

Professor Lucia Benaquisto

Professor Lucia Benaquisto returned to the Sociology department at the beginning of this semester after nearly a year's absence. She teaches The Design and Practice of Social Research (SOC 580), as well as the perennial undergraduate favourite, Sociological Inquiry (SOC 211). In addition to methodology courses, she also teaches Responses to Social Problems (SOC 460), and Deviance and Social Control (SOC 571), her main area of research.

SSA: So, it's a lot of methodology that you teach...

LB: I've moved into that more... When I first came to McGill I was more towards social problems and social control. But as I was here, and as I did the 211 course, Thompson Nelson Publishing talked me into doing the book with Babbie, because they wanted a Canadian text. They wanted the work to inspire and to encourage people to do work on Canadian topics... So I got involved in this really massive project, just because I had taught it for so long. And then once I did that, I became interested in the topic, in and of itself, you can't help it... I actually enjoy teaching methods, I think it's really important... But it's not just methodology, it's much more than that, as well. It's about what kinds of question we ask in this profession and what we can answer empirically.

SSA: So, before you started moving more towards methodology, what were your main interests in sociology?

LB: I've only moved a little bit towards that in my teaching-I'm still doing research in substantive issues. In the Nineties I did a major study of prisons in Canada. I also moved back towards my research on the historical study of the French criminal justice system and the use of punishment over time... The last couple of years, I've been working on the issue of children of offenders, and I got into that while I was doing some work with the National Crime Prevention Centre. They were interested in looking at a problem- which had really not been given much attention at all- which is that children of offenders are more likely to end up as criminals themselves- up to twice as likely (particularly males), according to some studies. So it's a high risk population that the government knows about but does very little about, which is very annoying. So in this regard I like this topic because it's the kind of work that will hopefully have a policy impact as well.

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SSA: You also said you've done work on the French criminal justice system. French, as in France, or as in Quebec?

LB: France. It was my dissertation. When I was in graduate school, I used to have arguments with my supervisor about the way the world works. And there was an issue that came up, where I thought that punishment was related to political upheavals in society, and he had a more Durkheimian, cultural view of the situation. So I set out to show him [laughs] that my argument had some merit. So I examined five countries, and one of them was France. France has very good statistical data— always has— so I looked at the French criminal justice system in more depth, and I found periods of outbursts in imprisonment, which I then went back to study. So I have a historical stream in my research, as well as a contemporary one.

SSA: You said you hoped your current study would have policy impacts?

LB: Yes, absolutely. That was one of the reasons I started doing work for the government. I'd like to see more programs in our criminal justice system focused on prevention, focused on the children. We spend so much of our time and money, a lot of time and money, on the inmates themselves, on their reintegration into the community, but not on the children. And it's at that young age when you can have a great deal of impact.

SSA: So is that why you got into sociology? Because you wanted to have policy impacts?

LB: Yes and no. I'm not that naïve. I like academic life; I like studies that have absolutely nothing more to them than the search for pure knowledge. Would I also like it to help people? Yes, absolutely.

But when I was an undergraduate I didn't know what I wanted to be. I thought about going into law, or business, but decided they weren't for me. I was encouraged by my economics professors to go into economics, which I liked- but I wasn't really...

(...continued on page two ◀)

The SSA Symposium

The SSA Symposium will take place on 15 March, 2006, from 3pm. It's a chance for graduate students and undergraduate honours students to share some of the work they've been doing for their theses with their professors and peers in the department. We've got a great line-up so far and more to be added, so come along and check out these presentations!

Yesim Bayar (PhD candidate)

Yesim will be discussing her work on the formation of national identity in Turkey during the Early Republican Period (1920-1938).

Aidan Jeffery (MA candidate)

Aidan's work aims to bridge some of the gaps that exist in the literature about human trafficking. She'll be presenting some of the work she's done for her thesis, a comparative analysis of several countries, examining specific legislation targeted at curtailing human trafficking. She will also discuss the human trafficking situation in Canada in more detail, particularly its surprising lack of legislation on the problem.

Andrew Ladd (BA Honours candidate) (TBC)

Andrew has spent the year studying gendered differences in humour—specifically, trying to answer the question of why women are seen as less funny than men. He'll be presenting a review of some of the existing theories and studies that have been done on the topic, as well as some results from his own work on women in sitcoms.

