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Letter from the Editor

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR OF
Silicon Valley Notebook, Volume 17
Dr. Marilyn Fernandez, Professor of Sociology

The Sociology Department at Santa Clara University is proud to present, in this volume of *Silicon Valley Notebook*, four research papers written by students from the class of 2019. 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 tensions between social structure and personal agency in exploring the boundary limits of environmental issues, community ownership, institutional trust, and socioeconomic success. Each student used a mixed methods research design integrating survey and qualitative analyses. 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.

Student authors in the first set, “Class and Race Boundaries of Community Challenges”, explored the socio-economic boundaries of carbon footprints and community ownership. **Erin Jessica Ronald** starts this section with her paper “Creating Low-carbon Communities: Evaluating the Role of Individual Agency and Systemic Inequality in San Jose, CA.” The respective roles that human agency and systemic inequalities (dimensions of Giddens’s Structuration model) played in carbon emissions was the central theme. Concentrated wealth intensified the propensities of upper class and dominant race groups to create larger carbon footprints while individual and demographic agency played minor roles, mainly in less wealthier communities. She used the 2016 SDG San Jose Dashboard data of city blocks and 2013 ACS survey, supplemented with interviews with eight climate action-oriented community engagement professionals in the South Bay, to illustrate the need for customizing interventions to communities with varied socioeconomic and racial concentration. **Elizabeth Namakula Kamy** rounds off the section with her paper titled, “A Community to Call Mine: Supportive Community Environment and Citizen Actions?” She identified the social class boundaries of strategies for improving resident attachment using the 2010 Soul of The Community Survey as well as narrative insights from community development professionals and community initiatives. Taking ownership of their communities meant having a supportive social fabric to residents of thriving communities (supporting Solari’s Affluent Neighborhood Persistence Model) while residents in poorer communities prioritized political action and a strong social fabric (per D’Maggio and Powell’s New Institutionalism). Her scholarly contributions to the boundary limiting conditions of community development also highlighted the need for tailored community strategies.

Shifting the focus internationally is **Noor Darwish** in her paper titled, “The Middle Eastern Societies: Institutional Trust in Political Turmoil and Stasis’. She documented the political boundaries of citizen trust surpluses and deficits in institutions in the North African and Levantine regions in the Middle East. Her analyses of the 2016 Arab Barometer, supplemented with qualitative insights from two Middle East scholars and content analyses of journalistic accounts, revealed the trust deficit caused by governmental dysfunction, balancing out the trust surplus created by government functionality. Trust deficits were particularly acute in North Africa, a region rife with political turmoil, in contrast to the Levantine region with its political stasis amidst economic inequality. Weber’s political legitimacy along with Mosca’s elite theory offered the theoretical foundation for her analyses of the contested citizen-government relationships.

Finally, **Anna Paris Heider**, in her longitudinal examination of the socioeconomic success of Americans in their youth and in early adulthood, identified some racialized limits of home and school resources for success theorized by Bourdieu, Coleman, Lareau, and Massey and Denton. For her analyses of the “Racialized Resource Models of Socioeconomic Success: A Mixed Methods Analysis of White and African American High School Students,” she used the 2002-2012 NELS survey data, in which 16,197 10th graders were followed up over the course of ten years. The statistical findings, along with narrative commentaries from education professionals and content analyses of journalistic/documentary evidence, pointed to racialized resource pathways to success. While resources in the home, and to a lesser extent in the school, were critical to the early educational success of both blacks and white youth, black young adults, unlike whites, could rely only on their home socioeconomic resources for their later socioeconomic success.

As a collection, the 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 and their boundary limits explored have important policy and programmatic implications. These applications resonate with the University’s mission to prepare students, of competence, conscience, and compassion, who will help fashion a more just, humane, and sustainable world.