Sociology Mission Statement: None Like It Anywhere

At a recent banquet celebrating the 80th Anniversary of Graduate Degrees in Sociology at TWU, Dr. Mahmoud Sadri described what was greatest about the program: “TWU, for the last few decades, has tried to give voice to the voiceless within our scientific community. It does within Sociology what Sociology does to the entire social reality.”

Dr. Sadri’s words speak not only to the inclusiveness of TWU’s Sociology program, but to its very focus.

Since 2014, the mission statement of the Sociology Graduate Program at TWU has been as follows:

“The mission of the sociology graduate program is to provide sociological training primarily for nontraditional, female, minority, and underprivileged students, though students from all backgrounds are welcomed.”

According to Dr. James Williams, who chaired the program from 2002-2014 and continues to head the Criminal Justice program, the change was first suggested by Dr. Yang. “It was what we were already doing; he suggested that we formalize it.” Changes in the program have reflected the shifting priorities. More classes are being offered at night, to reflect the needs of students working full time during the day.

What sets the program apart is that TWU’s Sociology is the only program in the nation to explicitly focus on nontraditional and disadvantaged students. Students are taking note: enrollment is up, especially among the underserved populations mentioned in the mission statement.

“Other schools, they tend to emphasize a topic or a methodology. We’re the only ones doing this,” Dr. Williams added.

The new mission statement was drafted in Spring 2014 and received full board approval later that year. Implementing the mission (at least, formally) began immediately and continues to this day. More classes are scheduled on weekday evenings in the 2016-2017 academic year, and the program is growing with the addition of Dr. Paul Bones this Fall.
For Debra Karch, PhD, the work of sociology begins at a computer but can culminate with a passport.

“I deployed to Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak, and containment of the epidemic required not only isolation and medical treatment for those infected but also a change in cultural body preparation and burial practices, stigmatization of infected families and individuals who had recovered from Ebola, and modification of the practices of traditional healers.”

Dr. Karch, who received her PhD in Sociology in 1994, serves as Lead Behavioral Scientist and Senior Epidemiologist for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of Violence Prevention. She considers her accomplishments in Sierra Leone to be the most memorable. “The prevention of many diseases and containment of epidemics is often behaviorally and culturally based,” she explains. Most of her work is domestic, supporting state and local health departments and conducting public health surveillance.

Dr. Karch says she enjoys her nontraditional sociology career, tracing it back to her favorite coursework at TWU: statistics and research methods. “I've used these throughout my career in different healthcare settings and especially in the field of public health.”

Dr. Karch continues to publish and present at conferences, and is very positive about the TWU experience. Without stating her own preference at the time, she speaks highly of Pioneers who protested the admission of men in the 1990s. “They were very strong women exercising their right to free speech.”
Down the Road, TWU Alum Makes Her Mark in Rehabilitation

It’s no secret that part of the appeal of both TWU and UNT is their Denton location, but that doesn’t stop commuters from pursuing academic rigor along the way.

Take, for example, Dr. Linda Holloway, Professor and Chair of Disability and Addiction Rehabilitation for the University of North Texas and graduate of the TWU graduate program in Sociology. She is the first to admit that she first selected TWU because of its “proximity to home”.

“I enjoyed the nurturing environment,” she elaborates, citing Dr. Sadri’s theory classes as a highlight. She adds, “Dr. Williams was my major professor and helped shepherd me through the program.”

In her time since completing her PhD, Dr. Holloway has served as President of the National Council of Rehabilitation Education and as Chair of the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.

More recently, Dr. Holloway has helped pioneer research and practices for collegiate recovery programs and working with college students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Asked if she can offer advice to the next generation of TWU Sociologists, she keeps it simple: “Study hard and get engaged in your profession.”
Alumni Feedback Highlights
Decades of Pioneering Sociology

In celebration of the 80th anniversary of graduate degree conferral, the Sociology Program at TWU reached out to its alumni network for a broad picture of where their education has taken them. Of the over 300 graduate degree recipients since 1936, 28 responded, representing Master’s and PhD recipients from as far back as the 1970s.

While over 90% of respondents have worked in academic positions, 18% are currently exploring other career tracks. Employers range from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the Portland Police Bureau; alumni have also started their own counseling practices, non-profit organizations, a documentary production company, and a private investigation firm.

