Departmental Challenge

Sociology students!

As a faculty, we are excited to have you major in sociology! We want you to make the most of your experience at BYU by taking advantage of many opportunities in sociology outside the classroom. There are opportunities to work with faculty on research, to apply for ORCA grants and be mentored on a project you propose, as well as opportunities to be a teaching assistant, to get involved in the Sociology Student Association (SSA), and to participate in internships. Getting involved in SSA, as well as working with faculty as a teaching or research assistant, are great ways to develop skills as you prepare for the future. Internships can also help you apply the skills you learn in the classroom and prepare for a career. There are study abroad programs spring and summer terms sponsored by faculty in sociology. There are many ways for you to get involved – and I challenge you to do so. In addition, think about giving back to the department by participating in the Choose to Give campaign the end of October. We use these funds for SSA activities, student travel to present at conferences, and the hosting of a sociology student research showcase.

There is so much more you can do and gain outside the sociology classroom experience. I encourage you to get involved. Check out the department website (http://sociology.byu.edu), or come and talk to me or the SSA student reps for more information.

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Journey to the Dark Side: a graduate perspective

Does being black and being Mormon really mix? Some black transracial adoptees raised in LDS families are still trying to figure this out. Their black role models are outsourced by the adoptive family, thus they learn how to be black from people outside their family unit. Some follow the media and fall into the black stereotype, which is not compatible with LDS values. LDS parents facing this predicament are often at a loss of how to connect with their black children and show them how being black and Mormon is not mutually exclusive. Organizations such as BYU’s Black Student Union can aid these parents in their efforts by reaching out to the local transracial adoption community and mentoring in various capacities, as well as through participating in the Genesis group. Developing a healthy black identity in this nation already encompasses unique challenges without adding the dimensions of being Mormon and transracially adopted.

BY ANDREA HARDEMAN
PSA: REVITALIZING THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

The mission of the Pacific Sociological Association (PSA) is to promote educated research in areas of social life and processes as well as to further quality teaching and the mentorship of the rising generation of sociologists.

Each year PSA hosts a conference where undergraduate and graduate students as well as their mentoring faculty are invited to present or discuss their findings with other scholars.

In April 2009, several students and faculty from the Department of Sociology attended the Conference hosted in San Diego, California. The students were able to interact with other students and faculty to learn more about the projects and research perspectives of other colleagues. All students from our Department who attended participated in either presentations, round-table discussions, or with posters. This coming April 2010 the conference will be hosted in Oakland, California. This year’s theme is “Revitalizing the Sociological Imagination: Individual Troubles & Social Issues in a Turbulent World.” C. Wright Mills argued that sociologists “need a quality of mind” capable of understanding the correlations between personal problems and social issues. This quality of mind is what Mills calls the “sociological imagination.” The PSA Conference is taking Mills’ idea to focus on how precisely sociologists are currently revitalizing the sociological imagination. All are encouraged to seek how the world around us and sociology are both changing. “The Sociological Imagination inspired a turning outward toward a publicly engaged sociology, as well as a turning inward, a self-reflexive critique of our own discipline’s stultifying theoretical canon and self-imposed methodological straightjacket.” Students Department-wide are encouraged to get involved with faculty and the differing research opportunities available. The results of your research or even your experience could be used to participate in the upcoming PSA Conference. Not only will your participation be beneficial for others, but you will learn a great deal yourself!

REAL VICTORY: an opportunity to get involved

The Real Victory training model as adapted from Robert Bennett’s Gaining Control, is an attitude change intervention that is influenced by the notion that beliefs motivate behavior. Real Victory is a combination of a cognitive behavior program and a phone coaching support system which aims to reinforce desired new behaviors and skills. Bruce Bennett invented the phone coaching support system. He and his cousin, Jim Bennett co-authored the cognitive behavior program utilized by Real Victory.

In 2005, they approached Dr. Stephen Bahr and Dr. David Cherrington to launch a research project treating probationers and parolees in Utah county. The mission of Real Victory is to identity and research methodologies that reduce criminal behavior and increase prosocial behavior among repeat criminal offenders. Many students from the Sociology Department have been able to collaborate with the Bennetts, Dr. S. Bahr, Dr. Cherrington, and Dr. Bert Burraston with the research and data collection efforts. The program invites students from all majors, but especially sociology to help in the aspiration reduce recidivism. If you are interested in the Real Victory Program and want to learn more about how you can help, come visit us at our Friday meetings at 9am on the ninth floor conference room of the SWKT.

STRATIFICATION IN THE SCRIPTURES: a faculty perspective

For the first semester in a while, I won’t have my Intro class do a little assignment where I ask them to find a scripture that relates to stratification.

I’ve loved having students do this because it forces them to see the social world through a gospel lens, which is a lot harder to do than you might think. I’ll miss having the helpful reminder.

A few semesters ago, the response from one student caught my eye. She found D & C 78:6 “For if you are not equal in earthly things, ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things.” She commented, “It seems we will be equal in standing in heaven and therefore should try to obtain that here on earth. It is a hard concept to see happening in this time though. I think it will require a lot of faith, patience, and selflessness.”

