

UConn | UNIVERSITY OF
CONNECTICUT
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

PORTAL



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SUMMER 2017

We the staff of Student Support Services (SSS) proudly say congratulations to the students of the SSS program. Your hard work and dedication over the past five weeks has built a solid foundation toward your undergraduate degrees and beyond. This summer we have had the privilege to witness your many talents which will undoubtedly enhance the campus community. This year's Portal is just a small reflection of the creativity, academic excellence, and artistry of the 2017 SSS students.

It takes tremendous commitment, passion and effort of many individuals coming together to build a platform for success for SSS students. We wish to send special thanks to the instructors of Sociology – Koyel Khan, Chriss Sneed, Ruth Hernandez, Kamryn Warren, and Michael Rosino; and Philosophy – Rasa Davidaviciute, Robin Jenkins, and Junyeol Kim. Your commitment to our students' academic excellence is a rich investment in their success now and into the future.

To the Residential Staff: thank you for your energetic and enthusiastic support of the program and our students. Your work day in and day out does not go unnoticed. You are appreciated.

We would like to recognize and express our appreciation to Dr. Bidya Ranjeet, Executive Director of the Center for Academic Programs and Director of SSS, and Dr. Maria D. Martinez, the Assistant Vice Provost of the Institute for Student Success, for your leadership, vision, and passion in serving and making UConn SSS one of the premier programs in the nation.

It has been a privilege to work with the students, instructors, and staff of the SSS 2017 summer program. We hope you enjoy the students' work.

Sincerely,

SSS Counselors: Yesenia Cajigas, Chelsea Cichocki, Kim Gorman, Shawn Samuels, and:

Carl Dean
SSS Counselor
Sociology Coordinator
Summer 2017

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WENDY MARTE
TO THE WOMAN MY MOM ONCE WAS

I am accustomed to locked doors.

Tu lugar es en la casa, muchachita, my mami says. Your place is in the house, little girl.

I hear, *nothing gold can stay, my dear, but you, I will keep pure.*

Her tight grasp shields my vision and her convictions drown out the whispers across the threshold.

She tells me her dreams— those she has managed to hold dear. She envisions prosperity for her children. Anything less would mean that her tremendous quest to split the ocean in half was fruitless. This country has provided us with a foundation of security. It now guards the exit like a doormat, reminding me that I should be grateful for my confinement.

Only I am not.

My mother's instinct to protect me is derived from the wisdom of experience. Yet, this history is also the reason that she will never understand why I long to be unsure. As the daughter of a woman intimately familiar with the terrors of darkness, I am defying both tradition and reason by craving the nights I might not remember.

Time and time again, my mother sacrifices portions of her true self without realizing that the missing pieces do not simply disappear. She has passed them on to me; I am the woman starring in both of our dreams.

Does she remember? Can she see the similarities between who she used to be and the young woman that I am becoming? As I step farther away from home, the purple moons under my eyes darken. They are no longer from deprived sleep, but from too much sleep. I drift and reawaken in another world that at times, appears to be another universe.

Five hundred miles off the coast of the Dominican Republic, on a manmade *yola* heading towards the United States, I see my Mami. She is alone. Huddled over like an infant, she tries, and fails, to remain unseen. The tremble in her

hands, the quick intake of her warm breath, her pink tongue sneaking out every few seconds or so to wet her lips— these signs reveal her fear.

She hums to herself in an attempt to drown out the cries of the menstruating woman thrown overboard by fellow passengers who fear the wrath of sharks. The smell of barf lingers in the air, as do the cries of children whose parents boarded the *yola* heading towards the land of the free. Her sobs during those dark nights are the perennial echo that haunts me even when the stars are replaced by the blinding light of the sun.

In solidarity with the countless women of color who were excluded from our forefathers' discussion of the Declaration of Independence, with the courageous advocates of the suffragist movement, and with those who fight daily to protect Planned Parenthood's right to exist, I can see that my mother's journey is just one of many. Even if her story is not recorded in any textbook, she is much more than a footnote in history.

Despite my mami's need to keep me as she could not be— a blossoming flower in a serene, gated garden— it is time I confess my dreams. I choose to reach up and out towards the sun. And though she may be devastated, I have to explain that purity is no more than repressed frustration. To remain golden as nature's first green is to not exist.

I will honor my mother by breaking down the doors that her possessive love has placed in front of me. Her fight will not die. It will be traced along the scars from the momentous adventures she has warned me to avoid.

I will feel like I have died a thousand deaths only to wake up refreshed in the morning.

I will know what it means to live.

