



thinkSOCIOLOGY!

Volume 3, Issue 2 Fall 2018

Thoughts from the Head

By Guy Stecklov

It has been an exciting year for our department, with lots of new faces joining our growing department, and this coming year promises to be no less eventful. I'd like to take a moment and share some of the exciting events that appear in the newsletter including Professor **Sinikka Elliott** discussing the complex issue of children's weight for low income parents; an opportunity to hear from three past heads of our department; and to learn about some well recognized accomplishments by our group of Sociologists over the past year.

I'll start with the impressive honors that appear in this newsletter. Our students continue to shine and achieve great recognition with **Larissa Sakumoto's** Governor General's Medal and **Mabel Ho's** Killam Graduate Teaching Assistant Award. Also, we were most proud to come together on a lovely Vancouver afternoon in May to celebrate Professor **Anne Martin-Matthews'** appointment as *Officer of the Order of Canada*. Professor Martin-Matthews is to be "hooded" on September 6, 2018.

I also want to tell everyone about some important changes among our faculty ranks. First, we held a late spring reception for Professor **Dawn Currie** to recognize her amazing career just before she begins her new one as an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at UBC. We wish her all the best. Professor **Richard Carpiano** has left UBC after being with us for twelve years and greatly contributing to our Sociology of Health program. He will be missed and we wish him well as he moves to a new position at UC-Riverside.

We are very excited about several new faculty members that have joined us for this new year. **Emily Huddart-Kennedy** has come on board July 1st as a new Assistant Professor, bringing her exciting research program and teaching in Environmental Sociology, to help our program continue to strengthen in this area. In addition, **Katherine Lyon** is our most recent tenure-track faculty hire and she takes an instructor position that is shared with Vantage College. Katherine will continue to bring her innovative pedagogy and the excellent teaching that she already demonstrated in our two programs. We are also very pleased to announce that two new lecturers have been appointed in the department: **Robyn Pitman** joins us to teach primarily in the Family Studies minor and **Neil Armitage** comes to us to help teach core courses in Sociology including social inequality. Please join me in welcoming all four new colleagues joining us this summer.

Finally, as I mentioned, this coming year promises its own share of exciting developments. First and foremost is that the department is engaged in three new faculty searches. You can keep abreast of upcoming job talks and hiring news by following us at our reliable website: soci.ubc.ca. ■

IN THIS ISSUE

Neighbourhood
Houses: Building
Welcoming
Communities

By Sean Lauer
2

When Right
Turns Left:

Making Sense of
Europe's Far-Right
Parties and Their
Cooptation of
Progressive Values

By Francesco Duina
3

One Afterlife
of a Head

By Neil Guppy
4

Weighing Motherhood: Poor Mothers Scrutinized for Children's Weight



By Sinikka Elliott

When asked on surveys whether their children are underweight, overweight, or just about the right size, most parents, regardless of their children's actual body sizes, say their kids are about the right size. Low-income parents are especially likely to consider their children's weights as just about right even when they are above the so-called normal range.

Dr. David Katz, founder of Yale University's Prevention Research Center, has helped to disseminate the most popular explanation for this finding: parents are simply oblivious to their children's actual body sizes. A couple of years ago, amid concerns over high rates of childhood obesity in the U.S., Katz coined the term "oblivioesity" to describe this so-called condition.

But rarely are parents asked how and why they feel as they do about their children's weights. Along with a team of researchers in the U.S., I have spent six years speaking in detail with over one hundred low-income black, white, and Latina mothers about their children's eating and body sizes. We also followed a smaller number of these women as they grocery shopped, took children to doctor's and other appointments, and cooked and fed their families.

"Weighing Motherhood" Continues on page 6...

Neighbourhood Houses: Building Welcoming Communities

By Sean Lauer, Associate Professor and Former Department Head

What would it be like to live in a welcoming community? I imagine that neighbors in a welcoming community would share rich set of social ties that span the community and form a dense network of relationships with each other. Through these ties, neighbors would work together to tackle issues that arise and to achieve shared goals. These dense relationships and the sense of efficacy that develop from successfully working together would, in turn, encourage a positive sense of community.

