High school exit exams—an accurate measure of success?

Sociological memoirs

Finding common ground

Ann Hironaka says civil wars are lasting longer

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Welcome to our newly redesigned sociology magazine, *Facets*. As usual, you’ll find within its pages stories of exceptional faculty members and students whose accomplishments we are proud to have fostered. But in this issue, we’ve placed a special emphasis on a real source of pride for our growing department: our commitment to a civic sociology.

As you’ll discover in the following pages, we are more driven than ever to conduct research that matters. You’ll see what I mean when you read about Professor Ann Hironaka, whose work investigates vital questions about civil war that have profound implications for the current situation in Iraq. You’ll also meet alumna Reba Carruth, whose job is to build consensus between governments, on matters ranging from industry to the environment. And you’ll learn about collaborations like that of Professor Kathy Hull and graduate student Tim Ortyl, who are delving into challenging questions about what defines same-sex couplehood. And those are just a few of the remarkable individuals who make up our department. In recognition of this commitment, our department was recently featured as an exemplar of “the engaged department” by the American Sociological Association.

Since my arrival in 1995, we have welcomed more than 20 new colleagues, each bringing a new wave of high-quality teaching and scholarship to the department and the University. This year, we’re excited to introduce to you our new faculty members (see page 18–19). These scholars bring expertise in social stratification, East Asia, labor politics, punishment, and legal history—among other issues. They and other faculty members continue to earn sizable research grants, national and international awards, and a steady stream of publications in the very best academic journals and university presses.

In short, the department is growing, quickly, and thanks to your support, we’re able to share that growth with more and more qualified students. Our undergraduate program is flourishing and more students are enjoying community service learning opportunities. We have also awarded more than 125 Ph.D. and master’s degrees in the past decade, with our students garnering prestigious awards and job placements in great sociology departments throughout the world. Our students have benefited immensely from fellowships and collaborative research partnerships with faculty members. As chair of “the engaged department,” I hope you’ll enjoy *Facets*—and I welcome your engagement in Minnesota sociology.

Chris Uggen, Chair
uggen001@umn.edu
A Natural Career  McKenna Davis had never thought of her passion for the environment as a career option, but now that she’s had the chance to do environmental policy research with Associate Professor Evan Schofer, she’s found a way to turn her passion into a career.

As a child growing up in California, McKenna Davis spent nearly every weekend at the local wildlife rehabilitation center, a facility devoted to rescuing injured wild animals—bobcats, coyotes, mountain lions—and nursing them back to health. At the time, she volunteered simply because she enjoyed working with the animals, but since then her interest has matured—into the beginnings of a career in international environmental work.

This evolution was nudged along by a grant from the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP), a University program that provides undergraduate students the opportunity to work side by side with accomplished faculty members. Davis chose to team up with Evan Schofer, a professor she met when she took his class on globalization. For a semester, she joined Schofer and a few graduate students in “studying environmental organizations around the world, and how factors like their political history and international aid affects them,” she says. Davis’s research contributed to at least one paper Schofer published during their collaboration.

Not every undergraduate student gets to collaborate with a nationally recognized scholar like Schofer, but the University is committed to making the opportunity available for as many students as possible, and so is the department. Schofer says the experience is something even small private colleges are hard-pressed to provide. “Most undergraduates never have a chance to see [faculty members and graduate students] hashing through data and watching research progress,” he says. “McKenna got a real taste of what that’s like.”

While Davis savors the fruits of her research, she’s even more enthusiastic about how the skills she’s gained will be useful down the road. One of the major benefits of the program, she explains, “is the practical experience you get. I learned about all the steps in getting a paper published, and I got to work with graduate students.”

What’s more, by demonstrating her capabilities to a professor already established in the field, Davis earned herself a powerful reference when it came time to apply to graduate school.

After graduating last spring, Davis enrolled at the University of Freiburg in Germany, where she’s pursuing a master’s degree in environmental governance. She hopes to work one day for an international environmental organization such as the World Wildlife Fund. With the experience she already has under her belt, her dream job could be just around the corner.
It’s impossible to take a class on nutrition without thinking about your own diet: Am I getting enough vitamin C? Are carbohydrates making me sleepy? In the same vein, sociology classes tend to make students reflect on the social contexts of their lives: How did my family’s economic status affect my decision to go to college? How does my cultural background shape the way I view the world? By asking her students to write their own “sociological memoirs,” Teresa Swartz, assistant professor of sociology, helps students learn through their natural curiosity about themselves.

“The point is to encourage students to use the sociological imagination,” she explains, “to consider the ways in which their own biographies intersect with history and the larger social context.” In their memoirs, students both describe their own experiences and support their arguments with sociological data, such as census information on the racial makeup, unemployment rate, and median family income in their hometowns.

Throughout the research process, many students made discoveries about the relative privilege that has gotten them where they are today. For instance, Ross Armstrong, who describes himself as a “typical white, middle-class American,” reflects, “I didn’t have any of the unconscious emotional or social baggage that comes with being identified as being a member of an ethnic group. I was the norm, whereas others had unavoidable expectations and judgments to overcome.”

**The Benefits of Being Average**

**The following is an excerpt from Ross Armstrong’s sociological memoir.**

Armstrong is a freshman majoring in sociology. He was raised in Cedar, Minnesota.

