

Macalester Sociology Majors Sweep Prizes in Midwest Sociological Society Paper Competitions

St. Paul, Minn. - Senior sociology majors **Evelyn Daugherty**, **Jenny Evgenia Grinblo**, and **Morgen Chang** have won the top three prizes awarded in the 48th Annual Midwest Sociological Society Student Paper Competition. Daugherty and Grinblo were co-awarded first prize and Chang received third prize.

In her first-prize paper “Language in the Name of National Security: The Transformation of Arabic Language Instruction in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education,” Daugherty examined the impact of U.S. government interest in Arabic as a "strategic language for national security" on Arabic language instruction at U.S. institutions of higher education. Daugherty’s paper drew on the following data: in-depth interviews with Arabic language instructors at a range of higher education institutions in the U.S., observation of deliberations at professional meetings, and historical analysis of government policy, the development of professional associations, and language instruction materials. She found that government interest in Arabic language has spurred a pedagogical shift from an emphasis on learning Classical Arabic for academic purposes to an emphasis on learning Modern Arabic for professional purposes. Daugherty’s paper contributed to sociological analysis of institutions by incorporating analysis of how power, change, and individual actors influence outcomes.

Grinblo completed a series of in-depth interviews to gather the data for her first-prize winning paper “Craft-a-Go-Go: Identification, Gender, and Occupational Autonomy in the Go-Go Dancing Occupation.” Grinblo analyzed how women working in mainstream nightclubs as go-go dancers achieved social integration and occupational autonomy in an occupation that is stigmatized. She found that go-go dancers organized work in ways similar to the older craft-labor model typical of guilds and apprenticeships; however, the go-go dancers’ organization differed from traditional craft labor by creating and enforcing an identity of go-go dancing as distinct from sex work. The dancers’ friendship networks built on this shared identity to create a collective autonomy that served as a non-bureaucratic way to increase social integration, create greater leverage for negotiating work conditions, and control entry into the occupation. By synthesizing insights from studies of craft labor and feminist scholarship, the paper contributed to understanding how identities take form in and influence work organization.

Chang’s paper, “Making or Maintaining Connections Online? YouTube as Both Site and Tool of Social Interaction,” addressed the question of how people use Internet technology in social interaction. Her paper blended both quantitative analysis from a survey and interpretative analysis from a series of in-depth interviews with a subset of survey respondents. Chang’s findings reframe debates about whether the Internet destroys or enhances community life by demonstrating that different people use sites like YouTube in distinct ways. She found that technical skill and level of offline interpersonal interactions influence how the Internet changes or expands users’ social networks. Users who were more socially connected in the offline world tended to use YouTube primarily as a currency in existing social relationships. Users with a higher level of involvement on the platform were more likely to have contact with strangers and feel agency about creating positive interactions online.

Daugherty, Grinblo, and Chang will receive their prizes and present their papers at the annual meetings of the Midwest Sociological Society in St. Louis in March.



Jenny Grinblo, Evelyn Daugherty, Morgen Chang, all seniors and sociology majors, wrote award winning papers.

The Midwest Sociological Society (MSS), founded in 1936, is a professional organization of academic and applied sociologists as well as students of the discipline. While the MSS membership area formally includes nine states - Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, Kansas, South Dakota and North Dakota - more than one-third of the members are from other parts of the nation and the world.

Macalester College, founded in 1874, is a national liberal arts college with a full-time enrollment of 1,958 students. Macalester is nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to academic excellence, internationalism, multiculturalism and civic engagement.

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