BY DR. LANCE ERICKSON
INTRODUCING DR. BENJAMIN GIBBS

Dr. Benjamin Gibbs is a visiting professor of Sociology at Brigham Young University. He comes to us from Ohio State where he earned his Ph.D. His dissertation focused on gender gaps in cognitive skills in childhood. Dr. Gibbs’ interest in sociology was sparked when he was the student director of the Utah County Crisis Line. After a year of volunteering, he later directed the team which comprised the nonprofit organization that dealt with suicide. This interest inspired him to work towards both a Bachelor’s and a Master’s Degree in Sociology at BYU.

His current emphasis is the origins of stratifications. Dr. Gibbs is researching the influence of nonschool factors on school outcomes. Even though “schools have inequalities, they pale in comparison to outside inequalities,” argues Dr. Gibbs. He also suggests that educational inequalities do not necessitate educational solutions. Instead, those solutions can originate from outside sources.

We encourage you to welcome Dr. Gibbs to the Department. He is currently teaching Soc 112—Current Social Problems and Soc 326—Sociology of Education. In Winter 2010 he will teach Soc 112 again and Soc 622—Social Stratification.

On a more personal note, Ben is a twin from Pennsylvania. He has three brothers and three sisters. Ben has also been married for six years. He and his wife currently reside in Orem. They are the proud parents of two daughters and are expecting their third child.

Dr. Benjamin Gibbs

INTERNING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: an opportunity to get involved

Over the past six years, Dr. Ralph Brown from the Sociology Department has taken a small group of students to intern for three months during the summer in Southeast Asia.

This past summer four students interned in Cambodia while six worked in Thailand. During the time interning, students had opportunities to work in rural schools teaching English and physical education, volunteer in orphanages, assist in dentistry, help organize management in NGOs, and aid children with AIDS.

Students also have an opportunity to participate in the culture by living with host families and participating in a variety of cultural excursions or field trips throughout the summer. A few of these excursions included a six-hour speedboat tour down the Mekong River capped by a three day stay in Luang Prabang, Laos; a weekend trip to Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, ancient ruins of old Thai Kingdoms; a week in a Hmong village in the Province of Nan; and a week in Cambodia visiting historical sites and landmarks such as Angkor Wat.

The experience is eye opening, enlightening, and life altering. Ralph says that “the whole purpose of this experience is to help you recognize what you have as Americans and appreciate it, then, to stay long enough to help you realize what you don’t have and to learn to appreciate that too.”

Ralph is taking students again in Spring and Summer 2010. If you are interested in learning more about the program and what it entails please e-mail the student facilitator for the program, Alex Currit at alexcurrit@gmail.com.

Growing up, I quickly found that the most satisfying form of productivity was helping others. This led to numerous career goals that seemed emotionally daunting, such as a social worker or a psychiatrist. So when I entered BYU as a freshman, I had no idea what major would suit me best. I took SOC 112 my first semester and by December, I had found the perfect career for me. The research I would be doing (and thus far have done) as a sociologist would prove helpful to individuals in society, while simultaneously, my emotional and psychological fragility would remain intact and unharmed. I have learned so much over the last three years, and I look forward to learning even more in graduate school, focusing my studies on crime and juvenile delinquency.

BY KAREN SPENCE
The Student Sociology Association (SSA) is a departmental organization established as a means for undergraduate and graduate students to interact with each other and the faculty. SSA represents all sociology majors; therefore, everyone in the major is automatically a member of SSA.

The primary aims of SSA are 1) to seek to create a sense of community and camaraderie within the Department of Sociology. We also 2) aim to enhance student awareness concerning post-graduation opportunities such as employment and graduate programs. Another goal, as mentioned earlier, is 3) to enable communication and networking within the Department between students, professors, alumni, and other relevant community members.

Dr. Ralph Brown is the faculty adviser for SSA, while Sondra Fitzgerald is the student president. We highly encourage other students to become involved members who actively participate in SSA! We also look forward to many more activities and socials with you throughout this aca-

“He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.” - Nietzsche

BY STUDENTS, FOR STUDENTS: C2G

Christmas isn’t the only season to be generous. Students at BYU can give all year round, but are specifically encouraged to get involved with a giving spirit during a week long campaign each semester called Choose to Give (C2G). In 2000, students started the C2G campaign for other students. The event is sponsored each semester by the BYU Annual Fund. The best thing about the campaign is that all of the funds donated benefit the students. C2G has a mission to “educate, encourage and facilitate philanthropic involvement to further the mission of Brigham Young University which is to ‘assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life.’”

The National Advisory Council and College Volunteer Leadership Council of our college (FHSS) were impressed with the students’ participation in giving back. Our dedication to education inspired the Council members to match the student donations 5-to-1. So every buck we donate, Council members will add five more which equals a $6.00 donation. (The donation must be to the FHSS Annual Fund). That’s a pretty sweet deal which makes the season of giving so much more jolly! Just grab a yellow envelope, check “Sociology” on the outside. Inside, fill in your name and student ID number, check the FHSS Annual Fund to get the 5-to-1 deal, enclose your cash or check donation (no coins, please!), and drop the sealed envelope into the Sociology department’s yellow box!

If you don’t carry cash or check on you, but you feel the spirit of giving—check out the website to give online at https://secure3.convio.net/ldsp/site/Donation2?df_id=1180&1180.donation=form1