Notes from the Chair

by Susan Ferguson

Greetings and welcome to the first annual Sociology Department newsletter from Grinnell College. Since becoming chair in January, 2002, one of my primary goals has been to establish more formal and regular contact with sociology alumni. I keep in touch with many former students over e-mail or through annual Christmas cards, but I want to establish a more systematic way of updating all of you about Department News and also provide a forum for you to inform the Department and other alumni about what you are up to. Currently, there are over 500 Grinnell College sociology alumni living around the world! If you read the statements from current students and alumni in this newsletter, I think you will be impressed by the variety of paths sociology majors have taken. We would like to hear from you! Thus, one purpose of this newsletter is to reach out to our former alumni and find out what is happening in their lives. Note the short questionnaire at the end of this newsletter. Please fill it out and send us an update on your life since your time at Grinnell College. We are especially interested in hearing how sociology classes and the major have impacted your life. We will include alum updates in each subsequent newsletter. You can either mail the form back to the department address below or send me an e-mail at fergusos@grinnell.edu.

The Sociology Department has undergone much transition in the past ten years, and more changes are on the horizon for the near future. The Department remains committed to providing a well-rounded sociology education to our students with an emphasis on social justice. Our curriculum has expanded to offer new courses in medical sociology, global development, environmental sociology, human sexuality, gender and masculinities, and seminars on the family, conflict mediation, death and dying, cities and racial conflict, and nonprofit organizations. Next year, with the additional hire of Miliann Kang, more new courses will be added to our curriculum on the sociology of the body and eventually, courses on Asian Americans and on the sociology of law. The faculty in the department also have traveled widely this year, offering courses in sociology in Washington, D.C., London, and Ethiopia! More faculty updates are inside this newsletter. Also enclosed are special news reports on departmental speakers, the Social Science Conference, and student and alumni news. Please enjoy!

A final note: This year we are setting up a book scholarship fund for sociology majors to help them cover the costs of expensive college texts. One or two sociology majors will be selected each year to receive a sociology book scholarship that recognizes their academic merit within the discipline. If you would like to donate to the Designated Fund for Sociology, please send a check payable to the Sociology Department, Grinnell College to my attention at the address below.

The Grinnell-in-Washington Semester

by Chris Hunter

I spent the Fall semester of 2001-2002 in Washington D.C. directing the trial semester of the new Grinnell-in-Washington program. The GfW program, still experimental, joins our long-standing Grinnell-in-London program in offering an off-campus experience devised and directed by Grinnell faculty. GfW is designed around a course (taught by a local instructor) that introduces students to public policy issues, a seminar offered by the Grinnell instructor, and an intensive internship.

This past semester five students participated in the new program, doing internships with the Education Trust, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, the Washington D.C. Corporation Counsel, Talk Radio News Service, and the Democratic National Committee. All enjoyed their internships, despite the normal tensions of internships and some unusual ones, especially after September 11th.

My seminar focused on Alternative Approaches to Solving Social Problems. We examined the drawbacks and advantages of alternative approaches (nonprofit, for-profit, and governmental) to solving a wide range of social problems. For example, we looked at the changing approaches to educating children: Primarily seen as a traditional state/local governmental responsibility, education has also long been provided by private not-for-profit schools and now is being offered by for-profit schools.

The semester was more eventful than we would have hoped but went well overall, in part because of the generous support of the local Grinnell alumni. I expect that this new program will join Grinnell-in-London as a permanent part of our curriculum.
Advocating Education for Ex-Cons
Sociology Speakers Address Issues of Teaching and Providing Opportunities in the Inner City

by Amanda Davis
Features Editor for Scarlet & Black

Cynthia Kobel and Fred “Bobby” Gore do not work with a typical group of students. On Wednesday, Dec. 5, the Sociology Department hosted the two Chicago activists, who spoke about working to help ex-convicts and former gang members get an education and find employment.

In 1996, Kobel and Gore started the Montgomery Scholars Program, through which they have funded the education of 108 men, most of whom were recently released from prison. According to Kobel, 90 percent of the men in their program are African American; Gore estimates that 50 percent of the men were involved in gang activity at some point. Seventy-four percent of the men who go through their program graduate with certificates in computer technology.

Kobel is the executive director of the Kenneth and Harle Montgomery Foundation, which funds the Montgomery Scholars Program. Gore, a former member of the Vice Lords and an ex-convict, works as a consultant to the Crossroads Correctional Center, a half-way house whose counselors recruit men for the Montgomery Scholars.

Since the elimination of Pell grants for prisoners in 1994, it has become much more difficult for prison inmates to receive an education. Kobel finds this extremely troubling, because “education is the only way out. Education is the only way that people can be saved.”

As part of their presentation at 4:15 p.m., Kobel and Gore screened a short video of interviews with men whose education had been funded through their program. All three had gone to prison; some described gang involvement. The men discussed the difficulties they had faced trying to get a good job when none of their family members had ever had a professional career. One of the men said he had had to learn how to “sell” himself to employers who were reluctant to hire him because of his criminal background.

