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## CRIMINOLOGY

### **The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children (Children Witness to Violence)**

**By: Jenna Lussier '13**

There has been violence between intimate partners and within families for countless years. It was not until 1994, however, that laws began to officially protect women from violence. The Violence Against Women Act – passed by Congress in 1994 – forced people to recognize cases of domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault as serious, punishment-worthy offenses (United States Department of Justice, 2011). As there are more than four million physical or sexual assaults experienced by women in intimate partner/domestic cases every year, not only is this type of violence severe, but extremely common (Safe Horizon, 2012).

Even though women/intimate partners are most often the victims of family violence, there are also other victims: the children who witness it. There are more than three million children who observe domestic violence in their homes every year, and out of these three million children 30-70% are victims of the same abuse or neglect they witness (Rothman, Mandel, and Silverman, 2007). Although domestic violence has been recognized as a serious issue in society, there is little known about the effects on the children who are exposed to such violence. This is an important area to continue research in, since the research that has been done shows that physical, emotional, psychological, and criminal problems can arise from a violence-filled home life and childhood.

Aforementioned, domestic violence is a prevalent issue within the United States, regardless of a family's race, ethnicity, sexual-orientation, or socio-economic status (Safe Horizon, 2012). This issue is so common, in fact, that a survey of over 2,000 American

families showed “that an assault with intent to injure had occurred in three out of ten married couples, and in one out of six within the past year” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011). Due to the vast amount of cases involving domestic violence, researchers have examined the reasons behind this violence. Some researchers have attributed violence in families partially to genetics. For example, research has shown that antisocial behavior in particular is hereditary to a certain extent. Biological factors can contribute to differences in aggressive behavior, in regards to children possibly being predisposed to such behavior. Whether or not the child becomes violent, however, “will depend on numerous factors, including experiences in the social world” (Siegler, DeLoache, & Eisenberg, 2006). These experiences in the social world include one’s interaction with their family, and in many families, aggression is learned. The theory behind this idea that aggression is learned is the social learning theory – this states that “children learn from aggressive models in their environments,” thus connecting exposure to violence and exhibiting aggressive behavior (Margolin & Gordis, 2004). In families where this theory holds true, there is often “low competence in responding non-aggressively,” and children will model their parents’ aggressive responses, thus repeating the cycle of violence (Hogg & Vaughan).

Oftentimes this cycle of violence is blamed on family factors or external factors. Family factors include proximity of family members, stresses within the household, and power struggles within the household (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011). Even when hostile feelings come from some external situation or issue, family members often tend to lash out at each other out of frustration. Aside from frustration and annoyance, a family is also a source of stress. Research has shown that “children living with violence

may also experience family conflict and other life stresses, such as poverty, parents' unemployment, or parents' substance abuse." Unfortunately, these stresses only keep the cycle constant, as they "increase the risk for continued violence, and violence increases the likelihood of these stresses" (Margolin & Gordis, 2004).

A study done by Baker, Perilla, and Norris (2001) on parenting stress levels for abusive fathers and nonabusive fathers found that "abusive fathers felt no more parenting stress than the nonabusive fathers," but that the most stress is felt by the victimized mothers (Rothman, Mandel, & Silverman, 2007). This brings in the idea of power as a source of stress. There is a "division of power in traditional nuclear families" which tends to favor the man of the household, and due to this idea of the man being in charge, it makes it harder "for democratic styles of interaction to predominate" (Hogg & Vaughan). Although this is not true for every so-called nuclear family, it is clear how violence could become a first response if the male of the household feels his power being questioned or threatened. This idea of a power struggle leading to violence in the household is also related to the ways parents punish their children – if a parent feels that their authority is threatened, they could perhaps become aggressive. This, however, could lead to abusive punishment, and therefore have adverse effects on those children being punished.

In most cultures abusive punishment is seen as a form of child abuse, and it can have serious effects on a child's development and behavior. For example, research has found that "abusive punishment is likely to be associated with the development of antisocial tendencies," which could cause a child to be violent later on in life (Siegler, DeLoache, & Eisenberg, 2006). Child abuse is one important physical consequence of

domestic violence, but there are also other physical consequences, which could include a parent leaving or even dying. Some of these violent relationships can end in divorce, which can be damaging to the child's well-being. Before there is a divorce, however, witnessing conflict between their parents can be painful for children, and can "cause them to feel insecure about their own relationship with their parents, even making them fear that their parents will desert them or stop living with them" (Siegler, et al.). This fear is only reinforced by the parents divorcing, and conflict does not always cease when the divorce is final. Divorce could lead to custody battles between the parents, the children could have to deal with relocating, and/or they could gain a step-parent. These transitions can also make a child more susceptible to antisocial or aggressive behaviors. Furthermore, remarriage can cause stress for all of the people involved – biological parents, step-parents, and the children. Remarriage can also result in the children feeling confused, angry, or rejected by their biological parents. In some cases, remarriage can even result in the cycle of violence repeating itself, as the step-parent can prove to be just as bad as the former abusive parent by "subject[ing] their stepchildren to emotional, physical, or sexual abuse" (Schmalleger & Bartollas, 2008). Even more, step-parents "are more likely to injure or kill the children with whom they reside than biological fathers," as they are often less attached than biological fathers would be (Rothman, Mandel, & Silverman, 2007). Sadly it seems that leaving the abuse in one relationship may not always be beneficial if there will only be abuse again in a new one, with perhaps greater risks of injury.

Just as domestic violence can result in divorce and splitting of the family, it can also result in a more permanent split: suicide or homicide. Suicide often coincides with

depression or a feeling of hopelessness. Sometimes, people who are in “an abusive or repressive environment” will commit suicide because they feel that there is no other option (Comer, 2010). Furthermore, problems within a marriage are a common predictor of suicide, along with anxiety, a ‘trapped’ feeling, depression, and stress. All of these predictors can be results of domestic violence, so it is not surprising that victims of domestic abuse would turn to suicide as an escape (Comer). Even the children who witness the violence may feel suicide is the only option left. According to Margolin and Gordis (2004), “a child may interpret violence at home...to mean that the world is unsafe and that he or she is unworthy of protection” and interpreting the violence in this way “may engender helplessness and lead to negative self-perceptions,” both factors sadly associated with suicide.

There are other severe outcomes of domestic violence aside from committing suicide, one of which is homicide. Spousal homicides account for one-fourth of all homicides in which the victim knows the killer, and in such homicides the offender is most often male. This is because even though women are “slightly more likely than men to use physical aggression against their partners in heterosexual relationships,” men tend to use more harmful forms of aggression; therefore it is more probable that they will deliver a fatal blow (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011). Even if a homicide does not occur, children are greatly impacted by just physically witnessing the violence. Witnessing the violence includes seeing or hearing incidents, becoming involved in the incidents by trying to intervene or calling police, or “experiencing the aftermath” of the incident by seeing bruises or noticing the mother is depressed (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999). If children

are impacted just by hearing the violence, there is no doubt of the negative consequences that would come with the death of a parent by intimate partner violence.

It is also important to note, as Kelly (1994) found in her research on the effects of domestic abuse on children, that “children are affected by all forms of domestic violence,” including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Kelly also states that there can be influence from both personal factors (genetics, home life) and external factors (school, friends) on how children react to the different kinds of violence (McGee, 2000). Additionally, most researchers agree on several common problems that stem from witnessing violence. These problems include “depression, suicidality, anxiety, developmental delay, substance abuse, inappropriate behavior at school, academic problems, school health problems, and aggression,” as well as sometimes even leading to posttraumatic stress symptoms (Rothman, Mandel, & Silverman, 2007; Margolin & Gordis, 2004). Oftentimes a child is exposed to different types of violence at the same time (being abused, witnessing abuse), but the effects of this are often similar to a child being exposed to one type of abuse for an extended period of time (Margolin & Gordis, 2004). Silvern, et al. (1995), however, showed in early research that children who witness violence but are never subjected to it, experience “traumatic effects...that are distinct from the effects of child abuse” (Edleson, 1997).