I am profoundly normal. I fulfill all the stereotypes of the “average” American: I am white, I’m middle-class, and I went to public schools all my life. When you imagine the average American in your head, you’re probably imagining someone very much like me.

It would be easy to assume that I am the way I am because that’s how it is “normal” to be. Yet, doing so would be ignoring all the factors, all the agents of socialization, that have made me what I am today. These factors have been the crucible in which my personality and identity were formed. They have also been essential in determining which options I have in life and what goals I develop.

I’m from a family that is middle class and a hometown that is overwhelmingly middle class. The U.S. Census states that less than 5 percent of the population of my hometown makes less than $35,000 a year, and just 2 percent makes over $150,000. Our median family income is $73,728, almost $25,000 more than the national average. My family is in the process of undergoing upward social mobility, from lower to upper middle class. That has had quite a profound effect on me: I have had inculcated in me the belief that if you work hard enough, you can get ahead, and this belief has been reinforced by the fact that my family and the families of my friends are, in fact, getting ahead. According to the American achievement ideology, if you just try hard enough, anything is within your reach. But this
Meanwhile, students such as Suzy Maves contemplated their more unusual circumstances. Maves wrote about how adoption laws and trends affected her personal experience of being adopted. Another student analyzed how ethnic relations in Malaysia played a part in her family's decision to emigrate to the United States.

Swartz says the paper was most difficult for those students who see themselves as “normal” or “ordinary,” and more straightforward for students with less common circumstances. “The last thing a fish would notice is water,” she says. “This assignment asked students to notice and examine the ‘water,’ or social context, around them.” And for students who have never had to think about the variables that have influenced their progress through life, that was often a real wake-up call. “These are successful young people—they have managed to get to college and they see themselves as successful,” she says. “This assignment complicated their stories of their own success.”

Swartz believes the paper helped drive home class lessons effectively. “Students learn concepts in a much deeper way when they apply them to their own lives,” she says.

Several of Swartz’s students presented their work at the 2006 Joint Sociologists of Minnesota/Wisconsin Sociological Association Annual Conference in October. An excerpt from Ross Armstrong’s memoir appears below.

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“I know firsthand; I went to school with people who perfectly fit the roles in Barbara Ehrenreich’s book *Nickel and Dimed*, people from families living paycheck to paycheck and working several minimum wage jobs, struggling not to suffer that most horrible of American tragedies: downward social mobility. The social environment in my hometown was often hostile to them, taking the simplistic view that they are in the situation they are in because they haven’t tried hard enough. The reality is much more complex. In actuality, social mobility is elusive and what little mobility does occur is usually only a small step.

To assume that our life situations are the product of either sheer willpower or natural law is a mistake. Instead, we must remember to use the sociological imagination and ask that most simple question “why”: Why is society the way it is? If you never question the reasons for social inequality or injustices, you will never solve them. If you never question the workings of your society, you will never improve it. At the basis of positive social change is the sociological imagination and that simple question: **Why?**
FIGHTING WORDS
Long before she ever made war one of her primary academic interests, Associate Professor Ann Hironaka was busy taking stands against it. As an undergraduate during the 1980s, she was active in a variety of peace-related causes; she even served a stint at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, though she says she was enlisted mostly as a diligent copier and coffee-fetcher, not as a policy analyst.

As Hironaka became interested in sociology, it might have made sense for her to leave war to the political scientists, who more commonly study the subject. But she was convinced that sociology would offer a unique perspective on conflict. As her new research demonstrates, her instinct was right.

From the beginning, Hironaka has been especially interested in the phenomenon of civil war. When she began her studies, she recalls, “there seemed to be a lot of civil wars going on in any given year, so I just assumed there were more civil wars breaking out than there were years ago.”

But once she began digging through the actual data, Hironaka realized the reality was much more nuanced. In fact, the number of new civil wars each year hasn’t changed much over the course of two centuries—what’s changed is their length. During the first half of the 20th century, the average civil war lasted about a year and a half. By the second half, that average had nearly tripled. They’re what social scientists refer to as “weak states”—countries with very limited economic, organizational, and political strength. Unlike a strong state (the United States or France, for example), a weak state typically has a government that rebels can easily exploit. Since the rebels are likely to be just as weak as the government they overthrow, however, power may move back and forth for years—or even decades.

Ann Hironaka’s new research shows that civil wars are nearly three times longer than they were 60 years ago.

What’s behind this disconcerting trend?
And what does it mean for Iraq?

A New Kind of War

By way of context, Hironaka explains that the vast majority of civil wars are fought in developing countries, which tend to be in flux as political entities.

That process of exchanging power isn’t something with which most Americans are familiar, Hironaka notes. “Americans see civil wars through the lens of Western history,” she says. “We assume a prototypical war is like one of the French civil wars—there are rebels and there is the government, and whoever gets Paris takes over and that’s it. It’s decisive and short. But that’s not how they work in the developing world.”
In Chad, for example, which “can’t even provide its people with food, clean water, and health care,” civil war has raged for nine years, Hironaka observes. “It doesn’t make sense that they can afford to have a costly civil war that goes on for so long,” she says. The missing piece, she explains, is intervention by other countries.

