



North Central Sociological Association Annual Meeting: Saint Mary's Students and Faculty Participation

Thanks to a generous donation from sociology alumna, Tysus Jackson (SMC '99), for the tenth consecutive year the Sociology Department has been able to invite sociology majors to participate in the North Central Sociological Association's (NCSA) annual meeting. This year three sociology majors attended the conference, which was held in Pittsburgh, PA, from April 12-15, 2012.

Two seniors, Kelly Reidenbach and Mariela Aguilera, presented research from their comprehensive research projects in regular research sessions. Junior sociology major and president-elect for the Sociology Club, Alyssa Carty, was able to attend several interesting research sessions. As always, the students were accompanied by sociology faculty Susan Alexander and Leslie Wang.

Susan presented data from her fall sabbatical research project titled, "The Corporate Masquerade: Branding Masculinity through Halloween Costumes." Leslie presented research on "The 1.5 Generation: Gender and Class Differences among Chinese American

Adults."

The theme of the conference was "Renewing Sociology: Living Traditions and Creative Beginnings." The

keynote address, titled "Political Renewal: Occupations, Springs, and Tea Parties," was given by our Notre Dame colleague Dan Myers, Professor of Sociology and Vice President and Associate Provost.

We all enjoyed both the academic presentations and the wonderful dinner at NOLA on the Square with Sociology alumnae Sarah Medina Steimer (SMC '05) and Shelly McGrath (SMC '01), and our former sociology colleague Carollette Norwood, who is an assistant professor of Sociology in the Department of Africana Studies and an affiliated faculty member in Women's Studies and Sociology at the University of Cincinnati.



Susan Alexander, recipient of the 2012 North Central Sociological Association's Aida Tomeh Distinguished Service Award



The Aida Tomeh Distinguished Service Award recognizes a member who has provided outstanding service to the NCSA typically through a variety of activities and roles over an extended period of time throughout her professional career. Susan has been a fixture at NCSA meetings since 1993. She has been an organizer and/or discussant of 23 NCSA sessions at meetings. She has served on several committees including the Scholarly Achievement Committee, the Program Committee, the Nominations Committee, the Publication Policy Committee, the Teaching Section, the Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award Committee, and the Student Awards Committee – which she chaired for three years — and she served on the NCSA Council as Secretary for three years.

Susan has been diligent in involving her own undergraduate students in NCSA meetings over the years. She is a recipient of the Schnabel Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award (2004). Currently Susan serves as the NCSA's Public Relations Coordinator

with responsibility for design and maintenance of the NCSA website and editing the NCSA newsletter, the *North Central Sociologist*.

Sociology Major Mariela Aguilera wins 1st Place in the NCSA Student Paper Competition



Each year the North Central Sociological Association (NCSA) sponsors a student paper competition for both graduate and undergraduate students. Since 2004, Saint Mary's sociology majors have won a total of five 1st place awards, three 2nd place awards, and three 3rd place awards. This year the winning streak continued with senior sociology major Mariela Aguilera, who won 1st place in the 2012 NCSA Undergraduate Student Paper Competition

Mariela's paper, titled "El Paraiso del Traficante: A Content Analysis of Music Lyrics in Narcocorridos," was a content analysis of 31 narcocorridos. Corridos are ballads that, historically, have been sung for the purpose of expressing the current societal conditions in a given community. In recent years, a derivative of corridos, known as narcocorridos, has emerged. These songs portray the culture of drug trafficking.

The purpose of Mariela's research was to identify themes within the narcocorridos lyrics that may include positive or negative characteristics possessed by drug traffickers as well as other common themes that may not be automatically perceived to belong to such a community. The main themes found include the following: fantasy lifestyle, war-like violence, drug-trafficking persona, running the business, and reference to poor background.

Mariela concluded that her research study revealed unforeseen positive portrayals of drug traffickers that would not have been necessarily expected to be found in such a social phenomenon. The idea that drug traffickers are not simply cold murderers who are willing to kill innocent people is constantly brought to the surface within the lyrics. In the song lyrics, drug traffickers see themselves as courageous, loyal, and fearless people who are willing to fight back if they are threatened or if they need to protect their possessions or property. Otherwise, they aim to continue to run their business with as little trouble as possible, although they are always prepared for a fight. Ultimately, the songs paint a fantasy lifestyle of wealth and affluence while at the same time drug traffickers see themselves as being involved in a war-like battle whose sole purpose is to run their drug trafficking business next to honorable, loyal, and fearless individuals.

