Earlier this year, Professor Rory McVeigh took over as editor of what must be one of the most aptly named publications in all of sociology. Mobilization is the top journal focused on social movements, protests, and collective behavior. But more than just suggesting the topics covered inside, its name gives a fitting nod to the growing number of scholars choosing to join the ranks of those specializing in social movement research.

“The American Sociological Association has 44 sections representing various subfields within the discipline,” says McVeigh, who is also the department’s chairperson. “The Section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements has 836 members, which ranks seventh and represents a 56 percent increase in membership since 2001.”

Founded in 1996 by San Diego State University’s Hank Johnston, Mobilization features the work of researchers from around the world. Professor Dan Myers started editing the journal at Notre Dame in 2007 through the Center for the Study of Social Movements and Social Change, which is housed in the department. Four of the center’s faculty affiliates, including Director Jackie Smith, currently serve as deputy editors, and two of its graduate students are assistant editors.

“The center is a hub of activity for social movement scholars both inside and outside of Notre Dame,” McVeigh says. “Having the journal based here shines a light on the center and also on the important work that our faculty members and graduate students have been doing in this field for a number of years.”

If Professor Mark Berends had a dollar for every time parents have asked him where to send their kids to school, he might not be rich, but he probably could purchase a lifetime supply of number two pencils. Their interest in his perspective is understandable. A highly regarded sociologist of education who joined the department’s faculty in January, Berends was previously an associate professor of public policy and education at Vanderbilt University and is still director of its federally funded National Center on School Choice. He’s published books such as Charter School Outcomes and Leading With Data: Pathways to Improve Your School. And with his move to Notre Dame, he now directs the University’s Center for Research on Educational Opportunity (CREO).

But for all that Berends does, he does not advocate for or against school choice or for one kind of school over another; he believes individual experiences vary dramatically and that the two centers he directs are best served if he remains as objective as possible.

“Schools can be a lot more alike than they are different,” Berends says, “and so while we may in particular be interested in, say, Catholic schools, or we may be interested in charter schools, we want to compare them to each other to draw lessons…So it’s more the conditions under which all schools can be effective than just choice or type per se.”

Describing himself as “very honored and flattered” upon receiving a phone call from Notre Dame sociologist Maureen Hallinan about the prospect of succeeding her as CREO’s director, continued on page 6
Subprime Lending, Then and Now

In 2005, Associate Professor Richard Williams and colleagues from two other institutions published “The Changing Face of Inequality in Home Mortgage Lending” in the journal Social Problems. Based on nationwide data made available through the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, the paper shows there was a substantial increase in the number of low-income and minority homeowners during the 1990s but that these gains were reversed over time via subprime loans.

“Even by 2000, we could see that low-income and minority communities were being adversely impacted by subprime lending practices,” Williams notes, referring to the higher foreclosure rate now infamous associated with this type of mortgage. He says people were willing to accept the unfavorable terms because for decades, qualified minority borrowers had been unjustly denied financing. In other words, a familiar culprit—particularly one that was aggressively marketed—was better than no loan at all.

The research team, which also included Notre Dame alumni Reynold Nesiba (Augustana College) and Eileen Diaz McConnell (Arizona State University), found subprime lending was so prevalent that it and loans for manufactured housing “accounted for as much as half or more of the gains made by underserved markets between 1993 and 2000.”

What Williams couldn’t have known when the paper was published, however, was that the structural changes experienced in these markets were going to surface in just about every other market, too, resulting in a ripple effect that would be felt worldwide.

“Subprime lending increased greatly after 2000, and … there was a dramatic increase in poor lending practices targeted at higher income groups,” says Williams, pointing to vehicles such as interest-only and adjustable-rate mortgages. “These loans were sold and resold globally, and when they started to go bad, the entire economy began to suffer.”

The research that led to the Social Problems article is part of Williams’ ongoing “Racial, Economic, and Institutional Disparities in Home Mortgage Lending” project, which has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and the department of Housing and Urban Development. More recently, he’s coauthored an article that was published in Social Forces that argues subprime loans, while allowing more people to buy homes, did not increase racial integration.