MEGAN SHUGULI
HOW SOCIETY FITS YOU IN A BOX

To explain how society has built limitations for individuals, and how these constraints relate to my life, I will first explain some of the social constructs that I have dealt with as a Hispanic female. Furthermore, I will focus on how gender stereotypes, gender inequality, and race stereotypes affect the lives of individuals like myself.

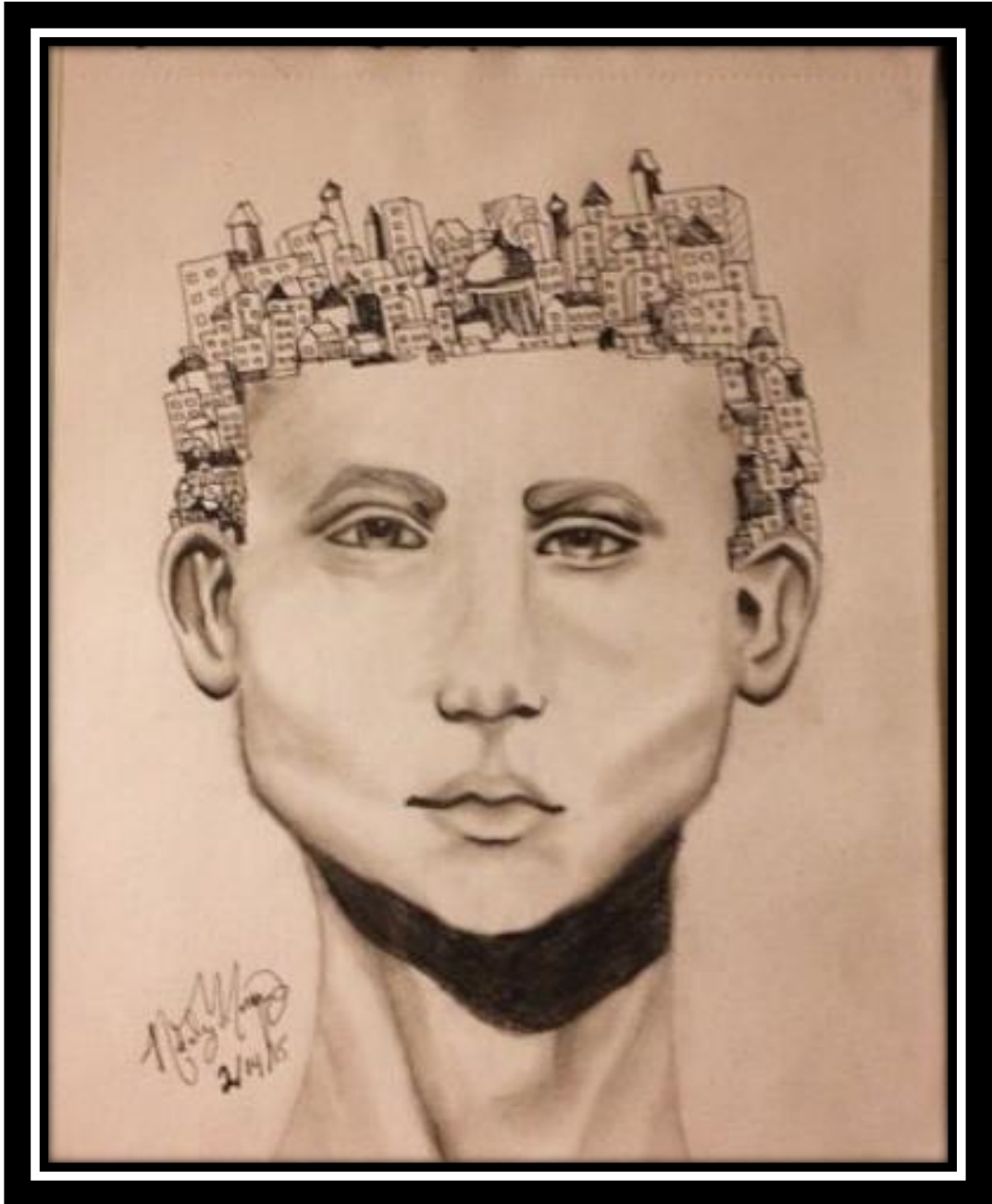
Let's first explore the idea of gender inequality. According to many people, this idea is nonexistent and is only seen as important because people want to perceive it as important. However, not taking into account the struggle that women face in a family and work environment and the gender expectations that come with the problem of gender inequality. The fact that we can see that there is a pay gap between men and women, that women still carry most of the housework that women are the victims of the system in cases of sexual assault; all of these problems are what's wrong in the structure of society and need to be attended to. In order to fix a problem, we first have to be able to see that it is real and that it affects society overall.

