



The Importance of Teacher-Scholars and Student-Scholars

In an article for the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2013), Washington and Lee University President Kenneth Ruscio says, "The dash between teacher and scholar is meant to be a link, not a line of demarcation. Scholarship and creative endeavors enrich our teaching and are essential to instruction of the highest quality."

In the Sociology Department we take this model to heart. The Sociology faculty work on research and they work with students to pursue research projects of their own. Ruscio goes on to say, "A hallmark of the liberal arts college, however, is that conversation about new scholarship also takes place in our classrooms, in our offices, in our hallways, in our homes-anywhere that we exchange ideas with students." Indeed, for many of our alumnae and current students, they know well these informal conversations about research. And many of our alumnae know the emphasis the Sociology faculty place on students presenting their research to broader audiences, both in their senior comprehensive research presentations and at professional sociology meetings.

Given the importance of research in the work lives of sociologists, this newsletter highlights some of the remarkable research carried out by our sociology alumnae, faculty, and current students. We hope you enjoy learning about these various research projects.

Mentoring the Next Generation of Researchers

Twenty years ago Susan Alexander started collaborating with students on joint research projects. Back in 1993-94, Susan's first joint faculty-student research project included Megan Ryan ('95). They examined students' perceptions of feminists, and their paper, "Social Constructs of Feminism: A Study of Undergraduates at a Women's College," was published in 1997 in the *College Student Journal*. Today, Megan is Chair of Modern Languages at The Browning School in New York, which is a college preparatory school for boys.

More recently, Susan has worked on two research projects involving Sociology students. The first is a project examining boyhood masculinity, and three students were part of the research team over a two year period: Molly Harmon ('13) is currently in the graduate program at Georgia State University, Abby Madsen ('14) is currently in the graduate program at Ball State University, and Kelsey Collins is a senior Sociology major. The team project has resulted in a forthcoming article, "From Patriotic Troops to Branded Boyhood: Hegemonic boyhood masculinity as depicted in *Boy's Life* magazine, 1911-2012," which will be published in *Boyhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* next year.

This semester Susan is working with a junior Sociology minor, Angela Bukur, on a research project examining the depictions of masculinity found in travel advertisements targeting gay men. The coding of the data should be completed early in the spring. And they look forward to finishing the article and presenting the finding at a professional conference next year.

Susan has also been busy with a co-authored research article with Sonalini Sapra from the Gender & Women's Studies Program/Political Science Department, titled "Post it on the Wall: Using Facebook to Complement Student Learning in Gender and Women's Studies Courses" (2014) for the journal *Feminist Teacher*. And Susan just published "The Corporate Masquerade: Branding Masculinity through Halloween Costumes" (2014) for *The Journal of Men's Studies*. Clearly a teacher-scholar has remained an important part of Susan's work life over the years.



Susan Alexander with Angela Bukur

Sociology Alumnae And Faculty Engaged in Research

Shelly McGrath ('01)

Assistant Professor of Sociology & Criminology
University of Alabama Birmingham



My career as an academic centers on research, but this path started at Saint Mary's College when I conducted research for my Senior Comprehensive Research Project, titled "A Look at Women's Progression in United States Politics." After graduating from SMC, I completed two Masters degrees from Ball State University, one in Sociology and the

other in Political Science. I then went on to Southern Illinois University Carbondale (also Susan Alexander's alma mater), where I completed my Ph.D. in Sociology in 2009. I am an assistant professor in the Sociology & Criminology Department at the University of Alabama Birmingham.

My current research agenda revolves around my work with the Birmingham Police Department. I have compiled a dataset of Homicides (1991-2014), Robbery (2010-2014), and Burglary, Auto Theft, Unlawful Breaking and Entering of Vehicle (2010-2012) of demographic information of the victim and offender (when available), time, date, and specific location of the crime occurrence. All crime data was collected from the Birmingham Police Department police reports. Data for the census tracts and block groups were collected from the 1990, 2000, and 2010 Census.

