

SOCIOLOGY 2018

SENIOR THESIS WRITERS

*TO GRADUATE OR NOT TO GRADUATE:
IMPACT OF LOW SCHOOL DISTRICT MORALE ON
GRADUATION RATES*



KIRSI ANSELM-STITH
ADVISOR: DANILO MANDIC

ABSTRACT

In two resource-extraction driven communities in Wyoming a mere 15 miles apart, obtaining a high school diploma is the difference between landing a six-figure job for life and working for minimum wage in a local grocery store. This thesis examines this graduation disparity through the perspectives of the local educational professionals obtained through 3 semi-structured interviews and quantitative data available through the Wyoming Department of Education. The results show that educational professionals of both districts utilize narratives of community and demographic differences to explain the disparity to themselves. However, quantitative data analysis revealed that these cited demographic and community differences are relatively minimal. Other results show extremely low levels of trust and morale in the district performing poorly from both the administrator and teacher perspectives. This thesis, then, poses an alternative explanation to help understand the disparity – low trust and morale in the school district impacts the school community, potentially through a mechanism of weakened teacher-student relationships, and its subsequent ability to graduate students.

*DEPOLITICIZED AND DISENGAGED:
THE POLITICAL CONDITION OF MUSHROOM
FARMWORKERS IN KENNETT SQUARE, PA*



CHRISTIAN CORDOVA-PEDROZA
ADVISOR: JASMIN SANDELSON, SHANNA WEITZ, GOV

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the political condition of immigrant agricultural mushroom farmworkers in a southeastern town in Pennsylvania. It investigates the justifications workers provide to explain their low levels of political participation, and explores the barriers to their political incorporation. Kennett Square, where the farmers work, boasts the largest concentration of mushroom farms in the United States. It cultivates a majority of the mushrooms consumed in the United States. I conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty-five mushroom farmworkers, covering topics including their social networks, trust, community, and politics. I argue the workers' particular variation of social capital increases the cost to political expression, and undermines their ability to influence the political decision-making process. I also show how their non-citizen, immigrant, and working-class backgrounds reinforce political disadvantage. This thesis contributes to the understanding of immigrant social capital and immigrant political incorporation.

*WHY ARE FEWER WOMEN COACHING WOMEN?
AN ANALYSIS OF THE BARRIERS THAT WOMEN FACE IN
ELITE INTERCOLLEGIATE COACHING*



KATELYN ELIZABETH DOLAN
ADVISOR: MARY BRINTON

ABSTRACT

Katy's thesis examines the barriers that women face as elite intercollegiate athletic coaches in NCAA Division I women's basketball in light of the decline in the number of female coaches since the passage of Title IX. In-depth interviews with both female and male coaches and female athletes in NCAA Division I women's basketball illuminate two major themes that may contribute to the trend of fewer female coaches: that female coaches struggle more than male coaches to balance professional and personal demands, and that female players almost unanimously prefer male coaches. The thesis builds on a substantial literature of women in sport to offer an innovative bridge between the coach and athlete perspective, and deepen the field's understanding of women's athletics through the lived experiences of women themselves. Ultimately, it interrogates the important but broadly unrecognized issue of gender equality in coaching of women's athletics.

*UNSEEN ON TV:
TELEVISION PORTRAYALS AND SELF-PERCEPTIONS
OF BLACK WORKING WOMEN*

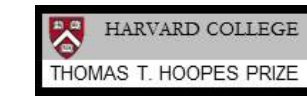


FATIMA GLOVENA FAIRFAX
ADVISOR: THEO LEENMAN

ABSTRACT

For minority populations, daily performance in the workplace can be imbued with cultural, racial, and gendered obstacles in addition to the typical standards of professionalism. This thesis analyzes how black women understand themselves through observations of the characters that resemble them on television. Research on minorities in the workplace and representation of minorities on television has left unanswered the question of how minority women themselves assess and relate to these portrayals. This thesis aims to bridge these areas of study. It looks at how television media displays workplace performance, how black women view and interpret these, and how they understand them within their own lives and experiences. First, through a media analysis of 30 contemporary television shows that substantially feature a black woman in a workspace, this study found that while there has been a departure from the more blatantly racist themes and depictions of black women on TV, there remain subtle tropes that can be harmful to representation. Second, 24 black women were given a media exposure experiment and interviewed about their reactions to contemporary television depictions and their own experiences in the workplace. Results show that these women could easily identify prototypes on display but sensed a tension between the importance of relatable representations and aspirational role-modeling characters. These interviews demonstrate the powerful dialectic relationship between appraisals of TV representations and individuals' self-understandings.

