Identities: Research by New Faculty

Two new members of the faculty, assistant professors Amy Wilkins and David Brunsma, are establishing their own identities at Mizzou with impressive research in such areas as subcultural identity and racial identity.

Racial identity is one of Brunsma’s specialties

David Brunsma joins the faculty with a joint appointment in sociology and the Black Studies Program after teaching for six years in his first academic position at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. He received a doctorate in sociology in 1998 from the University of Notre Dame.

Brunsma specializes in the areas of culture and identity, racial inequality, racial identity and institutions. His primary research focuses on varied investigations into post-civil rights strategies of racial identity as illuminated by the nexus of social, cultural/symbolic, interactional and narrative life structures in the lives of multiracial people and interracial couples.

The results of this ongoing inquiry have been published in several journals, edited volumes and a book (with Kerry Ann Rockquemore), Beyond Black: Biracial Identity in America (Sage Publications, 2001).

Brunsma is one of the nation’s premier scholars in studying the public school uniform movement in the context of contested cultural and political meanings that collide through symbolic codes.

His research on the impact of school uniform policies, the frames used to discuss uniform effectiveness in public schools and the unintended consequences of such a movement for American students has been influential in understanding this debate in a larger historical, political, cultural and social context. The most recent results appear in his new book, The School Uniform Movement and What it Tells Us About American Education: A Symbolic Crusade (Rowman & Littlefield/Scarecrow Press, 2004).

Brunsma is committed to investigating and initiating ways that scholarship can be actively used to combat structural racial injustices. He is collecting data for a project assessing the work of scholars across multiple disciplines who use race concepts.

Wilkins studies how subcultural identities help young adults

Amy Wilkins moved to MU from Massachusetts, where colleagues had warned her of potential culture shock in relocating to the heartland. “Although I grew up in Asia and thought I was adept at changing cultures, the move to the Midwest from the Northeast has come with some culture shock,” Wilkins says.

Wilkins, who received a doctorate from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 2004, works in the areas of youth, identities and inequality, especially the intersection of race, class and gender. She teaches (Continues on Page 2)
sociology of the family and plans to add courses on race, class, gender “intersectionality” and youth.

In a related interest, Wilkins is working on a campuswide committee to develop a youth studies program at MU.

Her research focuses on ways youths and young adults use identities that emerge from cultural projects, such as “Puerto Rican Wannabes” — young women engaged in racial crossover — Goths and evangelical Christians, to solve the problems they face as they make the transition into adulthood.

She is particularly concerned with how their subcultural identities help young people negotiate the meaning of their race, class and gender status and how those understandings make an impact on larger structures of inequality.

Her published articles examine how the sexual spectacle of the “Puerto Rican Wannabe” is used by non-Wannabe youths to articulate their own sexualized race, class and gender identities; how Goth women use their sexual agency to try to gain gender egalitarianism in the Goth scene and in their heterosexual relationships; and how “freaky” Goths remain conventionally middle class.

**MU Alumna Heads Women Laywers’ Group**

In her first official act as new president of the Women Lawyers’ Association of Greater St. Louis (WLA), Megan Phillips, BA ’92, wrote a letter to then-Governor of Missouri Bob Holden in support of two female nominees for the Missouri Supreme Court.

Phillips was thrilled when Holden appointed the Honorable Mary Rhodes Russell, longtime WLA member and recipient of WLA’s 2003 President’s Award. In addition to endorsing more women candidates for the judiciary, Phillips wants to strengthen the statewide collaboration among women lawyers to increase the number of women in leadership positions in state and local bar associations.

Among her other goals are supporting the Missouri Battered Women’s Clemency Coalition, improving the availability and quality of legal representation for battered mothers in juvenile protection proceedings, conducting and publishing a survey of law firms’ family-friendly (or unfriendly) policies and practices, and challenging law firms to increase the number of women partners and department chairs significantly by WLA’s 30-year anniversary in 2006.

Phillips practices corporate law with Levine Law LLC, serving small businesses and non-profit companies. She is a consultant with Redevelopment Opportunities for Women Inc. through the St. Louis County Greenbook Initiative, a federally funded pilot project to address domestic violence and child maltreatment cases in the St. Louis County Family Court.

