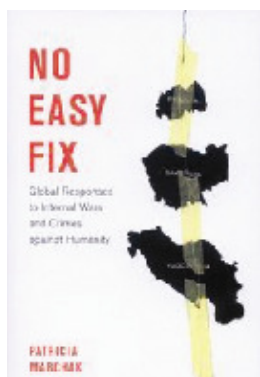# Think Sociology!

Thoughts from the Head

Welcome to the **Patricia Marchak** issue of our Sociology newsletter! Each article reflects a different strength of Pat's legacy… social change, international relations, and teaching.

In Pat's honour, we have created an International Research Excellence Scholarship. I am hoping that everyone reading this newsletter will consider making a financial contribution (please see the back page for details). The scholarship will simultaneously memorialize an outstanding professor and provide funds for students to undertake research fieldwork outside of Canada.

As most readers will know Pat was an exceptional teacher who influenced the imaginations of many sociology students. She was also an outstanding leader, as the first sociologist to head the Department of Anthropology and Sociology and the first woman to be the Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

To date we have pledges for over $60,000 with the goal of reaching at least $100,000. If you could make a contribution, we can match dollar for dollar the money you donate (up to $50,000). The money will be endowed, with the net annual revenue used to fund the scholarship.

The scholarship will be awarded to a student or students undertaking international research, an area of scholarship on which Dr. Marchak focused in the later part of her distinguished career (see e.g., No Easy Fix: Global Responses to Internal Wars and Crimes against Humanity McGill Queens Press, 2008). ✦

Neil Guppy
Department Head

In this issue:

Unconventional Leaders and Grassroots Social Change

by Jennifer Jihye Chun
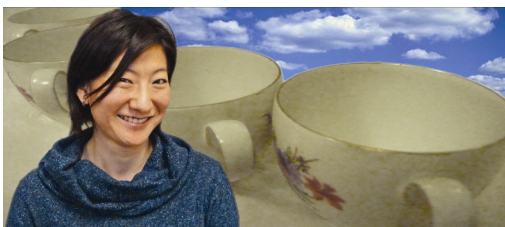
Li Fung first walked into the community office of Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) in 1996, three years after leaving Guangdong, China. She had a "good job with a good salary" in China, but her husband wanted to move to the United States to join his parents and six siblings who were living in Oakland, California. A week after she arrived, she started working at her sister's Chinatown restaurant making buns and shrimp dumplings (siu mai). A while later, she found a job doing assembly work at a Chinese-owned electronics factory making an annual income of less than $20,000. Without better English language skills, she knew she could not find a better job, but there were few classes available that allowed her to learn English while keeping her full-time job. AIWA was one of the few local organizations that offered English language classes on Sunday mornings and it catered specifically to Chinese immigrant women working in the Oakland Chinatown community.

Fourteen years after taking her first English language class at AIWA, Li Fung has become one of the organization's

most dynamic and successful leaders. As a peer trainer for the "Ergonomics Improvement Campaign," she worked closely with fellow Chinese immigrant garment workers, medical professionals and public health officials to innovate workplace health and safety condition in a dozen garment factories in Oakland. She collaborated with local employers and city council members to address the cost barriers of setting up ergonomic sewing stations and gave presentations to a wide variety of stakeholders about the need to alleviate the chronic pain and suffering of the mostly immigrant women working in the garment industry. She has also taken an active leadership role outside AIWA and workplace issues. In 1999, she established one of the first non-profit multi-racial Tai Chi organizations called "In Shape" which brings people of all ethnicities, races and generations together to practice Tai Chi and other forms of Chinese exercise.

What explains Li Fung`s transformation? What is behind her leadership development?

Li Fung attributes the profound changes in her life to the organizational influence of AIWA. When she first came to AIWA, she explains that she had a "very selfish mentality." Her multiple obligations at home and in the workplace left little time, inclination or energy to take on additional responsibilities and activities. But, as she participated in various skill development workshops and political education seminars, including seminars on the history of colonial oppression, racial discrimination and collective struggle among various racial-ethnic groups in the United States, she started to find her "own way out." Her ability to connect her personal troubles learning English and working low-paid jobs to a broader set of historical and structural circumstances provided her with what C. Wright Mills (1959) long ago termed the "sociological imagination."