These effects, however, are displayed differently throughout the course of childhood – and then sometimes carry on into adulthood. Both genders can experience violence in the same way when they are very young, but as children get older, there is a distinct difference in how exposure to violence affects each gender. Men are more likely to “express their anger in ways that hurt others” if they have been abused or neglected in



the past, while women tend to become self-destructive, engaging in behaviors such as substance abuse or sexual indecency (Schmallegger & Bartollas, 2008). Some researchers have also looked at these differences as men externalizing the pain of experiencing domestic violence through being hostile and violent, while women internalize the pain through hurting themselves, becoming depressed, or dealing with unexplained somatic complaints (Edleson, 1997). Although there is disparity between genders, researchers have not found any significant differences based on race and ethnicity of children who witness violence (Schmallegger & Bartollas).

Furthermore, based on the previous examples, it seems that the effects of domestic violence do not end after a child leaves the abusive home. Instead, these effects carry on into adulthood, and perhaps stay with a person for the rest of his or her life. Unfortunately, the cycle of violence often continues, as research has shown that “children who were exposed to violence between their parents subsequently were more likely to perpetrate violence against an adult partner and to be treated violently by an adult partner than were children who were not exposed to violence” (Margolin & Gordis, 2004). Aforesaid, women who experience abuse often become self-destructive, and turn to different substances to mask the trauma of their pasts. Women who are alcoholics are actually “more likely to report a history of childhood physical and emotional abuse than nonalcoholic women,” showing how their abusive childhood can lead into a self-abusive adulthood (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2005-2011). Moreover, substance abuse is often linked to domestic abuse, so it is interesting that women will turn to drugs to, in a sense, take them away from their abusive past. In point of fact, the U.S. Department of Justice stated that 36% of domestic abuse victims and 61% of domestic

abuse offenders were users of drugs or alcohol. Many of these offenders also tend to use their substance abuse as an excuse for the violence (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence). Therefore, even though substance abuse can be a consequence of domestic violence, it can also be a predictor.

Parallel to this idea of abuse at home as a predicting factor, research has found that drinking excessive amounts of alcohol can be correlated with a male's abuse of his spouse (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011). This does not mean that alcohol will always cause spousal abuse, but instead demonstrates that the two often go hand-in-hand. Additionally, substance abuse is not only associated with spousal abuse, but with child abuse as well. The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse found through a survey of welfare agencies that "80% of child abuse cases are associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs," and unfortunately, children who live in homes where there is substance abuse are more likely to experience any type of abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) in their lifetime than children with non-substance abusing parents (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence). Substance abuse often continues for these children into adulthood, as they are at a greater risk of dealing with substance abuse problems than those children who grow up in a non-violent environment (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence).

If abused children get involved with substance abuse, they are at higher risk for becoming delinquent – and they are already at risk if they were abused or witnessed domestic violence. In regards to criminality, witnessing violence in the home can lead to delinquency because children can learn "to rely on force and coercion to solve problems" rather than discussing or thinking through the problem at hand (Schmallegger & Bartollas,

2008). By learning such harmful problem-solving skills at a young age, children learn to rely on violence as an answer, and therefore are more likely to use violence to solve problems as they get older, which then puts them at risk of getting in trouble with the law. In fact, exposure to abuse or neglect as a child increases chances of being arrested for violent crime by thirty-percent. An abusive background also increases the chances of delinquency (being arrested as a juvenile) by 59%, and being arrested as an adult by 29% (Schmallegger & Bartollas). Further consequences of abuse in relation to crime include abused children committing crimes at an earlier age and getting arrested at a younger age than non-abused children. These children will also commit twice the number of offenses, and will be involved in criminal activity more frequently than non-abused children (Schmallegger & Bartollas). These are more long-term consequences of domestic violence. Even though the abuse may have only occurred in childhood, by learning to use more hostile tactics to solve problems, they may in turn be learning to use these tactics for the rest of their lives – hence, possibly becoming involved in violent crime.

Thus, from the former examples and statistics it is understandable how “the idea that violence begets violence is firmly entrenched in both the minds of professionals and those of the general public” (Schmallegger & Bartollas, 2008). As hard as a child might try to escape a violent environment, research has shown that such an environment has physical, emotional, psychological, and even criminal consequences that can stay with a child throughout their life. According to psychologist and researcher Caroline McGee, children do not need to physically see the abuse happen in order to be aware of it and have it affect them. In fact, her research found that “even if they did not actually see their mother being assaulted, they were still affected by witnessing the outcomes” of the abuse

(McGee, 2000). Therefore, the domestic violence could happen behind closed doors without the child/children ever witnessing or experiencing it, yet those children can still be at risk of the same consequences as others who have both witnessed and experienced abuse. Moreover, McGee found that mothers often assumed “that by not talking to the children about [the violence] they were protecting them,” and these mothers did not realize that the children were still aware of the violence whether or not someone told them. In some cases, trying to hide the domestic violence proved to be worse for the children, as it made them feel as if the abuse was a “shameful family secret” (McGee). Therefore, keeping the children in the dark just reinforced their idea that the violence was something not to be discussed – which could possibly become a more severe issue if a child was eventually abused as well.

There are consequences to witnessing abuse, being abused, or even just being aware of violence in one’s home. No matter what form the violence takes – whether it be emotional, sexual, or physical – it still can have a substantial negative effect on any child. The consequences of domestic violence can be physical, with the abuser or abused leaving or even dying; emotional or psychological, causing problems such as depression, suicide, fear, or substance abuse; and even criminal, with children who witness abuse more likely to become delinquent. Not every child will experience all the different kinds of consequences, nor will every child even experience consequences at all. It is clear, however, that there are detrimental outcomes of domestic violence, and even though not every child will be affected, they are at a greater risk of falling into physical, psychological, or criminal problems than non-abused children (Margolin & Gordis, 2004). With all the consequences at hand, it is absurd to think that the effects of

domestic violence on children had been overlooked at one point – just as it is absurd to believe that domestic violence altogether had been overlooked in the past. New and continuing research, however, plays a role to give voice to the “‘silent,’ ‘forgotten,’ and ‘unintended’ victims of...domestic violence” (Edleson, 1997). This research has been involved in developing programs and laws to protect children from witnessing violence, in the form of mental health services, case law, and recommendations for improving the system’s response.

Aforementioned, there are many psychological consequences of exposure to violence. Thus it is important for children to have access to mental health services if they suffer from these consequences. It is challenging, however, to provide mental health services to those children that witness domestic violence. Identifying the children suffering from psychological distress due to exposure to violence is one of the issues in accessing such services. Oftentimes, the children suffering display problem behaviors, and professionals, such as teachers, might not realize that these symptoms are due to experiencing violence at home. Furthermore, “they may be unable to elicit or respond to disclosures about the child’s home situation,” and therefore the situation goes unnoticed or is not dealt with (Groves, 1999). Doctors and even mental health professionals often do not inquire about domestic violence during check-ups or visits, and so “professionals often fail to detect that exposure to domestic violence is a contributing factor to the child’s difficulties” or problem behaviors (Groves).

