



## Sociology Newsletter Spring 2010

### Students and Faculty Attend the North Central Sociological Association Annual Meeting

Our department's tradition of accompanying sociology students to the North Central Sociological Association's (NCSA) annual meeting continued this year. The conference was held in Chicago from March 31-April 3, 2010. The theme was "Communities in an Age of Social Transition." The keynote address was given by Dr. Ann Swidler, University of California—Berkeley, on her research in Malawi.

It was an especially good meeting for us. Susan Alexander, Mary Ann Kanieski, Leslie Wang, and Carrie Erlin all presented papers and organized sessions. Our sociology faculty is well represented in the organization as Carrie was just elected Vice President of NCSA and Susan is the NCSA Public Relations Coordinator.

Thanks to a generous grant the students received from the Student Government Association, seven sociology majors were able to attend. The students either presented papers or presented posters of their senior research at the North Central Student Sociology Conference that ran concurrently. Congratulations to two of the Saint Mary's students who won awards in the NCSA Student Paper Competition: Sarah Rompola won first place for her paper "ComMANDer in Chief: A Content Analysis of Masculinity in Candidates' Images" and Elizabeth Madrigal won 3rd place for her paper "Hegemonic Masculinity."



### Donald N. M. Horning Senior Comprehensive Award Winner and 1st Place in the North Central Sociological Association's Annual Student Paper Competition

#### Sarah Rompola

#### "ComMANDer in Chief: A Content Analysis of Masculinity in Candidates' Images"

For her senior comp project, Sarah was interested in the media coverage of presidential elections, with a focus on the social construction of presidential masculinity. Sarah analyzed presidential images from *Newsweek* magazine from campaigns occurring between 1960 to 2008 to assess the form of masculinity and to identify changes over time. She operationalized performances of masculinity into several variables and then cross-tabulations to observe any significant differences.

She found that, overall, presidential candidates present a homogeneous performance of masculinity. In other words, presidential candidates appear to have internalized what is "appropriate masculine behavior" for a potential President. The findings indicate that most variables measuring presidential candidates' performances of masculinity have remained relatively constant, while other variables have changed significantly. For example, candidates' interaction with others has significantly increased over time. From this data, Sarah concluded that part of "performing presidential masculinity" is being engaging, interactive, and available to the masses. These characteristics constitute the hegemonic performance of presidential candidates.



# Applied Sociology

## Carlye Gibson ('05)

### Carlye's experience with the Indiana Department of Child Services

You may know my employer as Child Protective Services or CPS; however, I actually work for the Indiana Department of Child Services. I was hired by the St. Joseph County DCS in March of 2009 and went through three months of training in Indianapolis. My job is to help ensure the safety, stability, wellbeing, and permanency of the children in Indiana. The department I work for is divided into two different areas, Assessment and Ongoing. The assessment team does the initial investigation once we receive a new report, or 310. Those are either emergencies which are 1 hour or 24 hour response times, or they have 5 days to make initial contact with the child. The assessor will evaluate the case and interview the entire family involved. If the assessor decides to detain a child they must have exigent circumstances to detain without going to court first. Otherwise, they must provide notice and have a detention hearing in the courts before they are able to detain the child. In many of our cases the child could be in immediate danger where we would need to detain the child right away followed by a court hearing within 48 hours of the detention. At this hearing the Judge hears the evidence and decides whether we had enough evidence to detain the child. There is also a second type of hearing held concurrently in which the parent(s) can admit or deny whether their child is in need of services that they would not otherwise receive without intervention from the courts.

The Department of Child Services works differently than the criminal system because our standards of proof in a case are lower than in the criminal system. Many of you hear about "beyond a reasonable doubt" on the crime shows on T.V. which means 99.9% certain that the crime

happened and that person committed it. Our standards are not that high because we are dealing with the safety of a child. There are times where we only have a few minutes to make a decision because the child is about to go home from school and we must ask ourselves "Will that child be safe when they arrive home?"