For Li Fung grasping the interplay between biography and history enabled her to "live life outside a cup." When I asked her to elaborate, she pointed to

Photo credit AIWA

the tea cup sitting in front of her and said:

> *"What is life like in a cup? Eat, sleep, work. Go to work, finish work, come home. And outside the cup, since coming to AIWA, I meet a lot of people, come into contact with other races, go into different groups and organizations to give speeches. Grassroots women like us even have the courage to go to places like Berkeley and give presentations to university students. And if we see something that is unfair, then we will fight for change."*

Li Fung's experiences represent neither an isolated case nor a widespread phenomenon. She is one of approximately 1,000 Chinese and Korean immigrant women who have participated in AIWA's leadership develop programs since the organization was founded in 1983. She is also one of hundreds of thousands of immigrants employed in an array of low-paid and socially devalued jobs throughout Canada and the United States. Although the ports of entry in both countries were legally re-opened to mass migration from Asia, Africa and Latin America in the 1960s, ending almost four decades of

Photo credit AIWA

race-based immigration quotas, transformations in the political and economic world order have given rise to another dominant pattern of social inequality: the concentration of immigrant workers of colour on the bottom rungs of urban labour markets. While the causes of contemporary patterns of social inequality may not be rooted in familiar explanations of racial-ethnic discrimination, its consequences have created familiar patterns of racial-ethnic as well as gender and class stratification.

I first learned about Li Fung's experiences as part of the low-paid immigrant workforce in June 2009 during a focus group I was conducting for a larger comparative, cross-national research project. The study's primary aims include: 1) an examination of how low-paid immigrant workers interpret and make sense of their experiences in the labour market and 2) an analysis of the role of social movement communities in improving the living and working conditions of this group of workers.

As one of the few community organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area region devoted to the needs and concerns of working-class Asian immigrant women and an early precursor to the rise of immigrant workers' centres across the U.S., AIWA represented an ideal empirical case to examine how a U.S.-based social movement-oriented organization has attempted to address the intersecting inequalities associated with a specific segment of the low-paid immigrant workforce. In the mid-1990s AIWA's public shaming campaign and national boycott against corporate retailer, Jessica McClintock, Inc., thrust the small, community-based organization into the national and global spotlight, making it one of the leading organizational voices in the anti-sweatshop movement. Today, AIWA spends the majority of its time and resources towards a less high-profile purpose: the development of low-income Asian immigrant women workers such as Li Fung into visible, effective and innovative social movement leaders.

AIWA's commitment to cultivating leadership among low-income Asian immigrant women workers, many of whom speak very limited English and work in undesirable jobs as garment workers, factory assembly workers, hotel cleaners and domestic workers, runs contrary to our conventional wisdom. Leaders are supposed to be born with natural charisma, and they are typically highly educated and hold esteemed positions in government, the business world, and rec-

ognized religious and social institutions. Through the social movements literature, we have learned that non-elite actors can also become important and consequential leaders. Social movement leaders can inspire people to take personal risks and motivate them to participate in broader projects of collective social change. Social movement leaders also have the capacity to make strategic decisions that can affect the "inner lives and external careers of a variety of individuals," as C. Wright Mills puts it.

The ability of non-elite actors to radically change the course of history may be difficult to quantify or measure. However, the development of unconventional leaders such as low-income and limited-English speaking immigrant women workers is one concrete strategy being undertaken by social movement organizations to reconfigure the cultural values and belief structures that determine who has the right and ability to participate in changing the decision-making structures of society. ✦

Connecting Theory and Practice: Service Learning

by Dawn Currie
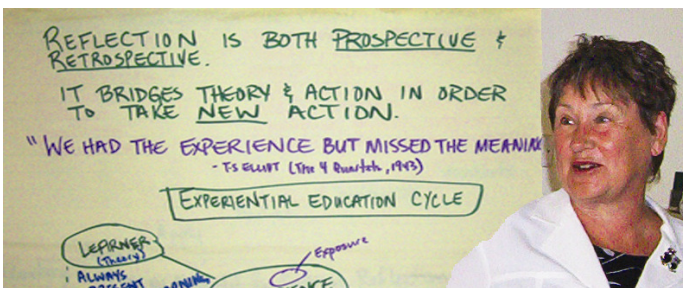
In *Place and Promise* President Toope sets a number of lofty goals for UBC's international engagement. They include increased student participation in learning and service abroad, along with strengthening UBC's role in international development. While many faculty members travel abroad for research purposes or for their own service work, what do these goals mean for us as teachers at UBC?

