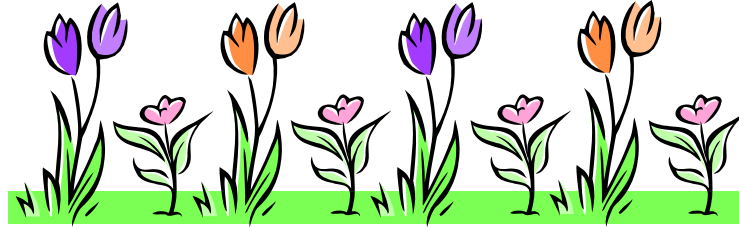


SOCIONEWS

A Biannual Newsletter from the Sociology and Anthropology Department at the College of New Jersey



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Spring 2006

Future Developments in Sociology Concentrations

Where Have the Concentrations Gone?

Amy Anderson

The rumor in the sociology department is that the recently proposed concentrations have “disappeared.” According to Dr. Rachel Adler, the newly appointed chair of the department, this is not exactly the case. Previously, the sociology department had proposed the addition of two new sociology concentrations, environment and social change and organizational and applied sociology, which would be added to the two existing concentrations in the department: social work and urban and ethnic studies. However, subsequent to the redesign of the Liberal Learning Program at the College, the department decided to put the proposed concentrations on the back burner and focus on the endorsement of one of the three Liberal Learning options: Option A.

For those of you who did not enter the college under the redesigned liberal learning program, like myself, Liberal Learning at the College (formally general education classes) has been divided into three options: Options A, B, and C. Option A is an approved interdisciplinary concentration that serves to fulfill all liberal learning requirements. The College currently offers fourteen approved programs that fall under Option A. One of these concentrations, environmental studies, contains several classes housed in the sociology department. As a result, the department has chosen to focus on students choosing

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an Option A program, rather than introducing new concentrations into the major at this time. “We think that it’s better to put all of our resources into the two concentrations and focus on Option A’s,” reports Dr. Adler.

Will the proposed concentrations reappear in the future? Possibly, says Dr. Adler, but “this is just not the time to do it. We need to nurture the concentrations we already have.” Sociology students should not be concerned, however: the sociology department continues to offer all previously existing classes, including those in the areas of the currently suspended concentrations.

For more information on the TCNJ Liberal Learning options, please visit <http://www.tcnj.edu/~liberal/concentrations/wgst.html>.

Students Involved in Sociological Research Projects

From Research to Real Life

Megan Saunders

The list of career possibilities displayed in the sociology and anthropology department provides dozens of choices of fields to choose from with a degree in sociology. But many people wonder and even ask whether all of the occupations could really be pursued professionally. One option in particular that I have been able to experience and critique through previous coursework and internships is public policy.

Last year I took the environmental sociology course taught by Dr. Bates to fulfill one of my elective requirements. Besides learning about the social affects of non-human environmental change and the public policies that have been implemented to manage their affects, each student wrote a paper through sociological prospective discussing a regulation or current environmental issue in New Jersey. I chose to do my research on the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act, a recent legislation passed in order to preserve the land and water resources of mountainous north-western New Jersey through restrictions on development, which at the time I knew very little about. Dr. Bates also invited a key speaker to address our class about the unique way New Jersey is growing and how the state plans maintain itself through policies in our State Plan, implemented through the Office of Smart Growth in Trenton. The State Plan ultimately designates where growth can and cannot occur as well as the type of development allowable in those areas through land use planning. With this knowledge, at the end of the semester I realized that land use policy, especially in New Jersey, was a path within sociology I wanted to know more about and decided to search for more experiences.

Over the course of the next year I took part in two internships which involved the principles of land-use planning in a public policy context. In fact, last fall I interned at the Office of Smart Growth in their policy unit and contributed to aspects of the State Plan. Ultimately, these experiences landed me in an internship at the Highlands Council, the staff that is in charge of the implementation of the Highlands Act

through a regional master plan. So far my experience of working in the public sector has proven to be quite rewarding. I have been able to use my social perspective in order to view certain policy issues, although coming from a sociology background has advantages as well as disadvantages in the public policy context.

