By Colin E. Sucland

The University of Missouri Department of Sociology welcomed two new faculty members this academic year, assistant professors Rebecca Scott and Brian Colwell. Both earned their doctorates from California universities. The two new hires add to a growing contingent of department faculty who trekked from the Golden State to the Show-Me State. Associate professors Victoria Johnson and Clarence Lo, as well as assistant professors Eric Brown and Byung-Soo Kim, all hold degrees from California institutions.

Brian Colwell: Exploring the Bonds Beyond the Bars

History may be Brian Colwell’s first love, but the new MU sociology assistant professor makes a point of separating business and pleasure.

After attending a community college in Seattle, Colwell transferred to the University of Washington where his scholarly interests flowed to both sociology and history. In the end, the former developed into a professional interest, the latter remained more personal.

“Honestly, I think my enjoyment is rooted in the history,” Colwell explains. “So I decided I was going to save that for leisure.”

Rebecca Scott: Coal Miners’ Researcher

As Becky Scott knows, the path to one discipline often leads to another. In her undergraduate studies the new MU sociology assistant professor first was drawn to anthropology, and then she studied French literature with the intention of becoming a teacher. She went on to work for a non-profit agency in Washington, D.C., the Institute of International Education. Still, she hesitated before committing any further to that path.

“I realized that’s why I couldn’t fill out my grad(uate) school applications,” Scott says. “It just wasn’t me.”

Instead, Scott found her way to the University of California, Santa Cruz, where she studied under professor Herman Gray, among others.
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Sociology piqued Colwell’s interest. “I went into sociology because I clearly had a respect for it,” he says. “I like the idea of taking a step and generalizing. I want to understand patterns not just stories.”

Colwell’s career led south to Stanford where he first considered study in social psychology. He said his studies at Stanford were a real introduction to academic rigor. “Stanford does take theory so seriously, theory test- ing,” Colwell says. “If you’re going to do qualitative work, it’s still theory building.”

It was at Stanford that he began his exploration of the way prisoners in the California penal system form bonds with one another. The project included 74 inmates at 16 prisons. The focus, Colwell says, was the forming of social bonds in a “high-risk environment.”

More generally, Colwell says he sees himself in the symbolic interactionist tradition, with an “overarching interest in social bonds.”

Asked about his decision to accept a position with MU Sociology, Colwell says he liked the department and the larger Columbia community. “Columbia’s a hip place that could easily fit in any- where on the West Coast,” he says. “I have an entire community of relatives out here. I have two kids, so it was nice to have that community, too.”

“The department, too, seems supportive,” he contin- ues. “They’re interested in your success. I feel like I’ve been given a lot of space here to do my work.”

At present, Colwell is working with former Stanford colleagues to test the hypothesis of his dissertation. He’s given a lot of space here to do my work.”

We’re Looking for You!

Sociology Alumni Listserv outreach under construction

As part of a larger effort to develop new outreach within our academic family, the MU sociology alumni relations committee is looking to track down a few of our own — you — to join a department listserv (e-mail group).

Signing on to the list will keep you up to date on depart- ment news and inform you of upcoming events of inter- est to alumni. Possible activities include a department alumni day, networking opportunities and lectures. In addition, the department is working to develop an alumni Web page through which members of the “family” can keep in touch, reacquaint themselves or meet for the first time.

Of course, the list also gives you the opportunity to share your successes with the department, as well as offer any suggestions you may have.

To sign on to the MU sociology listserv send your preferred e-mail address to the department chair, Jay Gubrium at gubrium@missouri.edu. We look forward to hearing from you!

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What asked attracted her to the discipline, Scott says, “Sociology is just about looking critically at the things that become naturalized in everyday life.”

It was at Santa Cruz that she developed a research project concerning coal mining and mountaintop removal. “I feel that my stuff is pretty interdisciplinary,” Scott says. It’s about “the way people make sense of things that seem to not make sense.”

