



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

The North Central Sociological Association (NCSA) annual conference was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, from April 10-13, 2014. The conference theme was "Doing Good: Positive Behavior, Promising Programs, and Promoting Change." Professors Susan Alexander, Sheryl Switaj, and Leslie Wang, along with sociology majors Abby Madsen ('14) and junior Kelsey Collins ('15) participated in this year's conference.

Susan and Kelsey co-presented their research project titled "It's a

[White] Boy's Life: The Hegemonic Masculinity of Boys Scouts Magazine covers, 1911-2012." Leslie gave a teaching presentation titled "Race and

Ethnicity: One course for all students?" Abby Madsen, the Undergraduate Student Paper Competition Second Place Winner, presented her senior research project titled "Lost between Two Cultures: Construction of Ethnic Identity in Korean Adoptees Adopted into American families" in the North Central Student Sociology Conference (NCSSC), a conference housed within the NCSA.

Thanks to a generous gift from Tysus Jackson (SMC '99), both Abby and Kelsey were able to attend this conference.



(left to right): Leslie Wang, Kelsey Collins, Abby Madsen, and Susan Alexander



(left to right): Sheryl Switaj, Kelsey Collins, and Abby Madsen

Sociology Major Abby Madsen wins 2nd 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 Abby Madsen ('14) continued the tradition by winning 2nd place. Her paper is titled, "Lost Between Two Cultures: Construction of Ethnic Identity in Korean Adoptees Adopted Into American Families ." In this paper, Abby explains that finding a sense of belonging is difficult for an international adoptee child.

Using an on-line survey distributed to Korean adoptees of American families, Abby's study examines how Korean adoptees ethnically identify, and the factors that influence the ethnic identities within this population. The evidence suggests that Korean adoptees struggle with their ethnic identification, and that parents' emphasis on Korean culture as well as acts of discrimination and prejudice against the adoptee, affected ethnic exploration and identification.

Abby noted that this project was personal to her since it was a study of people who had a similar background of being Korean and adopted into American families. Congratulations Abby ! A copy of Abby's paper can be viewed on-line at: <https://www.saintmarys.edu/files/Madsen%20PAP%20F13.pdf>.



Abby receiving her award from NCSA Student Paper Competition Chair Todd Callais.



2014 Faculty Grants

This year two of the Sociology faculty were given Saint Mary's college grants. The first is the Student Independent Study and Research (SISTAR) grant given to Susan Alexander and rising senior Kelsey Collins for their project "Attacking Masculinity: An Examination of Hegemonic Masculinity in Two Television Series."



Susan and Kelsey will spend eight weeks this summer working collaboratively on this research project analyzing two television series, *Breaking Bad* and *The Walking Dead*. They will be examining how masculinities may be similarly constructed in these TV series, theorizing that both series depict an attack on hegemonic masculinity – men as provider and protector for the family – by various enemies (from cancer to zombies). The response of male characters in both TV series is for the men to aggressively fight back by attacking the enemies (i.e., that which threatens hegemonic masculinity). In other words, hegemonic masculinity is both being attacked while simultaneously attacking various forms of perceived subordinate masculinities.

The second faculty grant awarded this year, the Susan Wolsfeld Sociology Teaching Grant, was given to Leslie Wang for the development of the course Medical Sociology. According to the proposal "Health, Illness, Medicine, and Health Care: Designing a Medical Sociology Course," this grant will allow Leslie the opportunity over the summer to design a course which will introduce students to the field of medicine using sociological lenses. This includes focusing on issues of social inequities among groups in the medical system (e.g. doctors, nurses, hospital staff, patients, patients' families and other advocates). Students will learn about various life experiences and perspectives among groups in the medical field, allowing for an appreciation of the opportunities and challenges that shape the field of health and medicine. Look for this new course in the spring of 2015!