Efforts to fund the education of former gang members and ex-convicts have a fairly long history. The Foundation Years was a program founded in 1965 that sent 15 residents of Chicago ghettos to Dartmouth College. Two films, “Making It” and “Lord Thing,” which was screened on Wednesday night, documented the men’s experiences in Chicago’s gangs.

Kobel described the Foundation Years Scholars’ experiences in college life as difficult for several reasons. First there was the work itself. The men had to take a year to prepare themselves academically for the classes they would be taking at Dartmouth. Also, the environment of Dartmouth made it difficult for the men to feel comfortable. Kobel said they felt like guinea pigs, and they were the only African Americans except for two others. These circumstances cultivated some feelings of resentment among the men. Although just less than half of the men graduated, all of their children have graduated from college. “I think that’s quite remarkable and also shows that maybe what doesn’t happen in the first generation [can happen in the second],” Kobel said.

Kobel’s father had funded the Foundation Years project originally, and over time he had grown curious as to what had happened to the 15 men. Around 1993, Kobel started investigating and talking to the men. She says that she has tried to learn from the experiences of the Foundation Years Scholars for her own program. Among other things, she and Gore have made sure that there is a lot of follow-through and weekly contact with the men. “That... is the most important part of the program... sitting down with them every single Friday and also knowing that they can find me,” Kobel said. “They now have people they can trust who will not let them down.”

Kobel and Gore’s program is a pilot program and, at the moment, it has stopped. “We’re hoping that we can refine it, find funding, and particularly talk to politicians and get this working properly,” Kobel said. As she emphasized, this is a national problem that needs to be dealt with even in light of the events of Sept. 11. “We lost [more than] 3000 people there and that was horrible, and we saw it on TV and it was devastating, but how many people have we lost in the inner city?”

Gore agreed, “There’s a lot of blinders that are created... we need a massive movement to correct what’s going on.”
Sociologist Speaks on Affirmative Action

by Amanda Davis
Features Editor for Scarlet & Black

Professor Jennifer Pierce of the University of Minnesota gave her presentation “Racing for Innocence: Whiteness, Corporate Culture, and the Backlash Against Affirmative Action,” to a full house on the night of February 27. If many more students or professors had tried to attend the presentation, which was held in ARH 302, they might not have found an open seat.

The interest of both faculty and students was piqued by Pierce’s 40-minute talk, which addressed the racial tensions of employees in a large corporate law firm and the role of affirmative action in today’s workplaces. The title, Pierce explained, came from an interview with an African American attorney working at a predominantly white firm. According to Pierce, the attorney described his white co-workers as “racing” to deny their accountability for the systematic discrimination facing minority members in the corporate workplace.

In her interviews of corporate attorneys in this particular law firm, which Pierce called “B.C. Law Firm,” she discovered several disturbing trends in the relations among employees. The firm had instituted a court-ordered affirmative action program after being sued for discrimination. Many of the white employees viewed the minority lawyers hired under the program as “unqualified,” despite the fact that some of them had graduated from prestigious law schools such as Stanford. Furthermore, Pierce said, most of the attorneys who were particularly critical of the minority presence in the firm were well-established lawyers who would not have been in direct competition with any employees hired as a result of the affirmative action program.

Among the white attorneys, Pierce also found widespread negativity regarding the personalities of the African American lawyers. The minority attorneys were seen as “demanding,” “abrasive” and as having “cashed in” on the employment opportunities mandated under affirmative action. The same lawyer who coined the phrase “racing for innocence” also described his co-workers as acting extremely defensive whenever he confronted them about their behavior.

In the lengthy question and answer session, students and faculty explored the idea of “racing for innocence.” Some questioned the legitimacy of the “innocence,” proposing that it was driven by more than simple obliviousness, and possibly by a very educated and racist agenda. Pierce also observed that while members of previous generations may have been described as openly and clearly racist, the present generation has given rise to a more coded, and covertly hostile environment.

Pierce also noted that she has seen the backlash against affirmative action grow stronger in recent years. She expressed concern over how perceptions regarding affirmative action can be changed in a climate where incidents of prejudice are often seen as isolated, rather than as ongoing racism.

The talk was, both in terms of attendance and feedback, highly successful. “It was a fantastic turnout,” said Susan Ferguson, associate professor of sociology, who encouraged professors to make announcements in their classes regarding the talk. While many professors invited their classes to attend, few were required to. Ferguson attributes the topic’s popularity to its pervasiveness in many areas, including sociology, American Studies, and Africana Studies. Pierce’s presentation was part of the Sociology Roberts Lectures and was sponsored jointly by the Sociology Department and the Wilson Program.

Jennifer Pierce

- She received her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley.
- She is an associate professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota.
- She is the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of American Studies at the University of Minnesota.
Marit Berntson

Marit Berntson is finishing her two-year post-doctoral fellowship at Grinnell, having taught Introduction to Statistics, Social Movements, and Research Methods. She recently accepted a tenure-track job at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, where she will teach data analysis, political sociology, introduction to sociology, and upper-level seminars.

