

# SOCIONEWS

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



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## Dr. Adler's Vision for the Department

Hannah Benevento

As the new Sociology and Anthropology Department chair, Dr. Rachel Adler has great vision for the department. During our recent interview, Dr. Adler explained that her main goal for the department will be to promote the three new sociology concentrations: Urban/Ethnic Studies, Environment and Social Change, and Applied and Organizational Sociology. Currently, the Urban/Ethnic Studies concentration is the only one available to students, but she intends to have the other two concentrations in full force very soon. These concentrations will have corresponding electives within the department, but each concentration allows students to take classes in other departments that fulfill the topic area. This structure offers great flexibility to students in that they can easily pursue a double major, while fulfilling his or her liberal learning requirements. Dr. Adler explains that the three optional concentrations are specifically geared towards 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, because they are relatively new to the department. Overall, these interdisciplinary concentrations allow students to gain a body of knowledge with a specific focus and Dr. Adler wants to get the word out.

Besides the new concentrations, Dr. Adler commented on the strengths the department has to offer for students. The Sociology and Anthropology Department professors cover a broad range of knowledge that includes both quantitative and qualitative work, as well as a vast geographic range of study. Also, most professors are active outside the classroom environment. They continuously work to publish their research, and even recruit students in the process. Dr. Adler emphasized those students who participate in research gain a practical application outside of the theoretical realm. As far as weaknesses are concerned, Dr. Adler recognized that the department staff is often stretched to the maximum capacity, but she hopes to hire other staff members in the future. Clearly, the student body can expect great things from Dr. Adler and the new department concentrations.

## Organizations and Applied Sociology Concentration: A Work in Progress

Aileen Fallon

Although still in a state of planning, the Sociology Department at The College of New Jersey will be introducing its newest concentration option: Organizations and Applied Sociology. Last year the department launched its first option, the Urban and Ethnic Studies concentration, and in Fall 2006 the Environment and Social Change concentration should also be available. This third alternative, Organizations and Applied Sociology, is the final component of the department's goal to enable Sociology majors to focus their studies on specific topics of interest. Professor Elizabeth Borland has been selected to head the development of this program.

Throughout their academic experience at TCNJ, Sociology students gain valuable methodological skills with which to research and

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analyze populations. With this latest concentration, students actively put these skills to use, while working with non-profit organizations and social service agencies. As of this spring semester there will be two electives available for the Organizations and Applied Sociology concentration and additional choices are being developed. Through field work with local organizations, these courses help students to obtain concrete experience and community engagement. Furthermore, each of the concentrations allows students to take an interdisciplinary approach to their course selections. The Organizations and Applied Sociology concentration will incorporate a list of relevant courses that students may select from other departments, such as the School of Business, to fulfill requirements. Interested students should inquire about this concentration which should be available next year.

FA's Note: While students are encouraged to investigate the new concentrations, concentrations in pre-Social Work and a general sociology major will continue to be offered in the department, as is a minor in anthropology. If you are interested in finding out more about these concentrations, contact:

Pre-Social Work: Thomas Swiatek  
Anthropology Minor: Rachel Adler  
Urban/Ethnic Studies: Rachel Adler  
Environment/Social Change: Diane Bates  
Organizations/Applied: Elizabeth Borland

## **Professor's Appearance on News Highlights Campus Crime Work**

David Nicotera

Dr. Howard Robboy, a professor at the College, was recently interviewed on New York's FOX 5 News in a segment regarding the under-reporting of sexual assaults on college campuses. While the report was inspired by a couple of well-documented cases at New York University, the problem of campus crime statistics contradicting reality is present just about everywhere. Luckily for College of New Jersey students or potential victims, not too many individuals are as learned on the subject as Dr. Robboy.

Dr. Robboy first became involved with the subject after multiple students at the College informed him that they had been victims of sexual assault, and

that the crimes had failed to spark appropriate action from the College. He eventually contacted those involved with the "Clery Act," a law enforced by the Department of Education that requires most colleges to disclose crime information to the public. After being informed of the proper procedure of handling such a situation, Robboy eventually alerted the federal government about several assaults of which he was aware that were publicly unreported, leading to a 2000 investigation.

Since then, The College of New Jersey is undoubtedly a more victim-friendly environment, despite the fact that the crime numbers have risen.

