

The Newsletter of the  
Women's and  
Gender Studies  
Program at Southern  
Methodist University

# *Women's and Gender Studies Network*

## Contents

*Director's Chair* 1

contributed to our travel expenses—as did program donors **Suzanne Schmidt '67** and her husband **Dan Jones**, through their kind annual gift. I am grateful to them all.

This newsletter marks the last one I will contribute to as Director; my term ends this summer. Negotiations for my successor are still ongoing as I write. I have enjoyed my six years directing WGS, writing this column, and hearing from some of you!

Sincerely,



Beth Newman

## WGS Students Make a Difference through Internships

### Family Outreach Dallas: Teenage Parenthood in Dallas

Nancy Fuentes '13



During the spring semester of 2013, I interned for Family Outreach Dallas, completing 200 on-site hours in the Teen Pregnancy and Parenting Program. Under the supervision of a licensed social worker, I was able to attend home visits in the East Dallas area.

I quickly realized that adolescent mothers lead different lives—some are married, some live with their parents, some are single parents, some are stay-at-home mothers, some are in school and others are working. Because of this, home visitations were usually scheduled in the evening, when teen parents arrive home from school, day care centers, or work.

One evening during a home visit, my internship suddenly became personal. About a year ago, I got orthodontic braces. I continued my daily routine without thinking much about them. This changed when I was introduced to a teen mother (of two children) who was wearing braces.

I felt a rush of self-awareness not only about my appearance (my braces) but also my present circumstances and future aspirations. I couldn't stop myself from comparing my reality with hers.

This experience made me realize that *the personal really is political*, and my training in WGS made me question my own assumptions about teen mothers. I am so glad to have participated in the WGS internship. I will carry this experience with me for many years to come.

*Nancy Fuentes, a Betty Maynard Scholar for 2012-2013, works for Cigna in Dallas.*

### Igniting a Passion for politics

Whitney Harp '14

This year I interned for IGNITE, a non-profit that works in local communities and schools to prepare women for leadership roles in political office. The program seeks to uplift girls in underprivileged neighborhoods and give them a political voice. Through my work with IGNITE, I finally understood the need to train students for leadership, and I found a role in furthering the cause. My internship with IGNITE CEO **Merriott Terry**, and my role as a facilitator of the IGNITE program, have been two of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

During the initial stages of my internship, I focused on shadowing Terry, a distinguished, dynamic woman who is passionate about women's involvement in politics. I learned to advocate for IGNITE's mission, articulate its successes and ask for funding. The fundraising skills I learned will undoubtedly benefit my future career and prepare me to manage political campaigns.

Additionally, I gained experience conducting board meetings and networking on behalf of an organization. I learned

how executive boards function and how a CEO functions in relationship to the Chairman of the Board; I learned how to successfully present financial information for executive approval. But my biggest task was developing the IGNITE College Council and serving as its Chairwoman. I spent hours developing a mission statement, drafting agendas, securing student leadership on the council, and planning events.

But the heart of IGNITE is its high school training program, which provided an experience I will never forget as a facilitator of the program at the Judge Barefoot Sanders Dallas ISD Law Magnet. During the two-semester program, participants learn fundamentals of American government, develop leadership and team building skills, identify current social and political issues, and develop strategies for addressing issues facing their community. Each week I presented the curriculum to my students and facilitated group discussion of the topic. The course encouraged more student engagement in community issues and current events.

In her book *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, Peggy Orenstein argues that young girls grow up in a society that does not recognize that they are “are competent, strong, creative or smart”; instead they learn that “every little girl wants – or should want – to be like Barbie.” Schools like Law Magnet acknowledge this and encourage

I also organized a tabling effort on campus and was pleasantly surprised by the turnout of supporters and generally positive response to our presence. I planned a PPGT Pub Crawl on Lower Greenville that was wildly successful- we gained 192 supporters in a little over two hours. I've also been able to mobilize support in the community (especially at SMU) and have successfully led a few volunteer training sessions.

It has been a joy to work with an organization that is so committed to the people of Texas (especially women) and the work I've been able to do with PPGT has ignited my passion for community outreach and advocacy.

*Amelia Johns is a senior majoring in Theatre with minors in Women's & Gender Studies and English. She is a Maynard Scholar.*

## **Feminist Boot-Camp**

Whitney Harp, '14

Thanks to the Women's and Gender Studies Program and the Women's Center for Gender and Pride Initiatives, I spent a week in New York City over the holiday break honing my skills as a feminist activist and advocate. Amy Richards and Jennifer Baumgardner, the authors of *Manifesta*, organize a seven-day intensive program they call "Feminist Boot-Camp" that works to connect young feminists with non-profit organizations in the areas of reproductive justice, LGBTQ rights, feminist media, sex education, and other forms of harm reduction. Thanks to the connections Amy and Jennifer have established in NYC, womies, as we were lovingly referred to, were mentored by the founders, interns and other activists engaged in feminist work.