Of course, given its name, the community would make welcoming newcomers to the social life of the community a priority and include a flexibility that invites differences and change. In the contemporary world, where residential mobility is high, neighbours regularly leave a community for new destinations, and the arrival of new neighbours is a regular occurrence. These new neighbours include people from all walks of life, but the welcoming community may most clearly demonstrate its uniqueness in its approach to welcoming immigrants and refugees who are new to Canada and others who bring unique differences to the community.

To succeed, a welcoming community would likely rely on a social infrastructure made up of local organizations that help to develop and nurture these elements of the community. Neighbourhood houses in Vancouver provide one model for what these organizations might look like. There are

three aspects of neighbourhood houses that allow them to make a unique contribution to the social life of a neighbourhood: 1) they offer a wide variety of programs and activities rather than focusing on a narrow programmatic mission; 2) they attract demographic variability that reflects the diversity in age, education, ethnicity, and family status of communities where they are located; and 3) they follow a community development mission that encourages participant engagement from the simple showing up to more complicated entrepreneurial and governance contributions. Below are two examples of how the aspects of the neighbourhood house model have contributed to the building of more welcoming communities.

First, local residents make connections with each other through regular, ongoing participation at the neighbourhood house. Sociologists have known for some time that in order to make new connections people need opportunities for contact. Rather than a simple introduction, however, long lasting connections develop through regular, ongoing interactions with a shared focus of attention. Neighbourhood houses provide the opportunities for just these sorts of interactions in the community. These opportunities might include a weekly drop-in for parents and toddlers, joining a multicultural cooking club, or participation in a community garden from year-to-year. Neighbourhood houses are unique, however, because of the demographic variability of the participants. This diversity, along with a variety of opportunities for

regular, ongoing interaction through neighbourhood house activities provides the opportunity for diverse connections to form that span the demographic variability of Vancouver's neighbourhoods.

Second, local residents develop their abilities to work together to achieve shared goals through their participation in the variety of activities available at the neighbourhood house. This begins with the assortment of activities taking place at a neighbourhood house that appeal to a wide variety of needs and interests. That assortment of activities allows participants to move through multiple activities and accumulate varied experiences. A parent, for instance, might be introduced to the neighbourhood house through the weekly drop-in for parents and toddlers, and from that learn about and join the community garden or a cooking club.

We know that learning takes place through the concrete experiences in which people engage, and that learning is enhanced through analytical reflection and application in new and varied contexts. Neighbourhood house activities provide

the concrete situations in which participants can develop social skills and practice working with others. This might include working with people from backgrounds different from their own, or organize and manage community projects. Moving

through multiple activities at the neighbourhood house allows participants to accumulate skills, and also to apply and reflect on the applicability of their new skills in the different contexts provided by the assortment of activities at the house.

For more than 10 years, I have worked with a group of colleagues, both academic researchers and community partners, to explore the neighbourhood house model in Vancouver. The research is collaborative: academic and community partners develop research questions together, collect and analyze data collaboratively, and together develop strategies to disseminate findings. This research approach embraces Craig Calhoun's notion of a public social science. Calhoun suggests moving away from a dissemination model to a more public social science that engages constituencies early in projects as research agendas are being set. In this way, we can improve the significance of our work for the publics to which we hope to contribute. Perhaps this research approach also reflects aspects of the neighbourhood house model: it brings together people with diverse skills and backgrounds, makes new connections through that work, and encourages the development of new abilities for all those involved as they work together on shared goals. You can learn more about neighbourhood houses and our research at www.yournh.ca.



When Right Turns Left: Making Sense of Europe's Far-Right Parties and Their Cooptation of Progressive Values

By Francesco Duina, Honorary Professor and Former Department Head

The scene is hard to imagine. As it turns out, however, we do not have to, because it is available on YouTube.* Standing at a podium is Geert Wilders, the founder and leader of the far-right *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom) in the Netherlands, giving a speech in Cleveland, Ohio, at the 2016 Republican National Convention event for LGBTQ Trump supporters. Against the background of a wall of sexually explicit gay posters, Wilders berates the intolerance of Islam and accuses Western leaders of cultural relativism: "The biggest disease in Europe today: politicians believing that Christianity, that Judaism, that humanism is worth as much as Islam, which of course it's not the case." The audience, which on the available video appears to include only men, all presumably either gay or supportive of LGBTQs, responds by cheering and applauding. They apparently appreciated the vertical positioning of Christianity and Judaism - two religions traditionally opposed to homosexuality - above Islam.