Most importantly, sociological imagination helps me to examine the comprehensive issues that may occur as a result of a policy, such as being able to see the way people and institutions will be affected and the potential inequalities. Moreover, the knowledge I have gained about social interactions helps me to see how people will react to certain policies, especially those with a value-laden nature. The research skills learned in this major will also become quite useful in analyzing problems related to certain policies as well as studying affected populations to determine their need for government intervention. Alternatively, the economic and political background and effects that are part of policy development are much harder to understand and analyze without having special training in those areas. Fortunately, such deficiencies associated with my background in sociology are likely to be addressed as I continue to study policy next fall through a masters planning program.

Dennis Chin's Senior Thesis: Intersecting Religion and Ethnicity

Catherine Blake

Dennis Chin is a sociology major at TCNJ who is a "guinea pig" for judging the effectiveness of taking independent study before developing a thesis. He is currently about halfway through a study that examines relationships between ethnicity and religion. Dennis is exploring trends within on-campus Christian ministries, particularly among Asian American Christians. His participants are students in groups at The College, Princeton, Rutgers, and Rider who respond to online surveys and have the option of a 30 to 60 minute follow-up interview. Dennis has had a very good response and found the groups to be very welcoming. He has 70 participating students and 20 interviews lined up.

Dennis says that he has found potential connections between religion, ethnicity, and how

people shape their identity. Most of the trends in data correlate to the literature review that Chin complete before beginning the research, but there are some cases which go against previous research. There are mostly cases of ethnic specific ministries that break off from intermixed groups, but Dennis has found two cases where the groups do not endorse ethnic specific ministry. Asian Americans in these cases have said that being a Christian is their main identity, and this transcends other parts of identity such as gender and ethnic background.

The advisor of this project is Dr. Borland who has been very helpful and involved. Dennis did not become a sociology major until his junior year and says that he is now learning by experience. He is also currently the National Asian American Student Conference Co-Advocacy Chair. Chin's leadership role certainly highlights the College on a national scale. In this position he finds resources for other groups around the United States to utilize. In the future, Dennis might pursue a higher degree and would love to teach Asian American studies. The College's sociology department has significantly benefited from the Chin's ambitious contributions.

Dr. Clydesdale conducted seventy-five in depth interviews on a group of individuals one month before high school graduation, as well as a follow up interview one year later. He also spend one year at "NJ High", where he did participant observation to have a better grasp on students' lives. Additionally, being a college professor for twelve years has provided Dr. Clydesdale with anecdotal experiences of what he has observed from his students.

Research has helped him discover that, "students have become consumed with daily life management", such as relationships, gratifications, and finances.

As a future project, Dr. Clydesdale plans to follow up on his study with a look at young Americans (approximately 18-25 years old) and how they choose and establish their life's work. He plans on taking a look at social forces and assistance that aid students in choosing their life's path as well as guiding decisions they make.

Dr. Clydesdale's future studies will be sure to give us a sociological perspective on one of the biggest decisions we make in our lives: choosing our careers and life paths. Keep your eyes out for this exciting release of discoveries on determining factors and decisions that young adults face in to determining their future.

Faculty Involved in Sociological Research Projects

Dr. Clydesdale's Upcoming Book Publication

Lisa Trzesniowski

Dr. Clydesdale, professor of the Sociology department, will soon be celebrating the release of his new book with working title *The First Year Out: Understanding American Teens During their First Year out of High School*.

During our recent interview, Dr. Clydesdale shared his interest in understanding changes that occur after high-school graduation, which has been his main research topic for the past tens years. In order to gain a comprehensive, overall perspective of these changes,

Dr. Li's Research Seminar on the Reform in China

By Aileen Fallon

Responding to the current debate over the effect of economic reform on China's stability, The College's Dr. Rebecca Li is writing her first book. Although an independent interest in this subject originated while constructing her dissertation, Dr. Li has taken advantage of the intellectual and hardworking students enrolled in her Research Seminar course.