In order to overcome the challenge of identifying the children in need of services; teachers, doctors, and mental health professionals “must develop and implement guidelines for screening and responses if a child discloses domestic violence”

(Groves). Only then can those children experiencing psychological distress after witnessing domestic violence be properly identified. Once they are identified, it is important to assess the impact of the events on the child in order to get them adequate mental health care. To do this, professionals need to examine “the child, the family, the living situation, and the nature of the events the child witnessed,” as well as factors such as age, stage of development, impact of events on child’s functioning, how the child understands the violence, whether or not the child can discuss the violence, presence of any supportive adults in the child’s life, and the view of domestic violence in the child’s culture through a clinical interview (Groves).

There are different types of mental health interventions available to children once their needs are assessed: either group intervention strategies or individual intervention strategies are employed based on the extent of trauma. The goals of these different interventions, however, are the same. The first goal is to help the child talk about their experiences with violence. The hope in this is that through discussing the events in a safe place, the child moves “toward integrating the experience into their understanding of themselves and their world,” as well as to “reduce the [child’s] sense of isolation” (Groves, 1999). The second goal is to “help children understand and cope with their emotional responses to the violence, while promoting their acquisition of positive behavior patterns” (Groves). An important part of this second goal is to help the child to understand that they are not to blame for their parents’ fighting, thus perhaps decreasing a child’s feelings of guilt or shame in regards to the domestic violence they have witnessed. The third goal of mental health interventions is to decrease any symptoms exhibited by the child due to exposure to domestic violence. The non-abusing parent will

often be involved in this goal, as they can be taught, along with the child, different strategies to deal with the symptoms. Finally, the fourth goal is “to help the family create a safe, stable, and nurturing environment for the child, because children cannot begin to recover from the effects of exposure to violence so long as the exposure continues” (Groves).

Unfortunately, case law does not always contribute to a safe environment for a child. Some judges when dealing with domestic violence cases, for example, “consider estrangement from the father to be more traumatic than witnessing abuse,” so they want to keep both parents involved in the child or children’s lives (O’Sullivan, 2002). There is limited research on what is more damaging to a child – living without the batterer or keeping in contact with the batterer – but what is clear is that witnessing violence has a hugely distressing impact. Due to this, many organizations, such as the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, have “proposed legislation making domestic violence a significant factor in custody and visitation decisions” (O’Sullivan). Some organizations have even gone as far to suggest that when a civil protection order is issued, the batterer should have no contact or limited contact with his or her children because they believe the risks involved in keeping contact are greater than the benefits.

Even though most states do take these recommendations into account when creating legislation, there is still discretion between legislation and actual decisions within the court system. For example, as mentioned some judges believe it is essential that the child have interactions with both parents, so “in awarding custody, the court...consider[s] which parent is more likely to allow frequent and continuing contact with the other parent” (O’Sullivan). What courts do not consider is that a batterer may

present him or herself as the better option in order to maintain control and even continue the abuse. For example, he might behave very differently in the court than he does at home, and might point out the flaws of the victim in order to gain custody. Even when the non-abused parent gets custody of the children and the parents separate, research has shown that “court ordered visitation after separation could increase the risk of children’s exposure to violence” and therefore increases children’s risk of further physical harm and psychological damage (O’Sullivan). Also contributing to more psychological distress is the idea that when visitation is allowed, the child is “moving between two parents and their two perspectives on the violence,” which can lead to confusion and “torn loyalties” for the child (O’Sullivan).

The problem with the courts allowing the abuser to continue seeing his child through visitation is that “the court seems to be holding mothers responsible for violence inflicted on them, rather than holding the batterers responsible” (O’Sullivan, 2002). Although the court systems are more aware that domestic violence causes great harm to children, this awareness has unfortunately “resulted in a punitive policy toward battered women in the child welfare system” (Fordham Urban Law Journal, 1999). In New York City specifically, more and more children are being taken away from their battered mothers in “failure to protect” proceedings, accusing the mothers of neglect. In a society where battered women already have many obstacles when trying to escape their violent situations, this approach only further discourages a victim of domestic violence “from seeking the service they need to escape domestic violence,” especially when children are involved (Fordham Urban Law Journal). Therefore, removing the children



might even increase the already harmful effects of the abuse as they are now physically losing a parent.

This approach also places blame on the victim: “charging battered mothers with ‘failure to protect’ implies that they are neglecting their children, because they did not prevent the violence,” as well as blames the victim for the abuser’s actions (Fordham Urban Law Journal, 1999). Even though the abuser is the one exposing his children to violence, the mother is the one being blamed for this exposure. The case that began this trend was the 1998 case *In re Lonell J.*, which found that there were adverse effects on children who had been exposed to violence. This case also found that because the mother had remained in the abusive relationship, “she had ‘failed to exercise a minimum degree of care,’” thus failing to protect her children (Fordham Urban Law Journal). The problem with this finding, however, was that the court did not examine the reasons the mother had for remaining, assess how much danger the children were really in, or “consider the steps taken by the mother to protect her children from the batterer” (Fordham Urban Law Journal).

The criminal justice system often removes children from violent homes rather than providing services. This was done even before the “failure to protect” laws were created, but these laws have “the potential to prompt removal in more domestic violence cases” (Fordham Urban Law Journal). Interestingly enough, this removal has had even more devastating effects on the children’s well-being, as well as discourages victims of domestic violence (i.e., mothers of the children) from seeking help – making these laws more damaging all around. Fortunately, there was a law suit filed by victims of abuse in response to “failure to protect” case rulings. In this suit, “the judge ruled that the city’s

child protection system violated parents and children's constitutional right to due process by removing children from mothers solely because the mothers were victims of domestic violence" (Jaffe, Baker, & Cunningham, 2004). This showed that the court system, as well as the child protection system, was combating this issue in the wrong way. They were not necessarily thinking about what was right for the family or the children, and were possibly causing more harm to the children. Overall, interventions should still focus on the safety of children in domestic violence cases, but not all cases are alike, so they should be dealt with differently.

According to many state statutes, "a child is a witness to domestic violence when an act that is defined as domestic violence is committed in the presence of or perceived by the child" (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2009). Research has shown this exposure has physical, emotional, and psychological effects on children, and can even lead to criminality later in life. To combat these effects, mental health interventions have been implemented, legislation has been changed, and recommendations have been made on how to better the system. There is still research that must be done to assess the effects of the strategies used, and the interventions are different in how they respond to domestic violence, but all of the strategies work to protect the children who are exposed. Overall, there is increasing awareness in society of the negative effects of witnessing domestic violence as a child, and interventions can only improve now that services created to protect and help children are extremely focused on doing just that.

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## SOCIOLOGY

### **Anomaly of Marriage Equality in the United States**

**By: Victoria Young'14**

A classroom full of elementary school students stands up at 9:05am Monday through Friday and rehearses the Pledge of Allegiance. They repeat the words “and with liberty and justice for all,” but do all citizens of the United States experience liberty and justice under the same laws? The Fourteenth Amendment in the Constitution, initially created to protect the rights of recently freed slaves following the end of the Civil War, states that no person could be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law or be denied equal protection of the laws (Cornell University Law School 2012). Aside from the obvious exclusion of women’s right, this Amendment served as a model for how America would organize itself. In excerpts from *How to Observe Morals and Manners and Society in America*, Harriet Martineau both lays out a sociological method for observing and gaining an understanding of a society and uses her research on the morals and manners of a society to reveal four major anomalies in United States society: slavery, lack of women’s rights, issues regarding public opinion, and issues of wealth inconsistency in a republic of equals. By unearthing the “relation of contradiction between morals (or principles) and manners (or interactional patterns) of a society, a sociologist can make the argument for social change to improve a society” (Martineau 1998:54). Ultimately, this challenge of tradition can accomplish the sociological goal of positive and beneficial social change.