Berntson turned in the final draft of her dissertation just a few months before coming to Grinnell in August 2000. Her dissertation research was on how and why women became members of France's Front National (FN) political party, a far Right traditional and family values party with a history steeped in ethnic nationalism. For her research, Berntson conducted fieldwork in France, interviews and correspondence in 1997, 1998, and 1999.

Berntson is a political sociologist, but her work also intersects with the areas of race and ethnicity, gender studies, and qualitative research methodology.

Since finishing her dissertation, she has developed articles from different parts of it—on anti-immigration sentiment, on anti-globalization discourse, on feminism and the family policy of the party, on the general reasons for joining the party, and on the risks and benefits of joining the party. She also is updating the work and increasing the sample size by conducting more interviews and correspondence with women members.

Berntson has several ideas for future research. One possible project is a comparative study of women on the far Right and the far Left in France. She is particularly interested in the discourses on the family, feminism, immigration, traditional values, multiculturalism, and globalization. Another project involves the dynamic relationship between social movements and countermovements, perhaps looking specifically at anti-racism and anti-immigration movements in France using newspaper accounts from 1980-1985.A third project is a comparative study of far Right women in France, Germany, and the United States. Her new job in Virginia, a bastion of conservative politics, will likely give her a good idea of the importance and feasibility of such a project.

We will miss Professor Berntson at Grinnell, but we wish her well in all of her future endeavors. From the Grinnell College Sociology Department: Good luck, Marit!

Paul Draus

Paul Draus says his career must appear somewhat "schizophrenic." With research interests ranging from the social impact of literature to drug abuse, to the social context of tuberculosis, one can see that his interests certainly are varied. For Draus, one of the most interesting aspects of his work is drawing connections between these seemingly disparate interests.

During his two years as a Grinnell professor, Draus has taught courses as varied in content as are his research interests. Teaching in both the American Studies and Sociology Departments, he has taught courses on business in America, violence in the media, and medicine in society. A dynamic teacher, Draus even took his Business in America students to Chicago for a few days to see how their lessons in the classroom applied to the real world.

In addition to his contributions in the classroom, Draus has been instrumental in bringing many important speakers to Grinnell. In Spring 2001, he invited two speakers to talk about problems with the death penalty in the United States: Louva Bell, the mother of a death row inmate, and David Bates, a former prisoner who had been wrongfully convicted. This year, Draus also invited two speakers from Chicago to speak about gifted incarcerated youth and youth gang activity.

Draus earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from Loyola University in Chicago. There he completed his dissertation on the social context of tuberculosis in Chicago, work inspired by his former job at the Department of Health's Bureau of Tuberculosis Control in New York City. Draus earned his Master's Degree in American Studies at the University of Wyoming.

Recently, Draus has accepted a position in the School of Medicine at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. He will be putting his ethnographic skills to work as he embarks on a five-year ethnographic study of urban and rural drug abuse. Draus says that this job appeals to him because he would like to do more field work before he eventually settles into another teaching position.

After leaving Grinnell as a student at the end of his first semester of college, Draus says, "I'm glad finally to have done my time at Grinnell." Students and faculty alike will miss his energetic presence in the Department. We wish him luck on all of his future pursuits.
Lisa Avalos is currently serving as co-chair of the Noun Program in Women's Studies. She recently presented "An Ethic of Care: Abortion Seekers Thinking About the Fetus" at the meeting of the International Institute of Human Understanding in Miami, Florida, and will be presenting "Abortion Caring: Women's Strategies for Treating the Fetus," at a conference on Anthropology and the Health of Populations at Brunel University, London, UK, in June. Avalos also is preparing a new seminar entitled Global Dimensions of Women's Health. A course that closely ties her research to her teaching, this course will be offered for the first time during Spring 2003.

Susan Ferguson has recently returned to teaching classes after the birth of her daughter, Gillian Catherine. She is currently teaching the Sociology Practicum course as well as two sections of Methods of Empirical Investigation; next year she will be teaching courses on the Family and Medical Sociology. Ferguson has recently published the third edition of Mapping the Social Landscape: Readings in Sociology (2002) and the second edition of Shifting the Center: Understanding Contemporary Families (2001). She also has co-edited Breast Cancer: Society Shapes an Epidemic (2000), which examines breast cancer from a critical medical sociologist's standpoint. Ferguson continues her research on never married Asian American women and is sponsoring two MAPs for students over the summer. In addition, Ferguson is chair of Grinnell's Sociology Department, and she will continue as chair through Spring 2004.

Kent McClelland is spending the current semester in London for the Grinnell-in-London program. In addition to supervising students' internships, McClelland is teaching a class entitled Health, Education, and Social Welfare in Contemporary Britain. McClelland has enjoyed taking full advantage of London's abundant theatres, museums, and parks. Next year, McClelland will be on sabbatical leave. He intends to spend most of that time in Grinnell working on several research projects, including continued work on his Perceptual Control Theory and further work with MICA, a local community action agency. Also, this summer McClelland will be working with a student on a MAP project deriving from the Spring 2000 methods class survey on relationships at Grinnell.

