Hopes and Wishes for the New Year

This second part of the semester has been filled with significant events that will shape our Department and the University’s future. Let’s take time to recognize our common efforts in making the next year a better one.

Recent Happenings:

- **Jennifer Mendez Colloquium**: The department’s second colloquium of the year featured Associate Professor, Jennifer Mendez, who gave an insightful talk entitled, “Undeserving Newcomers in the Nation's Birthplace: Latino Immigration and Immigrant Mothers in Williamsburg, Virginia.”
- **Holiday Party**: Faculty and grads enjoyed taking time to enjoy one another (and a wonderful spread!) before the holiday break.
- **Sexual Assault**: We joined the conversation on Grounds about ‘rape culture’ and the future of University’s policy surrounding this issue. Our Department Chair, Jeff Olick, and other faculty like Andrea Press, Brad Wilcox and James Hunter, shared their thoughts on the issue and received insightful comments from several alumni of our department.

For Contributions: Email the editorial board Joris Gjata (jg2nk@virginia.edu), Sarah Mosseri (sem2gw@virginia.edu) or Anna Cameron (acc4ff@virginia.edu).
Grad Student and Faculty Achievements


Our Blake Silver has published an article with two other collaborators titled “Student Experiences at Off-Campus Parties: Results from a Multi-Campus Survey” in Vol. 58 Issue 2 of the *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education*.

Our Roscoe Scarborough has his second article with our 2013 alumnus Allan McCoy titled “Watching ‘Bad’ Television: Ironic Consumption, Camp, and Guilt Pleasures” featured in the December 2014 issue of *Poetics*.

Our Allison Pugh and her research were mentioned in a Bloomberg article titled “What the Economy Has Done to the Family” last month.

Our Rachel Rinaldo has her new article “Pious and Critical: Muslim Women Activists and the Question of Agency” published in the December 2014 issue of *Gender & Society*.

Our Liz Gorman contributed the blog post “The end of ‘organizational sociology’ as we know it?” to the OOW section’s virtual panel on The Future of Organizational Sociology.

Our Donald Black took part in the West Virginia University Department of Sociology & Anthropology’s inaugural Mary L. Thomas Lecture Series this October with a lecture titled “Violence and Social Time”.

Our emeriti Murray Milner and Gianfranco Poggi have their new books out: *Elites: A General Model* and *Varieties of Political Experience: Power Phenomena in Modern Society* respectively.

Professional Development Opportunities

* Deadline for submitting your dissertation work to the spring competition Three Minute Thesis (3MT) @ UVA is February 18th, 2015.

* The Spring Job and Internship Fair will take place on January 29th – 30th in the 3rd floor of Newcomb Hall.

* Online registration for the Beyond the Academic Job Search Series - February 2nd-5th is open. It offers workshops on converting a CV to a resume, writing a cover letter, interviewing, and negotiation.
**Faculty Interview: Sabrina Pendergrass**

**Sabrina Pendergrass** joined the department in 2012 as an Assistant Professor of Sociology with a joint appointment in the Carter G. Woodson Institute. She has published in *Poetics*, the *Du Bois Review* and the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* on the topics of race, inequality, internal migration, regionalism and cultural sociology. Her current book project, based on more than 120 in-depth interviews, focuses on the African American reverse migration to the South, and her work from this project has received awards from the Association of Black Sociologists and the Society for the Study of Social Problems. Professor Pendergrass sat down with us a few weeks ago to talk about UVa, her research and teaching and to offer advice for graduate students.

**This is your third year at UVa. What has struck you most about your experience here?**

In being jointly appointed, I can speak to two aspects of the university. On one hand, with sociology, we are a very strong culture department. You do not have to justify your interests in cultural questions here…I never feel like my interests in culture are questioned. You never have to do that justification. Even with qualitative methods, we are very strong. So, you don’t have to justify those interests. Once you leave UVa, you will realize that is not the case everywhere—not everyone is accepting of qualitative methods, not everyone is interested in culture. To have that experience is a special experience. It makes UVa unique in that regard. On the other hand, I am appointed with the Woodson Institute, which is also incredibly rich. Many of the top scholars in AAS who are now faculty and deans at universities have come through the Woodson Institute. So to be in that space and to see them come back and give colloquia and to see the current pre-doc and post-doc fellows who are here develop their projects to then become stars in their field is really rich. To be able to work between those two areas is very intellectually engaging. It is something I really enjoy and that makes UVa special.

