

SOCIONEWS

Spring 2009
Volume 10, Issue 2



Senior Seminar: the Culminating Experience

Kaitlin McMahon

I had the good fortune of taking my senior seminar in Sociology with the incomparable Dr. Clydesdale. I remember an advising session I had with him last year, where he described the senior seminar as a “culminating experience” in the major; now that I’m in the class, I understand this description. When someone asks, “What is your senior seminar about?” I answer, “Life after college.” That response is the most accurate summary I can provide. We talk about our futures: grad school or work (or, further, backpacking around Europe)? We talk about personal finance: everything from debt to investments to life insurance. We talk about work and life skills: the class is broken up into groups reading four different books, including Stephen Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and *Now, Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton. The class is broad in scope and ambitious in purpose, and I would argue that each student in SOC-499 this semester will take away a tremendous amount of knowledge that he or she can use for the rest of his or her life.

Another aspect of the course is a 90-hour internship. There were many possibilities for the internship. We were allowed to pursue one in any field we thought we might like to work in; the two rules were that education double-majors couldn’t have teaching internships, and that none of us could get stuck in a mailroom as unpaid grunt labor. I started searching in November to prepare for the spring semester; I found jerseyintern.com, where I researched opportunities and applied to five or six of interest. The internship I was most interested in was listed as “Behavioral Health Substance Abuse,” through Jewish Employment and Vocational Services (JEVS). Tasks and responsibilities listed included observing and assisting clinical staff and assisting in clinical research projects. After inquiring by e-mail, an employee of the clinic called me to set up an interview, explaining that the organization is called Achievement through Counseling and Treatment (ACT) and is a methadone clinic. Methadone is a treatment for heroin and opiate

Inside This Issue

Senior Theses	2
Exploring Sociology Options	3
Opportunities for Getting Involved	4
New Course Offerings	5
A Discussion on Gender	6
Grade Inflation and TCNJ	6
Additional News & Notes	7
Farewell	8

addicts. Methadone fills the same brain receptors as opiates, preventing withdrawal symptoms and also preventing the individual from getting high on heroin or opiates while methadone is in his or her system.

My interview was successful and I was offered the internship. Though my parents complained about the internship being in such a bad neighborhood (North Philadelphia, near Broad and Olney), I was unwilling to miss this opportunity. At the clinic, I have observed the clinic’s intake process, observed group and individual counseling sessions, co-facilitated group counseling sessions, audited charts to ensure proper billing, and helped with other administrative tasks. What I’ve enjoyed most in my internship is interacting with patients and learning about them. I am beginning to understand the hardships and effects of addiction. Though taboo, addiction is a part of our society that cannot be ignored and addicts often need help to recover from their addictions.

The internship at ACT has inspired me to work to help addicts. Addicts are treated like lepers in our society: lost causes to forget and neglect. Addicts deserve more, they need more, than American society gives them. They are people. They are mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, daughters, sons. Addiction is a monster, a disease that changes the chemistry of the brain. If our fellow man asks us for help, we have a responsibility to provide that help, and we should rush to help the addict who wants to get clean.

I am grateful that my senior seminar has been such a wonderful experience and that I’ve been able to work as an intern at ACT. This semester has been the best of my college years, and my senior seminar and internship contribute largely to the quality of Spring 2009. Other majors should be jealous! I couldn’t have asked for more in my last Sociology course. ■

Senior Year Experiences Continued: Writing a Thesis

The Inequities of the Trenton Public School System

Johanna Soto



What are the major problems within the Trenton

Public School system? My senior thesis research proposes that the Trenton Public School system in Trenton, New Jersey has an array of administrative and bureaucratic issues, as well as common problems affecting the majority of urban public schools in the United States: violence, lack of resources, lack of adequate teachers, deteriorating facilities, and insufficient education. The study analyzes data collected through individual interviews with former students of the Trenton Public School system lasting an average of one hour. Questions for the interviews were developed from a community focus group identifying the main issues. The study finds that the experiences of former students are similar to the inequities described in the literature about other urban public schools (violence, lack of resources, lack of adequate teachers, poor facilities, and limited education). In addition, safety is identified as an urgent necessity in the Trenton Public School system. New initiatives to enhance security within the high school have been implemented. Overall, without the creation of a "school spirit" among the students, staff, and administrators these changes in the high school are viewed as short-term. The results confirm that the Trenton Public School system needs improvement in the administration, bureaucracy, violence, resources, teachers, facilities, and educational curriculums. Although the administration of Trenton High is progressing with a new principal, the key issues of lack of qualified teachers, deteriorating facilities, and insufficient education need to be resolved before the school can provide an adequate and conducive learning environment. Without these imperative changes, the Trenton Public School system will continue to disadvantage students through the limitations in the school district. ■