"We are at the forefront (of honesty in reporting crimes)," says Robboy. "Most schools, if they want to be fair to their students, should look to TCNJ."

The Clery Act violations of the College mostly occurred during a period of transition within its administration, and by all accounts, the current administration, led by President R. Barbara Gitenstein, has embraced honesty and fairness to students over image. Compared to zero sexual assaults reported in 1997, seventeen such crimes at the College were reported publicly in 2004. Considering the U.S. Dept. of Justice estimates that up to twenty percent of women are the victims of rape or attempted rape during their college careers, the higher numbers in reported sexual assaults should be comforting to potential students and parents instead of menacing.

In a Philadelphia Inquirer story from March 28, 2005, Gitenstein said, "It sounds strange, but if we're successful, our numbers will continue to go up."

Robboy's involvement in the issue has led him all the way to his current status as an advisory board member of Security on Campus, Inc., the organization which helped found the Clery Act. Recently, he was integral in the investigation of William Paterson University, which was ultimately found to be in violation of the law. Following these cases, other schools are being targeted for violations.

Robboy says that the message in his work is that "there are no truly safe schools, but there are responsible schools." With his work with the Clery Foundation, the number of responsible schools is growing slowly, but surely.

## Perspectives from Across the World: Students Spend Time in Israel & England

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### Israeli Army from a Tourist's Perspective

Laura Munice

While traveling for ten days in Israel this past June, I noticed many things that were quite different from the culture in the United States. Aside from the typical aspects of life that are generally different on another continent, such as the food or language, there was one feature that still fascinates me months after my journey: the military life. Israelis have become so acclimated to the military presence in their day to day life that it is comparable to the common presence United States police force. Especially in the cities, one could easily find an Israeli soldier just as you would find a police officer standing on a corner in New York City. It is such a common aspect of life in Israel that they possess the expression “soldier’s tan,” in comparison to our “farmer’s tan”.

One reason for its vast military appearance throughout the country, besides Israel’s obvious warfare-state, is the fact that every Israeli has a compulsory service in the army for 2-3 years. It is a way of life for them and most do not think twice about it. I had the pleasure to spend 5 of my 10 days with eight Israeli soldiers, all 18-20-year-olds. Talia, one of the soldiers on my trip, explains, “We don’t think about it, we just do it. All of our friends and family do it, it’s just the way of life.” Although this may not be everyone’s viewpoint, from my experiences it seems to be the norm.

I think the feature that surprised me most about the Israeli military is how young the majority of the soldiers are. When I will be graduating college this May and starting my career, Israelis the same age as me will just be starting their higher education. Many of the soldiers expressed the opinion that serving causes them to postpone their life.

Overall, my experiences in Israel enabled me see one more thing that I take for granted living in the United States. If my great-grandparents migrated to Israel instead of the United States, I too could just be

finishing up my compulsory service to the Israeli army instead of my fourth year in college.

### TCNJ Sociology Student Studies at Oxford

Katie Nosker

Have you ever had the desire to explore another country, to see castles and other cultures, or to experience life from another’s perspective? Well, I certainly do, and I have chosen to do it through the Oxford Study Abroad Program. Yes, that’s right, a College of New Jersey Student can study at one of the most prestigious universities in the world for a reasonable price.

The decision to study abroad is not an easy one; choosing the “perfect program” can be a daunting task, especially since the College has around 200 programs from which to choose. Personally, I began my search during my freshman year. I was not looking seriously into going abroad, but I wanted to keep my options open, so I looked at programs in Costa Rica, Italy, the Czech Republic, Australia, and the United Kingdom. I finally settled on Oxford because of its obvious repute and history, its location in a town (so it is neither in a huge city nor off in the boonies), and the fact that I would get to study whatever I want with some of the most distinguished faculty in the world.