Phillips previously practiced law in Paris with the Coudert Brothers firm and in St. Louis with the Bryan Cave firm, specializing in international transactions and commercial contracts. She has completed a teaching fellowship at MU’s law school, where she served as a supervising attorney in the Family Violence and Child Protection clinics and taught Client Interviewing and Counseling and Corporate Finance.

WLA was founded in 1976 to further the advancement of women in the legal profession, promote diversity, equality and justice in the legal system and improve the status of women in the community.
Our sociology faculty members continue their abiding concern with issues of knowledge in society, both in relation to how new forms of knowledge affect social life and how society influences the production and flow of ideas.

One of our graduate program areas — Theory, Knowledge and Critical Inquiry — is an important departmental arena for the consideration of these issues. Of recent interest is the department’s Life Sciences and Society Initiative. This centers on how developments in biotechnology such as cloning, genetic testing and reproductive technologies, and stem cell research influence the shape and quality of our lives.

One stream of growth is faculty development. In the coming years, the department wants to hire two new faculty members who specialize in the sociology of science, with particular interest in the life sciences and biotechnology. This would provide the core faculty for curriculum enhancement in the area, as well as serve as a solid impetus for research. We are conducting a national search for the first of these hires, and we expect to initiate the second search next year. There is considerable enthusiasm across campus in this effort, as it portends to increase interdisciplinary collaboration in biotechnology and society studies.

A second stream of growth is the establishment of an annual Life Sciences and Society Symposium series. Professor Emeritus Peter Hall has taken the lead in organizing it. The first symposium, held in March 2004, was an enormous success. The theme was “The Social and Cultural Implications of Human Genetics.” It featured nationally prominent speakers such as Troy Duster, president of the American Sociological Association, and Jonathan Marks, Bonnie LeRoy and Susannah Baruch, who are distinguished scholars and practitioners in their fields.

There is every indication that the second symposium, to be held March 9 and 10, 2005, will be just as successful, as interest in and co-sponsorship of the event and the series as a whole have spread across campus. The theme of the second symposium is “The Social and Cultural Implications of New Biomedical Technologies.” Keynote speaker is Jane Maienschein, who is regents professor of history and philosophy of science and director of the Center for Biology and Society at Arizona State University. She will speak on “Whose View of Life? Embryos, Cloning and Stem Cells.”

While the will and the enthusiasm are certainly in place, all of this, of course, takes funding. The department has been successful in generating support and co-sponsorship on campus, but the initiative needs a solid, continuing basis of support from alumni, friends and interested individuals and organizations off campus. In thinking about how to help the department, we ask you to please consider the important funding opportunities listed here.

**How to Help the Department**

If you want to support faculty development, student stipends and awards, our growing slate of activities or specific needs, please consider a gift to the Department of Sociology. Here are examples of ways that you can support our program, but any gift would be helpful and much appreciated:

- $50 to $500 for the department’s general fund
- $500 to $1,500 to the Robert Habenstein Dissertation Fund
- $2,500 to support a symposium speaker
- $18,000 for a graduate student stipend
- $300,000 to endow the Life Sciences and Society Symposium Series
- $1.5 million for an endowed faculty chair

Please phone or e-mail Jay Gubrium, chair, at (573) 882-7711 or gubrium@missouri.edu for more information, or simply write a check to Department of Sociology and mail it to Debbie Friedrich, Department of Sociology, 312 Middlebush Hall, Columbia, MO 65211-6100.

The School Uniform Movement and What it Tells Us About American Education: A Symbolic Crusade represents the most thorough exposition on our present understanding of the impetuses, debates, legalities and effectiveness of school uniform policies that have rapidly entered the discourse of school reform in the United States. In it, Brunsma provides an antidote to the ungrounded, anecdotal components that define the contemporary conversation regarding policies of standardized dress in American K-12 districts and schools.

Drawing upon years of experience and research directed at objectively and empirically understanding the issue of school uniform policies, Brunsma provides for the first time: a comprehensive history of the issue; critical evaluation of the extant literature; reviews of several case studies; and results of nationally representative empirical research.

All of this is of the utmost importance for those who wish to be informed and insightful participants in the contemporary debate on school uniform policies.

