WC Sociology Newsletter

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Note from the Chair

I am excited to roll out our first annual WAC Sociology Newsletter. We hope you enjoy the update on the great things that our students and faculty have accomplished. Bottom line up front - WAC Sociology is thriving! We continue to have strong students who are doing amazing things on and off campus. The sociologically inspired work of our 33 majors and 18 minors (Sociology, Social Work, and Justice, Law, and Society) are making a true difference in our community and communities around the region. Our students attended, and some presented, at professional conferences, collaborated with faculty, studied abroad, and completed valuable internships. This past fall we welcomed our newest faculty member, Dr. Rachel Durso, whose research areas focus on criminology and the intersection of political sociology and social media. Our faculty continually develop new courses to tap students’ interests and demonstrate the broad relevance of our discipline in understanding and improving society. This past year Dr. Durso offered The Sociology of Punishment, and I piloted a team taught course with Brian Palmer (Director of Digital Media Services) in which students conceptualized, filmed, and screened a short sociologically inspired documentary film. This fall Dr. Anderson will be offering a new course (Team taught with Dr. Michael Harvey in Business) on Gender & Leadership. Last October, nearly 60 students and 20 faculty, staff, and community members participated in WAC Sociology’s 6th annual poverty simulation (linked to our course Social Inequalities). In April we inducted an additional 9 high achieving students into the WC chapter of Alpha Kappa Delta – the International Sociological Honor Society – underscoring the excellent academic work of our students. We would love to hear from our alumni and learn about your adventures and milestones. As always, we invite you to visit us in Chestertown whenever you are able.

Dr. Kelty

Sociology Standouts Share Margaret Horsley Senior Award

The Margaret Horsely Award is given to the graduating major or majors who, in the opinion of the faculty and students of the Department of Sociology, have shown in his or her work the clearest understanding of human social behavior. This year the honor went to Christy Littlefield and Nicholas O’Meally.

Visit us at www.washcoll.edu/departments/sociology
Meet Dr. Rachel Durso

In the fall of 2014, Dr. Rachel Durso joined the Department of Sociology. An Ohio native, Professor Durso grew up outside of Columbus, Ohio. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in History from the Ohio University Honors Tutorial College in 2007, and wrote a thesis that compared Americans’ treatment of Muslims and people of Middle-Eastern descent during the Iran Hostage Crisis and after the 9/11 Terrorist attacks. She earned both her Master’s and Ph.D. in Sociology from the Ohio State University. Her Master’s thesis analyzed state-level determinants of active white supremacist groups. Her dissertation examined the contributors and consequences of mass incarceration in the United States in the 21st century and explored links between social control of minority groups, partisanship, and historical punishment practices such as convict leasing on modern-day issues of punishment such as increases in corrections spending, prison admissions, and privatization.

Professor Durso continues her research associated with mass incarceration. She and her collaborators are studying convictions and prison admissions in Florida, and presented preliminary findings at the Southern Sociological Society Annual Meeting this past spring. She is also finishing a co-authored manuscript that proposes a new methodology for studying sexual violence cross-nationally. In addition to these projects, Professor Durso is part of a research team from Ohio State and the University of Texas Austin that is investigating the ways in which social and political activists engage with social media. Their project is funded by the National Science Foundation and preliminary findings have been presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, the Eastern Sociological Society, and the Southern Sociological Society.

Since starting at Washington College, Professor Durso has taught a variety of classes that contribute to the broader study of criminology and our Justice, Law, and Society minor. These classes include Criminology, Juvenile Delinquency, and Vari-ant Behavior. She also taught The Sociology of Punishment, a class that explored the philosophy, history, politics, and inequalities associated with punishment in the United States. The class culminated in a tour of Eastern Correctional Institution in Westover, MD. Students took a 2.5 hour tour of the facility with the assistant warden, and were given access to the prison’s health facilities, mess area, educational facilities, prisoner’s cells, and the segregation unit. Professor Durso is excited to facilitate more unhurried conversations and learning experiences beyond the classroom in the upcoming academic year. We warmly welcome Dr. Durso and her partner, Nat, to the WAC Sociology family!

Tell Us About Your Path to Passion

WAC has created a new initiative called Path to Passion which creates connections between Alumni Relations, Admissions and the Center for Career Development. When you update your alumni profile and volunteer to participate in the Path to Passion program, your story is shared on the website. Your story is shared with prospective students and families interested in the liberal arts and current students examining career choices. Profiles will be sorted by major/minor and career field so members of the WC family can search for alumni with similar interests.

Project Description: https://www.washcoll.edu/alumni/path-to-passion/volunteer/

We invite all alumni to visit the path to passion portal to submit your stories: https://www.washcoll.edu/alumni/path-to-passion/volunteer/

I've learned that making a living is not the same as making a life.