“The international system plays a much more important role in states and their activities than it used to,” Hironaka says. According to her data, 70 percent of civil wars involve intervention on one or both sides. In the case of Chad’s ongoing conflict, France and Libya have helped fund the opposing groups, pouring resources into the war to achieve their own foreign policy ends. As with many other civil wars, support from partisan international sources has lengthened Chad’s conflict.

“In the 19th century, great powers agreed where they were going to intervene, and they crushed movements,” Hironaka says. “That doesn’t mean we should encourage such actions, but it is one way to end a war.”

Hironaka’s studies are currently focusing on countries affected by civil war in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Hironaka is careful not to adopt a moral or political stance on these changes, but she does believe it’s important to understand why they’re happening. “As a scholar, I believe the first step is to correctly diagnose the problem,” she says.

As the newspaper stories about Iraq have continued to pile up, Hironaka’s research has become even more relevant than she initially imagined. “I feel like I can see my academic arguments unfolding in real time,” she says. “Iraq had a brutal, repressive regime, but it was also a strong state. The United States created a weak state out of a strong state by taking out the central government, and now it’s realizing how difficult it is to rebuild a strong state.” Civil war, rare under Saddam Hussein’s rule, now has the potential to last for years, she adds.

Although prospects for Iraq’s near future may seem bleak, Hironaka points out that weak states can be built into strong states over time.
“Americans see civil wars through the lens of Western history. We assume a prototypical war is like one of the French civil wars—there are rebels and there is the government, and whoever gets Paris takes over and that’s it. It’s decisive and short. But that’s not how they work in the developing world.”

“The American state was disorganized for many years before becoming a strong state, and European states took centuries to develop stable organizational structures,” she says. “Strong states don’t just naturally occur.”

As for the role of academia in the debate about Iraq, Hironaka says it’s important for academics to “question the basic assumptions of what a state is, what a war is, and what wars are about—instead of relying on intuitive assumptions about these things. By doing that, I think we can gain an understanding of wars that will help lead to better policy.”

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Ann Hironaka’s findings about civil war are detailed in her new book, Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States, and the Perpetuation of Civil War.
In addition to dealing with acne, first heartbreaks, and peer pressure at its worst, high school students now have something more substantial to fret about: exit exams. Over half of the states across the country now require that students pass exams before they can be granted high school diplomas. And like so many other issues involving public education (prayer in schools and No Child Left Behind, for example), mandatory exit exams are extremely controversial.

The exams are designed to ensure that students who receive high school diplomas have acquired at least basic reading, math, and science skills. Proponents of the exam see it as a way to make sure that students apply themselves throughout their high school careers—making an effort even when they’re not being “graded.” Supposedly, the exams also guard against diploma inflation, or the devaluation of a high school degree by a preponderance of unqualified recipients. Meanwhile, exam detractors argue that the tests measure only minimal levels of competence and—because teachers feel pressured to “teach to the test”—diminish the amount of “real learning” that happens in the classroom.

With a high school diploma riding on the results of exit exams, there is much at stake. Yet despite animated debate, until recently little research had been done on their actual effectiveness. To sociologist Rob Warren, that seemed like a monumental oversight. So he set out to look for the facts behind the spin. “I’ve always done work on social inequality and education,” he says. “And when I saw that the [political] discussion about exit exams was going on in the absence of real evidence, I decided that I needed to do that work.”
Going Back in Time
Warren’s first challenge was simply acquiring the relevant data—which was no easy task. Although some states have been conducting exit exams for several decades, in many cases they hadn’t kept track of details that Warren needed for context. “Researchers hadn’t dug into minutiae of education policy in Utah in 1979, for example,” he says. “So I spent a year and a half just finding out which states have had exit exam policies for which graduating classes from the late 1970s until today.” Warren has made his findings publicly available so other researchers won’t have to spend their time collecting this basic data.

Test Results
In some cases, the results of Warren’s research were unsurprising. For example, he concluded that in most cases, states with mandatory exit exams have slightly lower graduation rates than states that do not require the exams. Such a discrepancy is to be expected; it wasn’t until Warren put this information in context that he saw reason for concern. “We might be willing to accept a higher dropout rate if the majority of kids are learning more and are better prepared for the labor market,” he says. “But we’ve found almost no impact at all.” According to Warren’s research, students in states with exit exams perform almost identically on nationwide standardized tests as students from states without the exams.

That’s unwelcome news for proponents of the exams. As Warren explains it, “Even if we can’t show that these students are smarter or better citizens, we would hope that they would at least do better on standardized tests.”

Meanwhile, students who fail the exit exam—of whom there are tens of thousands each year—suffer serious consequences. For some, failing the test means losing the chance to graduate with their classmates. For others, it means losing the chance to graduate altogether. In the latter case, students are labeled “high school dropouts,” joining a demographic that faces grimmer economic prospects, a higher incidence of criminal activity, and greater potential for health problems.

“Current policies on exit exams don’t have the positive consequences that some people claim, but they do have the negative consequences that some people fear.”
An Imperfect Measure

Taken as a whole, the results of Warren’s study suggest that the tests aren’t accomplishing the purpose for which they were created. “Current policies on exit exams don’t have the positive consequences that some people claim,” he says, “but they do have the negative consequences that some people fear.”