To answer the question of whether there is a spectrum on which American experience liberty and justice: certain groups of Americans experience more freedoms than other groups. While Martineau does not specifically address the issue of marriage

equality, her model of analyzing the inconsistencies between the morals and the manners of a society can be applied to the modern world. The Civil War was partially a result of American citizens and governmental officials addressing the anomaly of the morals of the United States and the manners in which these laws were practiced within most institutions. As a result, Amendments Thirteen, Fourteen, and Fifteen were placed into the written morals/laws of America to clarify the morals in hopes that the manners would begin to reflect the moral principles. Today, the fight for many sociological changes occurs because citizens recognize a disparity between the morals of the country and the practices that occur. While this paper will solely address the anomaly of marriage rights for homosexuals, many other fault lines exist within American society. For example, if all people are guaranteed the right to life according to the Constitution, then the practice of the death penalty may create a tension with the morals. Some believe the death penalty is necessary in saving the lives of many others in the future while others believe the criminal deserves the chance to live. In the case of gay marriage, some believe it threatens the rituals of the Church while others believe it is a violation of rights to prohibit the nuptials.

As a result of this, Martineau's theory can be applied to the issue of marriage equality in the United States. She writes, "the worldly interests of the minority, – of perhaps a single class, – are bound up with the anomaly" (54). Couples in legally recognized marriages are given certain benefits such as hospital visitation, pensions, immigration rights, and Social Security benefits. While some states in the United States, like Massachusetts and New York, recognize homosexual marriages, thirty-eight do not (Human Rights Campaign 2012a). Because of this, homosexuals do not receive the same

liberty and justice that heterosexuals do. This is evident in the documentary *For the Bible Tells Me So*. The documentary illustrates the tensions between a majority group (Christians) who are against marriage equality and a minority group (homosexuals) who are denied over a thousand rights given to a heterosexual marriage. One powerful aspect of the documentary is the language employed by those who assert that homosexuals should not be allowed to marry. Tonia Poteat's father refers to her as a "faggot" while Gene Robertson recalls church members calling his homosexual actions "unnatural, unmanly, and ungodly" (Karslake 1997). Jake Reitan discusses how he was told that his preference for men was innocent and unavoidable but acting on his feelings and homosexual tendencies was a sin. The documentary examines the religious institution's tendency to read the Bible literally while engaging in selective reading to manipulate the Bible's text to fit their anti-homosexual agenda. Furthermore, the documentary proves the tension between the tradition of heterosexual marriage and the new challenges marriage equality poses for those who wish for the United States society to remain stagnant, yet unequal. According to the Human Rights Campaign, fifteen states and the District of Columbia allow for equal hospital visitation rights to same-sex spouses or partners due to statewide recognition. (Human Rights Campaign 2012b). This statistic will increase with more challenges to the traditional system. Overall, the documentary serves as a visual and auditory example of the chafing that occurs in the United States' society as a result of a disparity between the morals and manners. Besides illustrating a very real social issue in the United States that might not go away until changes are made to the practices and the morals, the documentary gives faces and names to the otherwise dry and detached statistical data of homosexuality and marriage equality. Homosexuality exists and if the

United States asserts in its morals that all people should be free and should be allotted the same rights, then the practices within the institution of marriage and the Church must change to match said morals. Despite the arguments displayed in the documentary about homosexuality being an abomination that must be terminated, the minority does not seem to be accepting the laws quietly. According to Martineau, “the minority may go on for a length of time in apparent harmony with the expressed will of the many, – the law. But the time comes when their anomaly clashes with the law...” (Martineau 1998:54). This documentary illustrates the extreme hate towards homosexual marriage and the way in which these restrictions clash with the morals of the United States.

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## **THE DURKHEIMIAN PURSUIT OF HEALTHIER AND SOCIALLY JUST COLLEGE CAMPUSES**

**BY: MICHELLE RENNA '14**

The perpetuating speculation that aspiring male college students may have preferential applicant status because of their gender not only remains a debated issue of gender equity at Stonehill College, but at many college campuses across the United States. As females have transitioned from the underrepresented minority to the overrepresented majority of undergraduate students, are college admission offices advertently reversing decades of progress towards gender equity in higher education by discriminating against them (de Vise 2009: 1-2)? If so, what would Emile Durkheim, a sociologist concerned with the health of society, say about this phenomenon?

As a structural functionalist, Durkheim envisions society as a body of interdependent parts, where each part maintains a specialized role in the functioning of the body as a whole (Durkheim 1997: 3). Although he believes a particular function is not predestined from birth, he theorizes each individual possesses tastes and aptitudes that limit his or her choice (Durkheim 1997: 311). As a result, each individual fulfills a specific function complementing the function of another individual, fostering healthy organic solidarity and a normal division of labor (Durkheim 1997: 4).

Therefore, Durkheim would view intentional favoring of one gender over another as an unhealthy, or abnormal, division of labor in society. In particular, he would posit that a forced division of labor may be occurring across college campuses for admission offices may be admitting under qualified men in lieu of qualified women. A forced division of labor occurs when external constraints compel individuals to uphold a function that does not correspond to their natural abilities (Durkheim 1997: 311). In turn,



Durkheim would argue college admission offices may be forcing a male into a role he is not meant to fulfill by accepting him, and may be forcing a female into a role she is not meant to fulfill by rejecting her. Although conventional admission office wisdom dictates colleges dominated by either gender are less appealing, Durkheim would observe an intentional gender balance as unnatural and an act of social injustice, for in a normal division of labor social inequalities should reflect natural inequalities (de Vise 2009: 1; Durkheim 1997: 313).

If college admission offices disrupt the spontaneity of a normal division of labor, the regulatory organ of society, the state, must intervene and arrange society so every individual has a function agreeable to him or her (Durkheim 1997: 167, 311). In late 2009, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights approved an investigation seeking to determine whether colleges around the Washington D.C. area were engaging in this act of social injustice against women (de Vise 2009: 1). The investigation requested a range of data from a multitude of institutions that claim to practice “holistic” admission approaches, considering each applicant as an individual and as a whole, with gender being one of the least important factors considered (de Vise 2009: 3). Federal officials sought to gauge the relative academic merits of male and female applicants who were admitted, wait-listed, or rejected, in order to determine if college admission offices were admitting men at higher rates to preserve an equal gender balance on their campuses, as they worked to assemble an incoming freshman class (de Vise 2009: 3).

Durkheim would view the recent civil rights probe as the state intervening to resolve the abnormality resulting from male college applicants being intentionally favored over female college applicants, as well as the state’s pursuit of social justice.

Through restitution, demonstrated by the investigation's work to restore the admission process back to one that ensured fairness between the two genders, the state functioned to create a more equitable college admission process. Further, Durkheim would support a federal sanction that authorized only the "holistic" admission approach, for it would reduce the obstacles that may prevent prospective students from occupying a position commensurate to their natural abilities, allowing for a healthy division of labor (Durkheim 1997: 313-314). Although the commission lacks enforcement power, it can refer complaints to other state agencies that pursue action, continuing state intervention for gender equity on college campuses (de Vise 2009: 3).

Though Durkheim would deem the federal investigation as a mechanism to foster a healthier and equitable society, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission suspended the investigation in March 2011 after some members questioned the quality of the collected data (de Vise 2011: 1). They voted not only to end the nearly completed investigation, but also voted down a proposal to make the data available to researchers and the public (de Vise 2011: 1-2). Though an injustice in Durkheim's eyes, the case reminds us to think critically about the world we live in today by using and advancing sociological theory to help explain social phenomena.

