

SOCIOLOGY 2016 SENIOR THESIS WRITERS

VIRTUAL IMPRESSIONS:
The Effect of Digital Communication on Millennial Social Interaction



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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the effect of digital communication on millennial social interaction. I focus on the emotional and social implications of text messaging and the effect that social media platforms have on college students and their perceptions of intimacy and hookup culture on campus. These questions are explored using a new survey of over one thousand college students. Findings suggest the development of distinct digital and real-world selves; the digital self emerging as a filtered, polished version of our real-world self. This study reveals how digital communication can lead to tensions within friendships and romantic relationships. It also points to the emergence of hookup culture on college campuses as the norm resulting from a culture of immediacy within millennial social interaction caused by digital communication.

CONNECTING COMMUNITY AND CLIMATE:
Experiences of Hurricane Sandy Survivors and their Perspectives on Climate Change



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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to answer two main questions about Hurricane Sandy survivors in Brooklyn and Queens, New York City. First, I seek to understand what factors are most important in explaining the differences in respondents' experiences. Second, I ask whether and how respondents' experiences with Hurricane Sandy shaped their perspectives on climate change. I investigated these questions using semi-structured qualitative interviews, which I conducted with 24 residents and three key informants. This study found that the community-level factors were influential in shaping respondents' experiences. In particular, residents of communities with high social capital tended to experience community bonding following the storm, whereas residents from communities with low social capital experienced increased problems in their communities. On the matter of climate change, respondents fell along a spectrum, but most respondents expressed that the storm solidified their existing climate change beliefs or did not know enough about climate change to make the connection. For some respondents in low social capital communities, the community's problems post-hurricane caused them to actively deprioritize climate issues.

HONEY, I MEDICALIZED THE KIDS:
The Effects of Social Class and Parent Habitus on Childhood ADHD



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ABSTRACT

What is the relationship between parent habitus – parenting style and parent expectations shaped by social class – and ADHD? I seek to understand what shapes parents' decision-making processes for their children's ADHD and to understand how this decision-making process affects their children's ADHD. To understand the relationship, I rely on Pierre Bourdieu's idea of habitus and how habitus, based on social class, determines how a parent acts in the ADHD process. I investigate the research question using demographic data, parent habitus questions, and ADHD symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment data from the Add Health dataset. Through statistical analyses, I find that how parenting style and parent expectations affect symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment depends on social class and whether one had the necessary qualifications, for example if one had the symptoms necessary for a diagnosis or the diagnosis necessary for treatment. Overall, higher social class and a more involved parenting style were associated with a lower likelihood of symptoms and a higher likelihood of diagnosis and treatment, while the effects of parent expectations were highly dependent on social class and qualifications. The results suggest that, because ADHD is most often diagnosed in childhood and adolescence, parents play a decisive role.

"GENDERED" REENTRY:
How Gender Patterns Life After Prison



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ABSTRACT

Imprisonment and its related processes are deeply gendered. This paper uses data from the Boston Reentry Study, a longitudinal study of 122 men and women released from Massachusetts State Prisons, to compare the male and female reentry experiences through a life course perspective. The data reveal that the transition from prison to society is markedly different for men and women. Moreover, the life course perspective of the study highlights the cumulative nature of life experiences where gender differences, namely histories of victimization, mental illness, and drug addiction that are more common among women, impact experiences later in life, significantly altering the life trajectories and reentry experiences of formerly-incarcerated women in unique ways. Taken together, the results of my analyses confer a need to rethink the way we conceptualize reentry and punishment more broadly in order to address the unique gendered experiences of the incarcerated and their families.

SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL:
The Effects of Racial Residential Segregation on the Black and White Infant Mortality Rate in the U.S.