Warren sees no easy solutions for policy makers—but he does believe that change is in order. “Getting rid of exit exams is not the solution,” he says. “And lowering the standards so that graduation rates are politically palatable isn’t great, either. But if we want to set a higher bar for students, we might need to consider more complete assessments that aren’t just achievement tests.”

Portfolios of students’ work, writing assessments, and other alternative skill evaluators might provide a more complete picture of how prepared students are to enter college or the workforce—although Warren acknowledges that the cost would be significant. The key to a more effective assessment, he asserts, is creating a better balance in how students are evaluated. Such a solution might not end lengthy standardized exams, but it would put less weight on a single outcome.

The Disappearing Diplomas

› Some statistics put the high school graduation rate at 90 percent; others place it at 70 percent.

› How many students are really walking across that stage?

Each year, the federal government releases statistics about high school graduation rates, and each year, the national average hovers around 90 percent. That’s an encouraging number—if it’s accurate. But Rob Warren has some concerns. “The data being used are poorly suited for measuring this information,” he says, noting that the data derive from notoriously unreliable self-reports of high school graduation and also count GEDs as equivalent to high school diplomas.

Statistics culled through other sources suggest that the percentage of those who don’t earn a diploma may be as high as 30 percent. “If you do something simple, like look at how many ninth graders there were four years ago and how many students graduate this year, you’ll find that you’ve lost about 30 percent,” Warren says. Also troubling is the fact that the students who don’t graduate aren’t randomly distributed across the population, but are concentrated in cities and among minorities.

While politicians may fantasize about reaching a 100 percent graduation rate, Warren says that wouldn’t necessarily be best for students. “Most other modern industrialized countries have many different pathways for students to take—maybe they go to vocational school to become a skilled craftsman or take courses on agronomy so they can go into agriculture,” Warren says. “If you don’t march across the stage at the end of 12th grade, we see it as a failure. But if there is another positive outcome, maybe we don’t have to conceive of it that way.”

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A Running Start for Research

It’s no secret that faculty-student partnerships can be one of the most rewarding aspects of a student’s educational experience. But let’s face it: they can be challenging for busy students to coordinate on their own.

That’s why the College of Liberal Arts offers the Graduate Research Partnership Program (GRPP), which provides financial support to graduate students who propose significant creative research partnerships with tenured or tenure-track faculty members. With the help of the GRPP summer research stipend, students are able to focus more fully on these valuable collaborations.

“GRPPs work best when they serve as seed money to get something started,” says Assistant Professor Kathy Hull, who began working with graduate student Tim Ortyl as part of a GRPP project in 2005. “After that, it’s possible to draw on other resources.”

Among other criteria, GRPP proposals are judged on the intellectual merit of the research, as well as the degree to which they represent an ongoing mentoring relationship between the faculty member and the student.

Besides providing graduate students with research experience, GRPP creates an environment in which students and faculty members can be full partners on projects of common interest—complementing rather than duplicating the work of either partner.

On the following pages, Facets features two nascent research projects seeded by GRPP. Thanks to the program, they’re well on their way to answering some of society’s most burning questions.
Marrying Priorities

Assistant Professor Kathy Hull and graduate student Tim Ortyl discover that not all GLBT advocates are wedded to the idea of same-sex marriage.

By most accounts, social acceptance of gays and lesbians is growing—but that isn’t necessarily reflected at the polls. So far, measures supporting same-sex unions have had little success. Some suggest that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender (GLBT) organizations have pushed the marriage movement too far, too fast. But rather than hazard guesses about who’s causing what, Assistant Professor Kathy Hull and graduate student Tim Ortyl decided to explore an even more fundamental question: Is the marriage question as important to members of the GLBT community as it is to the organizations that represent them?

With the help of GRPP funding, Hull and Ortyl spent the summer of 2005 exhaustively reviewing the existing literature on GLBT family and relationship issues. They found that while GLBT organizations have put same-sex marriage at the top of their wish lists, there was no evidence to suggest that members of the GLBT community share that priority.

Flexible Ideas of Family

On the contrary, Ortyl and Hull’s initial research suggested that GLBT individuals tend to have fluid conceptions of family—and that they’re less focused on the marriage movement than GLBT organizations and media accounts suggest. “So while GLBT organizations are promoting the marriage movement as a key issue, other ideas for approaches to equality may be getting marginalized,” says Ortyl.

To get a clearer picture of attitudes about marriage and family in the GLBT community, Ortyl and Hull plan to spend next summer conducting individual interviews and focus groups with a diverse group of 100 GLBT individuals from Minnesota and western Wisconsin. “A lot of the past research on GLBT topics has tended to focus on white, middle-class, middle-aged urban gays and lesbians,” explains Hull. “We wanted to create a sample with more diversity in terms of class, race, and residence, and to include more bisexual and transgender people—in order to provide a more complete picture of the community.”

To help pay for further research, the two have applied for funding from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. A Schochet Research Award, provided by the University to support GLBT research, will also help defray costs.

