



Sociology Newsletter

spring 2006

SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS AND FACULTY ATTEND THE NORTH CENTRAL SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING



Jackie Saviñon, Stephanie Lutz, Susan Alexander, Katie Dingeman, and Sarah Medina

On March 23-25, 2006, Sociology Department faculty including Susan Alexander, Carolette Norwood, and Carrie Erlin accompanied eight Sociology majors to the North Central Sociological Association's annual meeting in Indianapolis, IN. The students included: Mary Kathleen (Katie) Dingeman, Diane Ihlenfeldt, Stephanie Lutz, Sarah (Sam) Medina, Stephanie Roth, Jacqueline Saviñon, Natasha Uffner, and Amanda Shropshire. The senior students presented their comprehensive research papers.

The theme of the conference was :”Making a Difference: Sociology as Social Activism.” The Plenary Address titled “Putting Activism and Movement Building at the Center” was given by Walda Katz-Fishman, professor of Sociology at Howard University. Dr. Katz-Fishman is also a board member of Project South: Institute for the Elimination of Poverty and Genocide. She spoke about the goals of the organization, which include creating opportunities for local grassroots organizations to develop skills for building social movement by using educational techniques.

SAINT MARY'S SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS WIN PAPER COMPETITION AWARDS

Two of our senior Sociology majors won awards in the 2006 annual undergraduate student paper competition sponsored by the North Central Sociological Association. The competition is open to all undergraduates in the United States and Canada.

1st place was awarded to Mary Kathleen (Katie) Dingeman for her paper “From War to “Refuge: A Case Study of Liberian Refugees Resettled in South Bend, IN.”

Katie's paper is based upon an ethnographic study of Liberian refugees resettled in South Bend who may be experiencing the forces of downward assimilation. Her paper assesses whether the Liberian community in South Bend currently holds the social antecedents necessary to obtain social capital that is necessary to prevent assimilation into poverty.



Katie Dingeman

The 3rd place award was given to Sarah (Sam) Medina for her paper titled “(Sexual) Minority Report: A Survey of Student Attitudes Regarding the Social and Cultural Environment for Sexual Minorities.” Sam's research project surveyed students at Saint Mary's College to examine their understanding and feelings about sexual minorities on our campus and to determine how much students knew about the resources available.

Both students received a certificate of recognition and a monetary award.



Sam Medina



Student Diversity at Saint Mary's College

By
Amanda Shropshire
Sociology Major and
Student Diversity Board
President 2005-06

During the past academic year I served as President of the Student Diversity Board. Diversity at Saint Mary's has become more than a fad this past year due to the dedication of the administration, faculty, and the students. The Student Diversity Board (SDB) in particular raises awareness regarding diversity issues among the student body. Serving as President of the Student Diversity Board for the past year, I have seen the women of Saint Mary's incorporating the concept of diversity in their everyday lives. This year, SDB took the approach of informing the students about the issue of diversity in general and explaining why it is important, instead of focusing on any specific racial, ethnic, or cultural group of people. Using this general approach, we brought together many diverse people on campus. Although the concept of diversity is broader than our campus, SDB addresses diversity issues on the Saint Mary's campus and that is the first step to change.

Amanda Shropshire is also the 2006-07 Undergraduate Student Representative for the North Central Sociological Association and the assistant editor for the NCSA newsletter. As a rising senior Sociology major and English writing minor, Amanda intends to pursue a career in journalism after college.



2007 ALPHA KAPPA DELTA

Congratulations to the 2007 sociology honors society Alpha Kappa Delta inductees (left to right): Sarah Medina, Natasha Uffner, Katie Dingeman, Chelsea Gulling, Laura Frechette, and McKenna Keenan. Missing from photo is Jessica Binhack.

Alumna Spotlight



Tysus Jackson, SMC 1999, has a few pointers for Sociology majors looking to enter the workforce. Before achieving her current job as Director of Development for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Virginia Tech University, Tysus attended Indiana University in Bloomington, earning a Masters degree in public administration with a concentration in non-profit management and philanthropy. She then returned to her hometown of Fort Wayne, IN, to work in economic development for a few years.

Today, Tysus is in charge of identifying resources for Virginia Tech University. She works closely with VTU alumni and praises her liberal arts education from Saint Mary's for giving her the background to be successful. "I worked in the career center [at SMC] for four years, so I didn't have any illusions about jobs...in my life I use a lot of what I learned in my classes every single day," Tysus said.

Tysus attributes some of her success to being a Sociology major and also to attending an all women's college. Tysus said, "Due to the experience of being in an all women's college, I was never intimidated. I think that a women's college builds a woman's confidence level and helps women to be leaders." She also stresses the importance of diversity. She encourages the women of Saint Mary's to take courses in Sociology at Saint Mary's, if not become majors themselves. "The only diversity, or diverse perspectives, I got at Saint Mary's was from sociology. In terms of understanding a complex global world, Sociology is the only department that did that," Tysus said.