One strategy, gaining momentum worldwide, is ' international service learning' (ISL). While 'service learning' (SL) is relatively new and a topic of growing interest across UBC, the principles of SL are familiar to those who use community placements as an opportunity for students to connect theories of social change to everyday practices of working for social justice. Most commentators trace the origins of international service learning to the volunteer activities that flourished in the 1960s - CUSO and the Peace Corps come to mind. While all SL includes volunteer activities as a core pedagogical component, this is where the similarity between 'service learning' and 'volunteerism' ends. Typically, 'volunteerism' is equated with charitable service, with the 'giver' expecting little, if anything, in return. Some students expect 'personal growth' while others see international placements as an opportunity to enhance their career prospects. When experienced in this manner, volunteerism can foster a paternalistic attitude among students, reinforcing negative stereotypes about needy 'others' as, at best, passive victims of circumstance or, at worst, as authors of their own troubles. It is precisely for this reason that UBC's student volunteer activities have been transformed into 'Go Global ISL'. Included in the mandate of the UBC Go Global office is the task of supporting curricular initiatives that incorporate international

education. Our Department is among the first to take up the challenge of designing a course - Sociology 435 - based on international service placements.

While service learning has a lengthy history in the USA, it is relatively new in Canada. As a leader in the Canadian context, UBC is able to build on its history of student volunteer services, notably work in the Downtown Eastside. As well as this local initiative, UBC has been sending student volunteers abroad for several decades. In contrast to this volunteer work, 'service learning' emphasizes reciprocal learning based on collaborative partnerships that can be sustained through short-term placements of student groups. Clearly, in an international setting these principles give rise to a number of unique challenges. During the past three years I have been working with Tamara Baldwin, Associate Director of Go Global, to design a sociology course incorporating international service placements. Without claiming to have resolved all the challenges of designing and implementing an ISL course, I want to share what I have learned about service learning.

While many proponents of service learning have been inspired by the writings of Paulo Freire (1970), the theoretical roots of service learning can be traced to the educational philosophy of John Dewey (see 1938). His emphasis on experiential learning has inspired apprenticeships, internships, work/study programmes, cooperative education and, today, service learning. Central to all these programmes is the way that the learner has a 'direct encounter with the phenomenon being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something' (Keaton and Tate, 1978 in Kolb 1984). When framed as a response to the growing demand that university education become 'more relevant', how can we translate students' out-of-classroom experiences (over which we have little control) into a moment for the development of what C. Wright Mills (1959) called the 'sociological imagination' - a way of thinking that connects the agency of everyday human activity to the current context of increasing global inequities and conflicts of all kinds?

Sociology 435 - bearing the no-nonsense title 'International Service Learning' - was designed in 2007, through collaboration with our doctoral student Anisha