Educators, parents, concerned community members and others will welcome such a compilation of present understandings of the crucial empirical, sociological, cultural, political and legal dimensions of the school uniform debate; it will also appeal to all those who are interested in the politics and critical realities behind the school uniform movement underway in the United States. In the end, the school uniform movement reveals a great deal about the politics, social realities and highly contested terrain of educational reform and the process of schooling in the United States.


Learning to do good qualitative research occurs most fortuitously by seeing what researchers actually do in particular projects and by incorporating their procedures and strategies into one's own research. This is one of the most powerful and pragmatic ways of bringing to bear the range of qualitative methodological perspectives available. The chapters in this important new volume are written by leading, internationally distinguished qualitative researchers who recount and reflect on their own research experiences as well as others, past and present, from whom they have learned. It demonstrates the benefits of using particular methods from the viewpoint of real-life experience.

From the outside, good research seems to be produced through practitioners learning and following standard theoretical, empirical and procedural formats. But from the inside we learn that qualitative research (like other forms of scientific endeavor) is also a biographical engagement, rendering its scholarly and practical contributions in its own terms. Standards take on practical meaning as the distinct activities of qualitative research resonate throughout the enterprise, complicating its accountability to itself and to others. In an authoritative yet accessible manner, *Qualitative Research Practice* reveals the special features of this engagement, teaching us that qualitative research is as much a craft and practice as it is a way of knowing.

Presenting a comprehensive examination of contemporary and traditional varieties of qualitative research practice, *Qualitative Research Practice* will be an invaluable resource for advanced students and researchers in any discipline. It is an essential and definitive guide to the major forms of qualitative methods in use today, written by leaders in the relevant fields of research practice.
Graduate Student Accomplishments

Cliff Beacham will present “Commemoration and the Struggle for Collective Memory: A Case study of Civil War National Military Parks” in the graduate research session at the 2005 annual meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society.


Maksim Kokushkin will present “Atypical Focus Groups: What Are They Good For?” at the 2005 Midwest Sociological Society’s annual meeting. The paper discusses issues of focus groups that, according to the prevailing view, “go wrong”. It stresses the importance of focus groups that deviate from the prescribed routine by analyzing two such cases.

Tom Lamoreux will present a paper in the health and inequality section of the Midwest Sociological Society’s 2005 annual meeting. The paper, “Community as a Cure: Social Capital’s Effect on Self-Perceived Health,” placed second in the Missouri Sociological Association graduate student paper competition.

Amy Lane will present “Virtual Selves and Permeable Boundaries: A Case Study of an Internet Neopagan Community” at the 2005 annual meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society. Her paper is a case study of the beliefs and practices of solitary, modern Pagans, also known as Neopagans, whose primary, and often only, spiritual group interaction is through an Internet message board.

Mike Lenza published “Controversies Surrounding Laud Humphreys’ Tearoom Trade: An Unsettling Example of Politics and Power in Methodological Critiques” in the International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy 24(395):20-31 2004. His paper, “The Prevailing Injustices in the Application of the Missouri Death Penalty” has been accepted for publication in Social Justice: A Journal of Crime, Conflict and World Order in early 2005. This work was entered into evidence before the U.S. Supreme Court in The United States Supreme Court, Roper v. Simmons, Case No. 03-633 and in The United States District Court, Western District Of Missouri, Western Division, Middleton v. Luebbers Habeas Corpus Petition. In addition, Lenza was filmed and interviewed by Nippon Television Network for “The World’s Astonishing News-Series” to be aired in Japan.

Veronica Medina will present “The Effects of Parents’ Mixed Citizenship Status on Hispanic College Students’ Aspirations and Sense of Cultural Identity” at the 2005 Midwest Sociological Society annual meeting. Her research seeks to determine if there are differences in the second-generation’s aspirations and sense of cultural identity when only one parent is foreign-born and the other is an American citizen.

Dave Overfelt will present an ethnography of Crocker, Mo., at the 2005 Midwest Sociological Society’s annual meeting. He completed the ethnography under the direction of Professor Richard Hessler with funds from a grant through the Missouri Cardiovascular Health Program. The study follows up the grant process to see if community health has been improved through the project.

