

2012-2013 Outstanding Thesis Award Winners

*By Shelby Reeder
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Stephen Anderson, awarded an M.A. in Criminal Justice in June 2013, was chosen as the recipient for the Outstanding Thesis Award in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, and Business category. His thesis, *International Cocaine and Heroin Drug Trafficking: A Social Network Approach*, uses network analysis to examine patterns of cocaine and heroin drug trafficking on a global scale. Anderson said his thesis began as a 10-page paper on network analysis written during his first year in graduate school. But long after the paper was finished, the topic continued to intrigue him. His first-year paper ended up "growing and growing" into the culminating project for his graduate degree.

Anderson said he enjoys research and is pursuing a career in criminology and social network analysis, and plans on becoming a professor. "The tutelage I got here inspired me," Anderson said. "My professors were always willing to help and showed a real interest in their students' work." He hopes to one day encourage and mentor students of his own.



Jennifer Wacan also has a passion for research, but her focus is psychology; she received a Master's in General Experimental Psychology in June 2013, and was awarded the 2013 Outstanding Thesis Award in the Biological Sciences, Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Life Sciences and Engineering category. Wacan's work explored the psychological benefits of ethnic group identification, particularly in the area of awareness of their history and future. "I felt that there was a gap in the literature concerning the way ethnic minorities value their group, and the way this value is measured," Wacan commented. She said studies of ethnic groups are usually approached "from the outside." She said she wanted to "find a way to measure the way the group actually perceives themselves, rather than the way others perceive them."

Wacan's thesis, *Backward and Forward Continuity as a Predictor of Wellbeing among Mexican American Respondents: Scale Development* explores the psychological effects of an ethnic group's perceived longevity in terms of their past and future, and includes a set of scales for measuring the sense of endurance within a group.

Wacan is currently employed as a research technician at CSUSB's Office of Institutional Research. She plans to continue to follow a research career path, and is considering a Ph.D. program in social neurosciences.