Kesho Scott has been on leave from Grinnell College on a Fulbright Fellowship. Scott is completing the Fulbright Year in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where she is teaching courses on Gender and Development and Sociological Theory at Addis Ababa University. She also is currently doing "Gender Sensitivity" Training at all of the six major universities in Ethiopia, which requires that she travel extensively throughout the country. This program is sponsored by the Office of Public Diplomacy at the U.S. Embassy in Addis. Scott continues her original research on "Isms" in Africa. We look forward to Scott's return next year, when she will be teaching Introduction to Sociology and the Sociology of Gender.

Chris Hunter spent the Fall semester teaching in Washington, D.C., in the inaugural semester of the Grinnell-in-Washington program. He is currently teaching Self and Society, along with Contemporary Sociological Theory. Next year he will be able to return to teaching his normal sequence of courses by offering these two courses plus Deviance and Social Control, and his seminar on nonprofit organizations, Organizing for Social Good. He is looking forward to once again integrating his personal interest and involvement in nonprofit organizations with his seminar. He is trying to arrange a special plus-two option in the seminar that will focus on developing the leadership skills needed for work in nonprofit organizations. This summer, Hunter will be offering another summer MAP with three sociology majors related to his research on the local community action agency, MICA.

Sylvia Thorson-Smith is currently teaching Human Sexuality in the U.S. and Advanced Studies in Sociology: Death and Dying. Next year she will teach Human Sexuality and Death and Dying again, as well as courses in Religious Studies and Gender and Women's Studies. She also is currently working on a book titled Body and Soul: Womanist, Feminist, and Queer Theologians Rethink Sexuality, which will be a collection of essays by theologians and ethicists looking at issues raised by the 1991 Presbyterian report on sexuality. She is co-editing the book with Marvin M. Ellison of Bangor Theological Seminary. This summer, Thorson-Smith looks forward to co-leading a workshop at the Ghost Ranch conference center in Abiquiu, New Mexico, with Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos of Louisville, KY, on "The Ties That Bind: Models of Intimacy in Bible and Tradition."

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Mitigating Circumstances
Alumna and Current Student Speak about Work with Clients Facing Death Row

by Amanda Davis
Features Editor for the Scarlet & Black

When she started her internship in mitigation last summer, Jill Peterson '03 didn't even know what mitigation was. Even now she has difficulty defining it. Basically, said Peterson, it's the process of presenting "the reasons a person deserves to live."

On Tuesday night, Peterson spoke about her mitigation internship in front of an audience that filled the Forum South Lounge. Caryn Platt Tatelli '92 sponsored Peterson's internship during last summer and fall semester, and was also present at Peterson's talk. During her internship, Peterson helped Tatelli in her work with 22 death penalty cases and met 12 men on death row.

A mitigator's job is to compile what Peterson calls a "bio/psycho/social developmental life history" of the defendant. In the process of forming the life history, mitigators end up talking to 40-50 friends and relatives of the defendant and collecting every available record pertaining to the defendant.

According to Tatelli, defense attorneys hire mitigators, of which there are 50 to 100 across the country during one of four phases of a trial. During her talk, Peterson addressed each of these phases. In a trial, mitigation is first used to help determine eligibility for the death penalty. According to Peterson, to face the death penalty, a defendant needs to be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, and mentally sane. Basically, said Peterson, the last criterion comes down to determining whether the defendant's I.Q. is below 70, in which case the defendant would be considered mentally retarded, and not fit to face the death penalty.

Peterson described working on the case of a man named Curtis, who was facing the death penalty for planning and having knowledge of a murder. However, his I.Q. scores indicated that he was possibly mentally retarded. Peterson described interviewing members of his family, many of whom also appeared to have similar psychological difficulties, which Peterson and Tatelli dubbed the "Curtis syndrome." After talking to relatives of Curtis who weren't raised with his family but still appeared to be affected by the "Curtis syndrome," Peterson and Tatelli came to the conclusion that there was something genetically wrong in Curtis' family.

The second phase in which mitigation is used is during the sentencing itself. After a defendant has been found guilty, the prosecution "will bring in everything negative they can" in order to convince the judge or jury to sentence the defendant to die, said Peterson. The mitigator's job is not to excuse the defendant's responsibility or say the crime didn't happen, but to "put a face on the person and say they deserve to live," Peterson said.

As an example of this case, Peterson talked about a man named Will, who was found guilty of murder. Peterson discussed attending the sentencing itself, emphasizing the "emotional intensity." Her role at the sentencing was mostly to talk to witnesses and spend time with Will's family. Through talking to Will and his relatives, Peterson learned the story of his life, including childhood abuse, and episodes of paranoia he experienced prior to committing the murder. Will was sentenced to the death penalty.

She then asked Will if he would like to tell people anything and he said "Hey, fight injustice, recognize the bias in the system and the race in the system and if [I] was White, this wouldn't have happened."