Datta. As stated on my current syllabus, service learning for this course is based on: active collaboration, both among classmates and with community partners; the development of cross-cultural and global awareness through critical reflection; an understanding of university-community collaboration on social problems; and the formation of engaged global citizens. These pedagogical goals are met through an academic seminar that includes a field placement organized by Go Global. During the most recent year, student placements were in Uganda. Eight students worked with an indigenous NGO, TASO (The AIDS Support Organization), while four worked in community libraries to enhance literacy among youth. While Go Global takes responsibility for negotiating MOUs (Memoranda of Understanding) with placement organizations and identifying home stays, the students must co-design actual project activities, based on an assessment of what would be useful for the organization and do-able given students' skills (and it goes without saying, as well as being ethical). This past summer, for example, one student of Microbiology helped to re-organize one of TASO's blood testing laboratories, while a student from Economics designed a project that would place goats in poor female-headed households.
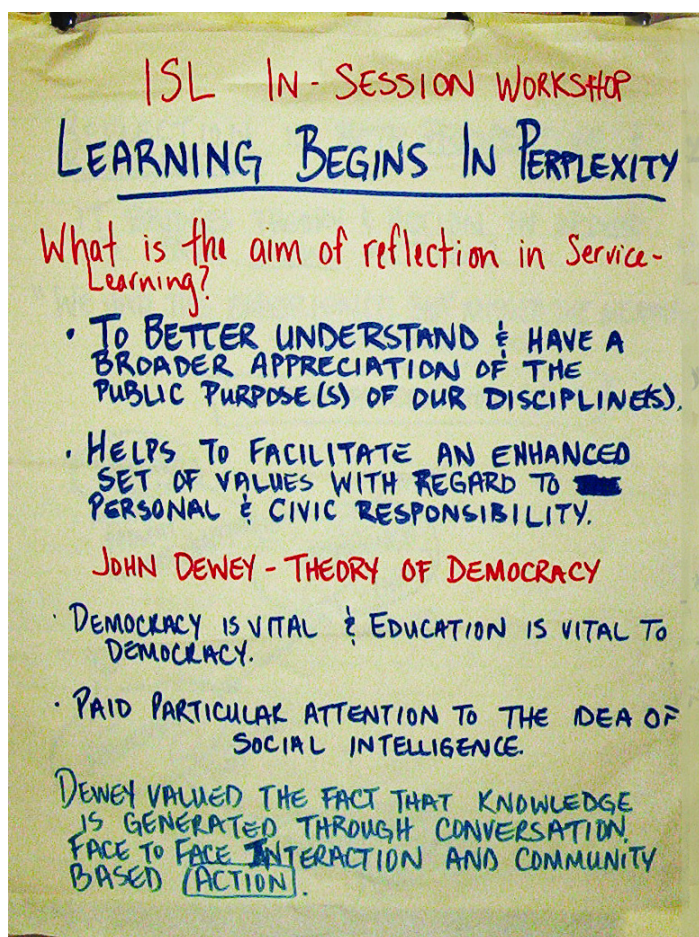
While all volunteer students attend pre-, mid- and post-placement seminars to deepen their service learning, students enrolled in Sociology 435 earn 6 academic credits. The purpose of the seminars in Sociology 435 is to enhance experien-

tial learning during field placements by connecting experiential learning to the sociology of globalization, inequality, and development. A key goal is to deepen my students' skills of 'critical social literacy' as a method of 'connected knowing'. Critical social literacy - which I base on Stuart Hall's (1992) postcolonial deconstruction - entails theoretical knowledge of colonial and neo-colonial relations as the origin of global inequalities and conflict. Because connected knowing treats education as something that is not separate from 'life' but as life itself, my hope as teacher is that learning becomes a life-long process, carried forward by proficiencies that foster self-directed learners. Proficiency for critical social literacy is fostered in Sociology 435 through readings which explore the history and contemporary nature of relationships between people in the 'developed' and 'developing' worlds, moving from theoretical critiques of 'modernization', 'progress', and 'development' itself to an exploration of how these concepts become embedded in the way that we - as Canadians - understand global issues such as poverty, inequality, and struggles for social change. Given that Sociology 435 is often the first exposure to sociology for many participants, it can be difficult for some to challenge the ethnocentrism of the knowledge-systems that often inform their chosen discipline.

At the inter-personal level, heightened awareness of inequality also requires interrogation of how markers such as 'race, gender, class and nation,' which operate as taken-for-granted aspects of our own 'identity,' are implicated in what Dorothy Smith (1987) calls 'relations of ruling'. Within this context seminar readings and discussions encourage students to reflect upon the impact that that their embodied presence may have on project partners and to consider the ethics of working with 'communities of others.' They are encouraged to 'take up the standpoint of others' - especially when faced with uncomfortable encounters - in order to better understand human agency as everyday practice in specific contexts shaped by global relations. Based on these skills, the final pre-placement in-class exercise entails the collaborative design of a 'Code of Ethics' to be followed in the field.

Given that learning is based on the learning *process* rather than course *content*, most of the graded student work is completed after placements, during September. While pre-departure assignments for Sociology 435 include conventional-looking work (for example a research paper on Uganda's Millennium Development Goals and a readings essay on the required text), during student placements, learning is enhanced by journaling what I call 'pedagogical moments'. A 'pedagogical moment' is a learning opportunity because it surrounds an everyday event that makes the participant question their 'definition of the situation'. These moments are highly personal and often uncomfortable; they can teach the participant as much about her/himself as about others or about the social world. The purpose of journaling this type of moment is to connect the analytical materials covered in the pre-departure seminars to everyday experience.