Though neither can predict what findings they may uncover, Hull says the collaborative effort has already yielded positive results. “It’s so important to bounce ideas off someone when you’re doing research, because it tends to be such a solitary undertaking,” says Hull. “It’s great to have a smart, motivated graduate student like Tim to engage in dialogue with throughout every stage of the research process.”
Making the transitions from adolescence to adulthood is never easy—but for young people with disabilities, it can be especially daunting. That’s something Gina Allen, a graduate student in sociology, observed years ago when she and her next-door neighbor and classmate—who had physical and mental disabilities—both graduated from high school. “I realized our lives would go in different directions,” she recalls. “I thought a lot about what becoming an adult means to a handicapped person.”

When Allen met Ross Macmillan, an associate professor who has studied the transition to adulthood for 15 years, it occurred to her that her personal curiosity might make for a compelling research project. Macmillan immediately took to the idea. They applied for and received a GRPP—and set out to learn more about this understudied group of people.

Easing into Adulthood

By some estimates, nearly 10 percent of the world’s population has some sort of physical or mental disability. Yet disability issues tend to fly under the radar. “It’s a black box in terms of information,” says Macmillan. “We don’t know much about how their lives unfold.”

To begin filling in the gaps, Macmillan and Allen spent the summer of 2005 sorting through existing data on the transitions to adulthood of several thousand disabled and nondisabled people, noting variations in how individuals dealt with traditional markers of adulthood such as living independently, taking on a full-time job, getting married, and having children.

They discovered that people with disabilities—whether they are physical, mental, or both—tend to move more slowly into adult roles than their nondisabled counterparts. “Youth with disabilities tend to become increasingly different from their nondisabled peers as they age,” says Allen. “In high school, everyone looks pretty much the same—they’re not really working, they’re not married, they don’t have kids. But as they get older and leave highly structured institutions, people with disabilities start looking very different from their nondisabled peers.”

Signs of Improvement

Such findings may seem discouraging, especially in the wake of more than a decade of key disability legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. But Macmillan believes the opposite might be true. “[Our findings may indicate] that these laws are doing what they’re supposed to do,” he says. “In the teenage years and early twenties, people don’t look all that different from one another, and that may be because a large number of them are still in universities and high schools, which are legally mandated to be supportive of people with disabilities. It’s when you move out of those institutions that you start to see more variation.”

Both Macmillan and Allen plan to pursue longer-term research on disabilities. “If we follow [individuals with disabilities] over time,” says Macmillan, “we can find the points at which they tend to have trouble making transitions, and we can pinpoint what types of people are better able to make these transitions. It helps identify where to put resources.”

Growing Up with Disability

Associate Professor Ross Macmillan and graduate student Gina Allen consider what adulthood means to people with physical and mental disabilities.
Finding Common Ground

How do you get a million people to agree on something?
Ask Reba Carruth—sociology alumna and consensus-builder extraordinaire. She’s made a career out of helping people—and countries—reach compromise.

Let’s face it; we’re all walking illustrations of globalization—from our Taiwanese T-shirts to our Bolivian loafers. In fact, nearly everything we wear, use, and eat has an international back-story. That long-distance, border-crossing commerce requires tremendous cooperation between governments—on regulations, industry standards, and public policies. Luckily, cooperation is what Reba Carruth (’86) does best.

For more than two decades, Carruth has advised governments and other groups that rely on broad agreement in order to do business through processes called socioeconomic integration and policy harmonization. Working with senior officials from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), for instance, Carruth has helped reconcile food standards from outside the United States with the stringent regulations required by the
U.S. Department of Agriculture. Given the emergence of global food safety and biosecurity issues such as E. coli and terrorism, it’s important that countries be on the same page. “We have to have a formalized approach between governments, societies, and industries to reach consensus about what our goals are,” Carruth says. “This isn’t just theory—it’s the real application of these ideas.”

Creating accord among different stakeholders requires diplomacy, she says. “The goal is not to tell countries what to do,” she explains, “but to create a level of sustainability and safety for the entire global integrated food supply.” This philosophy also applies to pharmaceuticals, transportation, human rights, financial services, the environment, and other areas.

A Career Based on Consensus
Carruth, who received a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Minnesota in 1986, has been fascinated by the way groups reach agreements since she wrote her dissertation on how steel policy is coordinated across borders in the European Community, now the European Union. Besides doing research on the topic when she was a faculty member at the former School of Business and Public Management at George Washington University, over the years Carruth has worked on global regulatory policy and market governance issues with groups from the European Commission, the FDA, WHO, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She has written books on global governance of the food and drug industries.

Despite her busy career, Carruth has taken time to use her skills to support causes about which she is passionate. As a supporter of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Foundation, she helped raise money for the $100 million memorial that will be built on the National Mall in Washington. She has worked with groups from other nations to create civil rights policy standards. “I’m always doing the same thing,” she says. “I’m always interested in how we have normative agreement, policy cooperation, and global standards for the rule of law within and across nations.”

As a result of Carruth’s many efforts at building consensus—in a variety of arenas—the Department of Sociology has honored her with the 2006 Public Sociology Award. “Her many efforts to use sociological knowledge to shape public policy and change the world for the better make her an excellent [award] recipient,” says Professor Candace Kruttschnitt. “The Department of Sociology is proud to have Dr. Carruth in the ranks of its alumni.”