With Dr. Li's guidance, the six students have formed a quasi-research team, conducting qualitative research on the reform in China. Essentially, the responsibilities of the students, up to this point, have

been to individually read and analyze articles on the topic.

Each week, the students meet to compare and contrast their findings with their classmates and Dr. Li. Progressing into the second half of the semester, the six students will begin to diverge slightly; using their previous findings, each student will formulate questions and pursue more specific research topics.

At this juncture in the course, Dr. Li is very pleased with the effort put forth by her students. She also commented on the benefit of taking this type of course, which provides students with a unique and valuable perspective of the research process. Additionally, Dr. Li's students are enjoying the challenges presented by the course and the small, comfortable atmosphere of the classroom.

Looking toward the future, Dr. Li hopes to write the majority of her book while taking a sabbatical during the 2006-2007 academic year. Furthermore, Dr. Li is developing a course for those students interested in studying the globalization of China, which may be available the following academic year.

The Social Science Librarian

Christine Yacimek

Some of you have probably never met the Social Science librarian, Terrence Epperson, although he has been employed at the College since 2004. Along with being the Social Science librarian, he is an adjunct in the Sociology/Anthropology department, and has taught Introduction to Cultural Anthropology for several semesters, joining the very small Anthropology department here.

Dr. Epperson came to us at the College after already having done much with his life. He received a B.A. in history, and after looking for ways to channel his interests into something to make a living at, began to do cultural resources work. He became the Vice President of a small cultural resources consulting firm, and did work related to the federal environmental impact process.

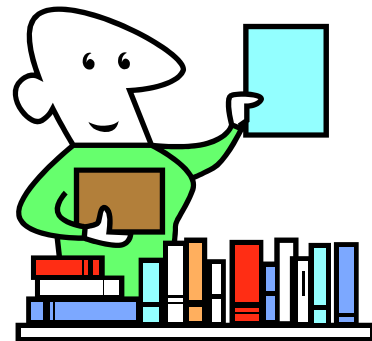
He had an early interest in archeology, and came to realize that it was only part of a broader field – anthropology. In 1991 he received a Ph.D. Degree in Anthropology from Temple University. His

dissertation is titled: "To Fix a Perpetual Brand": The Social Construction of Race in Virginia, 1675-1750. It is clear that the social construction of race is a topic of interest to him, as it comes up in his teaching of Introduction to Cultural Anthropology. He has also written several articles on the subject.

Dr. Epperson decided to become a librarian when he was looking for new challenges in his life. Having always been a fan of librarians and understanding the pressing need for librarians, he decided to get a degree in library science. He received his degree in 2003 from Drexel University.

Living in the Philadelphia area, Dr. Epperson had been aware of The College of New Jersey, and had heard good things about it. When the position of Social Sciences librarian for TCNJ was advertised, it seemed like a good fit, so he applied and became our librarian. His previous experience as an adjunct professor and his previous background in Anthropology fostered an interest in becoming active in the department, leading to his position as an adjunct here as well.

His research interests include looking at the area where Anthropology and Information Studies connect. He is very interested in Computer Supported Collaborative Learning, and the intersection between that field and librarianship. Dr. Epperson is delighted to be here, and says that the mission of a librarian is to make himself or herself more known. So the next time you're doing a research paper for one of your Sociology classes and need some help with resources, go visit Dr. Epperson in the library.



Sociological Perspectives from Across the World: Students Spend Time in England, Costa Rica, South Korea & Italy



Oxford: a Test of my Sociological and Professional Principle

Katie Nosker

As a suburban girl born and raised, I had never pictured myself feeling comfortable in an urban area. However, as my professional and sociological interests began to develop I found myself learning about (and even promoting!) the benefits of compact development, walkable communities, and urban areas in general. Eventually, I became uneasy as a result of the conflict between my personal preference for suburban areas and my professional desire to promote the benefits of an urban lifestyle.