Incorporating both ethnography and media analysis, Scott’s project explores corporate framing around indi- vidualism and the anti-union effects of that framing. She’s currently revising her dissertation into a book.

Asked her impression of the department, Scott says she saw similarities between UC Santa Cruz and Mizzou. “It’s very collegial,” she says. “And there’s a real social justice focus. That’s something that you really can’t take for granted.”

In the future Scott would like to develop a graduate- level course in symbolic interactionism.

Scott’s husband, Scott Garson, also joined the larger MU community as an instructor in the English depart- ment. The couple has a five-year-old daughter and a two- year-old son.

Faculty Kudos

Barbara J. Bank organized and edited Gender and Edu- cation: An Encyclopedia, published by Praeger in 2007. The two-volume work contains reviews and critiques of theories, research, scholarship, curricula and policies concerning gender and all levels and types of education in the U.S. and internationally.


Brunsma was nominated for chair-elect of the sociol...
The MU Sociology Fall 2007 Colloquium Series included presentations from the department's own as well as guest lectures from near and far.

New additions to the department last year, professors Amit and Srirupa Prasad opened the series Sept. 14 with a talk about an ongoing line of research in their native India. In a piece titled “Citizenship, Identity, and Power Within Neo-liberal Globalization: Drug Testing and Medical Transcription in India,” the duo presented findings that showed how job creation from off-shore interests affected the lives of both middle-class and poorer workers.

On Sept. 28, MU history Professor Carol Anderson presented “When the Levees Broke: New Orleans and the History of Uncivil Rights in America.” Her research explored how events such as Hurricane Katrina are not isolated but are linked to a history of oppression and inequality that disproportionately affects blacks (and other nonwhites).

Visiting from Loyola University of Chicago, Professor David Embrick led his audience through a study in visual sociology and ethnography titled “Dog Days, Cat Days, and Wearing Flip-flops to Work: Just What Does Diversity Mean in Post-Civil Rights Corporate America?” The Oct. 12 presentation was a study of the deployment of diversity in the cultures of several large American corporations.

Professor David Konisky, a faculty member at MU’s Truman School of Public Policy, led an Oct. 26 presentation called “Environmental Justice in Government Performance? Testing for Inequalities in Enforcement.” The study considered if the enforcement of environmental policy differed by location and population.

Candace Korasick, an MU sociology doctoral student, brought the fall series to its conclusion on Nov. 9 with “Being Without or Just Being? Childlessness as a Non-Identity.” The presentation — before a packed house of friends, students and peers — centered on Korasick’s interviews with women regarding their status as “childless.” She found that the label frequently was not central to her subjects’ senses of self.
Graduate Student Accomplishments

Jennifer Beggs’ paper “Coping with Food Vulnerability: The Role of Social Networks in the Lives of Missouri Food Pantry Clients” was awarded first prize in the student paper competition held by the Sociology and Social Welfare Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

Priya Dua’s paper “Feminist Mentoring and Female Graduate Success: Challenges and Gender Inequality in Higher Education” was accepted for publication by Sociology Compass in August 2007.

Maksim Kukushkin presented “Standpoint Theory is Dead, Long Live Standpoint Theory” at the Feminist Thought Session and “New Institutionalism and New Alternatives to Normative Positivism” at the 102nd ASA annual meeting in New York. He was an invited discussant at Norbert Elias’s Impact on Organization Studies by Ad van Ijzendoorn during the Sociology Classics and the Future of Organizational Studies Conference, in August at the Wharton School in Philadelphia. Kukushkin gave an invited presentation called “Transcendence by Theoretical Desires and Actual Developments” at the Global Supplemenitary Grant Spring Conference of the Open Society Foundation in New York.

Amy Lane presented her paper “From Mercy to Activism: Translating Social Justice Into Religious Practice and Religious Practice Into Social Justice” at the 2007 annual meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion in New York. This paper is based on Lane’s dissertation research exploring the ways in which religious practice comes to encompass social justice activism. She focused on an ethnographic study of Interfaith Worker Justice of Greater Kansas City.