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**THE POWER OF PICTURES**  
**BY: DANIEL GARDINER '14**



Let's begin with a challenge: Think about what you had for dinner last night. Now, if someone were to ask you to describe this experience from start to finish, what would you say? It would likely go something like this. I compiled a salad at the salad bar, bought a piece of grilled chicken, and grabbed a bag of baked potato chips and a glass of water. Then I enjoyed my meal with a few friends, threw away my trash and went on with my life. However, as students of the Food Politics Learning Community realized, this illustration is far from complete. Who grew the vegetables for my salad and where were they grown? Was the chicken raised on a small local farm or in a commercial facility? Who decided the price I paid for my meal and what does this price actually

reflect? Why did I pay twice as much as my friend who bought two slices of pizza and a large soda? When I throw my food away, what does “away” even mean? These are just a few of the questions that Food Politics students were pushed to answer in their attempt to understand and visually illustrate the food system at Stonehill.

One of the roles I have adopted is that of the teaching assistant and this summer, I had the opportunity to help create, develop and carry out a new course alongside our farm manager, Bridget Meigs and Professor Chris Wetzel of the sociology department. Our course, Food Politics, is a learning community seminar which means it unites two courses from different disciplines, namely, Political Sociology and Principles of Environmental Science. Building this course from the ground up was a tremendous experience and on Monday, November 12<sup>th</sup> we were able to see the fruits of our labor.



Students, faculty, staff and administrators filled the seats for the photo essay presentations on Monday November 12th.

The class was centered on examining the food system at Stonehill and understanding the five main aspects: production, purchasing, menu planning, solid waste disposal and composting. With this in mind, we organized experiential based learning seminars to expose our class to each of these aspects within the first portion of our

semester together. We worked consistently at The Stonehill Farm and examined its role as a product of the mission division at Stonehill. We met with the general manager of our dining commons, David Miller, who escorted us on a behind-the-scenes tour of Sodexo's main dining facility on our campus. We also ventured to a Waste Management Materials Recovery Facility where we were able to see firsthand the importance and benefits of the responsible disposal of waste, especially recyclable materials.



Team Purchasing makes their case for locally sourced goods in the cafeteria.

Our class of 25 was then divided into five groups with each group focusing on a different aspect of our food system. They were then tasked with creating photo essays to illustrate their portion of the food system in a compelling manner.<sup>1</sup> Together, these five presentations would create an accurate illustration of our initial challenge, understanding where our meals truly begin and where our waste actually ends up. Students had several weeks to conduct research, interview the important players and capture powerful images that would tell their story. On Monday November 12, 2012, our students presented

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Curran, Breanne Penkala, Alphonse Riang, and Jeff Santos created a PowerPoint entitled, "Composting at Stonehill," a version of which is located on our homepage.

their photo essays in a tremendously successful program held in the Martin Institute. The five groups walked the audience through their essay and fielded questions as they arose. Each essay captured a compelling narrative and many pushed for social change whether that be through increased awareness about composting on campus or a growing demand for locally sourced products in the cafeteria. The essays were very well received by the standing room only crowd.

The success of this event and the course as a whole speaks volumes about the potential for Stonehill's growth in the direction of sustainable initiatives. Hearing students speak with passion and vigor about the problems facing our food system sparked the hope that these issues will continue to gain traction as the members of this class continue to grow as leaders within our community.



Greg Wolfe, Stonehill's Director of Purchasing, asks a question of the presenters.

Food Politics is far from what one would classify as a traditional college course. We spent more time covered in dirt at the farm than we did sitting in desks in the classroom and the assignments we developed were more likely to involve our trash than any textbook. However, witnessing the well-executed, professional and impassioned final presentations leads me to believe that our students' learning did not suffer as a result. It

was a privilege to act as a teaching assistant for this course and it is my sincere hope that Stonehill will continue to support courses that expand our boundaries by creatively engaging students in meaningful ways.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF BROCKTON**

**BY: EMILY ANDERSON '14, MORGHAN FARNSWORTH '14, KATELYN HEINTZ '14, LAUREN MONTANO '14, LAUREN MOORE '14, ELIZABETH SHELLEY '13, AND LINDSAY TOMA '14**

The goal of our project was to design and implement sociological research to investigate perceptions of Brockton. We partnered with the Stonehill Community Based Learning office to conduct a study of Stonehill students' and faculty's perceptions of Brockton. This study can potentially provide the college with an opportunity to enhance school-community relations.

Two surveys were developed, one for faculty members and the other for students. We received a response rate of 37% for the faculty survey and 29% for the student survey. The following report is a brief summary of our preliminary findings.

### **Faculty Survey**

For the faculty survey portion of the Perceptions of Brockton research study, we had 61 respondents in total. Gender was almost equally divided. In addition, when looking at what department the faculty respondents work in, liberal arts fields make up the majority at 54%, followed by the mathematics or sciences with 25%, and the remaining 20% in other departments. Further, only 7% of the respondents said that they have ever lived in Brockton.

The initial question in the faculty survey asked participants to identify the first three words that come to mind when thinking about Brockton. The most frequent words faculty participants used to describe Brockton were city, shoes, and urban/crime. These findings seem to suggest a slightly negative, but predominantly neutral perception of Brockton among faculty.



When asked if their perceptions of Brockton have changed over the years they've worked at Stonehill, 49% of the responses cited having experienced a positive change, followed by 36% citing a negative change, and only 15% experiencing no change. However, the majority of the respondents who cited a positive change attributed it to their own personal experiences with the city and its residents.

In another section of the survey, we asked respondents to either strongly agree/agree, neither agree nor disagree, or strongly disagree/disagree with a series of statements regarding their perception of Brockton. In general, respondents were much more likely to select the 'neither agree nor disagree' answer when responding to the positive statements. The only exception is when we asked the respondents if they felt Brockton was a dangerous place. There was a much more equal distribution; one third of the respondents chose 'strongly agree/agree,' over one third of the respondents chose 'neither agree nor disagree,' and only about one fourth of the respondents selected 'strongly disagree/disagree.'

A final topic we proposed to the faculty respondents was in regards to whether or not they incorporated service requirements in Brockton into any of their classes. Only a quarter of respondents said that they did do this.

### **Student Survey**

Similar to the faculty survey, the first question asked students were to list "the first three words you think of when you hear, 'Brockton.'" A large majority of these words were negative. From these words 332 , or 43%, fell into one of the following categories: ghetto, poor, lower SES, poverty, or underprivileged; 259 words, or 34%, were city, city of Brockton, or shoe city; 218 words, or 27%, were crime, dangerous,

unsafe or violence. When students were asked, “What town is Stonehill located in?” 60% said Easton while 40% said Easton and Brockton. Although Brockton was an option, no participants selected it as their answer.

In our survey we had five statements that belong to a scale in order to see what students think about Brockton. Our group received some interesting results from the scale, for the statement “Brockton is a dangerous place” the results were pretty clear 59% of people agreed with this statement, while 10% disagreed and 30% were neutral. For the statement, “Most people in Brockton are not hard workers”, 73% disagreed.

The survey consisted of a social distance scale to measure how willing participants were to associate themselves with Brockton. While 98% of participants stated that they were “willing to drive through a small part of Brockton to get somewhere else”, 93% stated they were not “willing to buy a home and raise my children in Brockton”. Overall we found that people were less likely to say yes to statements that would associate them with Brockton for an extended amount of time.