As a future lawyer planning to work in the field of reproductive justice, I know I will find the connections I made at The Doula Project, National Advocates for Pregnant Women, Choices in Childbirth and the Ms. Foundation will be invaluable. Without a doubt, the highlight of my trip was the dinner hosted by Gloria Steinem in her apartment on the upper-east side. Ms. Steinem welcomed the "womies" warmly to her home, and imparted wisdom that will

pregnant woman. Her talk asked, what does this emphasis on the pregnant woman tell us about our inherited ideas and language about women, and about the death penalty?

Karen Barad, Professor of Feminist Studies, Philosophy, and History of Consciousness at U.C. Santa Cruz, drew upon quantum physics and queer theory in a project that she defined as “troubling the nature of the empirical while producing empirical evidence.” The peculiarities of matter at the quantum level provided metaphors through which to re-imagine key concepts of self, subject, object, and even justice.

Alondra Nelson, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Columbia University, illustrated the goals of the African Burial Ground Project, which linked the ancestors of an African American burial ground to their living descendants. She also explored the use of DNA testing to establish African ancestry, and the resulting repatriation ceremonies that some descendants of African peoples attend. She explored the way this work both contributes to and complicates ideas of identity, and reinforces heteronormative family structures.

Karen Engle, Minerva House Drysdale Regents Chair in Law at the University of Texas, discussed the influence of feminists on the United Nations resolutions addressing wartime rape. The United Nations has focused on criminalization, but some feminists have pointed out that punishing a perpetrator may not be the most important or only necessary response. Raped women in war-torn nations often want to be returned to their homes and reunited with their families more than they want to see their rapists prosecuted. Wartime rape affects women, families, and communities. The danger is in “narrowly tailoring” U.N. resolutions in a counterproductive way that imposes first-world attitudes where a less individualistic, more community-oriented response is needed.

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help local congregations create a domestic violence ministry. Grace Methodist recently began a relationship violence ministry. We will write a Sunday school curriculum, leading a worship service, and hold conference events to address the issue. We will provide survivors with resources.

As a youth and children's minister, I am constantly challenging my kids to look at things in a different way, not the predominant way of thinking. As a feminist, I believe it is important to acknowledge the intersections of all oppressions (sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism, etc). Perkins taught me how to examine and analyze the ways in which oppressions are linked. As Martin Luther King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." One lesson I did with my young people used the song "Same Love," which was playing all over the radio. It demonstrates the concept of interlocking oppressions well.

Because of what I learned at Perkins and in the Women's and Gender Studies program I am more inclined to egalitarian methods of teaching and discussion-oriented lessons, rather than an authoritarian method. I want to foster an environment in which all persons feel safe to express themselves. My Perkins education and my work toward the graduate certificate in Women's and Gender Studies have permeated my entire life.

*Christina Cavener graduated in 2011 from SMU's Perkins School of Theology with a Master of Theological Studies and a Graduate Certificate in Gender and Women's Studies.*

### In Memoriam Margareta N. Deschner, 1920-2014

The SMU Women's and Gender Studies Programs notes with sadness the passing of Margareta Deschner, Professor Emerita of German, on August 26, 2013. DTJ,

## Scholarship and Award Winners

## News

### Alumnae news

**Emily Reagan '13** writes that she will soon depart for “somewhere in the Pacific Island nations of Micronesia and Palau” as a Peace Corps volunteer.

### Other News

**Ruby Kim '14** will enter a Ph.D. program in American Studies at Washington State University, in its Department of Critical Culture, Gender, and Race Studies.

**Sammi Partida '15** will blog as *LGBTQ Insider* for the Dallas Morning News' new LGBTQ blogging project. <http://lgbtqblog.dallasnews.com>

**Rebecca Swarm '14** will enter a masters program in social work at Washington University in St. Louis this fall, after spending a summer working in the teen leadership program of St. Louis's Wyman Center.

**Jessica Lott '16** is a Graduate Certificate student who completed a fellowship at the Smithsonian last summer. She brought a poster presentation based on her work entitled “Critical intersections: Histories of Latinos/as, Reproduction, and Disability” to both Anthropology and Interdisciplinary conferences this year. Read more about her project at [bit.ly/LottNMAH](http://bit.ly/LottNMAH) and [bit.ly/LottSMUAdventures](http://bit.ly/LottSMUAdventures)

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Women's and Gender Studies Network  
Southern Methodist University

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