**Your research deals with the intersections of class, race and region. Can you talk about challenges you have encountered in addressing these intersections, and how the analyses of these intersections have illuminated particular insights?**

I think probably the biggest thing was not so much the challenges but actually being blind to just how deep the intersections were. In my first interviews, I was mainly getting the middle-class people. That was about thirty or forty interviews into the project, and I thought I had a good sense of the story. Then, I started interviewing the working class. The class divergence in the stories of how people were getting South and why they were leaving and what their experiences were; they were very different stories. I was glad that I stayed as long as I did in the field because even I underestimated how much class would matter in shaping certain aspects of their move to the south.

The paper on how my respondents chose their destination and how that is stratified by class, I didn’t expect to have that paper. When you design your dissertation, you have a sense of what the chapters are going to be. I didn’t expect that I would have that chapter. It was after the fieldwork and going back and relooking at seeing “wow, class really mattered here,” that that chapter emerged. Later, it became one of the first publications from the project.

So I think the biggest thing was remaining open and being very willing to be surprised by what’s actually happening in the movement. Some of the gender dynamics that were occurring were surprising in one sense but then not surprising when you think back to the literature. So that was also about remaining open to surprises and then constantly being in dialogue between what you’re finding and what’s happening in the literature. So I would say those were the biggest things in terms of thinking about the intersectionalities.

**Your current book project is based on your dissertation. What led you to the topic of African American reverse migration to the South?**

This was a topic that I came across and felt that there were questions about the movement that we didn’t have answers to, and I didn’t see sociologists working on answers to those questions. Also, black migration is a topic in which most of the sociological work is being done by...
demographers, and so I immediately saw there were all these questions about culture and interpretation. What does it mean for African Americans to be moving to the South? How do they manage racism and the notion of the South as this racially hostile environment?...As someone trained in qualitative research and who is a cultural sociologist and interested in meaning making, I immediately saw how I could hopefully raise new questions and uncover new insights on this topic.

I think it is also related—I am a southerner, and I grew up in North Carolina—to a pet peeve I have always had with the sociological literature about African Americans. It’s as if we only live in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia or Boston, maybe Los Angeles, when more than half of African Americans live in the South. There is so little sociological focus on the black experience in the South. I thought the fact that this movement had been going on since 1970, and we knew so little about it was just the ultimate sign that we need to focus more as a discipline on what’s happening with the South. I initially thought it would be a really quick, manageable project. I thought I’d interview these people, and it went through, I have the utmost respect for folks who go and do it and come out with original data, so I have the utmost admiration for those of us who go through that process. There are things you can’t get in a textbook or get in a class with qualitative methods...For example, I was interviewing a man in his forties or fifties, and he started bawling, I thought, “oh my god, qualitative methods class didn’t prepare me for this!” You are put on the spot to figure out how to handle these things that come up in the field...It is incredibly rich—in terms of what you come out with—but its challenging, and I adore qualitative folks who go and do it and come out with really interesting things to say.

Even though I completely adore what qualitative researchers have to go through, I have the utmost respect for folks who are doing statistical analyses on my topic as well. So, even my topic on the black reverse migration, some folks might not even want to look at the demographic studies. I don't have any problem picking up what they are saying. I don't feel intimidated by what the demographers are producing or intimidated by the numbers. I go and pick it up, study it and learn from it. I take from it; I identify other things we need to be thinking about and how I can get at them from a qualitative approach...I think that is some of what it gets me is moving beyond the intimidating, which opens me up to bridge areas and questions that aren't being put into dialogue with each other.

Your CV demonstrates a familiarity with quantitative methods-yet, the majority of your research thus far has been more qualitative. Can you speak a bit about the ways knowledge of both methods has shaped your research and career?

It is very challenging to do a qualitative research project and collect original data, so I have the utmost admiration for those of us who go through that process. There are things you can’t get in a textbook or get in a class with qualitative methods...For example, I was interviewing a man in his forties or fifties, and he started bawling, I thought, “oh my god, qualitative methods class didn’t prepare me for this!” You are put on the spot to figure out how to handle these things that come up in the field...It is incredibly rich—in terms of what you come out with—but its challenging, and I adore qualitative folks who go and do it and come out with really interesting things to say.

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You are teaching Race & Ethics next semester, which is a class you have taught previously. What are you looking forward to most about teaching that class?