The third case Peterson discussed was that of a man named Max, who was the first person she met on death row. In this case, mitigation was being used for Max's appeal. Peterson described the process of entering the prison through five or six padded doors, being searched, and finally sitting with an un-handcuffed Max in a small cafeteria. Max, Peterson said, had been on death row since 1988 and "reminded me of a child." Peterson explained that she and Tatelli had four months to try to put together a case for Max's appeal. Peterson held up a stack of paper about four inches thick as a demonstration of the "final product." At one point in their information-gathering process, Peterson and Tatelli drove five hours in the middle of the night to talk to the neighbors Max had as a child. Like many of their cases, the outcome for Max's appeal is still unknown, said Peterson. There is the possibility that he would only face a life sentence.

The fourth and final phase in which mitigation can be used is in a clemency petition. Peterson described the clemency petition and eventual execution of a man named Jerome. She described her main role as support and "media work, trying to get interviews." As it turned out, both Jerome's sister and the wife of the man he had killed were named "Sarah." The wife of the state trooper wanted an apology from Jerome's family. Although Tatelli tried to arrange a meeting of the two Saras, it did not happen. The meeting would have been an attempt at what Peterson called "restorative justice." As Peterson explained, "The victims are

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Social Science Research Conference

by Julie Dona

In March, the Grinnell College Sociology Department was proud to sponsor the 3rd annual Social Science Research Conference, in which students from all departments were invited to present their research. The conference was driven by three central goals: to provide a professional forum where students can share their research experience with the college community; to encourage and support students engaged in primary social science research; and to create an environment where students, faculty, and community members may exchange ideas on research topics, methodology, and modes of analysis. Organized by Jessica Halverson ’02, the conference included presentations by ten student researchers:

Ron Azoulay
Gangs, Films, and Future Implications

Julia Haltiwanger
The Absence of Gender in Newspaper Representations of Anti-abortionist Violence: The Murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian

Victoria Horn
Considering the Problem of Corporate Crime

Tawny Lane
Teen Drug Use: Reality vs. Traffic

Eve Obert
The Role of Public Opinion and the Print Media in the Case of the “State of Minnesota and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota vs. the Tobacco Industry”

Nancy Pellowski
Do Boys and Girls Learn Differently in Single-Sex Cooperative Learning Groups in a Computer Programming Robotics Class?

Stephanie Schmidt
Environmental Decision Making – A Collaborative Research Project

Alison Williams
Student Attributions by Gender in a Technology Classroom

Kenneth Yeung
The Christian-Confucian Encounter and the Jesuits in China, 1582-1610

Rebecca Zwerling
Assessing the Knowledge of and Attitudes Regarding the Codigo de la Niñez y la Adolescencia in Costa Rica: Perspectives of the Junta de Proteccion a la Niñez y la Adolescencia, School Directors, and Adolescent and Child Student Leaders

Mitigating Circumstances

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often left out of the justice system.” The idea of restorative justice is to “let offenders know [victims’] needs and let the offender take responsibility.” Often, Peterson said, the victim’s family isn’t looking for the death penalty.

As another example of an attempt at restorative justice, Peterson read a letter from a convicted murderer to the family of the man he killed. The letter had been presented to the family, and though the prisoner hadn’t received a reply yet, Peterson explained, “If there’s anything he can do, he’s willing.”

Following her presentation, Peterson had a brief question-and-answer session. She addressed the issue of race, saying that while there were

Faculty News

(Continued from page 5)

Amanda Udis-Kessler has been teaching at Grinnell in a one year replacement position. She successfully defended her dissertation on the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender inclusion struggle in the United Methodist Church over

Spring Break, and is now planning to develop a series of articles and one or more books from the material. She will be presenting two papers at this year’s Religious Research Association conference. This semester, Udis-Kessler is teaching three courses: Introduction to Sociology, Contested Masculinities, and Structures of Privilege in American Society.
News from a Few Current Sociology Majors

by Marcos Davalos

Classes, exams, papers, group meetings: these are a few of the things Grinnell College students have to go through on an everyday basis due to Grinnell’s rigorous academic schedule. Still, students at Grinnell find ways to entertain themselves whenever they are not hitting the books and sociology majors are no exception to this. Sociology majors are taking the lessons they learn in the classroom and applying them to their activities both on and off campus.

The Student Educational Policy Committee (SEPC) members this year were (from left to right) Julie Dona, Alison Williams, Marcos Davalos, Tina Wildhagen, and Melly Ntalu (not pictured). The SEPC helped with faculty searches, faculty reviews, and this newsletter.

Latrisa Chattin '03 combines her study of sociology with a concentration in education. Last semester she interned with the Education Trust in Washington, D.C. where she worked on creating policies and developing practices to better educational availability and equality among poor and minority students.

Marcos Davalos '03 is also a member of the Sociology SEPC and founder, director, and choreographer of the student dance group EMANATE!. In its first year, EMANATE! put on a successful show entitled “XXX” at the Harris Center that drew in a crowd of nearly 700 people. In its sophomore year, EMANATE! is gearing up to produce their second show entitled “XPOSED” on May 3rd. After graduation, Marcos plans to move to New York City, become a superstar, and put his sociological knowledge to use by pushing the boundaries of social norms.