Somehow, far-right values such as Islam-bashing, the evils of cultural relativism, support for Trump, the preservation of white Europe, and the superiority of Western religions got all rolled into one with progressive support for LGBTQs. It would be tempting to dismiss Wilders as an irrelevant aberration from normal political discourse or even standard logic. But that would be a big mistake. The Party for Freedom came second in the Dutch general elections of 2017, only 12 years after its founding. Wilders is succeeding, although personally he is constantly facing death threats and cannot sleep in the same place for more than a few nights in a row. He is, moreover, not alone. His unusual mixing of far-right populist views with progressive stances on LGBTQ rights as well as gender equality, a generous welfare state, and freedom of religion (but not for Islam!) has very clear parallels in other European countries. These include the platforms of *Sverigedemokraterna* (Sweden Democrats) in Sweden and the *Front National* (National Front) in France. And, like the Party for Freedom, these parties, too, have recently registered unprecedented victories at the polls. The National Front sent jitters throughout Europe in 2017 when, for the first time



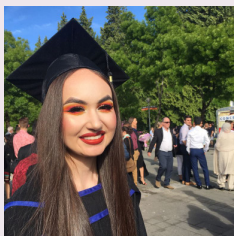
since 2002, it reached the final run-offs for the presidency. The Sweden Democrats, in turn, were at some point the second most popular party in the country in 2017.

The mind-bending rhetoric must obviously be understood. It represents a conceptual puzzle, has helped these parties win at the polls, and has forced their centrist and leftist competitors to question their own distinctiveness. Whether earnest or simply strategic, it has contributed to a reshaping of the traditional political landscape in many European countries. Right appears to be no longer right, the center feels compelled to take on conservative stances on immigration and other issues in order to retain support, and the left feels robbed of some of its defining stances. How can we make sense of such rhetoric? How can these parties be supportive of LGBTQs, gender equality, a generous welfare state, and religious freedom?

I have spent the last few months looking into this question. It is still work in progress, but I think I have made sufficient progress to share some initial insights with this newsletter's sociologically-curious readers. Let us remember that these parties are, above all, anti-immigration and nationalistic. Given this, what might seem like an ideological contradiction is in fact framed as a coherent and rational position: it amounts to a logical extension of xenophobic worries. Specifically, the rejection of 'others' coming from outside the country - as threatening, demanding, dangerous, or negative in other ways - is rhetorically countered, in its intolerant qualities, by an explicit articulation of an open and inclusive mindset on the domestic front. The key point is that being of the nation or, depending on the party, Western civilization is of paramount importance: other personal characteristics are either seen as secondary and ultimately irrele-

"When Right Turns Left" continues on back cover...

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GJC17c2sfk>



Larissa Sakumoto wins prestigious Governor General's Medal

The Governor-General's medal is awarded to the student graduating with the highest academic average in their field of study. For the 2018 Faculty of Arts graduating class the Governor-General's Silver Medal in Arts (Bachelor Level) went to Larissa Sakumoto, Sociology major. Her citation read as follows:

"Larissa is a very dedicated scholar who plans to start her law studies at UBC's Allard School of Law in the fall. She is interested in gender inequality and hopes to bridge the gap between the existing legal formal equality and substantive equality of outcomes which corresponds with her research at BC. As an undergraduate student she has worked with Professor Neil Guppy examining the gendered division of labour and hopes to use this research to generate discussion and potential policy change surrounding inequity facing women in both the public and private spheres. She has won numerous awards, including the Chancellor's Scholar Award, Kiyoharu and Kiyooki Momose Memorial Scholarship, Student Scholarship in Arts, Trek Excellence Scholarship, and the W H MacInnes Memorial Scholarship."



One Afterlife of a Head

Neil Guppy, Professor and Former Department Head

What old Heads ought to do is unclear. So I got a new job. I interviewed for it – panel interview (comps never end!). I thought it would be clever to study up first – the job title said advisor on “academic freedom” about which I didn’t know a whole lot. So I read what UBC said it was, and since I am at UBC I read what UofT said (and then McGill, and then Queen’s, and then the CAUT). Well guess what – there wasn’t a whole lot of agreement, especially once you got past the boilerplate. Then I dutifully read a bunch of books, as good academics do.