For winning 1st place, Mariela received a framed award certificate along with a cash prize.



A celebratory lunch with Susan Alexander, Mariela Aguilera, Kelly Reidenbach, and Alyssa Carty

Congratulations to Caroline Keep!

Caroline ('13) was awarded a Kahn Summer Internship Grants. This is the first year these grants have been awarded. The grants are competitive (only two were awarded) and given to students who are participating in unpaid internships for the summer that relate to their career goals. Caroline's internship will be with the Safe Haven Family Shelter in Nashville, TN.

Look for more information in the fall newsletter about Caroline's Internship experience.

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E-mail Susan Alexander at

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Sociology Students Abroad

Alyssa Carty

in Seoul, South Korea



Hi, I'm Alyssa Carty, a junior sociology major. In the fall 2011, I participated in the study abroad program in Seoul, South Korea. This is new program at Saint Mary's College. As of Fall 2011, three Saint Mary's students have participated in the program at Ewha Woman's University.

Ewha is the world's largest all women's college with over 20,000 students. Each semester, Ewha enrolls approximately 300 exchange students from all over the world and houses them in an on-campus international student dormitory. All exchange students speak English and can choose from over 500 classes taught in English.

While abroad, I took two sociology courses; the first course discussed leadership in society and focused on American leaders. I enjoyed the class but not as much as my second course, a special lecture on globalization. I was the only American in both of these classes; therefore, I was in constant dialogue with other interested students. It was fascinating to learn how they viewed the United States. In general, the other students admired American culture but believed that our culture is taking over the world. I learned that many countries use the term, *Americanization*, instead of globalization. I had never heard this term before, but I understood being in Seoul, South Korea, that American culture cannot be avoided. In the United States, we do not necessarily have to acknowledge other cultures. Other exchange students expressed similar Americanization processes in their home countries.

My semester abroad was an eye opening experience. I am appreciative of my classmates because they never asked me to speak on behalf of all Americans and never treated me negatively. This was an invaluable experience that has changed my perspectives and inspired me to pursue a "global career" after graduation. I sincerely hope that more Saint Mary's women will participate in this enriching program.

Caroline Proulx

in Freemantle, Australia



Greetings from down under! My name is Caroline Proulx, and I'm a junior sociology major studying abroad for the semester in Fremantle, Australia. In sociology, we often talk about the importance of getting a firsthand

account of a situation through ethnographies and interviews. One of the requirements for studying abroad is a six day field trip into the outback of Australia to learn more about aboriginal culture. This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience to be able to be on the land that aborigines have inhabited for tens of thousands of years and listen to them tell me about their culture.

Colin, our aboriginal host, had a nuanced understanding of cultural differences. He said he was able to consciously switch between white and aboriginal culture. He also told us the spirits would be angry if we took pictures of sacred ground without permission because it would be disrespectful. However, if other people took pictures, the spirits wouldn't be angry because the people didn't know better and weren't trying to be disrespectful.

My sociology background helped me understand the culture better than I would have without any sociology classes. I became even more aware of truly trying to understand different points of view. For example, one night we talked about spirits and singing — roughly equivalent to ghosts and voodoo. Instead of wondering whether these perspectives were true or not, I acknowledged that it was true for the aboriginals and wondered how this affected other aspects of their culture. While my experience in the outback would have been amazing regardless, I owe a great debt to my sociology professors for helping me get a deeper and more meaningful understanding of a different culture. I learned so much, and I'm sure my trip will only continue to help me understand sociology and life in general.

Congratulations and Best Wishes to the Sociology Class of 2012



The SMC Sociology Class of 2012 includes (back row left to right): Brianna Smith May, Mariela Aguilera, Maureen Barrett, Jessica Doherty, and Kelly Reidenbach

Front row: Sociology Faculty Mary Ann Kanieski, Leslie Wang and Susan Alexander

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