

*"The official
newsletter for the
TCNJ Department
of Sociology and
Anthropology"*

SocioNews

Welcome to SocioNews



Included in this Issue

- Letter from the Editors.....Pg. 1
- The Bridge Between Education & SociologyPg. 2-3
- Professional Research.....Pg. 4
- Behind the Prison Gates.....Pg. 5-

Thank you for your interest in reading the Spring 2017 newsletter for TCNJ's Department of Sociology and Anthropology in collaboration with the Alpha Kappa Delta Sociology Honor Society! This issue features articles varying from sociological concepts and experiences beyond the classroom to reflections on global engagement and real-world applications of the sociology degree. We hope to engage, educate, and empower our readers to better understand the opportunities available within the undergraduate sociology department.

Today, college students are constantly bombarded with messages about individual differences that separate us from one another. A contemporary perspective inspired by sociology allows these students to move beyond a superficial view of global citizens and focus on our collective capabilities instead of our social divisions. This issue represents the united effort of TCNJ's sociology students to encourage the student body to come together and exemplify a campus-wide sense of unity.

-Meg Beane-Fox and Deontee Davis, Editors



This newsletter is made as a collaborative effort by members and candidates of the Alpha Kappa Delta Sociology Honor Society

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The Bridge Between Education & Sociology

As juniors at The College of New Jersey we have all taken sociology classes where we have learned the importance of learning through experience. The sociology department here at TCNJ, encourages us to step outside the classroom to learn what the world is like outside of our campus. As double majors in both elementary education and sociology, we were excited to be able to combine our passion for teaching and sociology through a community outreach program this past winter.

It is no secret that American schools suffer from an education gap due to socio-economic factors. These social issues sparked interest within all three of us, so we decided to spend time in a Title One school to see how socio-economic inequalities impact students in school. For our community outreach program we volunteered at an after school program in the heart of Trenton, New Jersey.

We read stories to the students, planned art projects, helped with homework, and talked to the children. Immediately upon arriving in the 4th/5th grade classroom that we were selected to be in, we noticed that there was a limited amount of resources, compared to the suburban classrooms that we have all student taught in. The one resource that stood out to us the most, was the classroom library.

(Featured below is a comparison of the bookshelf in the Trenton school where we volunteered to one of the classrooms in Ringoes, New Jersey).

After realizing this trend within the school we volunteered in, we took it upon ourselves to bring items that the students do not get access to regularly in their daily school lives. We wanted to give these students experiences that other students, in different school districts receive.



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The Bridge Between Education & Sociology (cont.)

Ultimately, we wanted to make an impact during the time we were there, and in a small way close the education gap. In order to do so we brought supplies that we have seen in other after school programs. This included books for read alouds, allowing the children to read books that they have never read before, as well as supplies for arts and crafts. The craft that the students enjoyed that most was a Thanksgiving themed craft, which went along with a Thanksgiving read aloud.

We brought in materials for the students to make their own bookmarks that looked like turkeys, which we thought would be helpful since they told us they read everyday in school. (Featured below are some of the examples of the turkeys that the students made.) After talking to the students they seemed very thankful and said they enjoyed the activities, especially, since it was different than their normal after school routine. Overall, we were happy to make a positive impact on not only their education, but their lives.

- Gabriella Cardoso, Kristine Gaffney, and Olivia Markoski



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A Professional Research Experience with Dr. Bates

As part of Dr. Bates' research seminar on the effectiveness of the professional formation of engineering students at TCNJ, a group of us were able to see first-hand how professional research is conducted. We read up on the literature, determining which articles were deemed useful and which were not. The nine of us were also able to conduct interviews, utilizing our social networks to recruit upperclassmen into the study. As the semester went on, each one of us took interest in different parts of the study and conducted mini research projects.

I focused on the influence of internships on a student's career path. What I found from the data among the juniors and seniors there was a major focus on the importance of having an internship. Participants felt having an internship was crucial to finding a job after graduation and provided clarity on what the next step should be. Overall, the participants who obtained an internship made a connection to what was taught in the classroom and the tasks asked of them at the internship. The participants stated having an internship during their undergraduate years had many benefits such as: finding the right company, deciding to do research, or choosing to go on to graduate school.

The participants stated having an internship during their undergraduate years had many benefits such as: finding the right company, deciding to do research, or choosing to go on to graduate school. I was surprised to see how frequently the topic of internships came up during the interviews, especially from the juniors and seniors.

