Off of the College Campus: Seeing Sociologists in Action at the American Sociological Association Honors Program
By Kim Longfellow ’16

During the winter break of my junior year, I was encouraged by Professor VoonChin Phua to submit a research paper that I had written for his Data Analysis and Statistics course to the Honors Program of the American Sociological Association (ASA) Annual Meeting (the ASA Annual Meeting is a yearly event where sociologists from around the United States gather to share their research and receive feedback from their peers). Thanks to funding from Gettysburg College and the Sociology Department, I was able to travel to Chicago for five days during August 2015 in order to participate in this incredible opportunity.

ASA’s Honors Program specifically consisted of approximately forty-five undergraduate and graduate sociology students from around the country selected to attend the meeting and present their own research. In addition to providing access to all presentations, workshops, and plenary sessions held during the Annual Meeting, the Honors Program held sessions relevant to the interests of students interested in a career in sociology, including a Q&A session on how to research and apply for graduate programs and a discussion of potential careers in applied sociology (not to mention a boat tour of Chicago and a trip to get authentic Chicago deep-dish pizza!). Arguably the main event during the Honors Program was the roundtable student paper presentation session. Students were separated into smaller groups and matched with a professional sociologist. Each student gave a discussion of their research questions, theoretical framework, methods, and results, and then they received feedback from their peers and the sociologist moderating their table.

I was admittedly nervous about presenting my research for the first time. I was made even more nervous when I found out that the author of my Sociology Methods textbook, Earl Babbie, would be the moderator of my table. Despite this apprehension, the paper presentation session was
one of my favorite parts of the Honors Program. It was an incredible experience to meet and receive feedback from such a well-known sociologist, and it was inspiring to hear about the fascinating research being conducted by other enthusiastic sociology undergraduates around the country. In addition to attending the events specific to the Honors Program, I was also able to attend several additional sessions including a discussion of the current attitudes about abortion and gay marriage in the United States, women’s changing roles in the military, and technology and the “modern romance” (including a talk led by comedian Aziz Ansari). Particularly relevant to my current research, I was also able to observe a presentation of several sociologists’ collective memory research. In this professional, yet friendly, atmosphere, I was able to not only hear about the presenter’s research, but also to speak with them about afterwards. Throughout my personal experience with sociology, I had been most familiar with the work that sociologists do within the classroom setting, so it was exciting to see “sociologists in action” outside of the classroom.

Despite my initial anxiety about presenting my research, I would highly recommend the ASA Honors Program to current sociology majors at Gettysburg College, especially those considering a Master’s Degree or PhD in Sociology. It is a unique opportunity to network with sociologists from all over the United States and to meet the people whose findings you have quoted in your own research projects. It is also extremely fun and motivating to make connections with your own cohort of sociology scholars. An experience such as this truly put into perspective just how I had learned and grown during my time as a Sociology Major at Gettysburg. I left feeling full of interesting ideas for future research topics for my senior capstone and Honors Thesis, and confident that my experience at Gettysburg College and the ASA Honors Program had prepared me well to carry them out!

Proposing Change in the town of Biglerville
By Chrisbell Jimenez Sosa ’17

The students in Professor Abel's SOC 250 Community Development class presented low cost effective community development projects that were meant to help revitalize the community of Biglerville and make it more attractive to tourists. Some of their ideas included a recreational skateboarding park, apple fest/apple museum, having more options for tourism and new telecommunication programs. The students were able to present their proposals to the Mayor, Town Council, and citizens of Biglerville. After students discussed their proposals, officials and citizens were free to ask questions and voice their opinions. One of the students that presented a proposal is Caroline Campbell’17, although, this was not something she knew she would be doing when she signed up for Prof. Able’s course. Caroline notes that Prof. Able’s course was designed to make
students want to implement change. To help in this process, Professor Abel made the students create a Sim City game in which the students would design and create a “fake town” from scratch. After this, Professor Abel made students apply their knowledge to a real life situation: change that could be implemented in the community of Biglerville.

**Student Survey Review**  
By Xiunan Yu ’18

The following comments are based on the results of a survey given to senior sociology majors.

Most students in the sociology major felt very successful in the “mastery of skills in writing, reading, speaking, and utilizing electronic media grounded in the discipline of Sociology.” They also felt highly positive about their ability to “design a research project” and “to apply data collection and analysis to broader implications.”

Additionally, students noted that their most important learning experiences related to learning “how to apply the research skill to real life careers”. The learning experience in Research Methods helped students to “read facts critically” and “think outside the box”. Students also felt that the concepts and ideas learned in the department’s Theory course helped “develop theoretical perspectives on society and life” and to “understand individuals and events around the world”.

Many students offered suggestions as to how to improve the major. In this regard, students emphasized the necessity to have more programs that can help them to “identify potential jobs for sociology majors” and to give more “opportunities in specific careers”. Students felt these programs would enable majors to relate their experience to each other and to develop a sense of community.

Most students plan to look for a job after graduation. About 15% of students want to go to graduate school to continue their sociological studies.
Soc 212 Field Trip, October 2015

ASA Award Recipients, September 2015

Students who received ASA Award (2015)
Kimberly Longfellow ‘16
Sarah Kramer, ‘17
Alexandra Richmond, ‘17
Quadirah Bell, ‘16
Shae Belenski, ‘17
Michele Bonafide, ‘16
Miranda Wisor, ‘18

New Additions: Elic (May 2015)

Department Party, September 2015
Managing Editors:
Miranda Wisor and Andrea Switzer

Supervising Faculty:
Voon Chin Phua and Craig Lair