More information about the curriculum for Sociology 435 can be found on our department webpage or by contacting me. Keep in mind, there is much more to community-

based service learning than (simply) developing an academic course and organizing placements. When asked directly what TASO hoped to gain from working with UBC, their response was immediate and unambiguous - a workshop for staff to learn how to enhance men's participation in TASO services and activities. This request reflects the fact that while two thirds of their service clients are women, TASO outreach programmes concern the sexual practices of men that place women at risk. Our response to their request was an intense two-day training workshop, which I intend to describe in future writing. With the help of Erin Fields in Koerner Library, a public access wiki site for the workshop was developed and with Nora Angeles (SCARP) a gender training handbook (Currie and Angeles 2010). Sustainability of our relationship with TASO - that's another matter that Tamara and I still struggle with.

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Should you know students interested in exploring how to work with communities for social justice - especially if they intend to follow careers in Development or Global Studies - put them in touch with me and/or the Go Global Office (www.students.ubc.ca/global/learning-abroad/international-service-learning/current-programs/). For further reading on community-based service learning see:

Dick Cone and Susan Harris (1996) 'Service-Learning Practice: Developing a Theoretical Framework' *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 3: 31-43 (Available online)

Peter Devereaux (2008) 'International volunteering for development and sustainability: outdated paternalism or a radical response to globalization?' *Development in Practice* 18(3): 357-70.

Sara Grusky (2000) 'International Service Learning: A Critical Guide from an Impassioned Advocate' *The American Behavioral Scientist* 43(5): 858-67 (Available online)

Sam Marullo and Bob Edwards (2000) 'From Charity to Justice: The Potential of University-Community Collaboration for Social Change' *The American Behavioral Scientist* 43(5): 895-912 (Available online)

Keith Morton (1995) 'The Irony of Service: Charity, Project and Social Change in Service-Learning' *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* Fall: 19-32 (Available online)

References:

Dawn H. Currie and Nora Angeles (2010) *Designing Projects to Promote Gender Equality: A Handbook.* University of British Columbia

John Dewey (1938) *Experience and Education.* New York: Collier

Paulo Freire (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum

Stuart Hall (eds) (1992) 'The West and The Rest: Discourse and Power' Pp. 276-331 in S. Hall and B. Gieben (eds) *Formations of Modernity.* London: Polity Press

David A. Kolb (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development.* Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

C. Wright Mills (1959) *Sociological Imagination.* New York: Oxford University Press

Dorothy E. Smith (1987) *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press ✦

The Health Disparities Laboratory:
A New Resource for Student Research Training

By Richard Carpiano

I cannot imagine where my career would have led if not for the research opportunities I was afforded as a student by my faculty mentors. Aside from learning fundamental tools of the research trade, these outside-of-the-classroom experiences were where readings and lectures truly came alive for me - no matter how fascinating (or dry) I found the course topic. Whether it was applying a seemingly esoteric theory, formulating study hypotheses, designing instruments, analyzing real data, or interpreting actual results - I found the entire practice of research nothing short of awesome! These research mentoring experiences fueled my passion for discovery and, ultimately, my pursuit of an academic career.

As the years have passed and my role has changed from student to faculty mentor, I can easily see why I derive such enjoyment from mentoring students on research projects - particularly projects that students develop themselves. Sure, there is the great satisfaction of knowing that I am contributing to a crucial part of our students' training. Yet, there is so much more to it than simply the instrumental aim of helping students apply what they learn in the classroom and develop essential career skills. On an emotional level, it is difficult to fully convey the great enjoyment that I receive from helping student researchers think through a problem with designing a study, interpreting results, or even data coding and then seeing them express an "Oh, I figured it out!" or an "A-ha!" once they arrive at a solution. Put simply, research mentoring is one of my greatest joys as a faculty member! As such, it has always been an important focus of my teaching and research activities.

Since I arrived in the Sociology Department in 2006, there has been an increase in the number of students interested in my own areas of research, which focus on how social conditions contribute to the health of individuals and communities. Given the mentored research experiences I had as an undergraduate and graduate student, I wanted to be able to increase my ability to provide similar opportunities for students with

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health interests whom I mentor in Sociology and other related programs at UBC. Even though I was already collaborating with students, I dreamt of greater space and computing resources to facilitate my ability to provide a meaningful research mentorship experience for students.