Veronica Medina’s chapter “Shifting Populations and New Urbanism in New Orleans” will appear in Below the Belt: Race, Labor and Politics in the Changing Sunbelt (edited by Charles Gallagher and Cameron Lippard, the Belt: Race, Labor and Politics in the Changing Sunbelt). Medina will be revising an article for publication in Sociology of Religion titled “Alone/Together: Gendered Worship in the Seeker Church.” McElmury has an article under review at Social Forces titled “Bringing Emotion Back into the Sociology of Religion.” This piece is co-written with Mary Jo Nzentz (women’s and gender studies at MU) and Karen Bradley (sociology at Central Missouri State University).

In 2007, he presented papers at the MSS meetings in Chicago, the Association for the Sociology of Religion in New York and the ASA in New York. He traveled to Indiana University Northwest to give an invited lecture in the anthropology department. He also gave a paper at the meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in November 2007. McElmury serves as the graduate representative to the Association for the Sociology of Religion.

Jennifer A. Schlosser won first place in the 2007 American Correctional Association graduate student paper competition for her paper “The Department of Punishments and the Divergence of Identity: Institutional Rhetoric vs. Inmates’ Attributes.” The text also is under review at the journal Punishment and Society: Another article, “Issues in Interviewing Inmates: Navigating the Complexities of the Interviewing Environment,” has been accepted by Qualitative Inquiry (expected volume and issue 15:3). She was awarded a fellowship from the 2007 Difficult Dialogues Faculty Development Program from MU, funded by the Ford Foundation Difficult Dialogues Initiative. Schlosser is organizing two sessions at MSS in 2008, one called Qualitative Methods, the other called Offender Forensics: Researching Community-Based Initiatives. She also will present in the qualitative criminology session.

Paul Sturgis presented “Dimensions of Religiosity among Prison Inmates” at the MSS annual meeting in Chicago. His paper “Fath Behind Bars: The Social Eco- nomy of Religion and Deviance in the Penitentiary” has been accepted for presentation at the 2008 MSS annual meeting in St. Louis. His paper “Institutional Versus Contextual Theological Resistance: The Case of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the United States, 1945–2002” has been accepted for publication in Review of Religious Research.

Kuo-yang Tang presented “Institutional Change: Evolu- tion or Revolution? The East India Company Charter Act 1813” at Montreal ASA meetings in 2006. He also presented two papers at Chicago MSS meetings in 2007. "Leader, State, and Market: The Economic Policy-Making Process in Korea and Taiwan in 1980s" (with Daehoon Han) and “Why Do Chinese-Americans Avoid continuing on next page...
NSF Backs Prasad in Study of Techno-scientific Globalization

Amit Prasad’s research into the processes by which technology and scientific knowledge flow among nations has found a patron in the National Science Foundation (NSF).

In his second year with Mizzou sociology, Prasad is the recipient of a seven-month NSF grant of $73,550, which will aid him in completing a project revolving around multinational research in Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) technology. The project considers MRI research and innovation and technological transfer in and among the United States, United Kingdom and his native India.

“Once techno-scientific developments have taken place they diffuse within particular nations as well as internationally,” Prasad says. “My research shows how trans-national flow is a crucial factor in techno-scientific innovation.”

The NSF funding will allow Prasad to collect data from the U.K. as well as from the University of California, San Francisco. The components will complement the data Prasad already has gathered in India. His data set includes interviews, as well as analysis of scientific papers and historical documents.

“I am studying how MRI research and innovation in the U.S., India, and the U.K. has occurred and analyzing the role of transnational flows in the process,” Prasad explains.

The project expands on Prasad’s doctoral work, which considered MRI research in the U.S. and India. He plans to combine the two manuscripts into a book. Prasad says his project paints a picture of the transnational flow of knowledge and technology, rather than the Western/non-Western divide largely presumed in other research.

“My study offers a very different approach in understanding how techno-scientific innovations take place,” Prasad says. “It also maps how ideological constructs and institutional networks play crucial roles in the innovation process.”