Nevertheless, he’s concerned the fallout from all the foreclosures could continue to constrict lending to underserved markets, something that had been on the rise, and further segregate neighborhoods.

“Power-control theory defines egalitarian homes, on the other hand, as those where the mother has a high socioeconomic status, measured in terms of her standing in the workplace, the family making less likely to follow traditional gender scripts. In this environment, one would expect boys and girls to develop attitudes toward risk-taking that more closely resemble one another.

Power-control theory defines egalitarian homes, on the other hand, as those where the mother has a high socioeconomic status, measured in terms of her standing in the workplace, the family making less likely to follow traditional gender scripts. In this environment, one would expect boys and girls to develop attitudes toward risk-taking that more closely resemble one another.

Collett and Lizardo, following a line of inquiry Miller identified but didn’t pursue, hypothesized that the family structures described by power-control theory could impact the choices women make about religion, based on the assumption that those decisions involve a calculation of risk. To test this idea, they analyzed data gathered from 1994-2003 through the National Opinion Research Center’s “General Social Survey,” focusing on demographic traits as well as church attendance, frequency of prayer, and strength of religious affiliation.

“People motivate different kinds of decisions—like religious commitments—we use power-control theory’s assumption that those decisions involve a calculation of risk. To test this idea, they analyzed data gathered from 1994-2003 through the National Opinion Research Center’s “General Social Survey,” focusing on demographic traits as well as church attendance, frequency of prayer, and strength of religious affiliation.

“In these egalitarian homes, girls are likely treated more like their brothers … and [as adults] end up with similar rates of religiosity as men,” she says, a finding that implies biology alone can’t be responsible for the discrepancy in the general population. “What we can’t have access to are the measures of parental control in this data—and we are only able to look at gender, religiosity, and parental socioeconomic status—we use power-control theory’s arguments about the exertion of control to explain why mothers’ increased occupational status results in less religious daughters.”

Collett and Lizardo’s paper appears in JSPP along with three responses from others in the field.

Paper Examines Gender Differences in Religious Practice

Though not quite the stuff of a Norman Rockwell painting, a husband reluctantly heeding his wife’s request to abandon the couch and go to church is an appropriate scene to depict what two Notre Dame sociologists call “one of the most consistent findings in the sociology of religion.”

Women are more religious than men. But why?

As for why women tend to be more risk averse, Miller and Stark argue that biology alone can’t be responsible for the discrepancy in the general population. “What we can’t have access to are the measures of parental control in this data—and we are only able to look at gender, religiosity, and parental socioeconomic status—we use power-control theory’s arguments about the exertion of control to explain why mothers’ increased occupational status results in less religious daughters.”

Collett and Lizardo’s paper appears in JSPP along with three responses from others in the field.

Collett and Lizardo’s paper appears in JSPP along with three responses from others in the field.

Titled “A Power-Control Theory of Gender and Religiosity,” Collett and Lizardo’s paper examines the implications of gender differences in religious practice, with a focus on understanding why women tend to be more religious than men.

Jessica Collett and Omar Lizardo, both assistant professors in the department, believe the risk-aversion hypothesis developed by the late Alan Miller and Baylor University’s Rodney Stark is the best explanation. It draws on a considerable amount of data that indicates women aren’t as likely as men to engage in high-risk behavior, such as committing a crime. Miller and Stark applied the same principle to people’s attitudes about faith, arguing that the more prone someone is to follow society’s rules, the less inclined he or she will be to ignore religion and risk losing the supernatural rewards associated with it.

As for why women tend to be more risk averse, Miller and Stark argue that biology alone can’t be responsible for the discrepancy in the general population. “What we can’t have access to are the measures of parental control in this data—and we are only able to look at gender, religiosity, and parental socioeconomic status—we use power-control theory’s arguments about the exertion of control to explain why mothers’ increased occupational status results in less religious daughters.”

Collett and Lizardo’s paper appears in JSPP along with three responses from others in the field.

Collett and Lizardo’s paper appears in JSPP along with three responses from others in the field.