We also asked degree recipients to reflect back on their time at TWU. Joyce Williams, Jim Williams, Mahmoud Sahdri, Lisa Zottarelli, and Linda Marshall collectively represented over 80% of responses to the question of favorite instructors, often serving as the respondents’ dissertation or thesis committee chairs. Research Methods and Statistics courses received high marks for “favorite courses” as well, and several respondents lauded their study abroad trips with Dr. Sadri.

Advice for Graduate Students (From Alumni)

VALUE YOUR TIME. Work hard, but maintain balance. Endurance is key. "There are no wasted moments."

STAY ORGANIZED. Hold onto articles and books and save them for your Literature Review. "Stay focused on your degree plan."

ENGAGE WITH FACULTY. "Get to know your professors", find shared interests and opportunities for professional development, and "choose a good committee early on".

WORK TOGETHER. Network with your cohort, with more established students, and at conferences. "Gain mentorship."

STUDY UP. Read as much as you can, even outside of class. "Totally immerse yourself. You will never have another chance to do this so intensely."

FINISH YOUR DISSERTATION/THESIS. Choose a topic early and build toward it with coursework. Then don't overthink it. "You have to get it done!"

PLAN AHEAD FOR YOUR CAREER. Build your strengths. Look outside academia or at adjunct positions before you graduate. "Try to publish at least one article."

BELIEVE IN SOMETHING. "Make every effort to bring about positive social change."
Alpha Kappa Delta

This year marks 80 years from the first conferment of a graduate degree in Sociology at TWU. The 2016-2017 academic year, in fact, marks two significant events in the history of the department. TWU’s chapter of Alpha Kappa Delta, an international sociology honor society, was first chartered in 1936. The organization has been inducting members into the honor society ever since, and as we celebrate our student’s achievements, our goal is to particularly recognize those who exceed in their academic work with membership in Alpha Kappa Delta.

Membership in the national Alpha Kappa Delta organization requires undergraduate students to declare a sociology major or demonstrate serious interest in sociology. Additionally, new undergraduate members must be juniors and have an overall grade point average of 3.3, with a grade point average of 3.0 in at least four sociology courses. New graduate student members must complete one-half year of sociology coursework toward a sociology degree with a GPA over 3.0.

As Kimberly Folse explains in A Brief History of Alpha Kappa Delta, the organization was founded by Dr. Emory Bogardus (yes, the same one from your research methods textbooks) in 1920 at the University of Southern California to promote scholarly inquiry and study of society. The name of the organization is derived from the first letters of Greek words meaning mankind, examine closely, and to do service. TWU’s chapter of AKD is counted among the more than 630 local chapters from 7 countries; more than 106,000 scholars have been initiated into the honor society over the years. Our chapter was the fourth in Texas, and has the second longest running charter in the state.

In recent years, AKD at TWU has grown to embody the call for service represented in our name. Alongside our induction ceremony held each spring, our organization serves our department, school and local community through fundraisers, donation drives, and service events each semester. With this year being our 80th, the executive board agreed to focus on opportunities to enhance teaching and learning on campus and in our community. Our first major service event for this school year was planning and implementation of the 80th Anniversary Banquet and Program co-hosted with Graduate Sociology. The event provided an opportunity to reflect and celebrate on our continued shared success. Recently, our organization donated more than 1,000 pieces of candy to the campus Boo at the U event, and our most recent service project delivered 59 donated backpacks and accompanying school supplies to Refugee Services of Texas for dispersion among refugee children. We hope to ease the transition of these students into their new schools, and furnish them with necessary supplies to continue in their education. During this time of year, our organization focuses strongly on filling the on-campus food pantry administered by the Social Work program. In a time when many people are giving thanks and celebrating having plenty, some students and their families are going hungry.

Our plans for the remainder of the school year include our annual induction ceremony in April, workshops for both undergraduate and graduate students on study topics, a donation drive for a local women’s shelter, and a t-shirt fundraiser. In short, AKD has had a productive year of service so far, and the executive board plans to continue serving proudly for the rest of the academic year; as we continue in our educations and careers, it is paramount that we do so in the spirit of service to humanity.
If you’d looked around last year, you wouldn’t have had a hard time spotting Lucas Espinoza as he finished up his PhD. If you were really paying attention, you might have seen him twice.