Checkerboard Communities

Bonnie Friedman

My senior thesis explores residential racial segregation in the historic small city of Bordentown, New Jersey. Of the city's 3,969 residents, 81 percent are white and 13 percent are black (Census 2000). The bulk of those black residents are concentrated in a small central section of the city, a section that over time has consistently remained African American. Utilizing qualitative analysis of interviews based on quota sampling, this study examines how race conditions Bordentown City residents' self-understanding, interactions with others, institutional practices, and access to material resources. Specifically, this study explores how racial segregation impacts community relations and interactions by exploring the latent and manifest functions that are served, as well as the institutional and social behaviors that preserve the separation of the races both ideologically and materially.

The literature suggests that racial segregation patterns in small cities mimic that of nearby metropolitan areas and attributes discriminatory housing, exclusionary lending practices and racial steering as the main institutional and social behaviors used to preserve that separation. While my data collection is ongoing, current qualitative interviews do support the literature's findings on racial steering. Of those interviewed, the white residents that utilized a realtor to locate their home found that they were "steered" away from the black section of town with claims it had higher crime rates.

According to previous research, the theoretical perspective of spatial assimilation suggests that differences in socioeconomic status are accountable for a portion of residential patterns among different ethnicities and races even if structural barriers are not evident. Interesting early findings reveal that whites perceive a distinction in class between the white and the black areas of town, yet the one black family interviewed to date did not. Yet, the collected income data does support the white's perception. It will be interesting to see if these divergent perceptions and income patterns persist throughout the interviews.

Racial residential segregation impacts community attitudes and interactions; the resulting color line hinders meaningful relationships between the races and enforces "us" and "them" in-group solidarity and out-group conflict. My study does suggest social separation among the races of this community. Blacks and whites do not mingle in most community and social situations with the exception of education and athletics, and in those areas only the black family interviewed cited prejudice and racial tension.

Early data indicates that the blacks and whites in Bordentown City experience their community differently and perceive racial segregation within that community differently. Will the remaining data support that trend or bring new issues to light? ■

Exploring Your Options as a Sociology Student

So, what can I really do once I graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology?

Christy Myhren

On your way to class and office hours, you have probably walked past the Sociology and Anthropology office to see a long list of career possibilities you have if you attain a Bachelor's degree in Sociology (In case you haven't seen the list, check it out on the School of Culture and Society's website). But, what can you really do with a Sociology degree after graduation? One possibility is to continue your studies in graduate school by focusing on attaining a Master's in Social Work, Educational Administration, Business Administration, Sociology, Anthropology, Archeology, Linguistics, Criminology, or Counseling. Follow your dream to become a sociology instructor, an evaluation scientist of research, a social worker, a clergy member, or a career counselor. A vast array of possibilities may make it difficult to pick just one field of interest. Pursuing law school is another prospect for graduating Sociology majors. Law schools prefer that you study a liberal art major while an undergraduate and sociology is a great option.

If you are ready to enter the working world, don't worry! There are many opportunities out there not limited to managers, sales executives, counselors, research coordinators, human resource staff, administrators, corrections staff, geographers, teachers, public relations officers, media personnel, politicians, and urban planners. Government agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service, the Secret Service, the NJ Division of Human Services, and the Federal Bureau of Investigations are interested in hiring sociology degree holders. Non-profit organizations also continually look for volunteers in the field of social science.

Now that you have had a quick peek of all you are equipped to do with your Bachelor's in Sociology, I encourage you to check out the following sources for more information to invest in your future:

- <http://www.worldwidelearn.com/online-education-guide/social-science/sociology-major.htm>
- <http://cehd.umn.edu/ETCS/WhatCanIDo/sociology>
- <http://jobsearch.monster.cop>
- <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>

Remember to be daring in trying new areas of study and challenge yourself with every opportunity. If you try one career path in sociology and don't like it, you can always endeavor into something different. Good luck! ■

Double Major: Crazy, Glamorous, or Both?