Titled “A Power-Control Theory of Gender and Religiosity,” Collett and Lizardo’s paper examines the implications of gender differences in religious practice, with a focus on understanding why women tend to be more religious than men.

Jessica Collett and Omar Lizardo, both assistant professors in the department, believe the risk-aversion hypothesis developed by the late Alan Miller and Baylor University’s Rodney Stark is the best explanation. It draws on a considerable amount of data that indicates women aren’t as likely as men to engage in high-risk behavior, such as committing a crime. Miller and Stark applied the same principle to people’s attitudes about faith, arguing that the more prone someone is to follow society’s rules, the less inclined he or she will be to ignore religion and risk losing the supernatural rewards associated with it.

As for why women tend to be more risk averse, Miller and Stark argue that biology alone can’t be responsible for the discrepancy in the general population. “What we can’t have access to are the measures of parental control in this data—and we are only able to look at gender, religiosity, and parental socioeconomic status—we use power-control theory’s arguments about the exertion of control to explain why mothers’ increased occupational status results in less religious daughters.”

Collett and Lizardo’s paper appears in JSPP along with three responses from others in the field.

Titled “A Power-Control Theory of Gender and Religiosity,” Collett and Lizardo’s paper examines the implications of gender differences in religious practice, with a focus on understanding why women tend to be more religious than men.

Jessica Collett and Omar Lizardo, both assistant professors in the department, believe the risk-aversion hypothesis developed by the late Alan Miller and Baylor University’s Rodney Stark is the best explanation. It draws on a considerable amount of data that indicates women aren’t as likely as men to engage in high-risk behavior, such as committing a crime. Miller and Stark applied the same principle to people’s attitudes about faith, arguing that the more prone someone is to follow society’s rules, the less inclined he or she will be to ignore religion and risk losing the supernatural rewards associated with it.

As for why women tend to be more risk averse, Miller and Stark argue that biology alone can’t be responsible for the discrepancy in the general population. “What we can’t have access to are the measures of parental control in this data—and we are only able to look at gender, religiosity, and parental socioeconomic status—we use power-control theory’s arguments about the exertion of control to explain why mothers’ increased occupational status results in less religious daughters.”

Collett and Lizardo’s paper appears in JSPP along with three responses from others in the field.
Alumni Spotlight: When Sociology Becomes More Than a Major

There’s something you should know about Notre Dame’s Department of Sociology: While the faculty take great pride in offering the kind of education that proves to be an asset in a number of professions, they can’t help but feel a little extra excitement if the field an undergraduate chooses is their own. And the reason has nothing to do with imitation being the sincerest form of flattery. OK, maybe it is a little flattering. But mostly, their enthusiasm comes from looking to the future. When a student goes on to pursue a Ph.D. in sociology, his or her professors know they will soon be able to count that person among their colleagues. And given the talent in the department’s undergraduate program, it would be surprising if the faculty weren’t excited about that.

ND Soc asked several former sociology majors, some who are currently graduate students and others who are already in the profession, to reflect on where they got their start.

“I always liked the openness of the department. The pizza dinners where we met with our advisers and discussed courses for the next semester made me feel that the professors really cared about us and wanted us to enjoy our academic experience.”

— Maryann Erigha (’07), doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania

“Professor Rory McVeigh was influential in cultivating my interest in sociology. His class in ‘Methods of Sociology’ taught me to think critically about my own and others’ presentations of research, and his encouraging feedback on exams and papers not only helped me to improve my work but also inspired me to consider making sociology the base of my future career.”

— Anne Diederich (’09), doctoral student at Indiana University Bloomington (beginning this fall)

“I invested a lot of time and energy in the sociological theory class taught by Professor Robert Fishman. The writing I did in that class improved my ability to convey complex ideas clearly, and the content of the course familiarized me with theories that I would need to know both during and after graduate school.”

— Jeremy Reynolds (’94), associate professor at the University of Georgia

Graduate Seminars Enhance Scholarly Development, Research

Every week, graduate students in sociology have the opportunity to come together to discuss with faculty and each other their research and current issues in the field. These “training” seminars keep students focused on their projects and allow them to set weekly goals for themselves as they manage the demands on their time.