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ABSTRACT

As medical advances reduced the overall infant mortality rate in the United States over the past century, the rate of death for black infants has stubbornly remained twice that of white infants. While researchers have studied the effects of socioeconomic status and stress to help explain this stark disparity, they have only offered partial explanations. This study aims to investigate how racial residential segregation impacts the black infant mortality rate compared to the white infant mortality rate in the U.S. Using linear regressions to investigate the relationship between black-white residential segregation and infant mortality, controlling for a number of social and economic MSA-level characteristics for 153 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in the United States for the year 1990, this study found that the higher the level of racial residential segregation, the greater the black infant mortality rate, while there was a negligible effect on the white infant mortality rate. Additionally, the association between residential segregation and black infant mortality is observed in small MSAs, but not in large MSAs in terms of population size. Lastly, population density and access to healthcare do not seem to explain the mediating effect of population size on the relationship between segregation and the black infant mortality rate. This study contributes not only to the academic literature surrounding urban sociology, the social determinants of health, and health disparities, but it can also inform public policy in terms of urban, housing, welfare, and health policy. It offers a window of understanding a mechanism through which black-white racial health disparities may persist.

SACRED MISSIONS:
An Examination of Faith-Based and Secular Organizations in the 2014-15 Ebola Outbreak



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ABSTRACT

The international response to the 2014-15 West African Ebola outbreak was indicted as a global failure. Although one of the reasons cited for this failure was the lack of collaboration and coordination among the organizations responding to the outbreak, little research has examined how the distinctions between faith-based and secular organizations might have contributed to this divided response. This thesis used in-depth interviews with staff and the public texts of three organizations—World Vision (WV), Partners in Health (PIH), and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)—on a spectrum of faith-based to secular, respectively, to explore these organizational distinctions. A total of 8 in-depth interviews with staff and 126 blog posts were coded and analyzed. My findings reveal that the organizations were more similar than expected in that they exhibited three faith-like characteristics: a passionate devotion to their mission, a desire to share their mission, and a united following. While the organizations share these characteristics, their different "sacred" missions appeared to lead to different emphases of the causes of Ebola, and in turn, distinct approaches in the Ebola response. Therefore, this suggested that lack of coordination and collaboration between these organizations may not necessarily be a bureaucratic problem, but an ideological one.

SELLING FIFTH AVENUE:
How Manhattan's Luxury Real Estate Agents Organize the Global Elite



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ABSTRACT

In New York City, residential real estate prices have increased dramatically in the last decade. This study explores how an important but under-recognized group of actors—luxury real estate brokers— influence the residential organization of the global elite in Manhattan. I ask first, what are the primary characteristics of successful luxury real estate brokers in Manhattan, and how did they rise to a position of influence? Second, how do brokers impact the residential organization and stratification of Manhattan's elite? To answer these questions, I conducted ethnographic research with a leading broker, as well as twenty-six interviews with top grossing brokers and wealthy buyers.

I find that brokers rely heavily on dense social networks for continued professional success, and that they must deftly manage their own public persona to cultivate relationships of trust with the wealthiest of clients. Traditionally, brokers have played a pivotal role in the stratification of New York elites, and are complicit in a discriminatory sorting process of residents in Manhattan's most expensive neighborhoods. As new construction and new consumer preferences shift the demand of the residential market, the role of the broker, as a social agent, is changing.

TEVYE'S CHILDREN:
Jewish Continuity in Changing Times



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ABSTRACT

The goal of this project is to examine the views of (denominationally) Conservative Jews on interfaith dating and marriage as described through seventy in-depth interviews. This thesis looks at the backgrounds and upbringings of respondents and their thoughts on relationships to examine the connections between these formative experiences and plans for their Jewish futures. The articulation of attitudes on interfaith relationships among the people interviewed reflects a paradox in modern Judaism: while individuals seek out meaningful personal Jewish practice and behavior, being Jewish simultaneously involves the person's relationship to the broader Jewish community. This thesis is an attempt to examine Jewish continuity and what contributes to the desire of young Jewish adults to seek Jewish partners at a moment in history when they are free to make choices about their future independent of outside influences.

The fact that the people interviewed had a clear conception of the ideal person they wanted to marry and their imagined Jewish life demonstrated their self-understanding of being Jewish. This work examines the Jewish rituals and lifestyles with which respondents were raised in order to understand the way in which childhood Jewish experiences impacted their current conception of Jewishness. The analysis then focuses on the availability of choice during adolescence, which I find to be strongly correlated with future Jewish engagement. Finally, I explore the opinions respondents provided regarding interfaith dating and marriage, which further reflect the Jewish lives they hope to lead. This assessment is based on their upbringings and early social networks, but is most significantly shaped by their own choices regarding how to be Jewish during adolescence and young adulthood.