Now let's look at stereotypes between gender and race. First, in terms of gender. While gender inequality touches on some of the problems that women have to face, gender stereotypes in society drive some of these problems. For example, the idea that women are nurturing and emotional can lead to gender inequality in the workforce where society thinks that a woman cannot handle higher level jobs. The idea that women are submissive and men are naturally aggressive serves as a justification for sexual assault and abuse. The idea that women are dependent and seek protection leads to the notion that women should always put family before work, which does not allow them to develop as a profession even though more women go to college to earn a degree than men. This is how gender stereotypes influence some, if not to say, most of the problems of gender inequality in society.

Second, let's look at how racial stereotypes limit Hispanic females. One of the most important institutions of the Hispanic culture is family, and while many cultures value the importance of family, Hispanic families can have a stronger burden on females. One of the biggest stereotypes among Hispanic women is the idea that they are not responsible with their sexuality and end up pregnant at a very young age. This leads to avoiding questions about sex that will be important to practice safe sex, but in some cases these females are afraid to report sexual assault or abuse; this is due to the idea that females are the ones that carry the respect of the family.

In conclusion, these are just a few ways these social constructs limit the opportunities women have in their lives. A way in which we could fight the inequality and stereotypes of the social constructs mentioned is by understanding that there is more to Hispanic females than the ideas that are portrayed in society. This intersectional group has academic and social achievements aside from the notions that have been built by society. Overall, this understanding will help us value more the work of Hispanic females.

AISHA SHARHAN



AQUA PROVIDENCE

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

There are two paths
Which will you choose?
Either way you will
Have nothing to lose.

A game of sorts
With no wrong and no right.
The consequences of each
Will bring problems to light.

Do you believe in functions?
That everything has a place?
Then perhaps you're a functionalist
And it is purpose you must chase.

Or maybe you see truth in conflict,
And view oppression as society's foe.
You believe every institution was created
To maintain the status quo.

Is it anarchy you favor?
The fall of a regime.
Or is the idea of chaos
Something from a dream?

Do the little things matter?
Like you and I?
Or are we means of maintaining dominance?
Merely something to stratify.

A sociological imagination
Is an interesting tool.
If you use it correctly,
It can make reality seem quite cruel.

JASE RAFAEL VALLE
NEWS MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS PAPER

Educational disparities exist all over the globe and this is discussed in the article “The Education Gap between Rich and Poor is Growing Wider,” by Eduardo Porter. We can also see educational disparities on a smaller scale. For example, the education inequities within the State of Connecticut will be discussed from the article, “Legislators Struggle to Revise Education Funding After Rejecting Malloy Plan,” by Kathleen Megan.

The “Education Gap between Rich and Poor is Growing Wider” article by Eduardo Porter was explaining how we have made it so far from the deep roots of segregation, where the color of your skin determined your success, your quality of education, and everything in between. Despite making it this far, racial disparities remain embedded in our culture; however, the main divider in our society is class. All aspects of your life are affected by social class, especially education. The article explains how class is predicting people’s quality of education received. This is occurring because in fortunate communities they have over-funded schools, giving all students in the upper class an advantage. While in impoverished areas there are large populations of Latin Americans and African Americans lagging behind. This is a clear example of racial disparities because within these communities they are affecting specific racial groups. Leading to conflict between the majority group and minority group.

Conflict Theory is the total opposite of the functionalist perspective. Conflict Theory views society as there always must be a submissive group and a dominant group to maintain societal balance or the status quo. The Theory argues that competition between groups leads to social change and inequalities for each group and this is based on different struggles these groups have faced within history. It views inequality as unfair and used to stop groups from reaching dominance within our society and again maintaining the Status quo.

Conflict Theory lens will look at the education gap within our country from the article discussed in a new light. Education is divided across classes and

ethnic lines and therefore favors one group over another. To be specific, it benefits the wealthy while disadvantaging the poor. Education keeps the wealthy within their own social status, and makes the poor accept their social status as lower class individuals. This is most likely due to the economic differences between wealthy societies where they are predominantly white and able to afford greater technological advances and this helps fuel their students' education into colleges. Therefore, making it easier for those already well off educationally to receive a high earning job title to maintain wealth. While, holding back those in poorer areas who are already at a disadvantage with less technological advances from attaining social mobility and rather continuing the cycle of social reproduction. Education is not about opportunity for all; it is about maintaining power structure within our society, ensuring the status quo. This article uses some theoretical perspectives; within the article, it explains that higher education is preserved for the elites also known as the wealthy, and this is taking a stance on education that a conflict theorist would take because they would assume that the powerful group has the most access to resources than the weaker group.