We asked students how aware they were of Brockton before coming to Stonehill and this answer was pretty split with 53% saying they had heard of the city and 47% said they had not. For the question asking students what was the reason they first went into Brockton students responded that the first time they went in was for “Into the Streets Day” during Freshman Orientation (37%) and the next most popular answer was a social outing (27%).

One of the questions in our survey addressed the frequency of Stonehill students’ visits to Brockton. The majority of students answered that they go into Brockton for personal needs or recreationally once or twice a month or a few times a semester. An

additional aspect of examining frequency addressed the shopping plaza on Rt123 E. By asking this question it was evident that respondents did not associate this as a part of Brockton due to the discrepancy in answers between visits to Brockton and visits to this plaza.

As part of our research, we wanted to see where the students' perceptions, both negative and positive, come from. In our survey, we asked how the students felt other people speak about Brockton. The majority said that their professors and their parents spoke neither positive nor negative about Brockton but the overwhelming majority said that their friends tend to speak negatively about Brockton.

We then decided to look at what students thought of and got out of their Into the Streets Day and Into the Streets Program experiences. In regards to ITS Day, which takes place during Freshman Orientation, 73% of students felt satisfied with the program while only 46% felt like they were a part of the Brockton community on that day. It would also appear that the students did not view Brockton as a place with recreational opportunities, as 50% of students were not encouraged to visit Brockton more frequently following this day.

Based on these results, it is safe to say that there are a lot of similar statistics between the ITS Day and the program itself; however, we may also conclude that more students feel inclined to visit Brockton through ITS for service opportunities, although they do not feel as enthusiastic about visiting Brockton for recreational purposes.

Many Stonehill students participate in service opportunities, and 48% of these students do so in Brockton. While 54% of students do so for class requirements, 68% participate in these opportunities based on their own interest in service.

Within our research we also focused on the aspects of community based learning as well as community engagement. Our survey showed that only 32% of Stonehill students have ever taken a class that requires service in Brockton. The majority of students who have taken a CBL had an overwhelming response saying that the process made them feel like Brockton was in need of help as well as encouraged them to volunteer again. However, the majority also strongly disagree/disagree about wanting to hang out in Brockton or feeling encouraged to visit. Major themes that were identified within this question include the fact that students view Brockton as needy, have a desire to serve, and feel that there needs to be an emphasis on places beyond the Brockton community. However, overall, there was an overwhelming positivity in respondents who believed this emphasis on service bettered their impression of the Brockton community.

While Stonehill students have been exposed to various experiences and information regarding the city of Brockton, many respondents claimed that their perception of the city has not changed over their years at Stonehill. One student stated, “Entering Stonehill, I understood that Brockton was a less fortunate location based on the Into the Streets program. Now, as a sophomore, I still feel the same.” Another student has claimed to not venture into Brockton beyond what is right outside of Stonehill’s campus. Although it may seem that many Stonehill students simply do not feel encouraged to go to Brockton to hang out, it also appears that students do not even bother to explore the city or are unaware of what it has to offer.

We also wanted to ask if their perceptions of Brockton have changed during their time at Stonehill. We asked if their perceptions changed positively, negatively or if they

have not changed. The majority said that their perceptions have either changed positively or that they have not changed.

Several questions were formulated to test Stonehill students' knowledge about the demographics of Brockton. Twenty-four percent of Brockton residents are foreign born but Stonehill students estimated 36%. Students also thought that 37% of the population lives at or below the poverty line, while only 15% live at or below the poverty line. The percentages of residents that are either Black or African American or Hispanic were both overestimated while the percentage of White residents was underestimated. This shows that students do not have accurate perceptions of who actually lives in the Brockton community.

Of the over 750 students that participated in our survey, only 3% of participants live in Brockton. We asked them two main questions "How do you think residents of Brockton view Stonehill?" and "What were your perceptions of Stonehill students before coming to Stonehill?" A majority of participants, 35%, believed that residents of Brockton had a neither positive nor negative view of Stonehill. In addition, a majority of participants, 39%, said they had a neither positive nor negative view of Stonehill students before attending Stonehill and 35% had a very positive view.

The demographics of the students who participated in our study were consistent with the overall demographics of Stonehill.

### **Recommendations**

After reviewing this preliminary data, it seems that there are steps Stonehill could take to increase student's positive experiences with Brockton beyond community service. We think perceptions of Brockton would be improved if students were encouraged to be

more active members of the community. In order to do this we suggest that Stonehill work to promote more recreational activities in the City of Brockton. This can be achieved by establishing an event during freshman orientation that introduces the underclassmen to aspects of Brockton besides community service. Further research should continue to explore if these perceptions stem from stereotypes of large cities or are specific to the relationship between Stonehill and Brockton. In addition, further research should focus on specific reasons why Stonehill students are unwilling to go to Brockton recreationally. In conclusion, we believe that this research is the first step in helping change Stonehill students' perception of Brockton.

**BOLAND THIRD WEST GIRLS' BATHROOM****BY: MAGDALENA ROSS '14***Topic:*

This semester, I spent time in the bathroom of my residence hall in Boland Hall on the third floor. Originally thinking I would spend my time observing the body image practices of females on my floor as they prepare for class or going out on the weekends, I faced a completely different situation. Instead, I was presented with a project revolving around the body image perceptions of female college students, the impact of male college students, and hook-up culture and dating on campus.

*Description:*

When walking into Boland bathroom, it is seemingly similar to all other college dorm bathrooms. On a weekend evening, the bathroom smells of a mixture of scents from soaps to shampoos to body washes used by the girls. Musty, moist air from the showers has nowhere to circulate and after the scents and perfumes of the girls fade, the air smells of an honest stench similar to that of a public bathroom. Despite this, the girls use this space as an extension of their room and, temporarily, their home. There are small collections of shells, sea-themed frames, and a decorative sign saying "Home" displayed on the shelf above the sinks, reminding the residents that this room is an extension of their home and should be treated as such. On the weekends, there is no one cleaning and it is apparent that the bathroom almost reflects the lives of the residents. Disheveled and messy, the bathroom accurately portrays the alcohol-induced party scene on campus which has become central to my observations. Looking into how this space is impacted by the weekend happenings of the residents has given me clear insight into a female's

social role on campus when it comes to communicating, dating, and matters of the opposite gender entirely. On the weekends, the radio in the bathroom is almost constantly blaring at an audible level even from inside individual rooms. The pop station monotonous party beats fill the air and transcend into the hallway as the girls prepare for their nights out. Beyond the walls of the bathroom, the females of this hallway have their own territory to use as they please. But within the walls of the outdated, musty, perfume-scented air of the bathroom, they find a place of coexistence where the deep set functions and feelings of female social roles and body image perceptions surface.

***Research Questions:***

Beginning this project, I had little insight as to what I would be observing. I really tried to enter the space with an open mind and a flexible framework potential for my project. I assumed, at first, that I would be looking at body image and college women's preparations for each day and how this relates to their body perception. Instead, I found something much more interesting. The weekend culture, starkly contrasting with the everyday class schedules of the students, provided me with observations and an interview that shocked even me, who, as a female student, experiences these things on a daily basis. Overall, I am interested in this complex web of social interactions that take place on the weekend between males and females. This gives way to thoughts about dating, competition, expectations, clothing, and "hook-up" culture and "talking".