GETTING AHEAD:
The Experience of Socially-Mobile Minority College Students in Contemporary Brazil



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ABSTRACT

College access, a springboard to social mobility, has historically been reserved for a handful of elites in Brazil: an affluent white population. However, recently college access has expanded to include historically marginalized communities, including poor, black and brown Brazilians. In 2012, President Dilma Rousseff passed law 12.711/2012, requiring all federal universities to adhere to affirmative action legislation, reserving several spots at each university through the use of class- and race-based quotas. Given the backdrop of affirmative action, the minority student experience in Brazil is vastly different today than it was merely a decade ago. This thesis seeks to explore how working-class minority students in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil develop their racial identity in today's college context and shape their ideas on getting ahead. Using data from twenty-six semi-structured interviews with low-income minority college students, I find that individuals share a universal understanding of the importance of minority representation in higher education. As historically underrepresented college students, respondents learn to navigate a space much different from their own reality and recognize the larger structural factors that they will have to overcome as poor, minority students transitioning into adulthood. However, individuals differ in how they perceive such challenges. I find that individuals with a more affirmative racial identity take a structural approach at contextualizing their experiences, highlighting the salience of their race in shaping their views on getting ahead. Respondents with a less affirmative racial identity speak in individualistic terms, placing less of an emphasis on their racial identity when speaking of potential challenges. My findings thus extend existing theories on perceptions of social mobility for nonwhites in Brazil, shedding light on the contemporary minority student experience.

BEYOND RACIAL CLASSIFICATIONS:
The Importance of Country of Origin for Health Service Utilization Among Immigrants to the U.S.



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ABSTRACT

My thesis uses the New Immigrant Survey and Gelberg-Andersen behavioral model for health service utilization for vulnerable populations to examine the effect of origin health care systems on utilization patterns among immigrants to the United States. My study expands on existing models by considering origin health care systems and country-specific characteristics. Logistic techniques indicate that immigrants' odds of visiting a physician in the U.S. vary by country of origin, controlling for race. I focus on those from Mexico, China, India, El Salvador, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Importantly, years in the U.S. had a positive relationship with physician visits, while English competency was not significant. Gross domestic product and health expenditures had minor positive and negative effects, respectively; physician density significantly decreased a respondent's odds of visiting a physician, suggesting competition among providers and compromised quality of care in their efforts to lower costs. In addition to country of origin, gender, education, years in the U.S., insurance, frequency of visits before migration, health status, and alcohol consumption played a role in predicting immigrants' utilization behaviors in the U.S. My results align with the Gelberg-Andersen model, showing that individual-specific characteristics (predisposing, enabling, and need) may be more predictive than the included country-specific ones for physician visits. Although GDP per capita, health expenditure, and physician density in immigrants' origin countries are not strongly associated with immigrants' visits to physicians in the U.S., my results demonstrate substantial variation by country of origin that is also not explained by conventional racial classifications used in health disparities research.

WOMEN IN FIREHOUSES AND FINANCIAL FIRMS:
Experiences of Gender, Class, and the Intersection



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ABSTRACT

Studies of women in male-dominated occupations have generally focused on three key data points: the gender wage-gap (where men make increasingly more than women in the same occupations; American Association of University Women 2016), the gendered hierarchy (where men occupy top positions while women are overly represented at the bottom; Catalyst 2015), and the health patterns of women in these fields (where women experience higher stress than men, as measured by their cortisol levels; Siffrein 2015). Few studies have focused on the actual experiences of these women, by talking to them and exploring their thoughts and feelings regarding gender and work (Martin and Barnard 2013). And even fewer studies, if any at all, have done a cross-class comparative analysis of these experiences in male-dominated occupations. Using semi-structured interviews with 40 women in two male-dominated occupations—firefighting and finance—along with ethnographic observations from weekly meetings with the women in each field, I explored the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of upper-middle class women and working class women in these male-dominated fields. I selected firefighting and finance because they have a roughly equal proportion of women in each field (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010), and they represent the working class (firefighting) and upper-middle class (finance) division that I sought to investigate (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014).

In this study, I ask the following research question: how do women interpret, understand, and articulate their particular gendered experiences in male-dominated workplaces, and how do these experiences vary based on class contexts? I ultimately find that the experiences of these women are far more nuanced than the three data points (above) emphasize.