The media has a fundamental role in portraying this article in a very stereotyped fashion and enforcing hegemony in our society. The article title itself is not trying to be about race at first glance but rather class; however, once reading the article it portrays specific races to a specific class, which was interesting. For example, within the article there is a picture that shows a class full of African American and a white teacher (the dominant group). This makes me question what intention the media had in portraying African Americans as poor within the article. This idea creates stereotypes towards specific underrepresented group that few people know much about. It creates a false facade that poor correlates to being African American or a minority. The picture also reveals an interesting idea of hegemony in our society because the teacher represents a majority group and part of the concept of hegemony dominant groups show educational leadership within our society. The teacher is a clear

example of educational leadership in the classroom where she is teaching African American who are viewed as the minority.

The next article takes the global issue previously discussed and narrows the scope on a state level. It describes educational funding inequality within public schools within the State of Connecticut. It also explains, how state leaders are disagreeing on how to fund different school districts and unable cannot agree on the education budget, putting hundreds of thousands of student's education at risk.

Functionalist theory is the polar opposite of the conflict theory. The functionalist perspective argues that everything within our society exists to fulfill a certain role or meet a certain need of that particular society. It argues that certain processes serve functions that are necessary to keep society running smoothly.

The functionalist theory will examine the educational inequities in Connecticut and Connecticut political leaders' inability to reach a consensus on how educational funds should be distributed to schools throughout the state. Functionalist theorists will argue that education is fair. However, in this article it shows that within Connecticut there are no such thing as equal education, because class determines what quality of an education you receive. Even also argued that education at times believed to be fair, but as you can see within the article education functions to maintain a dominant group and a weaker group. Education can perpetuate inequalities and reduce inequalities amongst people. This article shows that education furthers the gap between rich and poorer individuals and perpetuates inequalities amongst these people; this directly results from policies that are created biased towards the dominant group. Political parties have a role in producing these inequalities in education and all other disparities. Political parties through a functionalist perspective function to reach power and become the dominant group within legislature to maintain inequalities that favor their own party. This is why disagreements are always prevalent between political parties and therefore prevent major change from occurring due to this striving for power.

Republicans and Democrats are blinded by power rather than solving the issue at hand. Therefore, these two political parties are not coming to a consensus and therefore furthering the education gap between high income and low income areas. This is due to the sociological concept of majority and minority group relations, majority groups, the Democrats, are attempting to remain as the majority group, while the minority group the Republicans in the Connecticut House of Representatives strive for power over the majority.

This article struggles to conform to any perspectives upon media from the pages within the “You May Ask Yourself” Sociology text book by Dalton Conley. The article does not appear to subtly or overtly target specific groups, or make any rash stereotypes against specific races or socioeconomic backgrounds. The article is more informative from a neutral standpoint about the inability of both political parties, Democrats and Republicans, from being able to come to a consensus upon how education funds should be allocated towards specific towns within Connecticut.

These two articles discussed in their summary, sociological theoretical perspectives, and perspectives through media, may be seen as if they are not related the slightest bit or you may think they relate but on a minute scale. However, the overarching relation between these two topics show that political parties can greatly affect the quality of an education you receive. The state government for too long has left my community in dark. Coming from an impoverished community where I lacked the fundamental tools to succeed in a 21st century economy. My education system did not function to level the playing field but rather held people back from attaining social mobility. Educational inequities within my community have motivated me to fight for equitable funding for areas that need it most. Which drove me to writing about educational inequalities between rich and poor groups and how politics can further these educational disparities that exist within our country.

Education Gap Between Rich & Poor is Growing Wider

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/23/business/economy/education-gap-between-rich-and-poor-is-growing-wider.html>

“Legislators Struggle to Revise Education Funding After Rejecting Malloy Plan,”

<http://www.courant.com/education/hc-education-funding-legislature-20170426-story.html>

MICHELL GONZALEZ



MARIA FIESTAS
DO YOU MEET SOCIETY'S EXPECTATION?

When you look down,
what do you see?

Do you see yourself or society?

When you look down, are you happy?

Do you feel accepted by who you are or are you judged for not fitting into a category?

Ask yourself this question, are you willing to lose your identity to be accepted by your society?

But, wait why do you want to fit in?

Into this artificial skin

You are beautiful because it's not about what they want to see but about what you want to be

This society has rules and regulations but it's more like fools with limitations

Don't let yourself be dragged out by this hateful society

But, instead be brought up by your own understanding personality

No more will you be enslaved to the chains of conformity

Nor the chains of normalcy

Nor the chains of mediocrity

No More

Accept yourself because society will never be able to accept who you are

Now I'll ask you again

When you look down,

what do you see?

Do you see yourself or society?

AISHA SHARHAN