This research utilizes GIS mapping to describe the geographic distribution of the different crime types and the key characteristics associated with the census block groups and tracts where the crimes are occurring. The results of the analyses will be used to help guide the types of strategies used by the Birmingham Police Department to efficiently and effectively patrol the city and determine the allocations of resources. GIS is being used to explore the hot spots and the shifting patterns of crime in Birmingham. I am trying to understand which demographic measures best predict each type of crime.

The research being conducted with and for the BPD has developed into a long-term partnership that will offer a sociological lens on crime.

Shelly's recent research articles include:

Johnson, Melencia, Shelly A. McGrath, and Michelle H. Miller. 2013. "Effective Advocacy in Rural Domains: Applying an Ecological Model to Understanding Advocates' Relationships." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

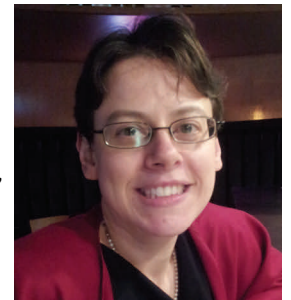
Chananie-Hill, Ruth, Shelly A. McGrath, and Justin Stoll. 2012. "Deviant or Normal? Female Bodybuilders' Accounts of Social Reactions." *Deviant Behavior*. 33, 811-830.

McGrath, Shelly A., Suzanne E. Perumean-Chaney, and John J. Sloan III. 2012. "Property Crime on College Campuses: A Case Study Using GIS and Related Tools." *Security Journal*.

Professor Mary Ann Kanieski

Researching Parenting

In addition to my work at Saint Mary's College, I am also a Research Associate with the Centre for Parenting Culture Studies at the University of Kent, which focuses on the study of parenting as an element of culture.



Currently, my research focuses on parenting classes. Since parenting is a culture, it is important to understand what values are being taught. To understand this culture, I observe parenting classes and interview parenting instructors.

I found that parenting instructors tend to emphasize an individualistic focus on the child, which often clashes with the more collectivist, family-oriented approach of many of their student-parents. More importantly, the subtle message is that parents are completely responsible for their children to the exclusion of other relatives, like grandparents, or other institutions of society like the education system.

I was quite pleased my research was accepted for presentation at the American Sociological Association meetings in New York City last summer, and am in the process of seeking publication of the work.

Find us on Facebook!

at:

SMC Sociology

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and let us know what you are up to!

Cristen Dalessandro ('10)

PhD Candidate
University of Colorado Boulder



My research path began at Saint Mary's with my senior sociology research project titled "Is 'She Saint Mary's?': Student Identity Construction Based on Institutional Stereotypes."

Today, I am a PhD candidate at the University of Colorado Boulder working on my dissertation, which will add to our understanding of gender identity

in the lives of "emerging adults" (a term coined by psychologist J.J. Arnett in 2000). I plan to examine how gender identity intersects with other social categories such as race, social class, and sexual identity.

At a time when popular opinion holds that gender egalitarianism has long been achieved, my primary research question is, how do people make sense of the persistence of social inequality based on gender? In my dissertation research, which is still in the initial stage, I will analyze how young adults understand gender by analyzing a facet of their lives in which gendered norms and expectations are highlighted, namely intimacy. I plan to interview a diverse group of young men and women about their intimate relationships. I plan to analyze how individuals make sense of their gender identities and how this may impact the gendered realities of individuals' lives.

The participants in my research will be young adults ages 22-32. I am particularly interested in this group because of their status position in-between adolescence and full adulthood. Previous research indicates that social changes have altered what it means to be a fully mature adult woman or man in American society. For many young people, the age at which they consider themselves fully "adult" is increasing. Additionally, some research suggests that emerging adults see their identities as works in progress rather than fully formed. Thus, my research on this group will examine the processes by which young adults both navigate their evolving adult gender identities and understand their gendered futures.

I look forward to getting into the field to conduct this research and build upon my research skills first developed at Saint Mary's.

Katie Dingeman-Cerda ('06)

Postdoctoral Fellow
University of Denver



Hi Belles! As a proud SMC alum and former sociology major I am pleased to share my journey with you.

