

THE *Current*

June 8, 2011

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UCSB Sociologist Receives Harold J. Plous Award

Victor Rios, an assistant professor of sociology at UC Santa Barbara, has received the 2011-12 Harold J. Plous Award. One of the university's most prestigious faculty honors, the award is given annually to an assistant professor from the humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences who has shown exceptional achievement in research, teaching, and service to the university. Presented by the College of Letters and Science, the award was established in 1957 to honor the memory of Harold J. Plous, an assistant professor of economics.

Rios will showcase his research when he delivers the annual Plous Lecture next spring.

"I congratulate Professor Rios on this very meaningful recognition from his campus peers," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "The Plous Award honors not only his remarkable research achievements in the field of sociology, but also his exemplary teaching and mentorship. Our campus community looks forward to his Plous Lecture next spring."

Melvin Oliver, the SAGE Sara Miller McCune dean of social sciences at UCSB, said: "Victor Rios is a remarkable scholar-teacher and his recognition with the Plous award is truly deserving. His work combines the best of ethnography with pragmatic and public policy-oriented implications for a key issue affecting U.S. society. We are proud of all of Victor's achievements and awards, he is definitely one of our best

early career scholar-teachers at UCSB."

Noted Verta Taylor, professor and chair of sociology at UCSB: "Victor Rios is a gifted scholar who is emerging as one of the leading experts on gangs and gang reduction. His groundbreaking research, together with his outstanding classroom teaching, student mentoring, and sustained commitment to public sociology through his work with youth at risk of gang involvement, is an inspiration to us all. This award signals that Rios's accomplishments represent the best of what UCSB has to offer."

Rios, who came to UCSB in 2006, completed his Ph.D. in sociology at UC Berkeley. He expanded his dissertation on gang members into a broader monograph, titled "Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys" (forthcoming, New York University Press), which explores how juvenile crime policies and criminalization affect the everyday lives of urban youth. His urban ethnography project has attracted considerable support from a variety of granting agencies, including the Ford Foundation and UC MEXUS.

In 2010, Rios received the New Scholar Award from the American Society of Criminology's Division of People of Color and Crime. The award recognizes scholars who, in the early stages of their careers, have made significant contributions to the literature on people of color and crime.

Rios's research spans several fields of sociology, including race and ethnicity, Latina/o Studies, Black Studies, deviance and social control, and urban studies. His study of criminalization and racialization of inner-city youth during the 1990's shows how "get tough" legislation targets Black and Latino youth, and generates public support by playing on mainstream anxieties about race and crime. More importantly, Rios shows how criminalization and punishment have become primary socializing institutions and sources of identity formation among delinquent boys.

A gifted and popular instructor, Rios has actively drawn undergraduates into research, and has been recognized with the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research, a Margaret T. Getman Service to Students Award, and an Outstanding Faculty Award.

His professional expertise has also been of great value to the local community, where Rios has served as an adviser to the Santa Barbara School District on gang violence and reduction strategies. He also established a mentoring program that matches UCSB students with at-risk youth.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.