Therefore, in embarking on my study abroad experience at Oxford, one of my goals was to test my theory that walkable communities are safe, vibrant, desirable, and feasible, in one of the most academically rigorous atmospheres in the world. I wanted to be sure that I could handle and that I truly believed in the urban planning principles I was promoting. This experience helped me discover that walkable communities really do promote a healthier lifestyle (as I walked at least five miles each day back and forth to New College, past the Gothic architecture, and through the Port Meadow), increased community interaction (since I came to know the shop owners of places like Meltz, a café just down the street from my house where I got my daily flapjack and vegetable panini, and Londis, a local grocery store, in my short stay there), and that the more people present in a given

place, the more eyes tended to be watching out for and preventing crime, thereby creating a safe environment.

As a result of this study abroad experience, I now feel completely comfortable pursuing a Masters in Urban Planning, have plans to live in New York City this coming summer, and am looking forward to a career devoted to promoting the environmental and social benefits of compact development.



The Sociology of Culture Shock

Catherine Blake

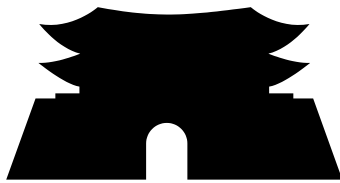
The past semester I studied abroad in San Jose, Costa Rica. Before I left the United States, I had heard of culture shock, but I had never actually experienced it myself. I knew that when people move from one culture to another, it can be very difficult to adjust to new social norms, however I did not realize how confusing and disorienting it is to experience a cultural difference for the first time.

There are many small, and some large, differences which I was introduced to as soon as I arrived in Costa Rica. For example, it is not customary for drivers to stop at red lights or stop signs, but it is normal to honk at passing cars and pedestrians. In the United States honking is often a way of showing anger, and it was confusing to see how calmly drivers reacted to the noise. Another change from American culture which was difficult to adjust to was the invasion of personal space. The second I met the mother of my Costa Rican home, she greeted me with a large hug and a kiss. Even after being in Costa Rica for a few weeks, I still had to remind myself to not step back or look anxious when I was greeted by a stranger.

Even though there were many small differences that were shocking at first, there were also large cultural variations. Differences between American and Costa Rican families were immediately apparent. In the United States an adult is expected to be independent, but it is customary, and very common, in

Costa Rica for sons and daughter to live with their families until they are married. In my Costa Rican home, the son who was 30 and has a very good job at the national newspaper, still lives in the home where he was raised. In Costa Rica family is one of the most important parts of life.

Although these examples, along with the many others I encountered, are initially very surprising, I was eventually able to enjoy the differences which make Costa Rican culture so unique. It is interesting and exciting to be able to experience a new culture and I enjoyed experiencing and gaining the shift in perspective.



The Fulbright Program: Sociological and Educational Opportunity in South Korea

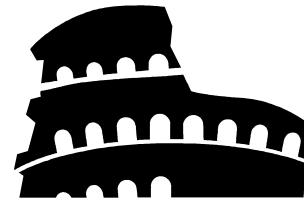
Hannah Benevento

Last summer, I began the law school application process. I was studying for the LSATs, researching schools and programs, and thinking about the personal statement. When September arrived, I embarked on my last year at the College with feelings of uncertainty for the future and excitement for a challenging year. Within the first month of school, I decided to temporarily abandon my plans for law school and pursue something of a different nature. After many discussions with friends, family, and mentors, I found myself longing for opportunity outside of the classroom setting. I wanted to experience new places and cultures and explore life outside of New Jersey. At this crossroad of my life, my former professor, Dr. Borland, informed me of the Fulbright Program. From that point on, I began the application process to become an English teaching assistant in South Korea.