***Methodology:***

For this research study, I spent twenty hours observing the third floor west wing Boland female bathroom. Within these twenty hours, I did not actively participate. If someone I knew came into the space, I would smile and say hello, politely converse with



those who asked me what I was doing and tried to stay as neutral as possible throughout all situations. To complete my research, I really wanted to hold a focus group interview where I would attempt to foster a comfortable, conversation-like interview. I held a focus group just after Easter break, the group consisted of four sophomore females, all age 19. It is important to point out that the four girls who were available at this time are friends and have a comfortable relationship with each other. I was hoping the girls would speak openly about their experience at Stonehill and on the weekends. Their responses exceeded my expectations.

***Findings and Discussion:***

Imagine a naturalistic world such as the one described by Charles Darwin. Only those with the most advantageous genes will survive. The idea of applying this theory of “survival of the fittest” perfectly describes the college atmosphere I delved into this past semester. Seeing as “natural selection... explain(s) the diversity of all life on Earth” (Pagel, 2009) couldn’t this idea be applied to social life on campus? In my interview, the idea of females as “vultures” was introduced to my study. It seems that natural selection has fondly enhanced the “shapes, sizes, and colors” (Pagel 2009) and created a breed of females who are “vicious, like they’re willing to do anything”. Because in college, let’s face it, ***“if you’re not hot enough, you’re going to have a really hard time”***.

The overarching concepts that have come from my observations, my focus group, and my review of the literature has given me the opportunity to shed light on new topics and provide more insight into what has already been established. The main findings of my research consist of body image and clothing, female expectations versus male

expectations on the weekends, “hook-up” culture, competition among females, “vultures”, technology, hopelessness, and futures, marriages, and divorce.

### **Vultures**

Probably the most interesting theory that has risen from this project is not one I can take credit for. As mentioned earlier in the paper, defining particular girls as “vultures” not only puts the world of a college female into perspective of others, but it also feeds into the competition between females for male attention. *A vulture is a girl who is “hot, sexy”, “flirty”, “vicious”, and “willing to do anything” such as “backstab a girl”*. Compared to the animal kingdom, vultures hover around other animals waiting to steal their prey and avoid working for their food. Girls who are vultures “have no respect for the girl code” whether it’s “touching” the guy they are dancing with or carrying themselves in a particular way, it seems that everyone knows who a vulture is. One girl came up with this idea in the interview, yet all four girls were able to accurately agree and define what kinds of characteristics make up a vulture. And while these types of girls do “carry themselves with confidence” they are perceived to be not as confident because of their willingness to do anything “physically” or “emotionally” to get what or who they desire. When looking back at Darwin’s theory of evolution, it is said that “each level (of evolution) was seen as more evolved than the one below” (Pagel, 2009) therefore, creating a diverse world we live in today. It is an interesting approach to apply this concept to female competition and vultures on campus. Knowing that “evolution is conservative, using the same designs over and over” (Pagel, 2009) it is easy to see the college campus in the same light as the animal kingdom. Females are in a constant battle, discovering who is the strongest and the most attractive, the most able to attract male

attention. The “survival of the fittest” is an absolute reality for females attempting to define themselves within the male perceptions, constraints, and opinions while still competing with other females for desired attention.

### **“Hook-up” Culture**

Consistently apparent throughout this project and in my daily life as a college student myself, I have become deeply familiar with the term “hooking-up” and the entire culture that surrounds it. Hooking up is a practice that has become an “accepted part of the college experience” and has been for many decades. Although “not synonymous with casual sex or one-night stands”, hooking up can consist of as little physical activity as kissing or as much physical activity as intercourse. Instead of traditional relationships between two people, hook ups are more similar to dating and are a means of “casual relationship” as they have grown in acceptance and occurrence. More often than not, hook ups begin with alcohol and social settings. The hook up system is a complex one and “stays intact because students believe there are no clear alternatives” and that this is the “only available route to sexual encounters and romantic relationships”. With the diminishing of traditional relationships and courtship, college students must adjust to the times and attempt to make connections in new and unfamiliar ways. Hook ups are appealing because of the influence of alcohol and the lack of fear of rejection. Instead, hooking up is seen as a clear alternative to traditional dating, free of the anxiety of one-on-one time with another. (Bogle, 2008).

In their research, Glenn & Marquardt have identified four separate types of dating that now take place on college campuses outside of hooking up. The first is the relationship where the couple is “joined at the hip”. The two are extremely intimate and it

is determined that they are exclusive and will not see other people. These relationships tend to move very quickly because of the accessibility the couple has to each other on a campus. The second type is a “boyfriend-girlfriend relationship that in some ways resembled “joined at the hip” dating, but these relationships progress much more slowly”. An indication of a slower moving relationship would be the couples refrain from sexual intercourse. The third type is much more rare and is in line with the more traditional means of dating where the man asks the women out, takes her out, and pays for the date while the two get to know each other. These seemed to take place around a “structured occasion” such as Valentine’s Day or an event. The final type of dating is what is defined as “hanging out”. This can be expanded into many categories whether these are considered informal dates or consistent hook up, hanging out is a phrase used on campus often, especially recently. (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001)

This whole idea of hooking up, dating, and hanging out is a very real situation for the students on college campus these days. The girls in my research, especially the participants in the focus group, identify dating and relationships on campus to be extremely complex. When it comes to hooking up, it seems that the hope that “girls will find this guy and they will start to date them”. The participants expressed concerns with hooking up and the dilemmas they face, saying that girls “don’t want to pass up an opportunity to go hook up with someone because they’re that insecure that they don’t think they’ll get anyone else”. This insecurity comes out again when girls discuss their actual desire to hook up with someone. While insecurities seem to run the lives of females on campus, males take on a different role. They, instead, “have all this selection” to choose from. Even in my observations, girls expressed frustration with hook ups

saying that, *“you will never meet your boyfriend in the courts. The kinds of guys you date don’t go there and hook up with whoever”*. The girls on campus go to these parties dressed in a way to attract attention. They are portraying themselves the way men want to see them, which is, consequently as hook ups. Contrary to what the research says, the girls I have talked with have demonstrated frustration with hooking up and casual relationships. The participants felt that “hooking up with people doesn’t have to do with your personal want to do it, because not many girls want to, who wants to just make out with some stranger”. Instead, these girls are looking for more meaningful relationships. It just seems they are, knowingly, looking in the wrong places.

### **Hopelessness**

Although not a major finding as those that has preceded it, I found much reference to hopelessness in my observation and especially my interview. Girls seem to have lost hope for finding a relationship in college. This hopelessness and disappointment began with an expectation that many females hold when entering college. Coming into college, many have the expectation that they will meet their spouse at their place of study (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001). Whether it was at orientation when the college’s President threw out statistics about Stonehill marriages or its family stories of parents meeting in college, there is this silent idea that all students will find the person they want to spend their life with here. Yet, when college culture is mainly focused around hook ups and hanging out, many girls are disappointed. When discussing wearing yoga pants to a party one girl explained “It’s not a norm but sometimes I just give up hope”. It is stated numerous times that *“with more expectations comes more disappointment”* and college seems to be hopeless in terms of finding someone to share the time with intimately and

for a prolonged period of time. This loss of hope can relate to body image and personal perception of females, especially when they are not feeling accepted and attractive to the males that surround them.

### **Future, Marriage, and Divorce**

Another theme that occurred in my research, particularly the focus group, was the college female's perspective on the future, marriage and divorce. Many of the girls feared for the future of other college students. *If casual sex and provocative dancing are acceptable now, what will the future bring?* The idea of prolonging marriage seems to be popular as well for "I'm definitely more cautious with the idea of marriage and like, I know people are like prolonging getting married in fear of getting a divorce". This fear of divorce does not necessarily need to come from parent influence. In our society, divorce is so common almost every individual has a connection to divorce of some sort. The idea of "get married when I am older" seems to be a trend "in our generation is that like, people want a safe bet" and do not want to risk a divorce. This frame of mind seems to transcend genders as well. Participants have often heard "guys sometimes even like now, like our age, they'll like describe a girl as the marrying-type". Discussions of prenups and divorce protective measures have also been discussed with male counterparts.