Looking forward, creating an open dialogue with the engineering students about when to apply for internships and which companies they should apply to would be extremely helpful, especially to students doing this for the first time. As a sociology student, we are required to have an internship for our capstone I found it interesting the engineering department does not have a mandatory co-op requirement. Inferring from the responses of the participants, I believe having a mandatory co-op for engineering students would profit both the engineering department and engineering students. I do not believe these changes will happen right away or if at all, but I would hope the engineering department takes into consideration the feedback from their students.

-Gabriella Garcia

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Behind the Prison Gates: A Semester with the NJ DOC Substance Abuse Programming & Addiction Services

During the fall 2016 semester, as part of my Sociology Senior Seminar experience, I had an internship with the Department of Corrections' Substance Abuse Programming & Addiction Services (OSAPAS). The goal of this division of the DOC is to address the addiction concerns of the offender population under the NJDOC's jurisdiction. There are numerous departments within this unit, but the two that I primarily worked with were the Therapeutic Community Substance Abuse Disorder Treatment Program and the Engaging the Family in the Recovery Process. The TC program is contracted out by the NJDOC as an in-prison treatment system, the first phase in a continuum of care that is later followed by participation in residential community release programming. One key aspect of this program is its focus on the whole person – recognizing the importance of making changes in lifestyle and self-identity – in the treatment of substance abuse as a disorder. The ETF program is "an innovative approach for the max-out offender;" it recruits the spouses or committed partners and sometimes the children of offenders as allies in an effort to end the criminal and addictive lifestyle

The focus on creating familial support mechanisms towards reintegration back into the community is a key component of this program.

I visited multiple correctional facilities throughout the state after I was issued an ID and entered into the system, which is contingent on a thorough background check. My supervisor, Adam, told me about the different programs offered through OSAPAS at the facilities, and he also briefed me on the type and nature of the different correctional facilities in addition to their rules and guidelines. Adam encouraged me to visit as many institutions as I could because he believes in the importance of witnessing and spreading the word of the positive outcomes of the work that departments like his do. I visited the Central Reception and Assignment Facility (CRAF) just down the road from my office in Central Office Headquarters on the border of Ewing and Trenton with a supervisor who sits on the classification committee. Inmates at CRAF are convicted offenders who are awaiting their prison classification. The classification committee goes through the day's list of convicted offenders and assigns them their security designation, length of sentence, and prison assignment.

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Behind the Prison Gates: A Semester with the NJ DOC Substance Abuse Programming & Addiction Services (cont.)

Pam from OSAPAS is present during classification to ensure that offenders whose intake test results have indicated issues of substance abuse are assigned to a correctional facility that offers OSAPAS programs so that they can get the help they need. I also was able to tour the women's correctional facility, Edna Mahan, and Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility with the head of the Therapeutic Community program, and later in the semester I got to sit in on an actual ETF session at Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility. In the Central Headquarters office, I learned much about the importance of data entry in the work that OSAPAS does. I was first drawn to this internship because the flyer announced the need for analytic skills and familiarity with data. I spent much time entering information from applications for the ETF program into the database so that OSAPAS can keep tabs on the people it helps.

I also learned about what the social workers who carry out the ETF programs feel could enhance the inmates' experiences with the substance abuse treatment programs. They encounter obstacles in their everyday work, and having sat in on staff meetings and workshops about change, I was able to hear about some of them. Many of the staff members felt that they should be allowed to have more contact with the inmates in their group so that they can develop better relationships that would be more therapeutically beneficial.

They also expressed that they could personally do their jobs better if the DOC provided them with at least a bit of clinical training. Additionally, movement of prisoners between facilities causes attendance at group meetings and completion of the program to suffer at some institutions.

My sociological background has helped me to understand all the good that divisions within the DOC have the potential to create; many see the DOC as an undesirable organization to be a part of, where inmates are treated as worthless – which is not the picture I received at all. I also feel that my sociological knowledge allowed me to see how the people who have direct contact with inmates suffering from substance abuse disorders are those who sometimes feel valued least in the system and how this prevents the actual programs meant to help inmates from being the best that they could be. The well-established mass incarceration of African American men in particular in our society has significant implications for the future generation of black families and individuals; socioeconomic status, mental and physical health, and relationships all tend to suffer when fathers, sons, and brothers are sent to prison. Substance abuse can significantly worsen the already negative effects of incarceration, and thus doing what we can while these individuals are institutionalized to help them reduce their likelihood of abuse upon reentry to society is crucial if we are to combat it.

-Jennifer Teets