With the help of Nancy Freudenthal, the College's Fulbright Representative, I wrote numerous drafts of my personal statement and project of study statement. The personal statement was the most challenging part because I found it difficult to describe my personality, ambitions, and experiences in just one

page. In addition to these statements, three generous and supportive professors wrote letters of recommendations. Lastly, I participated in a group interview to further explain my desire to be part of the English Teaching Assistantship Program.

For some of you, South Korea may not be your ideal destination. However, the Fulbright Program offers opportunities all over the world. Aside from the English Teaching Assistantship, the Fulbright Program encourages graduating seniors to pursue their own choice of study in a country. So what does this all mean? If you want to explore a new locale or pursue personal diplomacy, I would definitely recommend adding the Fulbright Program to your list of possibilities. As for me, law school is still a possibility in the future, but as for now, I hope to gain some new perspectives, long lasting memories, and maybe even a little culture shock.



Global Student Teaching in Rome

Laura Munice

As my global student teaching experience is quickly coming to an end, I find myself looking back at my expectations. Many of my prospects turned out to be what I hoped for – enhancing my skills in the field of teaching, gaining a close connection with the students and teachers surrounding me, and becoming worldly by visiting many other cities in Italy and throughout Europe. However, there were many parts of my experience that I did not anticipate, the biggest one being how diverse and multi-lingual the students were.

Let me preface this by saying that I have been teaching Pre-K at the American Overseas School of Rome. I was under the impression that most, if not all of the students, were American and would only speak English. That statement could not have been more wrong. The fact that I taught in the Pre-K had much to do with this, where only 11 out of the 16 3-year-olds spoke only Italian and understood limited English. However, in the 4-year-old classroom where I taught, 3

spoke only Italian, 6 could speak Italian and English, 8 could speak Hebrew and English, 1 could speak only Arabic, and only 3 could speak only English. At one table that seats four children, you could hear the languages of Arabic, English, Hebrew, and Italian.

The fact that these students were only 4-years-old really shows how behind the United States is with encouraging multi-lingual students. Because of this, I often found myself saying the phrase “No capisco Italiano, parlo Inglese” and having a “special translator for the day”. Even though my “Pre-Kers” couldn’t read or write yet, I often felt that they were smarter than me because of the way that they could switch between languages without hesitation. This experience has taught me to encourage my future students to learn another language, whether or not it is offered in the school.

Students Gain Valuable Knowledge from School and Professional Experiences

Kidsbridge: Integrating Sociology with College Students and Elementary School Students

By Nicole Hartman

“If you have a lot of active melanin, like my friend Taylor does, you are dark. If you have less, your skin is lighter, like mine.” This is one of the many teachings at the “Turn and Learn About Differences” station in the Kidsbridge Mini-Museum at the College. The mini-museum just opened this February in Forcina Hall, Room 111– the room that used to have all the laminators, color copiers and binding machines. It now features a powerful exhibit designed by the Chicago Children’s Museum titled *Face to Face: Dealing with Prejudice and Discrimination*. The exhibit focuses on teaching cultural awareness and tolerance, something very important in our ever-increasing diverse community and world. In 2006 alone, the museum hopes to be visited by over 1,000 students from the Mercer County region, most of whom live in Trenton.

The mini-museum is operated by Kidsbridge, Inc. (www.kidsbridgemuseum.org), a very small non-

profit organization devoted to encouraging diversity. Most of its members are made up of student volunteers and interns from the College. Kidsbridge is also involved with anti-bullying, anti-gang and character education programs in Trenton, as well as the annual Young Humanitarian Community Service Competition for the entire county.

I personally discovered Kidsbridge last semester when I began searching for an internship as part of my senior seminar requirement. As a dual major in sociology and elementary education I wanted to be involved with something relevant to both disciplines. Through my social network I found Lynne Azarchi, the executive director of Kidsbridge, Inc. Lynne was glad to hear from me, as she is with all volunteers and interns, and she offered me the opportunity to join the organization.