And more...

Are you an undergraduate in honours sociology, who wants to present on your thesis work? E-mail us at ssa.sociology@mail.mcgill.ca!

...Benaquisto, from page 1

deeply interested in the topics you covered in that. So I moved into sociology because at the time I really cared about issues of poverty, and in some ways I wanted to do work that would help in that area. So I did have some utopian ideals. But you know, things change once you get to graduate school... You end up working with different professors, and your interests change.

My committee, and my supervisor in particular, were interested in social control and the issue of morality, and issues like that, and punishment was part of it. I took some courses with people like Donald Black, who does stuff like the general theory of social control. So it was social control that was really my 'in' to sociology.

SSA: What do you think are some good reasons, these days, for students to get into sociology?

LB: Well, it depends on the person... You have to be very interested in the topic; you have to be interested in society; you have to be interested in interactions, and networks, and the way states operate. If you're interested in policy issues, it's a good way to get into that, too- knowing about sociology and learning how to accurately evaluate information, are really important for those kinds of positions.

There are too many people out there making policies on the basis of some kind of disaster, when everybody gets enraged over some issue that happened; some person that got hurt, some social slight. Doing it as an immediate response to an incident is a bad way to make policy. It should be thoughtful. It should be made by people who actually know how to investigate, how to look at the various aspects of a problem, and who understand that no policy will be perfect. So, in that regard, I believe that a lot of people should go into the field, because I think as a background for many jobs and many positions it's extremely important.

SSA: You said you liked the academic world a lot. What is it about you like about it?

LB: I like the fact that I can change what I'm working on, and work on issues that are interesting to me. I believe that that kind of control over what I want to study is a luxury- you don't often get to do that in a job. In law, for example, you don't get to jump around from one kind of law to another... Specialization really matters. Medicine's the same as well- you don't go from one kind of medicine to another very readily.

I also like working with young people who have good minds, that are interested in issues, that are energetic about them. I love following the projects that people are doing. You learn a great deal about other areas, but also, watching a project emerge is fun... I like learning for the sake of learning.

 Interview by Andrew Ladd

Montreal's Black History

How many of us have waxed the utter melancholy of February, deeming it the month of darkness and despair (not to mention midterms, papers, and stress)? Yet, all it takes is a step off of the McGill campus to dip into a miasma of culture and history, specifically Black History.

Montreal has the second-largest black population in the country, after Toronto. Canada's Black population dates back some 360 years, when French colonists brought their slaves to the New World. Dorothy W. Williams, author of *The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal*, writes that the period between 1897 and 1930 marked the beginning of a genuine black community in Montreal. Williams marks the St. Antoine District of Montreal as the original home of the American blacks. These migrants began getting hired in 1856 by the Grand Trunk Railway operating between Montreal and Toronto. Amongst the many obstacles faced by Montreal's Black communities included McGill University's color bar, which drove many talented blacks to seek an education away from Montreal.

The war years, on the other hand, favoured Montreal's black communities. Blacks became servicemen and therefore enjoyed fringe benefits such as medical care, subsidized housing and veteran's pensions. Black women, who generally came in as domestics from the islands, were able to obtain jobs in war industries.

The well-educated French-speaking immigrants from Haiti who started arriving in Montreal between 1963 and 1972 radically changed the demographics of the black community. Unlike their English-speaking counterparts, they aligned themselves with the nationalist movement of Quebec. Later on, blacks from French and English-speaking Africa started arriving in Montreal, albeit in smaller numbers.

Black student activism in Montreal made its debut in the 1960s. Black leaders like Stokely Carmichael from the US, Michael X from England and Walter Rodney from Jamaica, stoked student unrest. Their presence set the stage for the establishment of the National Black Coalition of Canada.

