



Sociology Newsletter

Fall 2006

Dr. Leslie Wang Joins Sociology Department

Assistant Professor of Sociology
Research and Teaching Interest: Race & Ethnicity

I was born in Hong Kong and came to the United States at the age of four (a member of the 1.5 generation). I grew up approximately 100 miles north of New York City, and I have spent the past fifteen years in Toledo, Ohio. You may be surprised to learn that I did not like school until my junior year in college, and yet I have chosen to pursue an academic career. You may also be surprised to learn that I enjoy trying ethnic dishes, though as I relocate westward with each move, I seem to be moving to places with less ethnic diversity.

Having taught sociology courses ranging from race and ethnicity, social class, and gender to topics dealing with education, family, and religion for the past fifteen years, I believe that I learn just as much from my students as they do from me. I received my B.A. and M.A. degrees from The State University of New York at New Paltz and my Ph.D. in Educational Sociology from The University of Toledo. My teaching, research, and community interests intersect nicely; these include the scholarship of teaching and learning, educational sociology, identity construction, and issues relating to cultural diversity.

As a new faculty member in the Department of Sociology, I am tremendously busy and yet enjoying it! So far, my ride at Saint Mary's College has been a relatively smooth one and I hope to continue with the journey. Please come and visit me so I can learn more about you!



Disciplining Motherhood: Analyzing "Bonding" Discourse

By Mary Ann Kanieski

Like a new mother, a sociologist can never rest. Unlike the chemists or biologists, we do not have the luxury of leaving our labs at the end of the day. We are constantly observing and analyzing the social events around us. Recently, this link between private and professional life became quite clear to me when I had children. As I read parenting magazines and books, I was surprised to read advice on how to bond with children. This struck me as odd. Why do I need to be instructed on how to love my baby, I wondered?

And I also wondered why this information was being targeted to the middle class readers of these parenting guides. Surely this population isn't at risk of not loving its children? Surely I am not at risk of not loving my children? I decided to dig deeper. I decided to conduct a genealogy of what I'm calling bonding discourse. My results show our society's uneasiness with women's changing roles.

To conduct my research, I read medical journals and books, as well as popular magazines and childrearing books. I found that bonding researchers created a "norm" of mothering based on animal studies, knowledge of primitive societies, and clinical observations of new mothers. Interestingly, this "norm" of mothering requires the nuclear family of breadwinning father and homemaker mother. Bonding is something that mothers do best while fathers are better viewed as providers and protectors. A truly "bonded" mother spends all of her time with her child. If the bond is strong, she will not work nor will she allow someone else to care for her child. Clearly, there are important sociological implications. The mothers most likely to meet the norm of bonded mothering are those who are white, heterosexual, married, and middle class.

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REBUILDING THE GULF COAST ONE HOUSE AT A TIME

By: Susan Alexander



Nearly 15 months ago Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. Katrina was a natural disaster of a magnitude unprecedented in the United States, but it was the human-made social systems that truly failed the people, particularly in New Orleans. We in the Sociology Department were emotionally impacted by

the shocking images on the nightly news programs of thousands of people left struggling to survive. We supported senior Sociology major Stephanie Lutz, a Bay St. Louis, Mississippi native, as she awaited the fate of friends and family. We offered assistance to our colleague Carollette Norwood, whose family resides in the New Orleans and Baton Rouge area, when she was called by a friend stuck on a roof in flooded New Orleans. While donations right after the storm illustrated the very best in human actions, the Gulf Coast is today still desperately in need of help.