Through the internship, some of the opportunities available to me include managing the mini-museum, interacting with students and their teachers, creating a teacher’s guide with pre- and post-visit activities, organizing and giving a campus walk, learning how to write grants, and drafting a press release to be published in the *Trentonian*. I have been able to apply many of the skills gained throughout college to this internship, such as organizing, writing effectively, and creating teaching materials.

Additionally, my sociological background has given me a unique perspective. For example, my knowledge of minority groups and race relations has helped me to develop compassion and tolerance towards diversity, while my familiarity of urban youth and social problems has helped me relate to students from the inner city. Even more, by understanding social structure and organizations, I have been able to understand the survival, function and struggles of a non-profit organization in an economy based on capitalism.

Thus far, working with Kidsbridge has been a satisfying experience. It is gratifying to know that I am contributing my services to an organization that is based on the betterment of our society and, at the same time, I am helping to make students more open-minded and respectful individuals. If only there were more organizations like Kidsbridge, the world would be a better place... but then, sociology would not be so interesting.

Sociology in Rural New Jersey

Dave Nicotera

Upon beginning my student teaching experience in a place called Sergeantsville, NJ, a name which approximately three students here at the College recognized, I was not expecting to experience too many earth-shattering sociological observations. The school website advertised the school's location as "rural western New Jersey." The two terms *rural* and *New Jersey* should never be placed in the same paragraph, I thought, save for an SAT analogy. My experience so far as a first grade teacher, though, has revealed a type of physical and social environment not commonly associated with the state of New Jersey.

For one thing, the school and surrounding area are not diverse by racial standards. Before visiting the school, which is in Hunterdon County, I managed to obtain data online that said there were three black students. Could that number possibly be accurate? From my observations, unless a couple of those students are absent every day, the number of three is actually too high.

Research shows that the lack of racial diversity can be seen throughout the entire northern region of west New Jersey. The 2000 Census shows that the overwhelming majority of these census tracts which border Pennsylvania have white populations of over 96 percent of all residents. Hunterdon County itself has a population in which 97.7 percent of its residents are white. Asians and Hispanics make up for about one percent each, while only .4 percent are African American. That is a miniscule ratio of one out of every 250 people.

The most intriguing issue regarding this general lack of diversity, as well as the open space, in Hunterdon County and throughout the rest of north western New Jersey is that it seems to be unbeknownst to most people. I certainly did not expect to teach children on farms who list horses, ponies, and pigs among their pets from just thirty minutes from Ewing. Diversity or not, the schools and community spirit are alive and well in Sergeantsville. I certainly do not intend to criticize the area for its unique rural elements. Yet it is important and intriguing to recognize this region in New Jersey which starkly contrasts the image that many people have of the nation's most densely populated state.

A Worthy Cause: AKD Students Help Community Program

Bethany Blundell

This semester, Alpha Kappa Delta candidates will be volunteering their time at Mobile Meals of Trenton/Ewing as part of a new service component for eligibility. All AKD candidates will be giving their time to pack and deliver meals to Mobile Meals participants.

Mobile Meals is a non-profit organization that delivers food to people who are homebound due to illness, age, or mental or physical challenges. Started in 1973, Mobile Meals delivers 41,000 meals each year to 500 people in the area. The program is supported by The United Way of Greater Mercer County, The United States Department of Agriculture by way of the Mercer County Office on Aging, local churches, and numerous other foundations and organizations.

The purpose of Mobile Meals is to encourage the health and well-being of clients as well as promote independence and decrease feelings of isolation by delivering meals personally to each individual. In addition to healthy meals, Mobile Meals also provides voter registration forms, absentee ballots, education materials, and emergency food boxes during inclement weather. The services of Mobile Meals are provided for as long as needed, varying from a few weeks to a permanent arrangement.

In order to provide a high level of service, Mobile Meals relies on volunteers, ranging from high school and college students to senior citizens, to deliver meals each weekday to over 180 participants. With such a large number of clients, it is easy to see why help is needed.

More information about Mobile Meals of Trenton/Ewing can be found at www.mobilemealstrenton-ewing.com or by calling 609-695-3483.

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