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Letter from the Editor

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR OF
Silicon Valley Notebook, Volume 15
Dr. Marilyn Fernandez, Professor of Sociology

The Sociology Department at Santa Clara University is proud to present, in this volume of Silicon Valley Notebook, six research papers written by students from the class of 2017. As in the past years, the substantive, theoretical, methodological, and applied content of the Sociology curriculum at SCU are reflected in these papers. Originally prepared as part of the Research Capstone course (Sociology 121), the student authors further refined their work during the following quarter for inclusion in this volume.

Taken together, the authors addressed a classic sociological issue, the tension between social structure and personal agency in understanding and addressing the effectiveness of contemporary social organizations, institutions, and the challenges that youth face. Each student used a sequential mixed methods research design. They conducted rigorous quantitative analyses of national secondary survey data to test predictions grounded in sociological theoretical traditions and reflected on their potential social applications; narrative interviews with sources knowledgeable about their respective topics and content analyses of documents were used to supplement their quantitative findings.

The authors in the first set titled, Effectiveness of Organizations and Institutions, examined the challenges and promise that international and local organizations as well as institutions face in actualizing their mission focus. **Jessica Frydenberg**, in her paper titled “Political Elites or Average Citizens? Perspectives on the Political Legitimacy of the European Union,” used the 2009 Eurobarometer 72.4 survey and current political events in Europe to illustrate the crucial role of an informed citizenry in the future stability of the EU. While the power elites did have a voice in the Union’s future, tighter systemic coupling between citizen interests and the EU organization is necessary to sustain EU’s mission focus. The central question in **Nicole G Speciale’s** paper was how member identities and their social integration shaped assessments of LGBT Organization’ Effectiveness. Members who had strong identities were more critical of LGBT organizations while those who were socially integrated were more appreciative. She used data from the 2010 Social Justice Sexuality Survey, along with commentaries from LGBT professionals to verify theoretical concepts of flexible self-concept, collective consciousness and solidarity and offer suggestions for improved mission driven operations. **Ana Raquel Gómez-Pérez**, in her analyses of “Structural Dynamics and Personal Agency in Housing Careers,” demonstrated that housing moves driven by structural displacement lead to downward mobility in housing careers while personal agency (choice) in housing moves led to upward mobility. She used the 2009 American Housing Survey: National Microdata, updated with content analyses of journalistic writings about contemporary housing issues, to contrast the operations of structural inequalities against human capital paradigms in housing careers. In the face of gentrification, locating affordable quality housing in healthy neighborhoods was an important message to housing assistance advocacy organizations.

The authors in the second set, Youth and Young Adults, investigated the social ecologies of youth as they shaped the challenges and successes they faced in their educational careers and personal relationships. **Veronica Fay Ybarra**, in her paper “Youth Academic Success: It starts in the Home,” found that academic support in the home was the primary force behind prosocial and academically successful youth. She analyzed data from the 2008-2013 “Social Capital and Children’s Development” survey, supplemented with commentaries from eight education professionals, and found support for the theoretical predictions about the value of social and cultural capital in the home and communities in shaping the core academic self-concept of youth. However, young adults who had faced challenges early in their academic careers can recover and succeed academically as young adults, the thesis explored by **Oscar Quiroz-Medrano** in his paper, “The Past Is Not Prologue”: Educational Achievements of Young Adults.” Academic success in young adulthood was dependent on access to social and cultural capital resources that helped young adults reshape their compromised adolescent academic self-concept. Survey data from the NLSY, supplemented with qualitative commentaries from seven education professionals, were used to illustrate the flexible academic self-concepts of young adults and their need for permanent positive support. In the third paper, **Karen Robles** explored “Interpersonal Violence Victimization of Adolescents” and contrasted the violence risks posed by drug and alcohol culture against the protections offered by family and the community. In her analyses of survey data from the 1999-2006 Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three-City Study, supplemented with qualitative insights from five professionals, she found that involvement in adolescent alcohol-drug cultures increased the probability of victimization in their intimate relationships. Youth differentially associating with socially disorganized youth sub-cultures was a more powerful predictor of intimate partner violence than the protections offered by families and cultures, pointing to the need for prevention programs to include peer cultures of adolescents.

As a collection, student research presented in this volume, continue to exemplify the evidence based social science curriculum offered by the Department of Sociology at Santa Clara University. The social issues explored have important policy implications that resonate with the University’s mission to not only prepare students of competence, conscience, and compassion but who will also help fashion a more just, humane, and sustainable world.