While hearing constructive criticism during these sessions can be tough, Department Chairperson Rory McVeigh says it is necessary in order to make progress as an academic.

“Negotiating one’s way through a graduate program is difficult and there is a lot to learn about producing research and publishing in journals that cannot be learned by reading a manual,” he notes. “It is instead learned through interactions with others who have already been through the process.”

The seminars were inspired by a group started in the department in 1997. Graduate students and faculty would meet to discuss ongoing research on social movements and contentious politics. Word of what was going on spread, and, over time, their numbers expanded.

The group proved to be so helpful for graduate students attempting to complete their theses, and finding it difficult to achieve results, the department created a seminar to support them.

“I have found the feedback to be helpful in moving my projects towards completion and placing my work into broader sociological perspectives,” says Lee. “After presenting my work, I always leave with many ideas of how to improve it.”

At Notre Dame, it’s not uncommon for students to combine what they learn during a service experience with what they study in class to help define their research and career interests.

“Furthermore, I observed the machismo and Spanish which graduated in May. In her time as an undergraduate, Lee worked for a number of social service organizations, including World Teach in Costa Rica, where she spent a summer teaching English to high school students in an impoverished rural community. It was there that she started developing a research project on the dynamics of rural social movements, drawing on what she had learned the previous semester in Associate Professor Jacki Smith’s “Social Movements, Global Perspectives” course.

“My experience with the families who contributed to my research was challenging, but it also inspired me to consider making sociology the base of my future career.”

— Anne Diederich (’09), doctoral student at Indiana University Bloomington (beginning this fall)

Lee received an Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program grant from the University’s College of Arts and Letters to return to Costa Rica in fall 2008 to engage in ethnographic research for her thesis, “Women’s Impact and Contribution to Rural Movements in Costa Rica: The Need for Inclusion and Open Spaces Dialogue.” As she conducted interviews, read graduate program records and immersed herself in the local culture, she gained a fuller understanding of how traditions and norms in rural Latin America limit women and prevent their social mobilization and organization.

“Providing open spaces where dialogue on public issues is encouraged and ideas can be shared would allow Costa Rican women in rural areas to explore the different avenues for improving their economic and political conditions through collective action,” says Lee, who wanted her thesis under the direction of Smith.

A graduate of the department’s honors track, Lee plans to enter the master of social work program at Columbia University this fall.

Faculty Committee Putting Eisch Endowment to Good Use

When Joan and John Eisch established the Margaret Eisch Endowment for Excellence in Sociology in the College of Arts and Letters, they seconded the department’s commitment to undergraduate research in a most generous manner.

The Eisch Endowment for Excellence Committee was created in fall 2008 to ensure the gift has the greatest possible impact. Chaired by Ann Power, director of undergraduate studies, the committee distributed funds toward several ends during the past academic year.

For instance, students were able to attend scholarly events away from campus thanks to awards that covered their travel expenses; one group went to the North Central Student Sociology Conference, the other to the Chicago Ethnography Conference and a workshop on ethnographic filmmaking. The endowment is also being used to pay for the printing of the next issue of the department’s undergraduate research journal, Sociological Voices, which is due out this summer.

The journal has been published intermittently in the past, but Power says it will now be possible to produce it annually. In addition, she expects the three-person faculty committee—whose other members are Russell Faiges and Mary Ellen Konieczny—to start accepting applications for funding from undergraduates who need additional resources to conduct “unique and creative research projects.”
on the same day; (quite a dungeon); memorable. They are:

places, moments, and experiences that stand out as particularly
increase the range of dinner recipes I can prepare without help.

reading more books for pleasure—maybe even some fiction—and
attended the event.
to the colleagues, family members, and special guests who

my first office in the basement of Hesburgh Library (quite a dungeon);
becoming tenured and appointed department chair on the same day;
the Department of Sociology and Anthropology separating and our department growing thereafter;

spending 10 years in administrative roles—four as department chair and six as study director;
adding three outstanding colleagues to the faculty while I was chair and still with us (David Hochén, Rich Williams, and Samuel Valenzuela);
watching students get younger every year, while I remain ageless;

having many opportunities for foreign professional travel to places such as India, Portugal, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, and Costa Rica;
seeing the construction of many buildings across campus and teaching in some strange places, including the attic of the Golden Dome;

being the academic adviser for Notre Dame’s last Heisman Trophy winner, Tim Brown, who was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in April and whose hair has become shockingly gray.