-Maya Angelou
**Senior Capstones**

Christy Littlefield

*How Do Depression and Masculine Norm Conformity Affect Men’s Willingness to Seek Help?*

This study aimed to examine the relationships between masculine gender role conformity, levels of depressive symptoms, and willingness to seek psychological help. It also examined the involvement of alcohol and other drug use, as well as violence, and explored the relation of those behaviors to traditional depressive symptoms. The way gender roles are socially constructed and taught in U.S. society may inhibit men from seeking help and displaying emotional expression, thus contributing to psychological distress. Surveys were emailed electronically to a random sample of male students at Washington College, and were completed by 77 males. Results showed a significant negative relationship between depressive symptoms and masculine norm conformity, and a significant positive relationship between depression and willingness to seek help. High levels of masculine norm conformity were also associated with lower levels of willingness to seek psychological help. Further analysis showed how masculinity and depression may affect a male’s willingness to seek support. Finally, violent behavior was positively associated with depressive symptoms. The importance of gender in the mental health field is discussed.

Sarah Beresik

*Risk Factors Contributing to the Likelihood of Domestic Violence*

Domestic violence is a persistent major issue in society occurring across all races, classes, and genders. This review of the literature seeks to understand which individuals are more likely to be perpetrators and which victims of domestic violence using four specific factors and the theories of Intersectionality and the Social Learning Theory. Based on the intersection of factors of a history of domestic violence, gender, race, and socioeconomic status, those who are most likely to be perpetrators of domestic violence are poor African American males who have witnessed interpersonal violence in childhood. Conversely, victims of domestic violence are more likely to be poor Hispanic females who have witnessed interpersonal violence in childhood.

Danielle Fleming

*Significant Predictors in Determining Attitudes Toward Homosexual Sex*

Data from the 2012 General Social Survey was used to assess whether and to what extent political view, religiosity, age, and sex predict attitudes toward homosexuality. Through an understanding of the history of homosexuality and relationship each predictor had with the dependent variable two hypotheses are tested. First, liberals are hypothesized to be more supportive of homosexual sex even when controlling for age, sex, and religiosity. And second, older, more religious, conservative, heterosexual males are hypothesized to be more likely to have negative attitudes toward homosexual sex. Results from a multivariate regression analysis supported both hypotheses. Implications of these findings are discussed.
Hegemonic Masculinity’s Effect on First Responders’ Perceptions of Male Victims of Sexual Assault

Erin Famularo

This pilot study shows the relationship between the attitudes first responders have toward male victims of sexual assault and hegemonic masculinity. The aim of this study was to research whether assumptions created by hegemonic masculinity could potentially influence the experiences male victims have with receiving help from first responders. The study used structured interviews with 4 police officers and 4 ER nurses to test the hypothesis.

The results showed that some participants did hold perceptions of male victims that adhere to hegemonic masculinity but also showed that some do not. It also showed that first responders could benefit from more training and education on the issue of sexual assault and gender. Gender Role Theory is used to analyze the research.

Abiodun Bello Olatunji

Foolish Government

In recent years Nigeria’s education system has been criticized for the quality of education that it provides. The poor quality of education is a symptom of the Nigerian government’s inability to run its institutions effectively. This paper uses qualitative interview data to document causes and consequences of governmental inefficiency in Nigeria. School officials were interviewed because they are the agents who put into place the policies created by the government. Five main themes were derived: corruption, policy, status, money, and culture. These themes are the mechanisms by which the government’s inefficiency is destroying public education. Findings suggest that Nigeria’s government has robbed education of its quality, and provided terrible conditions to those who dedicate their lives to education. The continued effects of the inequality created by federal policies on public education is hypothesized to cause Nigeria to lose its remaining skilled educators to brain drain.

Nicholas O’Meally

Trends of Gendered Violence in American Slasher Films

Gendered violence towards women in American Slasher films has been a long standing controversy since the genre gained popularity in the 1970s. Stereotypes and clichés of sexually active women dying in these films have become mainstream, but there is a lack of research on how the genre has changed over time. In the study, five films from the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s were analyzed to see how the treatment of female characters changed over time.

Despite the several stereotypes associated with the genre, analyses showed that male characters are more likely to die in these films. While more sexually active females than men died in the 1970s and 2000s, more sexually active men than women died in the 1980s and 1990s. Women experienced longer sequences of violence more often than did men in the 1970s and 1980s, but men experienced longer sequences than women in the 2000s.
This edited volume brings together both empirical research and institutional case studies that discusses why faculty and administrators of academe should care about implementing family-friendly policies and practices, as well as how they can advocate for policy changes. Family-Friendly policies must go beyond merely honoring the federal Family and Medical Leave Act and recognize the many types of family needs, the unique roles of faculty and staff, and the workplace cultures impacting college and university employees. Chapters in this book examine a variety of work-family policy needs, including parental leave, elder care, stop the clock tenure policies, and child care as well as the trials and triumphs of the policy creation and implementation process for family-friendly policies at several institutions. This collection also considers the unique work lives and semester schedules in higher education, the role of research, financial grants, and the tenure process in managing work and family needs, small colleges and large universities, and the growth in numbers of women in the academy as important factors influencing policy, culture, and decision making on the part of faculty and staff.