Christine Patterson organized a session called “Public Policy and the Prism of Gender, Race, Class and Sexuality” for the Midwest Sociological Society’s annual meeting. Brad Wing will preside. Patterson will present a paper, “The Unsaid: Race, Class and Gender Practices in Missouri’s Child Welfare System.” Additional presentations during Patterson’s session include sociology graduate students Kendra Yoder, who will present “The Gender Factor and the ‘Best Interests of the Child’: Domestic Violence and Child Custody in Missouri Policy & Practice”; Sara Petrowsky, who will present “Regulating the Brothel: Curbing Sexual Health Concerns and the Threat of Physical Violence”; and Wendy Meyer, who will present “Sexuality and Social Policy: Social Organization Campaigns in Missouri and Identity Construction.”

Diane Rodgers has a forthcoming chapter, “Children as Social Movement Participants,” in the book series Sociological Studies of Children and Youth Vol. II, 2005. Rodgers received a $7,888 grant from the state of Missouri for a radio archive project that will transfer taped programs to compact discs, which will then be available to the public.

Jennifer Schlosser will present “Melting Pot vs. Multiculturalism: American Attitudes Towards Assimilation” at the 2005 annual meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society. Her paper uses data from the General Social Survey to examine the attitudes Americans hold toward immigrant assimilation, especially the distinction between multiculturalism and melting-pot theories. (Continues on Page 7)
Faculty Kudos

Barbara Bank, professor emeritus, signed a contract with Greenwood Press to organize and edit a two-volume encyclopedia on gender and education. The encyclopedia will be divided into 10 sections devoted to gendered theories of education. Bank will write overviews of each section and is soliciting contributions from scholars with demonstrated expertise in the various topics. Alumni interested in making a contribution should contact her at bankb@missouri.edu.

J. Kenneth Benson, professor, presented two seminars on Health Systems Management at the University of Montreal in February 2004. One seminar dealt with the study of interorganizational networks. The other focused on religious issues affecting the interactions of professionals and their publics. He presented a paper co-written with Ed Brent at the 2004 annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. The paper focuses on how religious concerns affect the interactions of professionals and their publics and is based on a survey undertaken by MU’s Center for Religion, the Professions and the Public.

Wayne Brekhus, assistant professor, was the Donald B. Shaw lecturer at Dickinson College in 2004, where he spoke on his recent book, Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs: Gay Suburbia and the Grammar of Social Identity (University of Chicago Press). The annual Shaw lecture highlights outstanding scholars, activists and policy makers on gay and lesbian issues. His second book, co-written with John Galliher and David Keys, Laud Humphreys: Prophet of Homosexuality and Sociology, was published in 2004 with the University of Wisconsin Press.

Ed Brent, professor, has spent much of his year consulting with the internationally known firm Media Tenor, which conducts content analyses of newspapers, magazines and other media in dozens of countries worldwide. He is working with programmers at Idea Works to automate much of the initial content analysis using Qualrus. He has consulted for the organization that oversees Medicare admissions to hospitals in Missouri and has given workshops on Qualrus in England and Germany, at universities in Iowa, Illinois, Missouri and Texas, and at the American Sociological Association meetings in San Francisco. He is using experience gained in these projects to develop and test procedures to conceptualize, measure and improve reliability and validity in qualitative research.

David Brunsmma, assistant professor, has a book under review at Lynne Rienner Publications. Mixed Messages: Multiracial Identities in the “Color-Blind” Era will provide a multidisciplinary overview of the state of multiracial identity research and push toward new frontiers. It will include invited works from key authors in the field as well as up-and-coming investigators. The book will move beyond the narrow limitations of the Census debate to focus on the experiences of biracial people as they inform broader theoretical understandings about racial identity. A follow-up to Brunsmma’s book on school uniform policies (see Parade of Books) is under contract.


Jay Gubrium, professor and chair, continues to work with Professor Eileen Porter, MU School of Nursing, on an NIH-funded study of safety issues among frail elderly. At the invitation of the sociology departments at the universities of Bergamo and Milan in Italy, Gubrium presented lectures titled “Analyzing Inner Lives” and “Institutional Contours of Subjectivity.” He has been invited to be a visiting professor in the new interdisciplinary health and society program at Odense University in Denmark.