What I found could be noted in the following two contrasting examples of book covers. One cover depicts a taped mouth (a book by James Turk) equating academic freedom with free speech. Another cover image (of an edited book by Bilgrami and Cole) equates academic freedom with the scientific community, depicting scholars peering through a telescope - searching for heavenly bodies, presumably.

These images highlight a core tension in academic freedom, a tension between academic freedom defined principally via free speech as opposed to a framing of academic freedom via community. I’ve come to understand academic freedom more as an aspirational value of the scientific community, wherein free speech is important but not all there is to academic freedom.

Let me just pause to say a word about why there is disagreement or tension as the book covers depict. The sociologist Robert Merton wrote about “organized skepticism” as a defining characteristic of the scientific community. Few concepts go uncontested, and academic freedom is not on the exceptions list. Furthermore dispute remains because there is little Canadian case law to help cut through the thicket – which is also why I used the term “aspirational” above. Finally, as you will have noticed, the authority of science and the academy is increasingly questioned, as in why should academics have privileges others don’t enjoy? Hence, lots of tension.

Here is a listing of the popular dimensions of academic freedom:

- a) freedom to pursue knowledge claims in whatever directions they take,
- b) tenure to protect knowledge-seeking activity of all legitimate kinds,

- c) collegial governance and scholarly critique of the administration, and
- d) the ability of the scholar to participate freely in public life.

The book images (taped mouth vs peering through telescope) contrasted academic freedom and freedom of expression. Exploring this contrast helps clarify what most people take academic freedom to be. First, think of a literature professor, in German or English or Asian Studies, who is exploring a novel containing pornographic material. It would be outlandish that such a scholar could face obscenity

charges for discussing such material – providing that this discussion is scholarly, obscenity laws would not pertain because of academic freedom. Second, we could think of a sculptor satirizing a university president by crafting a mocking statue. Academic freedom allows the exploration of creative output – creativity ought to rule, not legal codes.

But does this freedom of expression mean that anything and everything is possible in the academy? One way to understand the constraints is to ask what the word academic is doing in front of freedom. If academic modifies freedom then our freedom as academics is not like everyone else’s. Indeed in important ways our freedom is more constrained, as academics, than members of the general public.

Academic freedom is a two sided coin, with freedom on one side and responsibility on the other. No academic is free to make outlandish comments on anything, if it isn’t done with due regard to professional standards. And of course why this is controversial, especially in a discipline like sociology, is because there is much debate about what constitutes professional standards (although these are defined in the ethical codes of many professionals, including sociologists).

Thinking about creationism helps to think about three issues together – freedom of expression, academic freedom, and academic responsibility. The essence of creation science is that the bible is literally true – a magical seven days. So why is Darwin’s evolutionary account taught as the standard interpretation? First, it has nothing to do with free expression. Second, it has much to do with the disciplinary structure of the university. Thomas Haskell, an historian, uses the phrase ‘communities of the competent’ to argue that it is because of the authority of disciplines that we rely on the Darwinian account. Creation science is not science – fake news! Few of us will have examined the fossil record or even read Charles Darwin’s explanation but most of us respect the authority of our colleagues in evolutionary biology that natural selection is the proper explanatory mechanism behind evolution. Disciplinary authority is critical for many versions of academic freedom, and for all versions that see academic freedom as something more than freedom of expression.

A core aspect of this argument is that the essence of the modern university rests on academic freedom – that by understanding the mission or mandate of the modern university we can understand why Academic must have some power in acting to modify Freedom. Core to the modern university is the intellectual division of labour and with it the need for disciplines and sub-disciplines. The disciplines are the collective repositories of our accumulated wisdom, as biologists or sociologists or pharmacologists. Now these last few assertions will have caused many to worry. Disciplines surely cement the past – they need to be transcended so that new wisdom can be allowed to flow.

Academic freedom has a very paradoxical nature. It simultaneously allows someone to challenge received wisdom / standard orthodoxy but this is always done, at least initially, from within a community of other scholars – and often the exact same discipline. In this sense, much like all of the social constructions that sociologists study, it is both enabling and constraining. Joan Scott, a historian phrases this well: “The critic of orthodoxy thus, ironically, must find legitimation in the very discipline whose orthodoxy he or she challenges.”