“We are the first set of twins in the history of TWU and the graduate Sociology program to complete our degree [at the same time].” Despite the similarities, however, Dr. Espinoza (Lucas, that is) forged a path entirely his own, and he utilized TWU’s federation with UNT and Texas A&M -- Commerce to do it.

“I got different perspectives on teaching the topic from more than one methodologist/statistician. I also took classes in other disciplines in methods to be trained effectively in qualitative and quantitative methodologist.” Explaining further, he adds, “I used my experience at TWU to tailor myself to the job I wanted.”

That job was Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and Dr. Espinoza says he secured the position before he’d even defended his dissertation. “In the recent years, jobs do not want people self-taught but rather formally trained in the discipline.”

“I chose to study at TWU because at the time I could tailor my major concentration in sociology. I also was able to choose my minor outside of sociology in multicultural women’s and gender studies.”

Dr. Espinoza credits the Federation of North Texas Area Universities for granting him more breadth and launching his academic career. “I can say that having the blended knowledge of sociology, women’s studies, and methods has provided me a critical analysis lens that few people can claim.” Dr. Espinoza has published two journal articles this year and plans to continue his work in law enforcement culture, Latin@ disparities, and social justice.
It is often whispered in academic circles that there is more prestige in moving on after receiving one's degree or that a university should not immediately hire its own graduate. If one should happen to return to their alma mater at some later point, however, a great deal of success can follow, at least if we’re talking about Texas Woman’s University’s Department of Sociology. Two members of the greater Sociology faculty, Dr. Linda Marshall and Dr. Jessica Smartt Gullion, each attained PhDs in the department, and each has since blazed her own trail.

Perhaps best known for her 11 years as the Director of the Social Work program (part of the broader Department of Sociology and Social Work), Dr. Marshall earned her Bachelor's Degree and PhD (from TWU) in Sociology. “The department here was very nurturing at the time and very supportive of grad students,” she recalls, highlighting, “the atmosphere of collaboration and supportiveness and feminism.” This stood in stark contrast to her first academic position, where another Sociology department required her (as its first full-time female faculty member) to join an organization called “Wives, Etc.”

“I realized I not only had to be my husband’s wife, for his career, I had to be my own wife here at my place of employment!”

Dr. Marshall is not alone in her appreciation of the central role of women at TWU. Dr. Jessica Smartt Gullion, Assistant Professor and Interim Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, says she initially came to TWU because of what the campus could uniquely offer: “I was interested in gender studies, nonlinear dynamics (at that time TWU had a prolific lab in this area), and [I] wanted to attend a historical women’s college.” Among her greatest instructors, Dr. Gullion cites Dr. Patti Hamilton, a nursing instructor who ran the Center for Nonlinear Science.

Both Dr. Gullion and Dr. Marshall have found success as instructors, publishers, and administrators since receiving their PhDs. Dr. Gullion has published five books and over 30 articles and book chapters (with more on the way). Between her degree and her arrival on TWU faculty, she served as Chief of Epidemiology for the Denton County Health Department. This year, she was named a Pioneer Teaching and Learning Academy mentor, “to help junior faculty with their teaching.”

Dr. Marshall likes to take pause at how much has changed since she first went into social work, a loophole during a time when office work was divided into male/female and her college GPA of 4.0 “could get me a job as a secretary.” Ever since her first job in social work, she has enjoyed opportunities to apply her skills in sociology and social work together. In addition to her work for the Social Work program, Dr. Marshall still teaches a graduate Sociology course every summer; she also serves on the Board and Research Committee of Denton County Friends of the Family and consults for Senator Jane Nelson’s statewide task force investigating how CPS treats battered women.