Maddie Patrick

You may think double majoring is a crazy idea. At first, I did as well. I assure you – the outcome was well worth the cost.

If you are thinking about becoming a double major and you are allergic to work, planning, and running around the College like a mad person, I suggest you think of an alternative plan to your college journey. Being a double major is not only a great deal of work with classes, projects, and papers, but the paperwork can be a nightmare. In addition to the administrative nightmares, being a double major does not offer flexibility in your course load. There will be little, if any, time for electives.

Scared? I was as well, but now that I am double majoring, I could not be happier. I am studying two subjects that are not only interesting, but useful to my future studies or career. I have connections in both departments and I have more opportunities afforded to me than most TCNJ students.

If you know the consequences and benefits of being a double major and are a freshman or sophomore, here are the simplified steps you should follow to become a double major.

1. **Plan, plan and plan.** Choose another major that you can easily complete along with sociology. *Be aware of deadlines.* See if classes overlap and can be counted for both majors. Plan out a tentative four-year schedule to assure you can complete both majors and liberal learning.
2. **Talk with liberal learning.** If you are dedicated to being a double major, talk to the Liberal Learning office. They can reduce your liberal learning course load.
3. **Talk with faculty.** See if the faculty in both departments can help you in any way in planning. Also, establish good relationships with the department heads because they will be signing all your paperwork.
4. **Be ready to conquer Green Hall.** Fill out all paperwork, have the forms signed, and make copies. Green Hall is a daunting place but with enough planning, there should not be a problem with achieving your double major dreams. ■

Opportunities for Getting Involved

Putting Off Adulthood: Taking Time to Find Meaningful Experiences

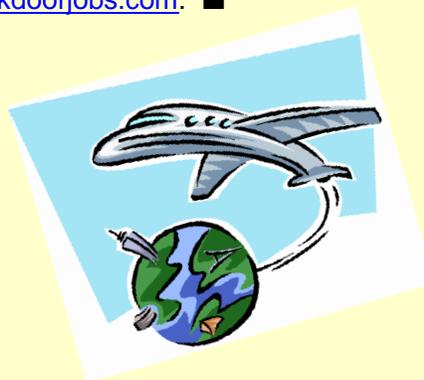
Amalia Yakobovich

Going straight from years of classroom education into a corporate job seems like a given in our work-driven society. However, there are many proponents for alternative paths who offer suggestions for interesting experiences to be had by twentysomethings and beyond. Whether you're looking for an exciting summer break, or an adventurous year or two between college and the career life, there are numerous options available.

Many alternative pathways are covered in [Delaying the Real World: A Twentysomething's Guide to Seeking Adventure](#) by Colleen Kinder. Kinder, a graduate of Yale University, suggests options for people in their twenties who prefer to delay the corporate life. Some options presented include: trying out for a show in Las Vegas, working in a rural vineyard in New Zealand, and working at Thailand's Wild Animal Rescue Foundation. While some of these adventures may not advance your career goals or significantly contribute to your savings accounts, they are experiences that can get you closer to a meaningful life. Being an adult does not necessarily mean sitting in a cubicle, or making the same morning commute day in and day out.

Adding interesting adventures and meaningful experiences post-graduation can make a huge impact on not only your life, but the lives of others as well. Learn more about this book and explore more options via the website: www.delayingtherealworld.com.

Similarly, [The Back Door Guide to Short-Term Job Adventures: Internships, Summer Jobs, Seasonal Work, Volunteer Vacations, and Transitions Abroad](#) by Michael Landes explores alternative paths with less time commitment. It is perfect for students who are looking for unconventional ways to spend spring break or summer vacation. The book includes options and information about numerous opportunities ranging from teaching English to students in Japan to being a leader of an outdoor adventure program for a summer, or even volunteering and living with a tribe in Tanzania. This resourceful database-like book gives websites and details about each opportunity. It is perfect for locating short-term adventure and volunteering options, for those looking to find meaningful work around their busy schedules. Find out more and search opportunities on the website: www.backdoorjobs.com. ■



Quick Ways to Make a Difference

Amanda Emmert

An amazing aspect of TCNJ students is our interest in helping others. I want to highlight three great activities that present the opportunity for students to connect with those in need, two of which can be accessed from your dorm room!