Carruth, who recently left her position at George Washington, will spend future months finishing Global Governance of Drug Safety in Pharmaceutical Industries, the second in a two-book series. Eventually, she plans to return to academia, but she believes there’s never been a better time for sociologists to move beyond the academy to help create positive change in society and across nations. “Finding a higher collective good requires positive social and economic integration and the rule of law,” she says. “And the only way we can have that is through agreement on how we’re all going to live together.”

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The Power of Second Chances

David Edelstein knew firsthand about the power of religious bigotry, and the power of education to counteract it. True to his legacy, the Edelstein Family Foundation is helping the University create a more tolerant world.

As a student at the University of Minnesota in the mid-1910s, David Edelstein—a smart young man from the tiny farming community of North Branch, Minnesota—looked forward to a bright future. But at a time when the country and the campus were deeply anti-Semitic, Edelstein, a Jew, needed to be resourceful and resilient.

When he was denied admittance to the school’s fraternities, Edelstein started the University’s first Jewish fraternity. When he was refused entrance to Phi Beta Kappa despite his stellar academic record, he resolved to succeed on his own terms. Each of his triumphs, it seemed, was a testament to his belief in the power of second chances.

Edelstein’s drive to overcome discrimination fueled both his career and his personal life. With the help of the liberal arts degree he received in 1916, he quickly worked his way up to become president and owner of a successful sugar brokerage at the age of 27. Edelstein also dedicated himself to public service—to giving others a second chance. He volunteered with and supported programs focused on counseling ex-convicts and fighting alcohol abuse.

When Edelstein began thinking about his legacy, he decided to give his alma mater a second chance as well, says Tom Keller, trustee of the Edelstein Family Foundation. “He said he owed a great deal to the University of Minnesota, because it gave him an education that made everything possible for him,” Keller says. “He might have been the object of systematic bigotry, but his approach to that was not to be bitter or to retaliate, but to study it and expose it.”

Since Edelstein’s death in 1975, the Edelstein Family Foundation has made annual gifts to the sociology department to fund research on issues of racial and religious diversity. During the past three decades, the foundation has given the department close to $800,000 to support these endeavors, including significant support to scholars working in the field.

Building a Mosaic

The most recent venture to receive funding from the foundation is the American Mosaic Project, a three-year undertaking that has focused on the ways Americans understand and experience diversity. During the past three decades, the foundation has given the department close to $800,000 to support these endeavors, including significant support to scholars working in the field.
The mosaic research suggests, among other things, that atheists are the most distrusted minority group—a finding that speaks volumes about our nation’s values, says Associate Professor Penny Edgell, the lead researcher. “It seems most Americans believe that diversity is fine, as long as everyone shares a common core of values that make them trustworthy—and in America, that core has historically been religion,” Edgell says. The research has garnered attention not only from scholarly journals, but also in top news organizations; the findings have been reported in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and CNN.

The work is having a major impact at the University as well. Associate Professor Doug Hartmann, one of three principal investigators of the project, says the research has helped the University attract a more diverse pool of applicants; nearly a third of the graduate students currently in the department have done significant research linked to the American Mosaic Project. “This project is helping train the next generation of scholars,” he says.

**Full Circle**

Keller believes Edelstein would be delighted with the recent work of the department on diversity issues. “The leverage that the department has been able to achieve from this project has been enormous,” he says, “and Dave would be excited to know that his generosity has helped foster an area of study that was so important to him and to our society.”

For more information on the American Mosaic Project, visit http://www.soc.umn.edu/research/amp.

In Edelstein’s world, discrimination was a fact of life. He was determined that future generations should not have to feel the sting as he had. By funding research and education on diversity, the Edelstein Family Foundation is helping to achieve his goal of a world free of prejudice. “The best investment that a society can make is in the education of its young people,” says Keller. “It yields returns—in both economic and social benefits—that are worth many times the initial investment.” •
NEW FACES

Yanjie Bian

Yanjie Bian received a Ph.D. in sociology from SUNY Albany (1990). He joined the sociology department at the University of Minnesota in 1991 and attained tenure and associate status in 1997. In 2001 Bian left the U of M to work for Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, establishing the first Chinese version of the General Social Survey. His specialty is social stratification in China, approached through the analysis of social networks, social capital, and social exchange. We welcomed his fall 2006 return.

Teresa Gowan

Teresa Gowan joined our faculty last fall after receiving a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley in March 2003 and then completing a research fellowship at the University of Manchester. Gowan’s research interests include work and identity in informal and illicit economies, the effects of contemporary forms of spatial and social control on homelessness, and historical formations of marginal masculinities.

FACULTY BOOKS

Gender and Crime: Patterns in Victimization and Offending
Written by top scholars in criminology, the essays in this book transform our understanding of women’s relationship to crime.

Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy
Oxford University Press. 2006. Jeff Manza and Christopher Uggen
Marshalling the first real empirical evidence on the issue of voting rights for felons, this path-breaking analysis will inform all future policy and political debates on the laws governing the political power of criminals.

The Structure of the Life Course: Standardized? Individualized? Differentiated?
Current debates in life course studies increasingly reference theories of individualization, standardization, and differentiation in the structure of the life course. This volume brings together leading scholars to assess the theoretical underpinnings, empirical evidence, and implications of existing arguments to expand our understanding of the contemporary life course.