“"This book is a critical read for researchers studying work-family and academic careers, faculty looking to manage different aspects of work-life integration, graduate students as prospective faculty, and administrators looking to improve the quality of faculty life.”

Dr. Kelly Ward, Monmouth University

The documentary film Small Town, Big Heart created by students in our new course Sociological Documentaries, team-taught by Dr. Kelty and Brian Palmer, Director of Digital Media Services, received the highest rated “Award of Excellence” from the Videographer Awards. This film, which synthesized sociological theory and qualitative research methods, competed against students from other top undergraduate and graduate film schools.

The film can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfUYZEc7dxi](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfUYZEc7dxi) Enjoy!

(Following text continues)
Dr. Kelty’s students role-play in families that struggle to cover basic expenses and provide fundamental necessities for their families. Through the simulation, students learn to identify and differentiate individual versus institutional discrimination, understand the effects of structural inequality, cumulative disadvantage, and systemic poverty. Students develop empathetic understanding for the stress and emotional toll of the more that 43 million Americans who live below the federal poverty threshold. A recent poverty simulation can be viewed at www.washcoll.edu/live/news/320-poverty-simulation
The 2015 Keynote speaker for the AKD induction ceremony was LTC Todd Woodruff, Ph.D., Director of Leadership and Management Studies at West Point. His talk, “The Road to a Gender Neutral Army” highlighted his research examining numerous metrics of value soldiers provide the military, comparing the relative value of male versus female soldiers. One of his key findings was that women provide essentially equal value to the military in terms of pro-organizational behavior and thus the organization is well placed to take advantage of female soldiers as the military moves to full gender integration in January 2016.

Alpha Kappa Delta — International Sociological Honor Society

The purpose of AKD is to promote human welfare through the association of an intellectual fellowship group interested in developing scientific knowledge that may be applied to the solution of social problems.
Faculty Research

Publications


  - Podcast interview discussing *Social Psychology Quarterly* publication: [http://spq.sagepub.com/site/misc/Index/Podcasts.xhtml](http://spq.sagepub.com/site/misc/Index/Podcasts.xhtml)


Conference Presentations


- **Bierman, Alex** and **Ryan Kelty.** 2014. “Structural Amplification of Anger and Cohesion among Department of Army Civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan.” American Sociological Association annual meeting, San Francisco.


- **Woodruff, Todd** and **Ryan Kelty.** 2015. “Gender Effects on Soldier Value for the Army.” Southern Sociological Society annual meeting, New Orleans, LA.


“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” —Mahatma Gandhi
Marx in Soho

Actor Bob Weick brings the German philosopher back to life on stage to defend the ideals of his *Communist Manifesto* and rail against injustice and inequality.

Ain’t I a Woman!

The Core Ensemble will bring its one-woman show “Ain’t I a Woman!” to the Decker Theatre stage at Washington College. This meld of chamber music and theater celebrates the lives and accomplishments of four remarkable African American women—novelist and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, ex-slave and abolitionist Sojourner Truth, folk artist Clementine Hunter, and civil rights worker Fannie Lou Hamer.

The Mask You Live In

This documentary makes the case that society’s narrow definition of what it means to be a man is having a host of unintended consequences, ranging from substance abuse to violence to rape. It maintains that many gender traits are a social construct and that the images of men that boys receive at home and from television, films, sports and video games encourage them to be stoic, dominant and to resolve conflicts with violence.

Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines

This documentary traces the fascinating evolution and legacy of Wonder Woman. From the birth of the comic book superheroine in the 1940s to the blockbusters of today, *WONDER WOMEN!* looks at how popular representations of powerful women often reflect society’s anxieties about women’s liberation.
Erin Famularo ’15

Marketing/Communications Intern with the National Center for Civil and Human Rights (Atlanta)

I spent two and a half months at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights through the Comegys Bight Fellowship offered through the CV Starr Center. I spent the summer creating content for social media — Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc. Through this experience I learned how difficult it is to post tweets and Facebook statuses that will engage the most diverse group of people while keeping the content neutral, relatable, and mission-driven. I was allowed to accompany tours and help run events. In addition, I was tasked with countless graphic design jobs that included creating fliers, sponsorship packages, a ‘Year in Review’ package, and coupons. I helped generate group sales by researching potential organizations, churches, and educational groups that would benefit from a trip to The Center. Majoring in sociology prepared me to handle sensitive information that inevitably comes up in an environment such as The Center in an educated way. Graduating with a degree in Sociology from WAC has also taught me how to look at different perspectives in both a broad and focused manner that allowed me to contribute to The Center’s mission of giving a “voice to the voiceless” by creating a safe space for a more inclusive dialogue surrounding civil and human rights. I’m happy to report that through my internship I secured a full time job at The Center for Civil and Human Rights!

Recommended Books