Behind their prolific work ethics, though, Drs. Marshall and Gullion retain affectionate memories of their time as Pioneers. Dr. Gullion proudly points out, “I was married to a fellow sociology graduate student (UNT -- we met through the federation) at the Little Chapel in the Woods. Many of my classmates and professors attended.” Dr. Marshall recalls another tradition that required its own attire. “We used to have Halloween parties, and we would all dress up as a sociological concept.” She adds, “I came as the Military Industrial Complex.”
Featured Banquet Speaker
an Alumni with Family Ties to TWU

Some students and alumni at the Sociology program’s 80th Anniversary Banquet were just meeting Dr. E. Diane Mosley for the first time when she took the podium, but Dr. Mosley was representing a small dynasty. Not only her mom but also her niece have attended Texas Woman’s University, where Dr. Mosley received her PhD in 1991.

Dr. Mosley, who has been on the faculty of Texas Southern University since receiving her degree, has continually defined her career by the people and stories with which she works, just as she did while attending TWU.

“My very favorite professor was Dr. Valerie Bentz,” she recalled, describing Dr. Bentz as “very warm, open, and nurturing. Dr. Bentz taught Dr. Mosley research methods and chaired her dissertation committee, but as a mentor her role went much further. “She introduced me to the intellectual community in Denton.”

She also pointed out Dr. Bentz’ donation of two large art sculptures to the TWU library.

Dr. Mosley has been active in campus politics since receiving her PhD, crediting her TWU studies in Social Organization. She served as Vice President of the Campus Senate, filled a number of academic positions (including Assistant Dean), and has also been the faculty representative for Alpha Kappa Delta -- another nod to her days as a Pioneer. She described her network from those days as very “close-knit and connected”, with several international friends and a “nurturing, warm, and open environment”.

Having conducted, among other projects, an ethnography funded by the US Department of Labor and commissioned by the Congressional Black Caucus to identify the employment and job-training needs of youth, Dr. Mosley’s current research is an institutional ethnography of the school where she has worked for years. She describes the project as, “looking to discover the types of power relationships that exist, with a particular focus on gender stratification.”
Although Texas Woman’s University retains the name and reputation of a school focused on the success of women (the only such state-sponsored school in North America), there was a time when men were not allowed to complete their degree here, nor even take a class. Transitions came in stages before the final sanctions were lifted, but someone had to go first. In the Sociology Graduate Program, the first was Preston Dyer.

Dr. Dyer began his career teaching Social Work at Baylor University, but in the 1970s he enrolled as TWU’s first male full-time Sociology student. At the time, he had to choose between TWU and the University of Utah, but dreaded making a big move temporarily. The faculty “supported me a lot,” he recalls, describing the loneliness he experienced as his family remained in Waco.

Indeed, his wife would later obtain her PhD in Family Studies from TWU, leading to a twenty-year collaboration as co-teachers of a class on Marriage and Family.

Since taking the title of Professor Emeritus in 2008, Dr. Dyer has only taught seminars, but for four decades he was an instructional fixture in two Baylor departments: the Department of Sociology and the Department of Social Work. Upon attaining his PhD, he directed the Undergraduate Social Work program in Waco. He would go on to serve as Founding Chair of the Texas Association of Social Work Deans and Directors, identified by one website as “The Most Important Social Worker Alive Today.”

Although he was always well known as a social worker, Dr. Dyer says that it was an interest in research that drew him toward a doctorate in Sociology. He credits TWU’s coursework on research methods for not only preparing him as a researcher, but also as a teacher.
The year 2016 marked a significant milestone for the study of sociology at Texas Woman’s University: It has been 80 years since two graduate students received the first advanced degrees in sociology from TWU, in 1936. To celebrate this important anniversary, TWU’s sociology faculty and graduate students organized a number of activities both on and off campus. As the year winds down, we now finish off our celebration of this memorable and exciting anniversary with the publication of this alumni newsletter. Let’s begin with a recap of our anniversary activities.

Starting off the year’s observances was the design and sale of a commemorative t-shirt featuring our 80-year logo. These remain available for $20 and up, in two colors, maroon shirt / white graphics and light grey shirt / maroon graphics. Proceeds help provide scholarships to our graduate students. I want to acknowledge and thank doctoral student William Ash-Houchen, president of Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD) honor society, and his spouse, James, for lending a hand with the eye-catching original design.

The next event in our 80th anniversary celebration was a reception hosted by TWU sociology for students and alumni during August’s annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, in Seattle. After placing a one-page announcement in the conference program, we were beyond pleased that so many friends and colleagues joined us at the reception. The annual meeting also gave us an opportunity to reach out to potential new TWU sociology students, and throughout the fall, numbers of emails and calls from these individuals have requested more information about graduate study with us.