Julie Dona '03 is a committed member of the Sociology SEPC and Amnesty International. Apart from that, Julie is also a staff writer for the Scarlet & Black and an employee for the Mid-Iowa Community Action. Last summer she was a Joint Program in Survey Methodology Junior Fellow and interned at the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Washington, DC. This summer she will be working with Professor Ferguson analyzing research on never married Asian American women. Next semester she will be traveling to India on a study abroad program.

Tai Duncan '04 is an avid member of the Women’s Basketball team at Grinnell. She represents the Women’s Basketball team at the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, is a Hall Social Coordinator, and a member of the Native American Student Alliance.

Rahlyn Gossen '03 will be working as an organizer for the reelection campaign of democratic Senator Kerry from Massachusetts.

Emily Kearny '02 interned at the Minnesota Department of Health in St. Paul working under the Director of the Office of Minority Health. Emily also completed an internship in Costa Rica during the fall at the Health Education and Nutrition Center, which focused on issues of malnutrition in young children and pregnant women. Emily plans to take a year off after graduation and work while applying to graduate schools for healthcare administration.

Tina Lim '03 is a peer mentor for first-year international/multicultural students and a resource coordinator for ASIA (Asian Students in Alliance). Currently, she is helping with the formation of a new organization named the Student Alumni Association. Tina is a keen piano player and a singer in the college community chorus. She also is an active member of Grinnell Christian Church. This summer she will be participating in a MAP project with Professor Ferguson in analyzing research on never married Asian American women.

Jancey Wickstrom '03 has recently been interning at Grinnell’s New Horizons Alternative High School as a school social worker. Last summer, Jancey worked on a project to study how race and socioeconomic status affect health care. This upcoming summer, she is planning on working at a camp for kids with cancer from the inner city of New York.

Tina Wildhagen '02 is a two-year member of the Sociology SEPC and will be attending graduate school in Sociology at the University of Iowa. The University of Iowa has awarded Tina with the Presidential Graduate Fellowship.

Alison Williams '03 is a member of the Sociology SEPC and has been involved in many recent performances on the Grinnell College stage such as playing “Fritzie” in the musical theater production “Cabaret,” and “Janet” in “The Rocky Horror Picture Show.” Alison is also a choreographer for the student-run dance group, EMANATE! This summer she will continue her research entitled “Student Attritions in a Technology Classroom” with education professor Martha Voyles. She hopes to publish her findings sometime in the next few years.

Rebecca Zwerling '02 is not entirely sure about her plans after graduation but would absolutely love to return to Costa Rica!
To the Head of the Class or How I Learned to Escape Academia and Make a Difference in the Real World

A Grinnell Alum Who Went on to Teach for America Shares Her Experiences

By Amanda Davis
Features Editor for Scarlet & Black

While in her first year of teaching at Andrew Hill High School in San José, Adrienne Enríquez ’98 was stopped by a school official and asked why she wasn’t in uniform. Confused, she explained that she didn’t realize that she, as a teacher, was required to wear the same uniforms as the students. It wasn’t the only time she was mistaken for a student.

As a 21-year-old college graduate, Enríquez joined Teach for America (TFA). The program recruits college students of all majors to commit to a two-year teaching assignment in some of America’s most under-resourced school districts. TFA teachers are hired and paid as other first-year teachers. However, a TFA corps member is only hired after the school district has exhausted its pool of certified or credentialed teachers. This policy, made between TFA and individual school districts and enforced by law, helps concentrate TFA’s human resources on the most needy schools.

The summer after TFA applicants are accepted, they participate in a six-week intensive training. In addition to learning about basic skills like making lesson plans and classroom management, part of the training entailed teaching at summer school sessions. Though Enríquez said that she felt “absolutely prepared” to go into the classroom after she completed her training, she said that in the years since she started teaching, the training program has improved dramatically. Enríquez says that she would feel ten times more prepared had she gone through the training offered now.

Enríquez’s typical day teaching was “probably what you’d imagine a teacher does, and then some.” She taught five classes of high school math, tutored students after school, acted as a sophomore class adviser, and also attended school sports events and chaperoned dances on weekends.

Her constant involvement with students both in and out of the classroom was made even more challenging because of the lack of preparation and resources available to the students. “One of the things that was really hard for me was to watch my students and know how capable they were and to know ... that their education was not sufficient to enable them to attend a school like Grinnell,” she said. “By virtue of where they had been born and the school they were attending, they weren’t receiving the preparation.”

In addition to compensating for the disadvantages students are facing in under-resourced districts across the country, TFA also tries to create systemic change in the education system, according to Enríquez. Although a sizable portion (Enríquez estimates more than half) of TFA teachers remain in the classroom after their two-year term is done, many TFA alumni also pursue careers in other areas. Consequently, the TFA leaders hope to make sure there are child and education advocates in legal, medical, and other professional communities. “It’s not just what happens in classrooms, it’s what happens afterwards,” Enríquez said.