Same-Sex Marriage: The Cultural Politics of Love and Law
Cambridge University Press. 2006. Kathy E. Hull
Fierce battles are being waged over who is allowed to marry, what marriage signifies, and where marriage is headed. This book examines these debates, and data from interviews with more than 70 people in same-sex relationships, to explore the cultural practices surrounding same-sex marriage and the battle for legal recognition.

Homicide: A Psychiatric Perspective
Presenting a psychiatric understanding of homicide in the 21st century, this new edition considers aspects of homicidal behavior in American society that were not evident a decade ago, looking at such phenomena as the Columbine killings and public fascination with The Sopranos. Homicide received the 2007 American Psychiatric Association’s Manfred S. Guttmacher Award, which honors outstanding contributions to the literature in forensic psychiatry.

Parenting for the State: An Ethnographic Analysis of Non-Profit Foster Care
Journalists and child advocates have described the U.S. foster care system as a national travesty. Through careful ethnography and in-depth interviews at a nonprofit foster family agency, this book takes a look behind the scenes to uncover what contributes to the increased numbers of children under state protection and other issues associated with the foster care system.

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Enid Logan
Enid Logan received a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 2005 and joined
our faculty in fall 2005 following a predoctoral fel-
lowship in the University of
Minnesota sociology department. Her interest areas include race
and ethnicity; family, marriage,
and gender; and Afro-Latin
populations.

Joshua Page
Joshua Page will join our faculty
in spring 2007, upon receiving a
Ph.D. from the
University of
California at
Berkeley. His
research interests
include prison
officer unions and victim’s
rights groups.

Joel Samaha
Joel Samaha, previously a
member of the history faculty,
made the sociology depart-
ment his home in
fall 2006. Samaha began
 teaching at the
University of Minnesota in 1971
with a joint appointment in the
criminal justice studies and his-
tory departments. He has taught
sociology courses in criminal
justice, criminal law, and criminal
procedure. He received his
Ph.D. from Northwestern
University in 1972.

FACULTY IN THE
MEDIA
Several of our faculty
members have received
national media attention
in the past year.

Penny Edgell appeared in a
September 11, 2006, Newsweek
article, “The New Naysayers,” on
the topic of atheists. She also dis-
cussed the American Mosaic
Project’s findings about
Americans’ attitudes toward athe-
ists on NPR’s On the Media on

Douglas Hartmann referred to his
work as a part of the American
Mosaic Project in a September 3,
2006, Time magazine article con-
cerning the differences between
African Americans’ and
Caucasians’ racial identity.

Erin Kelly’s work was cited in a
September 14, 2006, Washington
Post article discussing racial bias
in the workplace and diversity
programs. The study found that
diversity training actually reduces
workplace diversity.

Candace Krutschnitt’s expertise
on the incarceration of women
led her to testify at congressional
hearings and be a guest on the
Fox News Channel’s The O’Reilly
Factor on March 20, 2006.

Professor Ronald E.
Anderson Retires
Professor Ronald E. Anderson was honored by his colleagues
at a retirement celebration in May 2005 for his many contribu-
tions to the department and the discipline, and especially to
using technology in education.

He received a B.A. degree in
social science from La Sierra
College in Riverside,
California, and M.A. and
Ph.D. degrees from
Stanford University. In 1968,
soon after receiving his
Ph.D., Anderson joined the
University of Minnesota fac-
ulty as an assistant professor
of sociology; he was pro-
moted to associate professor
in 1977 and to professor in
1990. In addition to his work
with the sociology department, Anderson was director of the
Social Science Research Facilities Center from 1970 to 1973;
worked for the National Science Foundation Office of
Computing Activities in 1972; and directed the Minnesota

Anderson received a Higher Education Distinguished Software
Award from Social Power Software and has been listed in
American Men and Women of Science since 1992. He is recog-
nized as one of the foremost international scholars in
education and technology. Now, Anderson will spend more
time on his hobbies (photography and boating, to name two),
but will continue his contributions to the discipline by
consulting, working on grants, and writing articles and books.
In addition to his scholarship, he has left another legacy by
establishing the Ron Anderson Technology and Social
Cohesion Graduate Fellowship.
Happy 20th Anniversary to the Life Course Center

The Life Course Center celebrated the occasion at its annual Miniconference held on April 7, 2006.

The event featured distinguished speakers discussing health, immigration, genetics, intersexed lives, identity, and adolescent work. Glen H. Elder Jr., Howard W. Odum Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina, capped off the event with an overview of life course research.

The conference was also a time to recognize Professor Jeylan Mortimer, who finished her tenure with the center after 20 years as its director. She was honored for her dedication to fostering collaborative and interdisciplinary research, outreach, and educational efforts devoted to the study and understanding of all stages of the life course. Professor Ross Macmillan currently serves as interim director while Mortimer is on sabbatical and will take over full-time duties in fall 2007.

FACULTY IN THE MEDIA, continued

Phyllis Moen was quoted in two Business Week articles this year. A July 24, 2006, article, “Stay Happy, Together,” discussed the lifestyle adjustments of retiring couples, and a December 11, 2006, article, “Smashing the Clock,” highlighted Best Buy Corporation’s innovative management of the work day, basing job performance on output instead of hours.

John Robert Warren was quoted in articles in the Denver Post (April 19, 2006) and the Washington Post (May 23, 2006) about his research on high school dropout rates.