The first opportunity to help comes from a site called theanimalrescuesite.com. This site offers several opportunities to help by simply clicking a button once a day. The Animal Rescue Site is one of

six sites linked together to help solve the global issues related to hunger, breast cancer, child health, literacy, the rainforest, and animal rescue. With a click of a button on each of the six sites the sites' sponsors pay to provide services to that site's particular cause (The Animal Rescue Site donates food and care to rescued animals). You can even get a daily email reminder to visit the site. Also, check out the sites' shops in which you can buy great free trade and handmade items at great prices. With each purchase you make, a portion of the proceeds go to helping the site's cause. It really could not be simpler, so try visiting each of the sites daily!

continued on Page 5

The second opportunity to help others comes from the site freerice.com, where you can test your knowledge in several areas and for every question you answer correctly 10 grains of rice are donated to help end hunger. It is fun and easy!

The third opportunity comes from Best Friends Animal Society (network.bestfriends.org) which is a grassroots effort to place animals that are considered “unadoptable” into good homes and to reduce the number of unwanted pets. While there are many opportunities to contribute to Best Friends from all over the country (including adopting animals from them or simply donating money), one of the most amazing aspects of the society is its Sanctuary at Angel Canyon, Utah where about 2,000 animals are

given a home until they are adopted or for the duration of their lives if they are not. For individuals who love animals or wish to have a more hands on experience in helping animals, the Sanctuary has several cottages on its property where anyone is welcome to share overnight visits with the animals.

Finally, as Sociology students we understand the power of socialization and our social networks. We can each make a large impact on these issues simply by communicating them and the opportunities to participate in changing them to our friends, family, and peers. If you do nothing else, pass these opportunities on! Post the links on your social networking site or blog so that others have the chance to contribute as well! ■

New Course Offerings

An Expansion in Anthropology

Sarah Michlik

The Sociology and Anthropology department at the College spent innumerable hours planning out the recent expansion of course offerings and major concentrations over the past years, and now is the moment of truth. It is now a few weeks into the semester with spring break quickly approaching, yet course evaluations and final grades with which to judge a courses success are far away while scheduling is not. Luckily, any interested students in perusing anthropology need look no further for a glance at the departments' two newest courses in the subject: *Introduction to Epidemiology* and *Topics: Hunters and Gatherers*. These excellent additions to the curriculum aid in broadening students perspectives on the social world we are all a part of.

Introduction to Epidemiology, as intimidating as it sounds, is actually an incredibly insightful course which delves into the misunderstood world of public health. Taking an anthropological look at a presumably biological topic brings to light issues that are becoming increasingly important in our well-connected world, with a mission statement of “fulfilling society’s interest in assuring conditions in which people can be healthy”. With the ever-present threat of a global pandemic hanging over our heads, taking a look at public health at every level has been the focus of class discussion. From preventing influenza on our campus to eliminating easily-vaccinated diseases in developing countries, public health and culture are unquestioningly intertwined with disease prevention emerging as the key

to conquering the microscopic world we battle daily.

The anthropology topics course new to the department this semester focuses on primarily hunting and gathering societies around the world and seeks to better understand not only how they live as a culture but how they are maintaining their culture in the face of modern development.

From theories on foraging and subsistence to kinship and sharing, this course takes an in depth look at ways of life which are often dismissed in the face of western development. While soaking in every interesting cultural tidbit about a society, be it through an ethnography or a video documentary, students use the theories presented about hunting and gathering behavior to apply them to what is observed as well as examine what makes each society unique. It is often the differences which make the many cultures of our species interesting, and through the examination of some of the most environmentally harmonious peoples left on the planet perhaps we will find the answers to some of the problems we face in our own society. So to anyone toying with the idea of enrolling in these courses the next time they are offered, I would highly recommend taking on the challenge. Both new courses bring insight into the topics they explore and knowledge gained is an asset when one steps out into the real world. ■