Today, Montreal's Black communities number in the thousands. Their voices make up an intrinsic part of the city's livelihood. Following are a few events that will pique your interest. Check out the **Carnaval Du Monde**, hosted by TOHU (2345 Jarry Est. 374-3522 ext. 2248), on Saturday February 18th at 7.30 pm. TOHU is Montreal's school of Circus Arts, and the evening is sure to be unlike anything you have seen before. Salon Daome, at 141 Mount-Royal East, showcases the **Sistahs in the Arts** exhibit all month. The artists of the exhibit hail from Haiti, Zimbabwe, Barbados, and St. Vincent. Delve into a visual history of slavery in Canada at **Café Creole's** photo exhibit until March 11th (2519 Notre Dame W., 807-3097). The exhibit will showcase the history of Marie-Joseph Angelique a Portuguese-born black slave brought to New France (modern-day Quebec). Mark off Saturday, February 25th on your calendar, as Lounge 417 hosts **Sophisticated Rhythms: The Black History Month Edition**. Yesterday, I discovered a gem in the city by the name of Kunta Lounge on St. Denis below Sherbrooke Street. Check out this venue for some great art on the walls, vibrant vibes, and Caribbean-flavored beats.

✍️ Aziza Virani

By The Numbers

In 1997, the McGill Consortium for Ethnicity and Strategic Social Planning (MCESSP) undertook a two year study on the demographic profile of Blacks in Canada. The study was based on the 1991 national census, and revealed the following facts:

- Seventy per cent of all Blacks in Canada immigrated from the Caribbean and Bermuda.
- Sixty four per cent of all Blacks (two out of three) are under the age of 35.
- Close to 90% of Canada's Blacks were not in the country 25 years ago.
- There are 20,000 more Black women than Black men in Canada.
- 70% of all Blacks live in Toronto and Montreal. The study estimated that Toronto's Black population was approximately 240,940, and Montreal's was approximately 101,390.

Dear Marx...



More and more these days, I keep seeing 'celebrity playlist' features in the media. What are the ten most played songs on *your* iPod?

—Curious

Dear Curious,

What a wonderful question! Here they are:

In margin note by Engels: "Oh, sure, pretend like they're not all Britney and X-tina..."

1. "Can't Buy Me Love" —The Beatles
(Fantastic anti-commodification sentiment)
2. "These Boots Were Made For Walking" —Nancy Sinatra
(Excellent treatise on the concept of use-value)
3. "Factory Girl" —The Rolling Stones
4. "Material Girl" —Madonna
(The perfect pair of songs for raising class consciousness)
5. "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" —Gil Scott-Heron
(Panegyric for breaking free of media apathy)
6. "If Everybody Looked The Same" —Groove Armada
(Discussion of the evils of alienation)
7. "Take What You Want" —John Mellencamp
(The anthem of communism)
8. "Gold For the Price of Silver" —Kings of Convenience
(Examines the vicissitudes of exchange-value)
9. "End of the World" —Great Big Sea
(Prelude to the fall of capitalism)
10. "Hey Ya!" —Outkast
(Shake it like a polaroid picture!)

My adult children complain that when they send me photos of their kids who are missing teeth, I photo-edit them and replace the teeth. I am guilty as charged, but I think it looks better -- so why not do it? They claim that part of the "charm" of the children's photos is the missing

teeth, the cowlicks, the twisted tie, etc. In this electronic age, who is right?

—Photoshopper

Dear Photoshopper,

Are you freakin' kidding me? Of course you're the one who's right! Next time your whiny "adult" children complain, remind them that you can edit them out of the photos they send altogether.

I am a physics major. The only problem is, I am also female, and this means that I am often the subject of unwanted sexual attention from many of my classmates, and even some professors. I have tried making my discomfort at their persistent advances clear, but they simply accuse me of being "no fun," and continue. What should I do?

—Harassed

Dear Harassed,

I bet you always thought people talked about the 'social sciences' because disciplines like sociology and anthropology study society. WRONG! They're called the social sciences because the people who study them actually have some idea of how to behave appropriately in social settings, while 'real' scientists often do not. With physicists, the problem is compounded, because many of your colleagues will never have seen a girl before.

Luckily, there is some cause for hope. After all, even sociology was once a male-dominated discipline— but nowadays you can't walk into an undergraduate intro class without being confronted by long blonde hair, rouged cheeks, mini skirts, and a mist of perfume. And that's just Weber, post-op.

In margin note by Engels: "Yes, but let's not forget that a penis is still a valuable asset in pretty much any part of academia..."

So don't worry. With time, physicists, too, will start to realize that a metrosexual is not just someone who gets turned on by trains; and then they'll be thankful that you were around to press charges when they groped you during class.

✍ Karl Marx