### **Technology**

A final finding in my research has to do with the impact of technology on student life and, especially, relationships. It is a new trend that "social activities take precedence over academic concerns" (Hanson, et. al., 2011) and those students now live in "a technology rich world, using mobile phones" (Hanson, et. al., 2011) and other devices as means of communication. According to the participants in my focus group, "technology

should not be part of dating” for it only complicates interaction between two individuals. Texting and the concept of “talking” is new on college campuses as well. When two individuals are “talking” they are most often interested in one another, but are simply texting and conversing, sometimes in public, to show that interest. These relationships can lead to dating and hook ups, but it is a new stage taking place at the beginning of relationships. *Texting has complicated relationships* immensely, it simply “puts a barrier between people’s communication” and disables body language and facial expressions as a means of communication as well. Different aspects of a text such as “grammar”, “punctuation”, and “tone” can all be used to decode a simple text. Many girls admit to feeling that “when a boy texts you... you have to go ask your friends, what do I say? So it’s like not even talking to you” and instead “real personality” is not being conveyed in the messages. The impact of Facebook seems to create the same reactions. Participants felt that they could “minimum interaction with someone but then you facebook creep so much and you almost have an image in your head and analyze like, how would their personality be”. This type of “creeping” has come to define social life on college campuses as well. Instead of meeting people and knowing who they are as a person, one could simply rely on Facebook for pictures and information. This method is used so often because *“we like to judge people. And facebook is the key to judging people”* and it makes it easy to analyze and interpret someone.

### ***Conclusion and Future Suggestions:***

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my main finding from my research. It has become apparent that the female’s construction of their world in college is largely based on what males expect of them. Whether it’s how they dress, the way they act, or the

activities they partake in, females are constantly defining themselves by a male's point of view. This is not accusing males of pushing females to act a particular way, but their influence is evident throughout the entire study.

***Arts-based Research Component:***

The entire semester, I gathered information and inspiration from female students. These are the girls that are experiencing these feelings and encountering these situations on a daily basis. They should have the freedom to express themselves in a space that unifies them as a unit. Upon this discovery, I then decided, at last, that I would simply provide the means for which to graffiti the bathroom. Sticky notes seemed like the least harmful approach and would breathe some life into the bathroom with their bold colors and (hopefully) bold statements. So, I began with a sign that went on one of the mirrors above the row of sinks in the center of the bathroom.



*“Let’s remind everyone how beautiful they are. Write something inspiration to combat negative body image.”*

This was accompanied by eight or nine pads of sticky notes with a variety of colors; yellow, pink, blue, white, and green. I left pens out on the shelf above the sinks and put



up ten sticky notes of my own to begin the process. The response I received from the girls in my hallway was extraordinary. They decorated first all around the mirrors and then moved onto the walls and the bathroom stalls. A few girls asked me if I were responsible for the color explosion in the bathroom because I had obviously been sitting in there all semester. But for the most part, I liked keeping my identity anonymous. I think it added an element of community to the entire process, knowing that this was something that the girls started and worked on together rather than being prompted or encouraged by someone. The bathroom was sensational looking. Six girls tweeted about it and four girls mobile uploaded a picture of the bathroom to facebook. People conversed about it in the hallway, and all the RA's and cleaning staff were encouraged to go and look at it. Because of its popularity, I left the sticky notes up through the rest of the weekend, up until we went home for Easter. My RA added her own touch, despite her having her own bathroom; she wrote two construction paper sized notes about how proud she was to have this group of girls in her hallway.

For me, watching the decorating unfold gave me great feelings of satisfaction. It is easy to forget that we are observing real people in a real space with real struggles. The fact that I was able to give back to the community that allowed me to take over their personal space for a semester was gratifying for me. Unlike most of my findings, this graffiti gave the girls an opportunity to create their own space and make their own decisions. I hope that they all took some time to read the beautiful things transcribed on the sticky notes. Ideas, opinions, and phrases I had never even expected wallpapered the room that extended well beyond the scope of my research. Part of my arts-based research component was to empower the girls and give them the opportunity to take control of a

portion of their life, even if it was just the bathroom. Maybe this will give them the strength to take control of other areas of their life or inspire them to make a difference in the way that they view themselves and others.



“Whatever you are, be a good one.” Yellow Sticky note, third bathroom stall divider. April 1, 2012

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## **THE REALITY OF STALKING BY DR. CURRUL-DYKEMAN**

People are fearful of stalkers. We envision strangers lurking in dark alleys and outside our dorm rooms. The reality is that “nearly 3 in 4 of all victims of stalking knew their offender in some capacity” (Baum, Catalano, & Rand, 2009) and “59% of female victims were stalked by some type of intimate partner...and 87% of all stalkers are male.” (Tjaden & Thoennes 1998) So just what is stalking? The definition varies widely by state. In general it is classified as a felony and requires a repeated pattern of behavior (at least 3 incidents) that is both willful and malicious and causes the victim to feel alarmed, threatened or in fear. Some states (like MA) also require an explicit threat. The stalking behavior can include: unwanted phone calls, sending or leaving gifts, following the victim, trespassing on the victim’s property, spying, vandalizing her property, or even harming her pets. The list is vast and frightening. Stalking poses a problem on college campuses since the typical age of a stalking victim is between 18-29 with the highest reported victimization rates occurring in persons 18-19 and 20-24 (Baum, et. al. 2009). Thus, students should be vigilant about recording and reporting incidence as they occur.

While we all love our iPhones and devices, BUT changes in technology have given rise to new and more insidious ways to stalk. Cyber-stalking is defined as “threatening behavior or unwanted advances directed at another using the internet and other forms of online and computer communications” (Kilmarin & Allison, 2007, 29). It can include texts, emails, IMs, and the use of social media sites. Young people are particularly at risk for this type of stalking and harassment. A terrible example is the story of Kristen Pratt. She graduated from the University of Central Florida in

2009. While she was a student there she had a casual friendship with another student named Patrick Macchione. Soon thereafter he sent her a friend request on Facebook – which she accepted but soon regretted. Patrick quickly started sending her threatening and offensive messages. They eventually escalated to death threats on both her Facebook and Twitter accounts. One example (which was introduced at trial) read, “It is up to you now to save your life. I have no options. I will not be arrested” (ABC News, 2012). He also posted 27 lewd and threatening videos to her on YouTube and left her literally hundreds of messages on her voicemail. While he plead “no contest” and accepted 4 years in prison with 15 years probation from and after, Kristen still feels shattered and frightened that Patrick will never leave her alone. She fears the psychological damage he has caused her to suffer is permanent. Afraid to be alone and cautious of her social media contacts she is having trouble moving on.

People from the LGBT community are at a heightened risk of stalking victimization by strangers. Finn 2004 found that of college students, those who self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender “were twice as likely to experience cyber stalking or email harassment from a stranger as were students who identified themselves as heterosexual.” Often times members of this community are less likely to seek help from traditional sources thus their victimization could be particularly problematic. Sadly, many victims of stalking (26.7%) consider their victimization to be a personal matter and do not report the crimes to the appropriate authorities (Baum, et. al. 2009). Like Kristen Pratt had the courage to do, it is essential for victims to send a message to their stalkers and to the community at large. Regardless of whether the

perpetrator is a stranger or an intimate partner, stalking is a serious social problem which should not be tolerated.

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