It is disciplinary knowledge that keeps creation science out of the academy, at least in biology. And of course historically disciplines and disciplinary knowledge has kept out more than bad ideas – and here I mean women and indigenous people, etc. And some disciplines change more readily than others – and sociology is one of the ones that changes at a faster pace than many. Be careful what you toss out though if you decide that disciplines play too conservative role in the modern academy.

Let me end with what most see as the key justification for academic freedom. This is John Stuart Mills’s claim that truth-seeking is defensible because it leads to positive ends – it sheds light on things which were previously puzzling or unknown. The pursuit does not guarantee that we have found ‘the truth’ but in the long run it erodes mystery, dogma, and ignorance. And if that pursuit were to be hampered, that would be collectively bad and so censorship and pressure must be resisted.

In essence the reason most frequently given for bestowing on professors the freedom of ‘the unfettered and ceaseless quest for understanding’ is that societal good will result. There will be bumps and wrinkles along the way, but the world will ultimately be a better place in which to live. Certainly there are worrying signs about betterment, nuclear annihilation and climate change among them. And note that those who point to these and other worries often do so from the benefit of the university. But the vast majority of people in the world now lead better and longer lives. And universities are in part responsible for this. This claim, that the ends justify the means, was a main premise of the first academic freedom document written in the US in 1915 – they called it a “first condition of progress”. And the writers of those principles, in 1915, were very much aware that it was the disciplines within the universities that had been responsible for the revolutionary insights of properties of the blood and relativity and neural synapses and marginal utility. ■

Boundaries, Borders, and Space Between: Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference

On April 26th 2018 the GSCS hosted our 11th Annual Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference at the Liu Institute. We had a great lineup of presentations that spoke insightfully in various way to this year’s theme: Boundaries, Borders, and Space Between. For the first time in the history of the GSCS conference, we also hosted two undergraduate presenters.

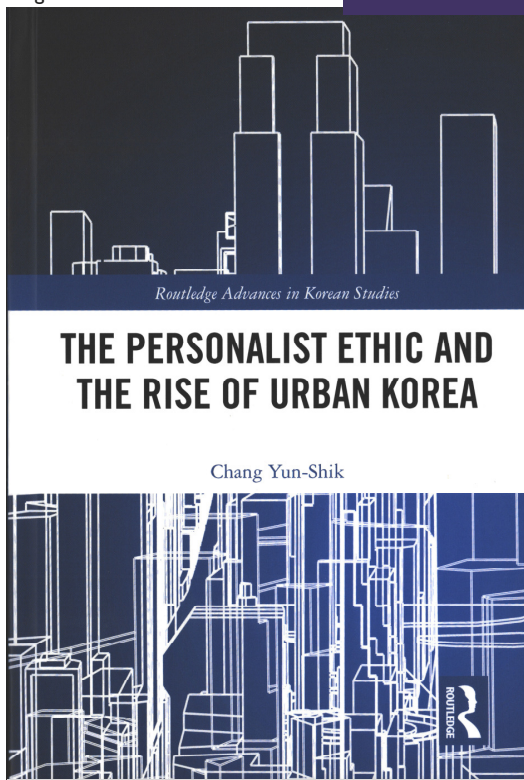
Presenters represented eight disciplines across three universities. Their presentations covered topics ranging from sexuality, stigma, and social control, state borders, trans-national immigration, and the experience of making home, social activism and social movements, and critical issues in pedagogy and education. We also heard from presenters who spoke to what lies between boundaries and borders, within spaces of liminality.

Interdisciplinarity is suggestive of crossing methodological and epistemic borders. This theme was reflected in our keynote address, given by Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc - a Professor and the Director of the School of Nursing here at UBC. In her talk she drew from her work at the Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre located here on campus. Specifically, Dr. Saewyc explored some difficulties and opportunities related to the process of conducting interdisciplinary research on vulnerable populations, as well as some methodological challenges of studying intersections of marginalization through large scale quantitative research.

Overall it was another engaging conference with impressive ideas that people were very excited to share and talk with others about. Thanks to everyone on the conference committee, and to those who helped out who were not on the committee, to make this year’s conference another great success!

By Adam Howe, GSCS Conference Chair





New book by Emeritus Prof. Yun-Shik Chang...