AWARDS

FACULTY

Doug Hartmann and Joe Gerteis received the 2006 Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Award from the Political Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association for their 2005 article “Dealing with Diversity: Mapping Multiculturalism in Sociological Terms.”

Penny Edgell’s book Religion and Family in a Changing Society won the ASA Sociology of Religion section Book Award.

Joachim Savelsberg and alumnus Ryan King, Ph.D. ’05 received the Law and Society Association’s 2006 Article Award for “Institutionalizing Collective Memories of Hate: Law and Law Enforcement in Germany and the United States.”

Career Mystique: Cracks in the American Dream, by Phyllis Moen and Patricia Roehling, was selected as the best publication in sociology in 2005 by the Professional and Scholarly Publication section of the Association of American Publishers.

Chris Uggen was chosen as one of four 2006 Distinguished McKnight University Professors. The award honors the University’s highest achieving and most renowned faculty members.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Sara Wakefield won a Graduate School Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, which provides outstanding Ph.D. candidates an opportunity to devote full-time effort to completing their dissertation.

Samantha Ammons has been named a 2006 Graduate Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. The fellowship goes to students who show an outstanding grasp of their social science discipline, an enthusiasm for understanding social issues, and the potential for making substantial social science contributions.

Trina Smith has been elected United Nations Representative for Sociologists for Women in Society.

UNDERGRADUATES
Christopher Shad and Benjamin Wiggins were awarded Selmer Birkelo Scholarships for 2006–07. Winners of the Birkelo Scholarship are among the brightest and most committed undergraduate students in the College of Liberal Arts.

Leslie Lindgren received a 2005 American Academy of Political and Social Science Junior Fellows Award, awarded to outstanding undergraduates with promise and enthusiasm.

RECENT JOB PLACEMENTS
Joyce Bell (Ph.D. expected 2007), assistant professor, University of Georgia, Athens.

Kristin Carbone-Lopez (‘06), assistant professor, University of Miami.

Brian Dill (Ph.D. expected 2007), assistant professor, University of Illinois, Urbana.

Christina Falci (‘06), assistant professor, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Katja Guenther (‘06), assistant professor, California State University, Fullerton.

Jennifer Lee (Ph.D. expected 2007), assistant professor, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Coleman Msoka (‘05), assistant professor, University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania).

Andrew Odubote (Ph.D. expected 2007), assistant professor, Bethel University, St. Paul, Minn.

Andrew State (‘05), associate professor, Makerere University, Kampala (Uganda).

Sara Wakefield (Ph.D. expected 2007), assistant professor, University of California at Irvine.

Melissa Weiner (‘06), assistant professor, Quinnipiac University, Hamden, Conn.

Darren Wheelock (‘06), assistant professor, Marquette University, Milwaukee.

GREAT CONVERSATIONS
On May 16, 2006, the University of Minnesota’s Great Conversations program hosted Phyllis Moen, McKnight Presidential Chair in Sociology, and Marc Freeman, founder and president of Civic Ventures, for a discussion about the social forces that are reshaping retirement.

Moen and Freeman talked about how, as the nation’s largest generation approaches retirement, they’re treating it not as a final stage of life, but rather as an interlude between stages and a time to take a breather before moving on to the next chapter of their lives.

The U’s Great Conversations series focuses on connecting Minnesotans with thought leaders, risk takers, and peacemakers for energetic dialogues about the important issues of the day.

Listen to Moen and Freeman’s “conversation” at www.cce.umn.edu/conversations.
Thoughts on Giving

We talk a lot about excellence here in the College of Liberal Arts, but how do we know we’re really achieving it? Well, this year’s annual fund drive yielded an increase of 325 percent over last year for the Department of Sociology. The increase in giving indicates that loyal alumni and friends are making annual contributions to support undergraduate and graduate students’ education and faculty research—I’d say that’s a pretty powerful measure of success.

Yet, for me, the principal measure of success came during a small lunch gathering Dean Steven Rosenstone and sociology department chair Chris Uggen hosted for sociology department alumni last fall. Over lunch, the dean described why the sociology department is a source of pride: he talked about how our faculty members continue to work together and across disciplines to further important and vital research; he complimented the department on maximizing opportunities for collaborations between students—both undergraduate and graduate—and department faculty members; and he spoke of how sociology degrees from the U are increasing in value because of the department’s and the college’s recent successes.

Alumni, too, were happy to share their reflections. Many spoke about how what they learned in sociology has continued to have real-world applications. That in itself is a very telling measure of success!

I hope you’ll help us continue this success. I invite you to join those who made a gift in the past year to help sustain and grow the department’s reputation for excellence. An increase in giving sends a very strong message: alumni believe in their department, and they want to support the important work of the faculty and the recruitment and retention of the best and brightest students. A gift to sociology is a vote of confidence in the direction and priorities of the department. And it’s a shot in the arm to all of the people in the department who have aspired to greatness and dedicated themselves to achieving it.

On behalf of the department, I want to thank all of you who have already given generously. If you would like to make a gift to ensure the future of this outstanding department, please use the enclosed pledge envelope; or to discuss other gift opportunities, contact me today at 612-625-5541 or hicks002@umn.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes for a successful year,

Mary Hicks
CLA External Relations