Sociology Majors and Minors Present at Notre Dame's "Bursting Gender's Bubble" Conference



Back row (left to right): Kelsey Collins, Hailey Shannon, Lucy MacFarlane & Kristin Murphy
Front row (left to right): Abby Burgan, Hannah Richmond, and Angela Bukur

The University of Notre Dame's Gender Studies Program, along with co-sponsor Saint Mary's College, co-hosted an undergraduate conference April 4 & 5, 2014, on the Notre Dame campus. Papers focused on any area of original research-based scholarship in gender studies, including literary criticism, sociology, theology, anthropology, economics, psychology, biology. Papers were accepted from colleges and universities in the Midwest. Scholarship that addressed the significance of gender—and the cognate subjects of sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, religion, and nationality—in all areas of human life, especially in the social formation of human identities, practices, and institutions was welcomed.

Several Saint Mary's sociology majors and minors had research papers accepted for presentation at the conference. Major Kelsey Collins and minor Helena Shannon were part of a group that presented on "The Sporting Life: Selling Masculinity in Sports Illustrated." The paper "Combat Boots and Varsity Jackets: Hegemonic Masculinity Portrayed in Teen Movies" was presented by sociology minors Angela Bukur, Kristin Murphy, and Hannah Richmond. Sociology majors Cara Firestein and Allison Sheets and minor Arianna Thelen teamed up to present the paper "Consumer Fatherhood: An Analysis of How 'The Father Life' Constructs Being a Father." Senior sociology majors Kaliegh Fields and Abigail Madsen presented their senior comps titled "Perceptions of Sexual Violence: Views of Sexual Assault on College Campuses" and "Construction of Ethnic Identity in Korean Adoptees Adopted into American Families." Congratulations to all of these sociology majors and minors who represented Saint Mary's College at this conference.

Sociology Alumnae

Nicole "Nikki" Witowski '08

Clinical and Research Programs Coordinator,
Neuroimaging Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Chicago

I graduated from Saint Mary's College with a degree in Sociology in 2008. Between then and now, I have largely worked in the cognitive research industry, starting in the corporate research sector in the data department at a contract research organization that supported the pharmaceuticals industry via clinical trials. Eventually, I moved from corporate research to academic research, working as a clinical and research programs coordinator for a neuroimaging laboratory at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Here, I coordinate the conduct of multiple federally funded psychiatric research studies. Our studies focus on brain function at the interface of cognition and affect, and the brain's response to medication and/or therapy in children with mood disorders.

Daily operations in the laboratory are highly variable. In the morning, I might be enrolling subjects and collecting data by performing fMRI brain scans or by interviewing patients. By noon, I'm preparing grant applications, editing manuscripts prior to publication, or interfacing with mental health workers. Before the day's end, I'm processing neuroimaging data through a computing language or analyzing demographic data with SPSS for an upcoming poster session. The work is

always engaging and it's always changing, often hour by hour. Most satisfying, however, is contributing to the local and scientific communities in a way that aims to improve the quality of life for people who suffer from mental illness.



Three experiences from my undergraduate education in sociology stand out as particularly instrumental to my current work: statistics and research methodology courses, the senior comprehensive, and assisting with faculty research. Statistics and research methods courses gave me a technical foundation, especially for understanding and analyzing data I would later build upon. The senior comprehensive familiarized me with all aspects of producing a research paper, from the informed consent process to properly formatting references

and presenting findings publicly. Completing research support tasks for faculty gave me further working knowledge of statistics and put into practice the research processes I learned about in lectures.

My training in sociology provided me with a unique and valuable skill set, and my sociology degree has served as a solid jumping off point for a career in the research field.



2014-15 Sociology Club

President: Kelsey Collins
VP: Cara Firestein
Treasurer: Allison Sheets
SAC Representative
Fall: Sarah Lee
Spring: Karlie Wolff
Secretary: Markie Harrison (not pictured)

Find us on Facebook!

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[SMC Sociology](#)

Share your post-SMC stories!

E-mail Susan Alexander at
salexand@saintmarys.edu
and let us know what you are up to!



Congratulations and Best Wishes to the Sociology Class of 2014



The SMC Sociology Class of 2014 includes
Edda (Stephany) Merlan, Abigail (Abby) Madsen, Kaliegh Fields, and Samantha (Sam) Marley
Front row:
Leslie Wang, Sheryl Switaj, Susan Alexander, and Mary Ann Kanieski

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