This book reviews South Korea's experiences of *kūndaehwa* (modernization), or catching up with the West, with a focus on three major historical projects, namely, expansion of new (Western) education, industrialization and democratization. The *kūndaehwa* efforts that began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century have now fully transformed South Korea into an urban industrial society. In this book we will explore the three major issues arising from the *kūndaehwa* process in Korea: How was the historical transformation made possible in the personalistic environment?; How personalistic is modern Korea?; And how difficult is it to build an orderly public domain in the personalistic modern Korea and how do Koreans respond to this dilemma of modernization?

As an examination of modernization as well as Korea, this book will appeal to students and scholars of Korean studies, sociology, politics and history. The book is now available on Amazon.

"Weighing Motherhood" continues from cover...

The mothers took seriously the responsibility for feeding their children well and for monitoring their weights. Yet their stories illustrated just how complex it actually was to balance feeding their children well while supporting their physical and emotional health in the face of scrutiny, racism, and moral messages around weight and feeding. Far from being oblivious to their children's real sizes, we found that mothers were contending with a number of objectives and meanings around food and weight.

The children in our study were regularly weighed at doctors' offices, schools, health clinics, and at checkups to qualify for food vouchers from the Women Infants and Children (WIC) federal program. Mothers knew a lot about their children's weight status, although sometimes they heard conflicting accounts given the many venues where their children were weighed. For example, one black mother was told by a WIC nutrition counselor that her son was obese, but his doctor told her "his weight was fine." A study of WIC professionals found they were concerned that mothers often received conflicting information about weight from different health providers.

Low-income mothers were also often juggling two equally crucial objectives in feeding their children and looking after their health. First, they spoke of how important it was to make sure their children had enough to eat in the context of frequent food shortages (half the families in the study were food insecure, meaning they had limited or uncertain access to food).

Even as they struggled to put food on the table, mothers emphasized the importance of buying the right kinds of foods like whole grain bread, fresh fruits and vegetables, and 100% fruit juice. Yet many noted that these foods were expensive, and research bears this perception out. Eating a healthy diet is costly in the U.S. One study found that low-income households would have to allocate seventy percent of their average grocery budget just to meet U.S. federal recommendations for fruit and vegetable consumption.

Low-income mothers were forced to make hard choices: feed

children "right" or make sure there was enough food to go around. Even though they had the option to go to charitable organizations, such as food pantries, to supplement their food supplies—and many mothers did exactly this—those visits could take precious hours mothers didn't have. In addition, they often had no choice over the foods they received, much of it wasn't fresh and some of it wasn't palatable.

Mothers in our study also experienced conflicts when it came to protecting their children's physical health and emotional well-being. They wanted their children to be healthy, happy, and active. They wanted their children to have the best start in life. But their stories demonstrated how complicated balancing these goals could be.

For example, promoting children's self-esteem is increasingly understood to be an important part of parenting. Mothers worried about their children being bullied at school for being overweight—as some of them had been when they were children—and developing low self-esteem. But mothers also worried about their children feeling self-conscious or bad about themselves if mothers put too much emphasis on their eating or the way they looked. Mothers said it was important to bolster their children's self-esteem and some did so by giving them messages about their worth, regardless of their body size.

One white mother whose teenage son was being teased at school for his weight was doing everything she could to make sure he understood the importance of healthy eating and physical exercise. But she was also adamant that his body shouldn't define him or what he was capable of. So she downplayed the importance of physical appearance to make him feel better about himself, even as she continued to worry about how to best support his health.

We also found the work of feeding children and monitoring their weight has entered highly moral ground. The mothers told us that only bad mothers knowingly let their children get fat and only lazy mothers don't monitor their children's eating and let them eat junk food.

Ph.D. Student Mabel Ho Receives Killam Graduate Teaching Assistant Award



Mabel Ho has been honoured with the prestigious Killam Awards. Established by the Killam Trusts, the endowment has supported more than 7,000 scholarships and fellowships since its inception in 1965. The Killam Graduate Teaching Assistant prize recognizes exceptional UBC graduate students for their commitment and service in the classroom.

Mabel Ho has a natural curiosity about people. Ho grew up in Toronto and was inspired by the multiculturalism in Canada's largest city to conduct research on the Canadian immigrant experience.

The research for her PhD in sociology examines four distinct ethnic organizations and its members in order to illustrate a picture of contemporary Canadian settlement and connections to one's ancestral country.