*STRONG WOMEN, DAINTY WORLD:
EMBODYING RESISTANCE TO HEGEMONIC FEMININE IDEALS*

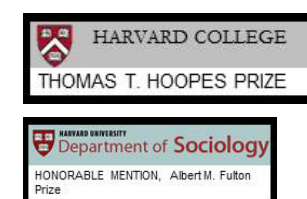


KAREN MARIA MALDONADO
ADVISOR: CHARLOTTE LLOYD

ABSTRACT

My thesis researches the experiences of female strength sport athletes whose muscular bodies subvert traditional notions of femininity. Through in-depth interviews and observation, I profile the obstacles these women face in their everyday lives as well as the strategies they use to mitigate gendered barriers. I find that these women are overwhelmingly empowered by their sports and muscular bodies, despite facing cultural consequences for breaking gendered norms. This project breaks ground in exploring the rare experienced women of the weight room: a space with direct impact on women's health that many women feel they cannot access. Furthermore, the sample serves as a case study of women who physically embody forms of resistance to traditional gender expectations, both in the aesthetic of their bodies and the action of their sports. From this, we can learn about the experience of resistance within the sociology of the body.

*SOLITARY IN SUBURBIA:
THE SOCIAL NETWORKS OF SUBURBAN
VOUCHER HOLDERS IN ATLANTA*



QUINN MULHOLLAND
ADVISOR: TOM WOOTEN

ABSTRACT

Sociologists have long observed the importance of social networks for economic, physical, and mental wellbeing, especially for the poor. The context in which sociologists have historically studied the social networks of the poor, however, has largely been limited to high-poverty urban neighborhoods. As a result of shifts in housing policy and the geographic distribution of poverty, the population of Section 8 voucher holders living in the suburbs has emerged in recent years as the new face of housing assistance and poverty in America. Yet we know comparatively little about the social networks of this population. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with a sample of voucher holders living in suburban Atlanta, this thesis aims to fill this gap in research. My findings show that the social networks of suburban voucher holders are small, shallow, and geographically diffuse. I propose several potential explanations are suggested for suburban voucher holders' isolation from friends, family, and neighbors.

*FORBIDDEN SEX, DANGEROUS GOSSIP, AND EMPODERISMO:
AN ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO THE
PUZZLING EPIDEMIC OF UNWANTED TEEN PREGNANCY IN NICARAGUA*

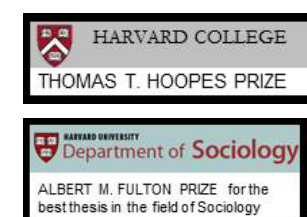


CRISTINA SHANNIN PARAJON CHANCHIEN
ADVISOR: JOCELYN VITERNA

ABSTRACT

Nicaragua has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Latin America—28% of women between 20 and 24 have given birth before 19. Existing studies blame Nicaraguan girls' lack of education, limited occupational opportunities, and inability to access contraception as the central causes of these high rates. After twenty years of implementing solutions these studies have suggested—promoting literacy, new occupational opportunities, and widespread accessibility to affordable contraception—teen pregnancy rates in Nicaragua continue to rise. Building from 4 months of ethnographic research and 40 in-depth interviews in Managua, this research provides an alternative explanation. Girls fail to access contraception when they become sexually active because they fear gossip. Perpetuated by community members and healthcare professionals, gossip can jeopardize a girl's membership in her community and her perceived life chances as much or even more so than pregnancy itself. The findings of this thesis extend our knowledge of sociology on "gender as performance" by demonstrating how surveillance shapes the way we make decisions as male or female. Perhaps most importantly, this thesis prescribes new, and relatively simple-to-implement, policy solutions to a critical public health crisis in Nicaragua.

*INVISIBLE ASSETS:
EXPERIENCES OF HARVARD STUDENTS IN THE RECRUITING
PROCESS FOR FINANCE JOBS*



CAROLINA RIBEIRO
ADVISOR: TIFFANIE TING

ABSTRACT

Admission to an elite college is often regarded as a pinnacle of achievement. Yet for Harvard undergraduates, their college experience is marked by constant competition for further success. This is especially true during the recruiting season for finance jobs. In this thesis, I set out to understand how Harvard students navigate competition in the finance recruiting process. I draw from interviews with 30 Harvard students and two staff members at the Harvard Office of Career Services, as well as observational data from networking events. I find that throughout the recruiting process, students must navigate increasingly invisible systems of competition that obscure and perpetuate inequality of opportunity. Moreover, I find that students themselves reproduce and legitimize inequality by making invisible their own privilege in structures of power. Thus, my findings offer a glimpse into how social stratification occurs in elite spaces.

*JURORS' PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL DISPARITIES AND FAIRNESS IN
THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM*



ANNA IRENE ZANNETOS
ADVISOR: ALIX WINTER

ABSTRACT

Jurors serve an important role in the criminal justice system, yet little is known about how jurors make sense of racial disparities in the criminal justice system. My thesis seeks to investigate this, while also studying how jurors' explanations for racial disparities relate to their general sense of procedural justice and legal cynicism of the criminal justice system, and how, if at all, jurors report incorporating their explanations for racial disparities into their thinking and decision-making in the trial. To answer these questions, I interviewed 20 individuals who served as jurors in criminal trials in the Boston area. I found that these jurors used a variety of explanations for racial disparities, often believing that racial bias is at least partly responsible for the disproportionate involvement of Blacks and Latinos in the criminal justice system. These explanations for racial disparities were related to jurors' perceptions of fairness of the criminal justice system, although often in complex and unexpected ways. Finally, I found that most jurors incorporated their explanations for racial disparities into their thinking about the trial but not their decision-making about the defendant's innocence or guilt.