I've had the opportunity to visit the Gulf Coast twice since Katrina and I can say that the media images of the "back-in-business" French Quarter belie the concrete experiences of most Gulf Coast residents. In May 2006 and again over fall break last month I volunteered with the East Tammany Parish Habitat for



Humanity in Slidell, Louisiana. Slidell lies on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, across from New Orleans. Slidell was hit with several feet of storm surge, but unlike New Orleans the water receded quickly. What was left behind are hundreds of empty lots that once housed families. The stilts the houses formerly rested upon now stand as a monument to the power of nature. Along the coast east of Slidell are the remains of once thriving towns: Pass Christian, Waveland, Bay St. Louis, Long Beach, Diamondhead, Gulf Port, Biloxi, and points in between. In New Orleans, sections of the city – Gentilly, New Orleans East, Jefferson Parish, Lakeview, St. Bernard Parish, the Lower Ninth Ward – are still largely without power and lights. There are areas with no gas stations, no grocery stores, and no chain stores of any kind. Bumper stickers proclaim, "New Orleans: Third World and Still Proud."

The scope of this natural and human-made disaster can leave one feeling helpless and hopeless. Although the Gulf Coast region is still struggling to rebuild, the spirit of the "returnees" and those who never left remains strong. While the courage to rebuild is there, Gulf Coast residents could use some help. Here is where Habitat for Humanity and other non-profit organizations are stepping in to fill the vacuum left by an incompetent government at all levels.

Over fall break, Saint Mary's College Center for Women's InterCultural Leadership sponsored a service trip to Slidell, LA, along with Karen Chambers, Associate Professor of Psychology, Brandy Ellison, adjunct faculty in Sociology, and my husband, Brett Alexander, traveled with sixteen Saint Mary's College students to volunteer for Habitat for Hu-



Ken and Karen Chambers and Brett and Susan Alexander

manity. The students represented all class years and several majors including three Sociology majors, Stephanie Petty, Sr. Stella Maris Kunihira, CSC, and Becki Faunce. Even before we left campus, we felt the support of the local community. Home Depot and ALCO Tool Supply donated tools. Our secretary Kathy Hammond made dozens of cookies for the long drive, and Sociology major Amanda Shropshire generously house-sat all my cats and the dog so I could participate in the trip.

We spent the week working on several houses for families displaced by Katrina. We hammered, sanded, painted, laid flooring, installed cabinets, installed electrical wiring, and most importantly, we worked alongside others who also recognize the tremendous need that still exists along the Gulf Coast. Here's where you can make a difference. Habitat is rebuilding the Gulf Coast one house at a time and they need volunteers and materials. Check out their website at <http://www.esthfh.org/> and you too can make a difference in the lives of individuals who have lost so much and ask for so little. Thank you

WANTED: ALUMNAE STORIES

Students always want to know, "What can I do with a degree in sociology?" Please help the sociology faculty with information about career option opportunities.

Email Susan Alexander @ salexand@saintmarys.edu with post-SMC stories or send your business card.

Disciplining Motherhood

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What is most interesting about bonding research is that its basic science is problematic. Many researchers have published critiques of bonding research (Lamb and Eyre) yet it still appears in parenting magazines and books. Most egregious from my point of view as a social statistician is the fact that results that were not statistically significant were reported anyway. (It sounds like the bonding researchers needed to take SOC 372: Sociological Statistics!) Despite the scientific problems with the research, mothers who failed to follow this norm were labeled as “unattached” and in need of social intervention. And all mothers were viewed with the suspicion that they may fail to bond with their children.

In conclusion, my research raises important questions about the creation and use of scientific knowledge, the media, and changing women’s roles. Given the questionable science, is maternal bonding really a social problem? Should new mothers really be worried about this? I think not. I believe that the popularity of bonding research reflects deeper anxieties in our society. Women’s roles have changed dramatically as more and more mothers work, often because they have no choice. Yet our society fails to provide social support for new mothers and their children. Given our limited maternity leaves, the high cost of quality day care, and the long hours both mothers and fathers are working, “bonding” may be all we have left to offer our children.