The application process itself was impressively convoluted and difficult. First, the College required that I apply for acceptance to study abroad through the Global Programs office; next, they were to send my application to the Oxford Study Abroad Program. Being the rather anal student that I am, I turned my application in about three weeks before the deadline, just to be sure that nothing would go wrong. Unfortunately, this precaution was not enough. I decided to check on the status of my application about a week after the deadline had passed only to discover that the College had lost a vital piece of information, and had failed to inform me. I hurriedly recollected this information and resubmitted it. I double checked in another two weeks to find that they *still* had not mailed my application even though I had already been accepted by TCNJ and the deadline had long since passed. Eventually, the Office of Undergraduate Global Programs did mail my application successfully, but I would advise all students who wish to study

abroad to check up with the Global Programs Office as often as they need to in order to be absolutely sure that their application gets into the right hands.

I now stand on the threshold of adventure. One week from today, I will arrive at Oxford and start my classes which will include British Land Use Planning and the Geography of Inequality, geography being very similar to sociology. My classes will be in the form of tutorials in which I will meet one on one with an Oxford Don, or professor, on a weekly basis. I am a slightly intimidated by this unique and highly self-directed form of study, but I also welcome the challenge. I cannot wait to spread my wings and see if I can fly!

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## Students Involved in Sociological Research Projects

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### From SOC-302 to ASA

Nicole Hartman

When I stepped through the door into my SOC-302 class last fall, little did I know that I was beginning a journey that would lead me to Philadelphia at the 100th American Sociological Association (ASA) Annual Meeting. What I did know was that I was apprehensive because this course, Quantitative Research Methods, has a reputation of being extremely challenging. I quickly learned that I just needed to put forth a consistent effort and that my worries were exaggerated.

My professor, Dr. Diane Bates, had high expectations for her students. She required that we use the General Social Survey (GSS) to collect and analyze data, and then construct a term paper that contained the parts of a professional sociological research article. She was willing to give endless effort to help us succeed as long as we were prepared to do the same. Needless to say, it was demanding, but in the long run those stressful days and sleepless nights paid off!

The term paper entailed an evaluation of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Given the vastness of the GSS data set, the possibilities were almost endless. Having a dual major

in elementary education and sociology, I was intrigued to investigate an aspect dealing with both disciplines. I decided to look at how one's level of education tends to affect his or her happiness and satisfaction in different life aspects. After developing the topic idea, research hypotheses, annotated bibliography, theoretical framework, data, analysis, and conclusions, the final paper titled "The Effects of Education Attainment on Subjective Wellbeing" came together

Yet, when the course ended in December, my work was hardly done. Professor Bates suggested that I submit my paper to the ASA for possible selection to the Annual Meeting. Despite her confidence, I was not convinced that my paper was good enough to be selected. Still, I decided that after all the time and energy we put into it, it was worth a shot. After a bit more editing and drafting I submitted the paper and crossed my fingers.

In March I received an acceptance letter from the ASA. My research was chosen to be presented at an undergraduate panel session. It was one of only 15 undergraduate papers chosen nationwide for an oral presentation. Another student from TCNJ, Christine Yakimec, was given this honor as well. It felt awesome to receive such a mark of distinction, and I was pleased to represent TCNJ among other great schools like Cornell University, the University of Chicago, and the University of California at Berkeley.

I spent the summer preparing for August when I would have to speak in a student session with four other undergraduates. The session focused on "Chronic Stress and Social Location" and discussed how socioeconomic status influences one's quality of life. My research contributed to the development of this discussion, as socioeconomic status undoubtedly has an effect on a person's educational attainment.

As the days approached, my anxiety about public speaking began to get the best of me. When I entered into the Grand Salon at the Marriott Hotel on August 14, 2005 and saw hundreds of chairs I thought, "Why did I sign up for this? I hate giving presentations." Nevertheless, once again, my worries were exaggerated. The majority of the audience consisted of family, friends, and professors who were all there to provide support for the presenters in a very friendly, relaxed atmosphere. Of course, Professor Bates was there too, despite having heard my presentation numerous times before. I was given 15 minutes to present my research, and when it came time

to do so, I was surprisingly calm. After all, due to the collective work of many wonderful professors, I knew it better than the back of my hand.

I was glad to be done, but I will never forget the great experience. I learned so much from my fellow presenters and even more about myself. Consequently, my advice to any future SOC-302 student would be to apply a consistent effort, put pride into your work, and to not doubt your ability to amaze yourself, for maybe you will be the next one on a presentation panel at the 2006 meeting in Montreal!

