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Letter from the Editor

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR OF
Silicon Valley Notebook, Volume 16
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 2018. 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 life transitions as well as the effectiveness of contemporary social institutions. 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.

Student authors in the first set titled, “Life Transitions”, explored how adults and teenagers, respectively, make sense of the challenges they face in different life stages. **Christian Abraham**, in “Shifting Priorities over the Life Course: The Changing Roles of Work, Family, and Leisure in American Adult Self-Concept”, demonstrated how American adults realigned their life priorities over a ten year span from 2002 to 2011. She used the Americans’ Changing Lives (ACL) survey, supplemented with narrative comments from professionals and textual analyses of journalistic accounts of select celebrities and average citizens to demonstrate shifts in priorities from work to family as people aged. She theoretically framed her empirical analyses of self-concept redefinition over the life course within the social systems of work, family, and leisure. The second author in this section, **Emilio Sánchez**, focused on the challenging transitions that American teenagers face in the social ecologies of school, home, and their neighborhoods. In his paper, “Bullying and Victimization: Strains and Protections during Teenage Transitions”, he relied on the 2015 “National Crime Victimization Survey: School Crime Supplement”, and a few qualitative interviews with school professionals, to illustrate the strains caused by drug culture and neighborhood crimes as well as the protections offered by schools. The types and depth of bullying experiences and associated fears were contingent on teenage students’ maturity.

In the next set titled, “Effectiveness of Institutions”, two student authors focused on the police force and health care system. **Pamela M. Low**, in her “Community Trust in Their Local Police Force: The Gendered Impacts of Police Militarization and Community-Police Relationships”, examined the consequences that systemic social boundaries (gender, race, and community standing) between police and citizens have on citizen trust in the police. She used the 2011 national Police-Public Contact Survey,

complemented with interview comments from community organizers, to capture strains in community trust due to police militarization and limited community-police familiarity. The gendered and other systemic bounded impacts also varied depending on whether the community encountered the police as pedestrians or drivers. **Deja Shantel Webster** rounds out this section with her paper “The Costs of NOT having ACA Insurance: Access, Costs, and Informed Choices.” She used the 2014 Health Reform Monitoring Survey, with comments from health care professionals, to demonstrate the comparative advantages that non-elderly adults enrolled in the Affordable Care Act health insurance program had over those who had other health insurance policies. Despite the overwhelming health impacts of pre-existing conditions, non-ACA insurees had better health outcomes than ACA members, only if they had access to health care and at lower costs. In contrast, ACA participants, because of the structural advantages of the ACA, kept their health stable with lower health care costs and more equitable access to care.

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 and programmatic implications that each of the authors explored. 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.