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Global Transformations

SPRING 2010

Newsletter of the Department of Sociology at Michigan State University

FACULTY AND RESEARCH INTERESTS

Why graffiti? Because it is art – because it is a voice. In April 2010, Toby A. Ten Eyck, Emily Christensen, Jacqueline Kaltz, and Zoe Pelbart visited Montreal, QC to study the graffiti culture in a city where this art form is given the opportunity to thrive. The trip was paid for by funds from the Provost Undergraduate Research Initiative. The group’s work on art and culture led to an invitation to participate in the 47th Annual East Lansing Art Festival, which was held May 22nd and 23rd, 2010.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sociology of Population
- Faculty and Research Interests
- Distinguished Speaker Series
- Recent PhD Dissertations
- Web of Affiliations
- Noteworthy News
- In Memory
- Graffiti and Sociology in Montreal

Sociology of Population

The Sociology of Population, a new focus area, is concerned with the rise, composition and distribution of people defined by geographical location and time period, as well as how populations change through fertility, mortality and migration. Numbers, however, do not speak for themselves. Sociologists in this area of study approach populations by focusing on the social processes and implications on society of demographic changes. The Sociological Perspective is a crucial tool for understanding the ‘whys’ of change in population systems which helps to explain how social structures are transformed. It is an area fertile for the student of both social theory and statistical methodology.

Rui (Cathy) Liu (Ph.D., University of Texas Austin, 2008) specializes in marriage and the family, health/mortality disparities, social demography and quantitative methodology. Dr. Liu’s recent research focuses on demographic changes in families and marriage, and how these changes are related to population health. Dr. Liu’s work on marriage and health trends has been widely reported in prominent media outlets including the New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, CBS News and Fox News.

Soma Chaudhuri (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, 2008) studies collective violence and social movements with a special focus on gender. She is currently interested in how small groups mobilize prior to acts of collective violence such as witch hunts or genocides, and how the formation of violent groups can be prevented.

Dr. Chaudhuri has published articles in journals such as American Journal of Sociology and Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Some of her current projects include contemporary witch hunts in the tea plantations of India (book manuscript); intimate partner violence among South Asian immigrants in the United States; and an analysis of twenty-five years of data on witch hunts in India. Dr. Chaudhuri holds a joint position in Sociology and the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University.

Stephen Gasteyer (Assistant Professor) studies the structures and processes that influence community level access to critical natural resources and the capacity to manage those resources. He is currently working on the role of coalitions, social networks and social capital in protecting water quality; community resources needed to create and maintain sustainable food systems; and how social network models are mobilized to understand surface water-groundwater interactions for protection of instream flows. This work is located across the globe, including the United States, Middle East and West Africa.

Before coming to Michigan State University (MSU), Dr. Gasteyer was on faculty in the Department of Human and Community Development (HCD) at the University of Illinois. He was also a Peace Corps volunteer in Mali from 1987 through 1990. He received his Ph.D. in Sociology from Iowa State University in 2001.
On Friday, April 23, 2010, the Department hosted its inaugural Distinguished Speaker Series with Professor Pietrocondo-Sotelo’s presentation, “There’s a Spirit that Transcends the Border: Religious Activists for Immigrant Rights.” The presentation drew over 125 professors, students and other guests. This inaugu- ral Distinguished Speaker Series was coordinated by Dr. Stephanie Navyn and Tom Dietz. It was sponsored by the Department of Sociology and co-sponsored by the Julian Samora Research Institute, Department of History, College of Social Science, and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

Pietrocondo-Sotelo is Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Sociology at the University of Southern California. Her primary research has focused on gender and migration, inferior social work, and religious and social movements among immigrant rights. She has authored or edited eight books, with over twenty reviews and guest appearances. This inaugu- ral Distinguished Speaker Series was coordinated by Dr. Stephanie Navyn and Tom Dietz. It was sponsored by the Department of Sociology and co-sponsored by the Julian Samora Research Institute, Department of History, College of Social Science, and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

Those who wish to view the lecture, please contact Erik Selke at selkeeri@msu.edu.

NOTEWORTHY NEWS

The Great Lakes Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments Center

The Department of Sociology’s own Dr. Tom Dietz will be helping to run The Great Lakes Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments Center (RESA), housed at Michigan State University. The goals of the Center are to contrib- ute to the long-term sustainability of the Great Lakes region in the face of multiple and simultaneous changes, including regional climate change, and to improve the utility of scientific knowledge in decision making. These goals arise from concerns that predict climate changes will affect ecosystems in the Great Lakes region and the services they provide with potential impacts on the region’s economy and societal well-being. RESA will draw on a long history of outstanding research by regional stakeholders in the Great Lakes region, and through its inte- grative approach, will bring together the active involvement of regional stakeholders in the co-production of knowledge and policy. Funded by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

David A. Lopez, Ph.D., M.S., 1996, was promoted to full professor at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) in August 2008. Dr. Lopez came to CSUN after holding an assistant professor position at Brigham Young University from 1996 to 2004. Dr. Lopez’s promotion recognizes his significant contributions to research, teaching, and service. He is now the Department’s first tenured faculty member.

Jason Konofal is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at Saint Maarten State University. He received his Ph.D. in Sociology from Michigan State University in 2007. His areas of research and teaching include the environment, food and agricul- ture, social movements, political economy, and science and technology. Dr. Konofal’s dissertation examined how marine and ocean conservation organizations are using market-based tools to conserve marine life and protect the oceans.

Dr. Thomas Dietz, professor and Chair of the Sociology Department, will be retiring in July 2010. He served as interim Chair of the Department from 2002 until 2006. In that role, he was the chief academic officer for the nine academic campuses within the University of Texas system.

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It was with a heavy heart that the Department bid a farewell to Dr. Harriette Piper McAdoo on December 13, 2009. Dr. McAdoo was born in Fort Valley, GA, and attended Michigan State University as an undergraduate before moving to the University of Michigan where she received her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Child Development. Dr. McAdoo was preceded in death by her husband, John Lewis McAdoo, and is survived by three sons – Garner, John and David – and one daughter – Julia.

Dr. McAdoo was prolific in her research and writing. She edited the seminal anthol- ogy Black Families (four editions), which turned the academic and policy arenas from a “deficit” orientation regarding family life to a “strength” orientation.

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