The assessment team has 15-30 days to transfer the case to an ongoing team once they decide to substantiate or unsubstantiate the case. The ongoing team works with the family throughout the life of the case. CPS has three different case types.

The IA does not require the intervention of the court because the family states that they will cooperate with services. This case type is usually used for our less severe cases such as a Marijuana positive baby. There is also an In-home CHINS (Child in Need of Services), where the courts are involved but the children are able to remain in the home with their parents. The third is an Out of Home CHINS where the children are removed and placed either in foster care, relative placement, or residential.

Every day in these jobs you never know what type of situations you will face. You may think you are about ready to close a case and then something unexpected happens, or you may be completely surprised by how cooperative a family is when they are working with you. I love my job and there are many days when I wish that I could take some of the children home with me. I consider the children on my caseload as my very own children while we are involved with the family. Before making any decisions on a case I stop and think, is this in the best interest of the child and does it maintain the child's safety. Our initial goal in a case is reunification with the parent. However in some cases that is not in the



best interest of the child. We have 15 out of 22 months to work the case when the child is out of the home. If the parent is unable to complete their court orders in that time we are required to file for TPR (Termination of Parental Rights). I have witnessed cases arrive at this point as well as reach this point sooner than 15 months into the case. I have seen many endings where the children are able to be reunited with their parents, as well as seeing parents relinquish their rights voluntarily. I am not here to say one situation is better than others, just that all of the choices in a case are made in the best interest of the child and their safety.

My favorite part of this job is knowing that every day I am making a difference in the life of at least one child. A favorite moment from my job has to be when a family I was involved with thanked me for helping their family. I have found this to be a rare occurrence, but I have at least that one memory of being thanked for what I do. My co-workers are also wonderful, because without working side by side on a team of 10 and having their support, I would not be able to be as successful in my job. This job has a high turnover rate and it takes a special type of person to do each side of the job. Even during my time at Saint Mary's College I enjoyed working with the children at the Notre Dame ECDC, and in this job I am allowed to continue working with children. Without my education at Saint Mary's and having professors push you because they know you can do better, I would not be as successful in my job. I hope that this has given you at least a glimpse of my job and I would love to hear from fellow graduates or current students if you have more questions.

Carlye Gibson M.S. (SMC 05')  
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**Congratulations!**

**Dr. Leslie Wang**

**On your tenure and promotion to Associate Professor**

## FACULTY SUMMER PROJECTS



The faculty have a busy summer ahead. Carrie will be teaching the first on-line sociology course at Saint Mary's. Additionally, Sociology faculty have been awarded the following grants: **Susan Alexander** — COSTAR grant with Anita Houck (RLST) for research on "Single in the Church: Theological and Gender-Studies Approaches to Single Adults' Congregational Practice and Spirituality " and a Wolsfeld CFAI Summer Teaching Grant on "Consumer Society: Rethinking Hyper-consumerism after the Stock Market Crash of 2009"; **Carrie Erlin**—a Faculty Development and Indiana Connections grant from the Cross Currents Program; **Leslie Wang**—Wolsfeld CFAI Summer Teaching Grant - "Social Inequalities in Education: A Course for All Students"; **Mary Ann Kanieski**—SISTAR Grant with sociology student Ashley Feely on "Studying Parenting Identities: A SISTAR Grant Proposal." Mary Ann's individual project is "Constructing Parenting Identity: Using Identity Theory to Examine Differences in Parenting Styles."

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**Share your post-SMC stories!**

E-mail Dr. Susan Alexander at [salexand@saintmarys.edu](mailto:salexand@saintmarys.edu) and let us know what you are up to!

## Congratulations and Best Wishes to the Sociology Class of 2010!

The SMC sociology class of 2010 includes (back row left to right):

Sarah Rompola  
Cristen Dalessandro  
Nori Drach  
Krista Durski  
Nichole Galullo  
Meghan McEvoy-Hein  
Allison Meeks  
Carly Zagaroli

Faculty in Front Row (Left to right)

Dr. Mary Ann Kanieski, Dr. Carrie Erlin, Dr. Susan Alexander, and Dr. Leslie Wang,



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