This course comes out of the John Casteen Fellowship in Ethics, where they ask you to design a course around ethics...The class is interesting in that there is not a canon, so to speak, within the field around the topic. So I was pulling it together the first time I taught it, pulling all these different readings together to try to create a seamless experience for myself and the students. It was interesting to get to the end of it and see that all of these different questions—whether it is affirmative action or death penalty sentence or race-based medicine or migration and exclusion—were around similar themes related to issues of race and how ethical questions play out in institutions and in people’s everyday lives...I hope to actually write a paper that will take the notes from the seminar and pull them together to think about what a consideration of race in the sociological study of ethics offers.

Do you have any advice for grad students on the job market?

Be prepared to show how you are an independent scholar. Don’t take the job market personally. Eat your wheaties as it is a long, exhausting process.

What is your favorite book/from where are you currently gaining inspiration?

Right now, I am reading a lot of work by popular nonfiction writers. That is partly because I am working on my book, and I am trying to learn how to write for a broader audience. I am reading a lot of people like John McPhee, Jelani Cobb and Ta-Nehisi Coates—really great popular writers that are writing on social issues. John McPhee writes about rocks, but he makes rocks interesting! If he can make rocks interesting, I can make black migration to the South interesting. In terms of my own favorite books, I really like Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye... she says a lot about the sociology of knowledge and race that I think is very parallel to what we see in the academy in terms of the kinds of questions we ask, the things we study and the way we approach them. Her work is inspirational. James Baldwin’s work Go Tell it on the Mountain is also really inspirational.
Reflections on the Rape Issue

Writing this piece proved more difficult than I had anticipated. My reaction to the initial revelations in the Rolling Stone article, like that of many of you, included a myriad of strong emotions. And those emotions—especially anger, outrage, disappointment, and disgust—have only been amplified by the painfully predictable victim-blaming and discussions based on “the myth of the lie” that have followed. But to galvanize all of these various sentiments into something cogently written seemed like a herculean task not because I had too little to say, but because I had so much. As a woman, a mother of a college freshman, a teacher, a feminist, a gender scholar, and a student myself, all of my various voices clamored and competed for primacy. But the role I share with all of my colleagues is that of graduate student.

Graduate students are first and foremost students, here to earn our degrees and hone our skills. But from the perspective of many undergrads we are also viewed as teachers, more aligned with the experiences of faculty and the workings of the institution. We occupy a middle ground. We can be less intimidating than administrators or senior faculty members, we often are closer to undergraduates in age, and our interactions with undergraduates are often in smaller discussion sections where we foster an environment that facilitates discussion and sharing. All of us who have taught or worked closely with undergraduates have experienced (or will experience) students in our offices sharing anxieties, traumas, and tears. We have a duty as members of the UVa community. Graduate students must use our unique positions to both aid the undergraduates who may look to us for help and guidance, inform those in positions of power of what we may see on the frontlines with undergrads, and work to foster a culture of safety and respect.

One of the ways we can be most effective in advocating for students who might share personal stories of sexual assault is to have a greater understanding of what sexual assault can look like, for it has many variations that are traumatizing even if the victim does not define an experience using the language of victim. Hand-in-hand with understanding the multiplicities in sexual assault is an understanding of what consent looks like, for it too can be present or absent in many ways. Finally, we are not trained counsellors, so while we can help recognize when a student may have been the victim of an assault, we have an imperative to know what resources are available in the community to help these students. This means training and other efforts to connect ourselves to a larger network in order to be well versed and informative about appropriate resources.

As sociologists we know the power of words, and we are trained to use them carefully and deliberately in our research. The term “rape” is being replaced in many discussions by the phrase “sexual assault,” and rightfully so. While the legal definitions of rape and sexual assault may vary from state-to-state, what we need to focus on is the fact that there are many faces of traumatic sexual violations and they all need addressing with compassion. Rape conjures up images of male-on-female violence, specifically vaginal penetration accompanied by injuries, often by strangers lurking in dark alleys. While certainly some sexual assaults do follow this pattern, most do not. Many victims are hesitant to define themselves as such, let alone go to the authorities, if they do not fit this “perfect-victim” narrative. Victims who have mental illnesses, who are drinking or using drugs, who are or have been in relationships with their attackers, who are the same sex or gender identity as the perpetrator, who engaged in some form of physical intimacy leading up to the assault, who are racial or sexual minorities—all of these factors add a crushing weight of potential doubt and have a silencing effect on victims, which can compound the effects of the assault itself. By utilizing sexual assault instead of the stigmatized word rape, victims are more likely to recognize their experiences as violations. We as graduate students need to acknowledge the complexity of sexual assaults, that it is more than the stranger-danger scenario. This will allow us to recognize assault even when the student may not be able to name it, and helps us deal more compassionately with the majority who fall outside of the “perfect victim” trope.