A Discussion on Gender

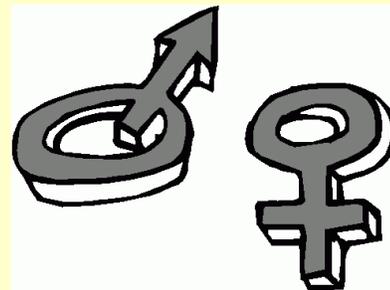
Gender: A Social Construct

Erica Jungels

Typically Americans believe that there are two genders, male and female due to the anatomy of the person. However, Judith Lorber in "Night to his Day: The Social Construction of Gender," believes that gender is not a result of anatomy but gender is a social construction. A social construction is an artifact of a particular culture or society. It is produced, institutionalized, and made into tradition by a culture. Gender then is not the result of biology but the embodiment of a set of social or cultural expectations that is based on physiology.

A social construct is created by humans within a particular society. It is constantly being recreated by people acting on their expectations and assumptions of the construct. Being created by a society does not mean that it is not real. Social constructs become legitimate through the influence it exerts on society. They are not historically or culturally universal; therefore the definition of gender in America is different than the definition of gender in another country.

In U.S. culture, gender is so ingrained in our lives because it is one way to organize and categorize society. Gender roles are assigned according to the classification that society gives a person. The material and tangible affects of gender makes gender real. The influence it has begins even before birth based on people's perceptions of gender. This can be seen in the blue nursery of a boy's room and the pink clothes a girl wears. It is an ongoing process that teaches children to be masculine or feminine. Therefore, gender is not simply human anatomy but is constructed and continually exerts its influence on society. ■



Grade Inflation's Effect on TCNJ Students

New Grading Policy at TCNJ?

Lisa Esposito



The College of New Jersey is known for being one of the most prestigious schools in the nation. The students that attend the College are the best of the best, the crème of the crop. In high school, these students are accustomed to getting straight As. However, these once straight A students are challenged to maintain those superb grades upon entering TCNJ.

It has been brought to my attention from several professors that the College is being instructed to shy away from awarding A's to students; instead they are encouraged to give a more normal distribution of grades. In today's society, especially for TCNJ students, As are expected and almost the norm. To many students, receiving a B is dreadful. A C, which used to be considered average, is now devastating to some students. By definition, "a grade is a teacher's standardized evaluation of a student's work." However, grades today serve several other purposes. Most importantly, they are a sign of approval or disapproval in both the classroom and at home. Many students' self-esteem is dependent on the grades they receive in school.

Although I see why TCNJ strives to bring back the meaning of "A's for excellence" I believe it is important for professors to communicate with students about grades instead of just assigning a letter. The College of New Jersey is not the only school jumping on board with this movement. Administrators, professors, and students all have different opinions on this "grading reform," but only time will tell if the desired effect is achieved. ■

Additional News & Notes

Top Five Tips for Sociology Majors and Minors

Jessica Godofsky

1. **Keep up with the reading!** The amount of reading you get each week may seem crazy at first, but splitting it up will be the only way you'll get through it and process it for exams, especially midterms & finals. If the assignment appears impossible, or if you're bogged down with other work, at least skim the material to locate the most important points so you're prepared for class and can reasonably get back to it at another time.
2. **Make a connection!** The department faculty has a variety of interests and abilities that span multiple disciplines, and are appropriate whether you are looking to do research or apply your studies in some way. If you're interested in education, schedule a meeting with Dr. Clydesdale. Dr. Robboy is our resident social work advisor, and Dr. Borland's research focuses on social movements. Dr. Kenen and Professor Monaghan can discuss public health with you, and Dr. Li investigates social and cultural change around the world, especially China. There are many others, so check out <http://sociology.department.tcnj.edu/> for profiles of faculty members or visit Dr. Bates in the Department Office to discuss who you may wish to connect with based on your interests.
3. **Take advantage of peer mentoring!** We are all assigned a faculty advisor, but sometimes there are questions that may be appropriate for a fellow student to

answer, or perhaps you are looking to connect with someone who has obtained internships and research opportunities you may be interested in. Peer mentors are seasoned majors who want to make your experience as a Sociology/Anthropology major or minor the best that it can be. Check out the description of the program in this edition of *SocioNews*!