Joan Hermansen, assistant professor, published “Gender Inequality at Work,” with David Cotter and Reeve Vanneman, a report in The American People Series published in Fall 2004 by the Russell Sage Foundation/Population Reference Bureau. Hermansen was a co-investigator on a grant funded in Fall 2004 by the University of Missouri Research Board to examine food insecurity and for use in north central Missouri.

Richard Hessler, professor, received a contract from the Missouri Department of Health, Bureau of Chronic Disease Control, to do a pilot study involving ethnographies in six small towns in Missouri. Hessler worked with anthropology student Mike Dietz and trained several undergraduate students who then did the ethnographies under the supervision of Hessler and Dietz. The purpose was to study the social and cultural dynamics involved as the towns addressed the problem of obesity and cardiovascular risk. Hessler and Dietz submitted a proposal to the Center for Disease Control and to the Association for American Medical Colleges to extend the pilot study and were approved contingent upon funds. The project ended in June 2004, and Hessler will lead a session at the April 2005 Society for Applied Anthropology meeting in Santa Fe, N.M., where he and Dietz are delivering a paper. Hessler
received a three-year seed grant from a foundation to develop an intergenerational day care center and studies program. The center will serve 100 pre-school children and 100 seniors, and will have a certificate program in intergenerational studies, a research consortium and a recurring summer institute. In 2004, Hessler published “The Relationship Between MNA and SF36 in a Free-Living Elderly Population Aged 70-75” in The Journal of Nutrition, Health & Aging with Bo G. Eriksson, B. Steen and V. Sundh.

Jackie Litt, associate professor and women’s and gender studies director, is working with Mary Zimmerman of the University of Kansas and Christine Bose of SUNY Albany on a book for Stanford University Press on Gender and Carework in Global Perspective. With a series of previously published essays by a variety of sociologists, the book will feature a sequence of integrative essays by Litt, Zimmerman and Bose on key topics: Globalization and Multiple Crises of Care, Transnational Migration and Citizenship in Paid and Unpaid Labor, The Meanings of Motherhood in the Transnational Context of Care, and Valuing Carework: States, Communities and Women’s Empowerment.

Clarence Lo, associate professor, has organized and will preside over a thematic session for the August 2005 convention of the American Sociological Association, “Competing Explanations for U.S. Global Expansionism,” featuring presentations by Janet Abu-Lughod, Giovanni Arrighi and Frances Fox Piven. Lo also has organized two sessions at the 2005 Midwest Sociological Society meetings, “Cultures of Resistance and Empowerment: Anarchism, Feminism and Agency” and “Power in Social Movements: Coalitions, Factions and Social Change. He has served on the book award committee of the ASA section on political sociology and will be a candidate for office for the section in the upcoming elections.
Participants in the Commodification and the Body Symposium in October 2004 analyzed the ways that human bodies are commodified, or bought and sold as objects of exchange. Sponsoring the event with the department were the Black Studies Program and Women’s and Gender Studies.

Ingrid Banks, assistant professor of Black Studies at the University of California-Santa Barbara, discussed the “21st Century Commodification of Black Bodies” through sports, entertainment and advertising. To demonstrate her point, Banks asked the audience to visualize a conversation in which Michael Jordan tries to buy his “image” from a corporate executive.

Banks received a PhD in comparative ethnic studies from the University of California-Berkeley. Her publications have appeared in the journals Feminist Teacher, The Chronicle of Higher Education and Contemporary Sociology.

Associate Professor Carol Rambo from the sociology department at the University of Memphis questioned the ways that sociologists and feminist theorists have characterized exotic dancers, arguing for a greater voice for dancers to define their own experiences. Her presentation was called “Claiming the Bodies of Exotic Dancers: At Play with the Problematic Discourse of Commodification.”

Rambo received her PhD from the University of Florida. Her articles have appeared in the Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Deviant Behavior and the Journal of Aging Studies.

Joy Zarembka's presentation “Modern Day Slavery in the USA: Implications for People of Color,” drew upon her work with the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., and the Break the Chains Campaign, which seeks to minimize human trafficking, modern-day slavery and worker exploitation through direct service, research and advocacy.

Zarembka received a master's degree in international relations from Yale University. The Women's Information Networks honored her with a Young Women of Achievement award.