Another way we can help potentially traumatized students is by having a more complete understanding of what does and does not constitute consent. These issues are still being debated, but even if we have not defined what consent looks like in every sexual encounter, we can be thinking about what it might or might not entail. While there is controversy over universities who are putting affirmative consent policies in place, we as citizens of a university community need to have a more
nuanced understanding of when consent is present and when it is not. Consent is not implied by clothing. It is not implied by flirting, or by previous sexual contact. It is not the final “yes” that follows repeated, coercive “no’s.” It is not the lack of a “no.” Consent does not exist when one participant is drunk, asleep, or under extreme forms of emotional duress. Consent is about communication, about affirmative and conscious decisions that are unambiguous. Consent is enthusiastic, not apathetic. Consent can be revoked at any time. Consent can be verbal. It can also be physical, or non-verbally vocal. Consent takes the burden off of the victim, and places it on the shoulders of all participants. As Jaclyn Friedman says, “consent isn’t a question. It’s a state.” By being conscious of issues surrounding consent, and not relying on the “lack of a no equals a yes” paradigm, we can more effectively help students who may not be able to articulate their assaults, or who blame themselves for activities which left them scarred and vulnerable.

Does this mean all graduate students need to also be counsellors and therapists? No. But we need to be cognizant of the fact that students will look to us for guidance when they are upset, and that some of those students may be coming to us about sexual assault. We need to be ready to respond in a way that is both compassionate and informed about university resources. One way to empower ourselves is to go through training, such as the Survivor Support Network certification offered by UVa’s Maxine Platzer Lynn Women’s Center. As graduate students one of the strongest contributions I believe we can make is being able to both listen to undergraduates and also dialogue with the faculty and administration. Embracing the responsibilities inherent in our unique position as grad students will allow us to be even more valuable citizens of the UVa community, empowering ourselves whilst advocating for our students. – GABRIELLA SMITH

2. This is especially germane to the issue of rape and sexual assault reports and statistics. http://www.vox.com/2014/12/11/7378271/why-some-studies-make-campus-rape-look-like-an-epidemic-while-others
4. As Sara Alcid points out, girls in particular are raised to tolerate sexual micro-aggressions and various boundary violations, be they street harassment or bra-snapping’ and boys are raised to see these actions as masculinity rights of passage. https://everydayfeminism.com/2013/01/navigating-consent-debunking-the-grey-area-myth/
6. Gabriella’s Champagne Risotto with Mushrooms (vegetarian)

It pairs well with a simple butterhead/bibb lettuce salad, or steamed asparagus. Of course, make sure to have a glass of the good bubbly for yourself!

Ingredients: Serves 6-8 as a side dish.
- 2 cups Arborio rice
- 6-8 ounces of flavorful mushrooms, chopped (Not button mushrooms. I prefer shiitakes or chanterelles, or a mix. Asparagus also works in this recipe)
- 1 bottle brut sparkling wine
- 2 cups stock (I use vegetable or mushroom, but beef stock would complement the mushrooms well for non-vegetarians)
- 2 Tbsp butter or olive oil
- 3 small or 2 medium shallots, diced
- 4 oz. Gruyere cheese, shredded (You can substitute Jarlsburg in a pinch, or a mix of the two)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Additional water, if needed

Directions: In a large skillet, melt butter or heat olive oil on medium. Add the diced shallots and sauté them until they are translucent. Add in your mushrooms and sauté them until they are soft and the edges are a bit crispy. Add the rice and toast it in the pan for a minute or two with the vegetables before you add any liquid. Add in your 2 cups of broth and about 1/3 bottle of your sparkling wine, and stir. Risotto requires a lot of stirring, so stir frequently until the rice has absorbed about half of the liquid. Pour in the rest of the bottle of sparkling wine. Arborio rice takes a long time to absorb liquid and attain the perfect al dente texture, so prepare yourself to be stirring frequently for as much as 35 minutes. Feel free to add water if the stock and wine have been absorbed before the rice is fully cooked. As it gets close to being finished you should be stirring constantly. When the rice reaches the desired consistency, stir in the grated cheese. On occasion I have been tempted to add additional cheese, but this tends to make the risotto too creamy. After the cheese has melted add salt and pepper to taste, (I like white pepper in this recipe). Serve immediately.

Serves 6