### **Housing Inequalities in New Jersey: Student-Faculty Research**

Christine Yakimec

To experience real sociological research in a team setting as an undergraduate college student, a student-faculty research course is one of the best options. This semester, Dr. Diane C. Bates and a team of seven senior Sociology students are looking at housing policies and land use across the state of New Jersey in a research course titled “Environmental Regulation, Housing, and Environmental Justice in New Jersey.”

The focus of the course is on housing and land use policies across the state of New Jersey. In tasks that range from deciding on and collecting data on important variables to reading and reviewing literature, the students in this seminar have a first-hand view of how sociological research is done in a real world setting. The research done for this course has several aspects including book reviews and article summaries, as well as the collection of information regarding land use and housing in New Jersey municipalities from different areas of the state.

Each of the eight researchers will look at two specific municipalities and collect a wide range of data for each. The final dataset is to include everything from economic factors to environmental and educational factors from municipalities in very different regions of the state. The variables were developed by the research team and include data to conceptualize socio-economic class and environmental ‘goods’ and ‘bads.’ Many variables were considered in the brainstorming phase, but some were found to be inconsistently measured or unavailable for all of the municipalities and therefore abandoned. It is

important to realize that in real research the data does not always come out as expected and there can be problems with collecting the preferred types of data. The final data collected about the sixteen municipalities will be combined into a case study with a narrative history of each municipality.

The case studies are only one aspect of the research process for this class. Each researcher is also responsible for three book reviews and many article reviews on topics related to the topic of housing and land use. These can be used to create an extensive literature review on the topic. The final aspect of the class is a regulatory report in which each researcher is responsible for researching an environmental regulation in the state of New Jersey.

All together, the research will give a view of the housing and land use situation in New Jersey and the inequalities and trends in housing and land use. This experience in data collection and analysis with a look at the real sociological research process is very valuable for students involved in research classes.

### **Social Movement Timelines: Assisting Faculty Research**

Joe Garavente

Most would agree that the most valuable experiences in sociology take place outside the traditional classroom setting. This past Summer I enjoyed the experience of working alongside a professor of sociology, Dr. Elizabeth Borland, as she wrote up a manuscript on the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. As her research assistant, I compiled relevant information regarding the Madres from scholarly journals and Argentine newspapers. The experience provided the opportunity to carry out various methods of research and additionally offered to me a glimpse into the publication process.

As I thumbed through scholarly journals looking for relevant information I could not help but compare the process to the research sociology students carry out for their classes. Though it was very intimidating at first I soon realized that, as a student of sociology, I was pretty well equipped to conduct research. I surprised myself with how well my classes had conditioned me for this experience. I used the same research databases from the TCNJ library website and summarized articles similarly to how I would as if I

was simply writing a paper for a class. As familiar as I seemed to be with the research process, I enjoyed new experiences such as newspaper tracking as well as using a program called EndNote which automatically organizes sources.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the research I conducted was the newspaper tabbing, which tracked the past several years of the Madres' activity through examining newspaper articles. I reviewed articles in an Argentine newspaper that described activities of the Madres and categorized them according to the subject of the articles. This research revealed the changing scope and purposes of the Madres' movement as they've matured over the years. This method would be extremely helpful in tracking the maturation of basically any social movement or any significant news event. For example, what would a newspaper tab of recent months reveal about the evolving effort movements to aid victims of hurricanes in the Gulf region?

FA's Note: EndNote is available campus-wide at TCNJ from the SAL Applications menu under "Library Applications Menu."

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## **Students Gain Valuable Knowledge from School and Professional Experiences**

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### **Ten Minutes Can Make All the Difference**

Amy Anderson

As an elementary education and sociology major, I have had the opportunity to experience my elementary education school placements through a sociological perspective. During both my junior and senior years, I have been placed in elementary schools only ten minutes from my off-campus house in Ewing. However, depending on the direction, ten minutes can make all the difference.

During my Junior Professional Experience (JPE), I was placed in an elementary school in

Hopewell Valley, one of the more affluent towns and school districts in New Jersey. An immediate and quite apparent feature of the school was the level of parental involvement present. Without exaggeration, parents virtually fought over who would receive the coveted position of "room mother" for their child's class. After completing an art project with her class, a teacher in an upper grade immediately received a phone call from an unhappy parent concerned that her child was not being "challenged" enough. The school appeared to be a model of parent/teacher communication at its finest: notes went back and forth between parents and teachers on a daily basis and no parent was left in the dark concerning their child's performance in school.