This past summer, that idea became a reality. Thanks to the encouragement of Department Head Neil Guppy plus grant funding I received as part of a Scholar Award from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, I was able to create a laboratory for mentoring students on health research—a research environment containing several high speed computers equipped with data analysis and other necessary software. Given my preoccupation with obtaining the necessary computing equipment, I asked graduate students to think up a name for the lab. After I politely vetoed their first idea ("Carp-Lab"), the students suggested the (more appropriate) "Health Disparities Laboratory." After all, in the world of health research, it is always ideal to give a lab or study project a name that has a succinct, easy-to-remember acronym (HDL).

Even though it is only a few months old, the HDL is alive and buzzing with students either working on their own empirical research for which they seek my guidance (e.g., original research papers that will be presented at conferences and submitted to journals for publication, theses, and dissertations) or working with me on my own research projects. As if having a space to mentor students on research isn't thrilling enough, the diverse range of health-related projects only adds to the excitement. Quantitative and qualitative projects being conducted in the HDL include the health-implications of social networks, the influence of neighborhood social life on early childhood development, sexual minority health issues, public attitudes towards mental illness, and the negotiation of consent for Human Papillomavirus and Hepatitis C vaccination.

The HDL is not simply a lab for my graduate students to work on my projects. In fact, I am not the supervisor for all the students presently using the HDL for their own research. Rather, it aims to be a lab for undergraduate and graduate students with health-related interests who seek mentored research opportunities. Through their work in the HDL, students will be able to apply what they learn in the classroom and hone their research skills, as they train to become tomorrow's academic and applied researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. More fundamentally, the HDL will contribute to sparking the research imagination of students. ✦

2010/2011 Seminar Series .... at a glance

Suzanna Crage (University of Pittsburgh)   **Tuesday Sept 28**
"Negotiating the Relevance of the Past: Refugee Aid Policymaking in Berlin"

Robert S. Jansen (University of Michigan)   **Tuesday Oct 5**
"The Historical Emergence of Populist Mobilization in Latin America"

Chris Bail (Harvard University)   **Thursday Oct 14**
"Terrified: Social Movements, Emotions, and the Collective Identity of Muslims in the U.S. Media, 2001-2008"

Shamus Khan (Columbia University)   **Tuesday Nov 9**
"Privilege: Educating an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School"

Erika Summers-Effler (University of Notre Dame)   **Tuesday Nov 30**
"The Dance of Day-to Day Life: Tension between Complementary Emotions"

Rina Agarwala (John Hopkins University)   **Tuesday Feb 22**
"Dignifying Discontent: Informal Workers' Movements and the State in India"

Scott Schieman (University of Toronto)   **Tuesday March 1**
"The Nature of Work and the Stress of Higher Status"

Bill Carroll *(University of Victoria)*   **Tuesday March 15**
"Alternative Policy Groups and Transnational Counter-Hegemonic Struggle"

Nicole Constable (University of Pittsburgh)   **Tuesday March 29**
"Telling Tales of Migrant Workers: Religion, Activism, and Women's Narratives"
(Jointly sponsored with Departments of Anthropology, Geography and the Liu Center)

Visit www.soci.ubc.ca for details.

Caitlin in London!

Current PhD student Caitlin Forsey is currently spending two terms as a visiting research student in the Gender Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She is among 60 SSHRC fellowship holders to receive a Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement ($6,000), a recent initiative designed to facilitate research intern-

Caitlin Forsey (pictured far right), with fellow researchers at the Gender Institute.

ships and global linkages with prestigious institutions abroad. Caitlin is studying gender and media representations with Dr. Sadie Wearing (Gender Institute) and discourse analysis with Dr. Derek Hook (Institute of Social Psychology).

Think Sociology!

Pat Marchak International Research Excellence Scholarship

Support our students' international fieldwork!

Help us recognize and promote the global orientation of our students, of UBC, and of scholarship in Contemporary Canada - Donate to the Pat Marchak International Research Excellence Scholarship.

Send cheque to:

The Department of Sociology, UBC, 6303 NW Marine Drive, Vancouver BC V6T 1Z1

Online donations will be possible early in the new year…details to follow in next newsletter.
An official tax receipt will be mailed to you.

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!

<u>**Think Sociology**</u> is issued semiannually. Editors: Neil Guppy and Kristin Sopotiuk. Photos: Kristin Sopotiuk, Dawn Currie, and AIWA