"Canadian culture does a lot to expose someone to multiculturalism," she said. "But no one can really define what being a Canadian is — the definition is always changing."

Her background in studying sociology and political science also informs her teaching, she said. Teaching enables her to give back to the education community.

"I want students to feel a sense of play when it comes to learning," she said. "By building an inclusive and collaborative classroom, they have a chance to work together and learn from one another."

Instructing and interacting with students is something she hopes to continue throughout her professional career. Her completion of the Certificate in Advanced Teaching and Learning and her recent Killam Award pushes her one step closer to that goal.

"Teaching, it is really a great joy for me" she admits, with no surprise to any of us. Congratulations Mabel.

And, at the health checkups we went to with some of the low-income families in our study, we listened as mothers were given unambiguous messages that they were either doing things right or wrong when it came to their children's health. One pediatrician told a Latina mother who reported that her 18-month-old son ate a varied diet, "That's perfect! The proof is in his weight: continue to do a great job!" Using moral terms like "perfect" and "great," the pediatrician attributed the child's weight solely to the mother's feeding efforts. Yet many different factors affect how children grow and the ways they respond to new foods.

In addition, praising mothers for their children's weight puts the focus, and the responsibility, solely on mothers. And praise can quickly turn to blame. When a 4-year-old child in our study gained more weight than the professionals thought she should have, we watched as a WIC nutrition counselor cautioned the mother, who was white, about letting the child eat too many snacks and advised her to "turn the TV off early." Yet kids' eating habits are shaped not just by what happens at home, but by the food they eat at daycare, preschool or school, by peer pressure from their friends, and even by advertising.

Mothers who participated in food assistance programs frequently felt like their feeding practices were under a microscope. Some mothers talked about being threatened with or reported to Social Services because of their children's weights or how they fed them. Importantly, despite the attention paid to childhood obesity these days, their stories suggested that thin children especially raised alarm bells.

For example, a black mother said her twin sons, whom she characterized as skinny, ate so much during school lunch, which they received free through the School Lunch program, that the "lunch lady" reported her to the Department of Social Services on the basis that she must not be feeding them at home. Another black mother recalled being questioned by a WIC nutrition counselor about her son's food intake given his small body size. She said she anxiously responded: "I tell the nutritionist, 'Yes, he eats. I feeds him. I do not deny food.'"

From doctors, nutritionists, teachers, talk shows, and public health campaigns, low-income mothers got the message that their kids' eating habits and body sizes reflected not simply their ability but also their willingness to feed their children well.

Although many mothers described feeling judged based on their children's body sizes, our study found that more black mothers shared experiences of fearing or being accused of neglect on the basis of their children's weights or appetites. This corresponds to a large body of research demonstrating that negative stereotypes of African-American mothers mean they are subjected to harsher treatment by authority figures. An analysis of welfare in Florida, for example, found that black mothers were more likely to be sanctioned—meaning a temporary or permanent loss of welfare benefits—by caseworkers than white mothers for the same infractions.

The obliobesity argument doesn't capture the multiple pressures and intersecting inequalities low-income mothers encountered as they tried to feed their children well on minute budgets, support their children's physical and emotional health, and defend themselves as good, caring mothers.

And yet, the loudest voices around childhood obesity in public health continue to tell parents, mothers especially, that they should just try harder and know better. This shaming rhetoric deflects attention away from the issue of poverty, gendered racism, weight-based stigma, and the problems with the food system. It ignores the responsibility communities have for ensuring the health of all.

After spending six years immersed in low-income families' lives and communities, I'm convinced that low-income parents are not deluded or in denial about health and weight. Rather, it would seem researchers are oblivious to the real challenges facing these families and their communities.



Prof. Anne Martin-Matthews Appointed Officer of the Order of Canada

The Order of Canada is one of our country's highest civilian honours, recognizes outstanding achievement, dedication to the community and service to the nation. Close to 7 000 people from all sectors of society have been invested into the Order of Canada. Their contributions are varied, yet they have all enriched the lives of others and have taken to heart the motto of the Order: DESIDERANTES MELIOREM PATRIAM ("They desire a better country"). Appointments are made by the governor general on the recommendation of the Advisory Council for the Order of Canada.