In contrast, I am currently completing my senior student teaching experience in Trenton. Recently the school's annual Back-to-School Night took place, and only three out of twenty-seven parents visited my cooperating teacher's classroom. The parents that attended were those of the three most successful and hardworking students in the class, a fact I feel is extremely significant. Numerous studies have been conducted that positively correlate parental involvement with student achievement in school.

As elementary school students, children oftentimes take on the values of their parents, and if parents do not treat education as a priority at home, students are likely to adopt their viewpoint as well. Though certainly there are exceptions to these generalities, the disturbing truth remains that if students are not motivated by the interest and involvement of their parents, they may lack the determination necessary to succeed in school.

### **Brownfields Redevelopment in Trenton**

Lisa Trzesniowski

Brownfields redevelopment is a program that focuses on community improvements in hopes of stimulating economic growth in industrialized urban areas. This program was created to make use of abandoned and possibly contaminated buildings and the surrounding land in ways that will benefit the community. New industries, schools, and parks are commonly constructed in areas that were once only eye sores to the community, giving community members something to take pride in. This can be seen locally in

neighboring Trenton, which has undergone drastic change from a highly industrialized area to a city with an unstable, deteriorating economy where many factories have been left abandoned.

Although the Brownfields remediation program has proved to be successful and beneficial, it is a time-consuming process that requires both governmental and community support. Since a goal of the program is to improve the living standards of local community members, it is necessary for members of the community to share their ideas for use of the land. In addition to this community involvement, it is required that the government supplies enough funding to complete the redevelopment. This often happens by collecting monetary damages from those responsible for the original contamination. Many projects have been delayed due to lack of financial assistance or the inability to monetarily collect damages as well as the inability to find the appropriate responsible party.

The potential for Brownfields redevelopment in creating a more economically stable, healthy environment for the city of Trenton is very encouraging; however, it will require further assistance from the community, government, and industries that were involved in the contamination of the city of Trenton. Since the program requires a great deal of research, planning, and reconstruction, the outcome is still unknown; however, many recent projects have proved to be successful and hopeful for the Trenton area.

Upon taking a course in Environmental Sociology, I became interested in redevelopment in urban areas and wanted to research programs being utilized to better these communities. Brownfields redevelopment was a program I researched that specifically affected the Mercer county area in an attempt to strengthen the economy and create a better environment. Now that I am student teaching in Chambersburg, which happens to be the specific area of Trenton that I researched, I have seen the evidence that the area, along with its community, is steadily being redeveloped. Not only are some buildings and the overall environment changing, but the educational system is also attempting to strengthen the schools' programs and teaching methods. Is it possible that once one aspect of an environment is redeveloped, others regions of the community strengthen as well? Hopefully the future of Trenton will prove that

Brownfields redevelopment, education, and the environment will all be advantageous to the re-creation of a better community for the city of Trenton.

## **Sociology at Work**

Bethany Blundell

“What are you going to do with a degree in that?” I am pretty sure that every person majoring in Sociology has heard this question at least once when asked about their field of study. It seems to be a common misconception that a bachelor's degree in sociology is useless unless you are planning to go to straight to graduate school or into the field of social work. While either of these options might be the right one for you, there are many other opportunities in which a degree in Sociology can be valuable. An internship is a great way to experience something new while applying the knowledge gained from classes at the College in ways you might not have thought possible.

This semester I am working at McCarter Theatre as a Special Events Intern. While helping out with marketing projects and fundraising events, I have the opportunity to interact with a wide variety of people as well as a number of different profit and not-for-profit groups. So far I have been able to use my knowledge from my Sociology classes in order to effectively communicate with the people I come in contact with. I also find that looking at things from a sociological perspective provides me with different and creative ways of approaching problems, which is often appreciated by the people I work with at the theatre.

Through this internship, I actively perceive that Sociology is all around and that the degree that I will graduate with in May will help me in just about any career I decide to pursue. My internship has helped to demonstrate that the question should not be “What are you going to do with a degree in Sociology?” Instead, it ought to be, “What aren't you going to do with a degree in Sociology?”

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