I recently graduated with my Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Irvine. I am now a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Sociology & Criminology at the University of Denver. I am currently working on a book manuscript and developing courses that engage students with disenfranchised populations and activists in the local community.

My research interests include immigration, law & society, and human rights. My dissertation examines the construction of the "modern deportation regime" and the impact of this set of punitive policies, practices, and technologies on the lifecourses of deportees sent back "home" to El Salvador. Between 2008 and 2013, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in El Salvador and Los Angeles, a city widely considered the "fifteenth district" of El Salvador.

This transnational ethnography included 100 life history interviews with Salvadoran deportees. Findings speak to the disjunctures between migrants' social and legal membership in the U.S. and El Salvador, as well as the inverse relationship that often emerges between deportees' societal reception and labor market re-entry. Behind these seemingly dispassionate findings resides my deeply held desire to "give voice" to a vulnerable population whose narratives are essentially silenced in U.S. immigration reform debates.

My own trajectory toward a Ph.D. was in no-way predetermined. I remember SMC as a time of freedom in which I was encouraged to creatively pursue my burgeoning interest in immigration and social justice. The mentorship and opportunities offered at SMC cultivated my sociological imagination and permitted my political awakening. I hope my story encourages current Belles to cherish the special space in which they find themselves, seize unique opportunities as they present themselves, and use their skills for the pursuit of the public good.

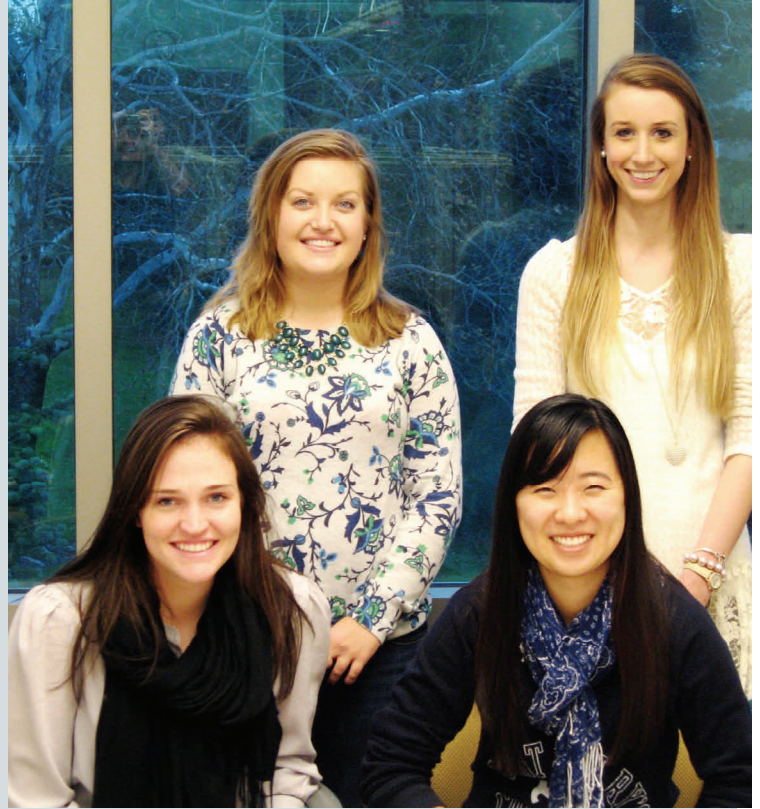
2014 Senior Sociology Comprehensive Research Projects

Markie Harrison “Putting Blacks into a Cultural Prison: An analysis of victims and criminals in the television series *Law & Order*”

Kelsey Collins “Cooking Meth & Killing Girl-friends: Audience perceptions of justifiable crime in the television series *Breaking Bad*”

Sarah Lee “Refashioning the Korean Gender Dichotomy: Female performance in music videos by K-pop girl groups”

Allison Sheets “Switching the Code: The complicity of female Twitter users in the preservation of rape culture”



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