Dr. Anne Martin-Matthews is being appointed for her extensive research contributions to the field of gerontology, notably in implementing the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging.

Dr. Martin-Matthews will be duly hooded at a ceremony Sept 6th, 2018.



"When Right Turns Left" continues from p. 3...

vant for one's standing in the eyes of the party, or, conversely, as something that recent hard-fought social progress has moved to protect and is therefore deserving of further safekeeping, especially given the threats coming from the ideologies of Muslim immigrants. After all, the protection of *all* citizens from negative outside forces is the primary goal of these parties. It follows that party leaders 'welcome' and 'support' individuals of all different personal inclinations, and treat them as equal, *as long as* they are 'of the nation' or 'of Western civilization'.

This general logic takes on subtle differences. The Party for Freedom, for instance, has focused above all on Islam's attacks on the core ideals of Western civilization. The presumed intolerance of Islam is pitted against the tolerance of the West. Islam, Wilders stated for instance in 2016, "is not so much a religion but an ideology." Specifically, it is a "totalitarian violent ideology." Its spread in the Netherlands and Europe more generally means that "we are heading toward the end of European civilization." Given this, gays, gender equality, and freedom of religion must be protected against Muslim intransigence. As he put it in a typical speech in Germany in 2017:

Politicians from almost all established parties are promoting our Islamization. Almost the entire establishment, the elite universities, the churches, the media, politicians, put our hard-earned liberties at risk. Day after day, for years, we are experiencing the decay of our cherished values. The equality of men and women, freedom of opinion and speech, tolerance of homosexuality - all this is in retreat.

The National Front, with Marine Le Pen as its leader, is instead especially focused on protecting the values of the French Republic, especially liberty, against the threats of globalization, Europeanization, and, perhaps most importantly, radical Islam. Its most progressive language has concerned LGBTQs, women's rights, and religious freedoms. Consider, for instance Le Pen's words in a campaign speech in December of 2010. In a "number of territories," she said, Muslim headscarves and public prayer are so common that people feel "subject to religious laws that replace the laws of the Republic." The result, she continued, is that "I hear more and more testimonies about the fact that in certain districts, it is not good to be a woman, homosexu-

al, Jewish" or anything else. It should clearly not be so: it should be 'good' to be those things. And the reason is that, as Le Pen put it in 2011, "whether man or woman, heterosexual or homosexual, Christian, Jewish or Muslim, we are foremost French," which means being free.

And the Sweden Democrats, considered by many to be a neo-Nazi outfit, eager to safeguard Sweden's valuing of community and social inclusion, seeks to protect LGBTQ rights, gender equality, and above all a generous welfare system. It sees all of these - and especially welfare programs - as being under threat from excessive Muslim immigration. Consider the words of Jimmie Åkesson, the party's leader, as he speaks in a party video featuring images of assorted scarved and otherwise clearly middle-eastern immigrants begging for money and using drugs:

Our country is in a grave state and our society is falling apart. Vital welfare functions, such as elderly care, schooling, health care, social services, police, judiciary, and more, are in severe hardship ... Becoming a Swedish citizen is a welcoming into our community ... but it is also a social contract associated with duties and responsibilities. We will never welcome those who come here only ... to live at our expense ... but, at the same time we need to strengthen the way to our community for those whose honest ambition is to become a part of our society ... I have a dream of a strengthened public spirit ... a society characterized by trust, a sense of community and faith in the future.

Thus, what Sweden faces is a threat to the destructive behavior of foreigners who do not subscribe to its commitment to public wellbeing. A far-reaching welfare state is a good thing, but it must be protected in order to survive.

In all these cases, xenophobic depictions of intolerant 'others' are seamlessly combined with a willingness to protect progressive values at home. What appears like a contradiction at first is not without internal logic. The approach has worked in terms of votes but also party recruitment and organizational structure: the National Front has more gay men in leadership positions than any other party in France. This represents a major challenge to the established parties of Europe. The future of Europe depends, in part, on whether and how they will respond. ■

think SOCIOLOGY!

Think SOCIOLOGY! is typically issued semiannually. Editors: Guy Stecklov (Executive Editor) and Kristin Sopotiuik (Managing Editor).
Graphics and photos: Arsebel Gancena and Kristin Sopotiuik. soci.ubc.ca soci.dept@ubc.ca