Criminal Justice Symposium

On October 27 Carrie Erlin, a Fellow with the Center for Women’s InterCultural Leadership and lecturer for the Departments of Sociology and Justice Education took part in the Ivy Tech Community College’s 4th Annual Criminal Justice Symposium entitled *Law Enforcement in America: Race, Class and Crime*. Carrie has spent the past year involved in planning this year’s conference and developing

the theme for the symposium, “Therapeutic Jurisprudence.” Therapeutic Jurisprudence – or “TJ” – is the analysis of social impacts of laws and policies on societies and individuals. The symposium featured a keynote address from Professor Bruce Winick from the University of Miami School of

Law. Professor Winick, along with a colleague, developed the field of therapeutic jurisprudence in the late 80’s and is considered one of the leading scholars in TJ.

The symposium itself was well attended by approximately 150 members of the community, academics from South Bend’s local colleges and universities, and students from Ivy Tech, Saint Mary’s, Indiana University South Bend, and other area schools. Carrie’s presentation at the conference detailed differential applications of laws via the use of officer discretion in arrest and ticketing, and included data from and analysis of local South Bend arrest statistics.

Melissa Tyler, a Saint Mary’s student, has been working on this project for over a year and also presented at the conference, detailing the specific interactions and impacts of age, gender, and race in South Bend traffic ticketing patterns. Carrie and Melissa are continuing their analysis of arrest patterns in South Bend and are beginning to compare the rates of arrest and tickets given in South Bend to other, comparable cities across the United States.



Sociology Club

The Sociology Club’s purpose is to promote an alliance among sociology majors and minors, along with all others interested in the field of sociology. The club strives to promote unity and to improve scholarship among students. In addition to the formal classroom setting, it seeks to provide a hospitable forum in addition to the formal classroom setting for discussing and actively approaching sociological issues.

One of the highlighted activities to-date for this year was the showing of the documentary “Brats: Our Journey Home. An Intimate Portrait of a Lost American Tribe” (2005) on September 20, 2006. The discussion leader for the film, senior Sociology major Lauren Falvey, is a military brat. The film features interviews from 500 brats including Army brat General Norman Schwarzkopf, author Mary Edwards Wertsch, psychotherapist Stephanie Donaldson-Pressman, and West Point Sociologist Morten Ender. More information about this excellent documentary can be found at:

<http://www.militarybrat.com/bratsfilm.cfm>

2006-2007 Officers



Chelsea Gulling, President

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Alumnae News: Sociology Degrees and Legal Careers

Judith DeVliegher Weaver (1970). After graduation, Judith moved to Charleston, South Carolina to work as a caseworker in the Food Stamp Program. That was in 1970 and she made about \$5,000 a year! After working for the South Carolina Department of Social Services for 13 years, Judith moved to Columbia when she received a promotion. She worked with the Commissioner of Social Services doing lobbying for the agency. Eventually, recruited out of state government by the private sector, Judith did consulting work for about 10 years. At the age of 41, she decided to go to law school. Judith graduated three years later with both a JD and an LLM. Now Judith is practicing law in a specialty she truly enjoys (representation of health providers --- hospitals, doctor groups, nursing homes) and serving as a gubernatorial appointee to a statewide regulatory commission.

Susan Shouvlin Caldwell (1968). Susan married shortly after graduation and obtained a teaching job in Leavenworth, Kansas, where her husband was stationed with the Army. She "retired" in 1969 after her first son was born. The family moved to Cincinnati in 1970 and has made it their home. Around 1990 Susan began looking for a different work environment. Law was very attractive, and she was accepted by two area law schools. However, several close friends who were attorneys expressed concern about the lack of well educated paralegals and asked Susan to consider paralegal training. She took their advice and began a two-year intensive ABA-approved paralegal program at the College of Mt. St. Joseph in Cincinnati. Susan graduated at the top of her class. She chose the area of estate and trust administration because of the variety of skills required, the ability to work autonomously, and the true service and support she provides to people at their most vulnerable times. Susan says she loves what she does. "Sociology provided me with a well rounded outlook on the interweaving of economics, politics, humane issues, etc. that drive every society. Those are relationships that we deal with every day as citizens of the world."

Saint Mary's College
Sociology Department
Room 159, Madeleva Hall