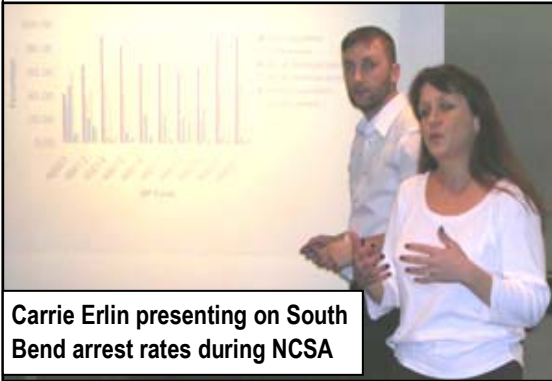
While she loves her current field of working in development, Tysus hopes to one day become the president of a community foundation within a city with a diverse population.

WANTED ALUMNAE BUSINESS CARDS

Students always what to know, "What can I do with a degree in Sociology?" Please help the Sociology faculty to discuss all the career options possible.

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

SOCIOLOGY RESEARCH PROJECT REVEALS RACIAL INEQUALITY IN ARREST RATES IN SOUTH BEND



Carrie Erlin presenting on South Bend arrest rates during NCSA

During the spring semester, Carrie Erlin, a Fellow with the Center for Women's InterCultural Leadership and lecturer for the Departments of Sociology and Justice Education led a research team analyzing patterns of arrests in the city of South Bend. The goal of the research was to determine whether race, income, and gender have a significant impact on who is arrested. The research team, comprised of three Saint Mary's students – Diane Ihlenfeldt, Melissa Tyler, and Natasha Uffner – and four students from local Ivy Tech Community College, presented the preliminary results of the research at the North Central Sociological Association's annual meeting March 23-25, 2006, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Carrie has expanded the research by incorporating data on ticketing patterns as well as arrest patterns. Results of the initial research appear to demonstrate some disturbing trends, particularly when focusing on race. For example, for low-level traffic infractions where an officer has discretion to give the driver a ticket or let the driver off with a warning, an African American driver is significantly more likely to receive a traffic citation (ticket), while a white driver is more likely to receive a traffic warning. Understandably, these results have generated a great deal of discussion in the local community. Carrie was asked to present summaries of the preliminary research to the South Bend Common Council and to enter into a discussion with the South Bend Police Department regarding the need for a more comprehensive study of police department practices and diversity training. The data and analysis will also form the basis for the 4th Annual Criminal Justice Symposium at Saint Mary's this October, which will focus on issues in race, social class, and crime. The research and analysis continues under Carrie's direction and will have new students joining the project for the fall 2006 semester.



Natasha Uffner and Diane Ihlenfeldt at NCSA

WOMEN AND MICROCREDIT IN AFRICA



Madame Onodobo and Marie Rose, an SMC student from Rwanda provided translation

During the summer of 2005, Dr. Carolette Norwood, assistant professor of Sociology, traveled to Cameroon, Central Africa, to learn more about microcredit organizations in Africa. During her travels, Dr. Norwood met Madame Francois Onodobo. Madame Onodobo is the founder and current president of Les Chrysalides, one of the microcredit groups locally referred to as *Tontines*. Microcredit programs are informal banking operations. In French speaking Cameroon, the establishment of microcredit programs is said to have originated among the Bamileke ethnic group in the northern region of Dscheng. Microcredit is an old concept and practice that dates back to Cameroon's pre-colonial era.

In November 2005 the Sociology Department, with co-sponsorship from the Center for Women's InterCultural Leadership (CWIL) and the Department of Business/Administration, the Women's Studies Program, and the InterCultural Studies Program, had the great pleasure of hosting a visit from Madame Onodobo.

She shared her experience in a microcredit program in Cameroon. She discussed how the organizations are typically structured and the benefits they offer women in particular. Madame Onodobo discussed how her organization does both – empower women and take the initiative to address the HIV epidemic in their community. In regard to the former, she spoke about a woman who makes hats with money she receives from the tontine. The hats are beautifully designed and she sells them for a small profit. This woman's participation in the tontine is done in secret. Her husband opposes her involvement in activities outside house and tries to regulate her mobility. Through membership in the tontine, she is able to make some money of her own and maintain a small savings for herself.

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2006!

The SMC Sociology class of 2006 includes (left to right) Sarah Medina, Jasmin Abbatiello, Natasha Uffner, Stephanie Roth, Stephanie Lutz, Diane Ihlenfeldt, Jackie Savinon, Jennifer Witherow, and Katie Dingeman . Missing from photo: Lauren Lydon, Angie Omanski, and Emily Romano.



The 2006 Sociology Award was given to Katie Dingeman, and the 2006 Donald N.M. Horning Award for the outstanding senior comprehensive paper was awarded to Sarah Medina.

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