Doug Cutchins, Director of the Office of Social Commitment, and Enríquez both feel that TFA as a program is primarily positive, but they acknowledge that there are some valid criticisms. The main drawback is that the teachers are only required to stay for two years, making them somewhat temporary members of the community they serve. “I think about my kids and I think about the fact that I left,” Enríquez said. “I came into a community that I wasn’t familiar with, taught some kids, made some friends, then I left.”

Cutchins also acknowledged that TFA is essentially a “band-aid” cure and that it’s important not to let TFA become a permanent solution to the problems of the education system. However, Cutchins asked, “If [TFA teachers] weren’t there, who would be?”

He also recalled a conversation with a principal in North Carolina who said that the teachers she was hiring through TFA were better than the teachers she was hiring from university education programs. She said she’d staff the entire school with TFA teachers if it were possible.

Both Enríquez and Cutchins emphasize the magnitude of the commitment required to succeed as a teacher through TFA. While Cutchins acknowledges that Grinnell students are used to working hard, he also stresses that the nature of the challenges faced by a first-year teacher in TFA are different from those Grinnell students have experienced. He said, “The challenge with TFA is how do you get a student to learn? How do you get a student to care? How do you making teaching relevant? How do you ignite young minds? How do you help a student learn who’s facing huge turmoil at home?”

The transition from college to teaching is a profound one, Enríquez said. “In college, you’re only beholden to yourself. All of a sudden, everything you do is affecting other people, and a lot of other people, not just . . . right now, but their future.”

Although she tells stories of coming home after work and going to sleep at 5 p.m. and not waking up until the next morning, Enríquez also said “the kids make you willing to do that.”
Abi Tapia Returns to Town
Recent Grad Shares Her Music In An Intimate Show

by Sabrina Ross
Staff Writer for Scarlet & Black

"House performances are my favorite," Abi Tapia said to someone while chatting with audience members before the show started. A Grinnell alumni of 1998, Abi Tapia was back in Grinnell for a two-set performance in a friend's apartment on Wednesday night. This is her third house performance she's done in the three weeks of her tour so far. With candles scattered around the room for lighting, and several couches, two chairs, a bed, and the floor providing the seating, the audience was prepared for a friendly, intimate show. The show play list included songs from her cd, This Life Will Be Mine, covers of Gillian Welch and Patti Griffin, and one of the songs from the country musical that she's in the process of writing.

Tapia currently lives in Maine, but she plans to move in the near future. "I want a bigger place, and I want to be around more musicians, for inspiration and for community," explained Tapia. She's considering cities like New York, Boston, and Austin, where she hopes to be able to fully support herself by profits made from performing. When she's not touring, Tapia says that she "waits tables to pay the bills."

Currently, Tapia is in the midst of her longest tour so far in her career, covering parts of the east coast, the Midwest, and the south. After a few more shows in Iowa, Tapia will be heading to Texas for the next leg of her tour.

Tapia began singing during 1996, her sophomore year here at Grinnell, and by her senior year, Tapia started taking off during her fall and spring breaks to tour. Today she plays mostly within her home state of Maine, and frequently goes on short tours around New England.

"Right now I'm plugging away, writing songs, finding better venues... I'm not looking for a record contract or anything," Tapia said. Following the completion of her current tour, Tapia will attend a music conference in Nashville, before returning home.

Many Grinnell students hope to make Tapia's visits to campus a yearly occasion.

A few townspeople and professors as well as students attended Wednesday's performance. Before the show began, Tapia's academic advisor from Grinnell, Kent McClelland, approached her and asked "You're doing what you've dreamed of doing?" and Tapia replied, smiling, "Exactly!"

Other Alumni News

Compiled by Alison Williams

Yong Min Hong, class of 1996

I am currently serving as an assistant pastor in charge of English Language Ministries at The Korean Church of Atlanta United Methodist Church. My sociology background from Grinnell is helpful because I serve in a Korean American church where issues of race and identity are very important issues, especially as we consider what it means to nurture faith in second and third generation Korean Americans.

The opportunity to study issues of race and identity in Grinnell was what convinced me to become a sociology major. Originally, I assumed I would simply be a nerdy science major. However, after I discovered the sociology department, I knew I had found an area of study that fascinated me. In short, I discovered that there were other feasible majors! Now, I'm not sure how others "discovered" sociology, but I only took Introduction to Sociology because I could not get into another class and needed to fit a class into my schedule. This turned out to be one of the best unintentional decisions I made in college. My background in sociology was an asset when I entered seminary. I ended up writing my Master's Thesis on issues of faith with the future generations of Korean Americans.

Hollis Pfitsch, class of 1996

Since graduating from Grinnell in 1996 with a Sociology major and concentration in Gender and Women's Studies, I have been working in various capacities focusing on human rights issues, and more recently, immigrant rights. Right after college I spent six months in a returned refugee community in Guatemala as an "accompanier," or human rights observer.