4. **Try to keep good notes!** Expect that the material that you read as well as what you discuss in class is what will be covered on your exams...of course, that's all that SHOULD be on your exams. If your professor says something that sounds important, write it down! If you have a good handle on the reading and are able to recall people, events, and themes you've discussed in class, you are already on your way to a successful studying regimen.

5. **Take advantage of the department-sponsored events!** Alpha Kappa Delta and the department organize and sponsor various events throughout the year that are of interest to students who are interested in different avenues in sociology/anthropology, as well as those of you who are exploring graduate school and career options. TCNJ alumni who are pursuing graduate degrees in research-oriented and applied sociology frequently visit to discuss their adventures and co-sponsor annual graduate panels with Career Services that are attended by schools such as Bryn Mawr, University of Pennsylvania, and Temple University in social work, environmental studies, and other subjects. ■

Attention Sociology/Anthropology Majors, Minors, New Transfers, and Interested Students

The student members of Alpha Kappa Delta, International Sociology Honor Society would like to offer you the service of a peer mentor. Your mentor will be a junior or senior sociology/anthropology major who can assist you with any questions you may have regarding the major/minor, classes offered, double majoring, or other topics you wish could be addressed with your peer. If for some reason your mentor cannot completely answer all of your questions throughout the course of the semester, he/she can point you in the right direction to find the answer.

We can match you with a mentor that shares research interests with you, is currently pursuing a concentration you are considering, has studied abroad in a country of interest to you, or has held an internship

opportunity you hope to obtain in the future. Current mentors' interests cover a variety of areas in sociology including education, communications, environmental justice, public policy, cultural change, and health.

You can converse with your mentor by e-mail or AIM, on the phone, or even meet in person if you so choose. The flexibility of this program and the dedication of the mentors to their coursework and scholarship make this commitment a great resource for you that will complement the assistance you receive from your faculty advisor.

If you are interested in having an AKD mentor, please e-mail Jessica Godofsky, Co-President of AKD at godofsk2@tcnj.edu the following information:

- Full name, e-mail address, phone number, your program (major, minor), your class year, concentration (either declared or one that is of interest to you), and any research interested you and experiences you hope to aspire to.

Farewell

Brittany Addeo



Who would have thought that I would be sitting here, 4 years after entering TCNJ, writing a farewell to the department that has shaped the way in which I will leave this school? Well here it is. Having Sociology as one of my two majors has certainly been a rewarding, although at times, very tedious, choice. Yes, there is TONS of reading to do and pages upon pages of papers to write and yes there are those 3 hour classes that seem to go on for 6 hours but there is also an immense joy in learning about people and being able to apply what you learned in everyday situations. Sociology has not only taught me more about myself but it has also shaped the way in which I will teach my future students and the ways I will approach new and different situations in my life.

As a final note, I would like to personally thank the professors in the department that have helped, guided, pushed, and supported me throughout my four wonderful years at TCNJ. A very special thank you to Dr. Diane Bates, who not only pushed me to do my best (Freshman year I took her Environmental class and on the first day she said, "Well, freshman don't usually do too well in my classes.") but she also, in her own little way, made it clear that she believed that I would accomplish great things. So thank you Dr. Bates and thank you to the rest of the fantastic staff in the department! Good luck to all the graduating seniors as well as the upcoming seniors,

juniors, sophomores, and incoming freshmen! It really does go by fast, so enjoy it while it lasts!

Why I Chose Sociology

Caryn Monta

As a freshman, I did not have a major. I chose Sociology because I love studying people. To me, studying individuals as they relate to their surroundings just makes sense. I loved studying the social reasons behind racism and poverty, because it helped me understand and process the world. Without sociology, I would be overwhelmed by the negativity in the world. With my sociological background, I can understand the "why" behind daily events, and because of this, I have a clearer picture of what I can do to improve our communities.

SocioNews Spring 2009 Contributors

Amanda Emmert, Lisa Esposito,
Bonnie Friedman, Erica Jungels, Kaitlin
McMahon, Sarah Michlik, Christy Myhren, ,
Madeline Patrick, Johanna Soto, Amalia
Yakovovich, *Brittany Addeo, *Jessica
Godofsky, *Caryn Monta

Editor: Nicole Lavender

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Diane C. Bates

Sociology & Anthropology Department

The College of New Jersey

PO Box 7718

Ewing, NJ 08628-0718