Also, I would like to thank those who have had a major impact on my professional and personal life, including mentors, Notre Dame faculty and graduate students, administrators and staff, collaborators at other universities, and family members, most especially my wife, Jennifer.

Berends accepted her invitation to come take a closer look at the University.

Rev. Timothy Scully, C.S.C., director of the Institute for Educational Outreach, of which CREO is a part, impressed Berends during those visits with his great hope for Catholic education, especially in areas with high levels of poverty. The institute supports these under-resourced schools with teachers trained through its Alliance for Catholic Education, creating an environment where CREO researchers can collaborate directly with educators.

An academic who’s most enthusiastic about projects that also have relevance for policymakers and practitioners, Berends liked what he saw. “And so this invite in some ways also turned into a call, mainly because of the mission of Notre Dame,” he says.

Under his direction, work at the National Center on School Choice has examined everything from schooling options to themselves to the reasons parents make their decisions. However, Catholic schools have not figured into the center’s research, something Berends is glad will change with the connection to CREO.

“To be able to think about effective Catholic education in some of these urban centers and what lessons we can translate into the public sector is an added benefit of being at a place like Notre Dame,” he says.

Berends’ most recent book, Handbook of Research on School Choice, was published in April, and he is currently helping lead “What Makes Schools Work,” a project the National Center on School Choice is conducting with the Northwest Evaluation Association, the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, and Mountain Measurement.

The study concentrates on second—through eighth-grade math classes and aims to discover whether it’s really differences in instruction that cause students from one type of school to outperform those at another. Teachers from approximately 150 schools are completing an online survey on what and how they teach; these results will then be linked to their classes’ standardized test scores. Although all data will be reported in the aggregate and won’t identify any of the participants, a teacher who takes the survey immediately receives a confidential report on how his or her methods compare to school, district, and state standards as well as how they align with what the standardized tests are measuring.

Not surprisingly, this is one of Berends’ favorite aspects of the project. “It’s helpful not only from a research standpoint but for the teachers themselves just to be able to reflect on their instruction,” he says, noting that professional development activities based on the study’s findings will also be offered.

Excited about the potential of “What Makes Schools Work,” he is similarly optimistic about CREO’s future.

“That’s my hope,” Berends says. “to continue to build this to the point where if you want to study sociology of education, you go to Notre Dame.”
Smith Receives $5 Million Grant to Explore the “Science of Generosity”

Notre Dame has launched the “Science of Generosity,” a multiyear project supported by a $5 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation to Christian Smith, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Sociology and director of the University’s Center for the Study of Religion and Society.

“The goal of the project is to mobilize top-quality research across various disciplines on the origins, expressions, and effects of generosity,” Smith says, noting that “generosity” is defined in this context as the spirit and practice of giving good things to others freely and abundantly.

“This includes time, aid, attention, blood, possessions, encouragement, emotional investment, and more.”

The grant is the largest ever received by a faculty member in Notre Dame’s College of Arts and Letters. The University also has contributed approximately $200,000 to the project.

In addition to supporting academic research at Notre Dame, the “Science of Generosity” is hosting an international competition among scholars in fields such as sociology, economics, psychology, behavioral economics, education, law, and religious studies. Four to eight research proposals will be selected to receive grants of $250,000–$500,000 during the first phase of the competition, which started this spring. The second phase will fund seven to 15 smaller awards, totaling another $1.2 million.

Smith says current examinations of generosity are a scattered constellation of research studies operating under different terms (philanthropy, giving, charity, altruism, etc.), but he anticipates a more unified field will develop around the Notre Dame initiative. To that end, he has assembled a board of advisers consisting of experts who represent a number of fields and institutions.

Visit http://generosityresearch.nd.edu for more information.

Visit us on the web: http://sociology.nd.edu