Upon returning to the U.S. I found an internship with the Washington Alliance for Immigrant and Refugee Justice (WAIRJ) in Seattle, Washington. The internship turned into a job, and I spent three years at WAIRJ, coordinating the Raids Resistance Project. I monitored civil and human rights abuses in immigration law enforcement around Washington State, writing reports and press releases. I also organized committees of immigrants directly affected by immigration law enforcement, primarily farm workers, in isolated rural areas of Washington State. These committees conducted basic education about immigrant rights in their communities and participated in rallies, marches, and press conferences exposing on-going attacks on immigrants.

In September of 2000 I left WAIRJ to work at the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, where I am the legal advocate in the domestic violence unit. I work on immigration cases for battered immigrants who are eligible to self-petition for immigration status under the Violence Against Women Act. I
coordinate our intake system, develop outreach materials, and help coordinate educational presentations. In June of 2001, I received a Joseph Wall Sesquicentennial Service Award from Grinnell to initiate the Immigrant Women's Outreach Project, a community-organizing, leadership development project. Through this project, I have formed and trained an Outreach Team made up of former clients and volunteers, who carry out community education projects in their own communities to raise awareness of the legal rights of immigrant survivors of domestic violence. This fall I am going to law school.

Sarah Staveteig, class of 1998

I have been doing social policy research in Washington, D.C. at the Urban Institute for three years, primarily studying the devolution of social assistance programs from the federal government to states. I have focused on racial and ethnic inequalities in welfare funding. I recently co-authored two of the Institute's book on welfare reform, see http://unidata.urban.org/conference/confbook.html for more info. My newest project is researching how state food stamp policy choices influence program participation. I will be leaving the Institute in August to start working on my Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography at UC-Berkeley. I would love to catch up with other Sociology majors via email: sstaveteig@aol.com

Josh Waddell, class of 1997

After graduation, I worked at Catholic Charities, a social services agency in Bridgewater, N.J., as case manager. I worked in two programs, one providing tutoring/mentoring and outreach services to at-risk youth and as a case-manager, I worked with families that were referred to Catholic Charities through the Division of Youth of Family Services of New Jersey. Probably the most interesting thing about my job was attempting to teach parenting skills in a six-month period.

After working at Catholic Charities, I began my career in higher education and college admissions. I worked at Rider University as an undergraduate admissions counselor. At Rider, I was the athletic liaison and worked with prospective student athletes for a NCAA division I institution. I also traveled quite extensively throughout New England, representing Rider at various college fairs. I am presently the Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions at Monmouth University N.J., (not Monmouth College in Illinois) and recently received my MSEd in Counseling. I review applications and provide academic advising to students for the graduate education, social work, and psychology programs. I am also the advisor for the ice hockey team and am teaching a freshman tutorial in the fall.

Aaron Wagner, class of 1999

After graduation I spent about two years working as an organizer for a small grassroots community organization called Blocks Together, in West Humboldt Park Chicago, a predominantly Puerto Rican, Black, and Mexican neighborhood. Blocks Together is an affiliate of National People's Action, a national network of local groups who do Saul Alinsky style organizing. I work on local community based campaigns and a little on some of the national campaigns. Our work ranged from rate abatement, better city services and capital improvement spending, crime and safety, education, health care, youth organizing, to community development and an anti-gentrification campaign. I also worked a little on new issues surrounding the Community Reinvestment Act, including Predatory Lending, changes accompanying the Workforce Investment Act, and national Immigration Policy.

We built our organizing base around door-to-door work as well as in coalition with schools, churches, and agencies/institutions.

I am currently working for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 73, a public sector union also based in Chicago, servicing public employees city, statewide, and in NW Indiana. I work in the organizing department as a new member organizer. We are currently working on a campaign in Chicago Public Schools focusing on paid parent workers. We are gaining support in our drive to win union recognition for these workers, who make between $5-8/hour without health benefits, paid sick/vacation days, or any sort of representation. I am also leading our community outreach component of this campaign, which involves forming alliances with community organizations who we can collaborate with on our campaign and their ongoing work.

Mission Statement

The Sociology Department at Grinnell College seeks to develop in students the sociological knowledge and skills that will enable them to think critically and imaginatively about society and social issues. Serving students directly and society indirectly, the Department encourages a commitment to social justice based on an appreciation of social and intellectual diversity and an awareness of social inequality.

Sociological Knowledge. We expect students to have attained:

a) Knowledge of basic sociological concepts.

b) Familiarity with various theoretical perspectives within sociology.

c) Knowledge of ways of collecting and evaluating sociological evidence.

Sociological Skills. We expect students to acquire:

a) An ability to think critically and imaginatively about society and social issues, using sociological knowledge.

b) An ability to express this thinking clearly through oral and written communication.

c) An ability to use the standards of the field to evaluate the quality of sociological work, including one's own work.

Sociological Values. We expect students to demonstrate:

a) An appreciation for social and intellectual diversity.

b) An awareness of social inequality.

c) A commitment to social justice.
Let Us Know What You Are Doing Now

Send to: Susan Ferguson, Department of Sociology, Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA 50112-1690, or e-mail to: fergusos@grinnell.edu

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