Perhaps the most exciting of the year’s activities was our 80th Anniversary Sociology Banquet, in September. Taking charge of planning and hosting was doctoral student Heather Gerling, who currently serves as AKD community-relations officer and has coordinated large gatherings for other organizations. The occasion proved grand and beautiful—and well-attended. Joining Heather Gerling as volunteers whose diligent work made the banquet possible were students William Ash-Houchen, Jeffrey Lawson, Emily Musgrove, and Michaela Wilson. These five outdid themselves in developing a logo for our anniversary gifts, decorating the banquet hall, and welcoming guests. Their talent and commitment made this banquet a success. Guests included alumni, former and current graduate students, sociology program faculty and administrators, and other friends of TWU sociology. We were honored that several alumni agreed to address us as we gathered to celebrate the anniversary; they spoke about their experiences at TWU and their achievements after completing sociology graduate study.

The participation of our alumni and current students in each of our 80th anniversary events has been gratifying. Throughout 2016, we have approached graduates of our program to talk about their lives and careers after TWU. Some of their stories—compiled by master’s program students Jeffrey Lawson, Hannah Labelson, Emily Musgrove, and Kyndal DeBruin and presented here in our final 2016 newsletter—provide the culmination of our anniversary year observances. As you enjoy these stories and photographs, we humbly ask that you consider giving to TWU sociology. Financial gifts in any amount are appropriate and also tax-deductible (as federal and state law allow). Donations are easy! Just go to the TWU Sociology Website at http://www.twu.edu/sociology/, scroll about half of page on the left side, and click on the “Friends of Sociology—Donate” button. The sociology faculty is especially grateful for your generosity.
School/Dpartment of Sociology

Stepping into the year 2016, both the sociology program and social work program have monumental achievements to celebrate. In 1946, our social work program was established at TWU; while in 1936, the first two TWU graduate degrees in sociology were conferred. Celebrating the 70th anniversary of our social work program and the 80th anniversary of our first advanced degrees in sociology has certainly brought us closer to our alumni, those who graduated only recently and those who left us decades ago and have done great things with their careers and lives. The observance of these important anniversaries gives the department opportunity to renew communication with those who have graduated from our programs.

Department alumni as well as current students can rightly be proud of the two programs' historical achievements; there is so much to celebrate. And the department is certainly not slowing the pace of its achievements. We work hard, filling each semester with new contributions, successes, and memories. Some examples (since we last spoke to you through our 2015 newsletter) of great news in the department in include Dr. Abigail Tilton's recent appointment as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Prior to becoming dean, Dr. Tilton, an associate professor of social work, was the college's associate dean. She also directed our department's social work program for several years. In addition, we are happy to have gained another faculty position for our sociology program, to which Dr. Paul Bones has been appointed, beginning fall 2016. He is a sociologist, the 2015 recipient of a doctorate from the University of Oklahoma, and currently an assistant professor at Westminster College. His substantive area is criminology/criminal justice. Dr. Bones' presence will certainly facilitate continued growth in our sociology programs at all levels.

The hard work of TWU's scholars of social work has not gone unnoticed. The TWU administration and the Department of Sociology and Social Work have expressed strong support for launching a master of social work program in the department in the near future. Moreover, TWU's social work faculty has begun negotiating with colleagues at the University of North Texas to develop a joint MSW program, its first students to enroll in fall 2017. This significant effort of the social work faculty as a group is complemented by its members' many individual achievements.

Available Now

Get Your 80th Anniversary T-Shirt for $20.

Available in TWO color combinations: Maroon T-Shirt with White Writing and Light Gray T-Shirt with Maroon Writing

To order, please email Ivy Naudé at INaudé@twu.edu with the following information: Number of Shirts (Each shirt requires a $20 check)

Color combination (maroon and white OR gray and maroon)

Indicate T-Shirts Size(s) of each shirt (XS-XL)

Cash and Checks are deliverable in person to CFO 305 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Please make checks payable to TWU Sociology

Sophie Says “It Comes in Gray Too!”