

12-18-2023

Editors' Note

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Recommended Citation

Devaraj, Nirupama and Ganesh Babu, Bharath (2023) "Editors' Note," *Midwest Social Sciences Journal*: Vol. 26: Iss. 1, Article 2.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22543/2766-0796.1125>

Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/mssj/vol26/iss1/2>

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EDITORS' NOTE

The *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* received more than one hundred manuscript submissions for volumes 22 through 26. Regional, national, and international reviewers graciously contributed their time to review and re-review the papers to guide authors as they refined their work, and to help us publish quality research in various areas of the social sciences. We express our immense gratitude to those peer scholars for their service. In total, 47 papers have been published thus far, with nine papers in volume 26, including topics in psychology, politics, public administration, sociology, economics, criminal justice, and teaching pedagogy.

IN THIS VOLUME

In this volume, we share scholarship addressing depression, environmental history of racism, society's skewed view of gender violence, experiences of incarcerated women, classroom communication and learning challenges for college students during the pandemic, regional manufacturing economics, and insights into accountability of nonprofit organizations.

Papers by Powless et al. and Shine et al. investigate the implications of the COVID pandemic on student mental health and learning experience. These papers use social science methodology to delve into both the short-term and long-term psychological effects of pandemic policies, such as masking and social restrictions. The pandemic provided a natural setting for social science research on the factors that affect student learning, specifically social interaction and communication with peers and learning communities. The findings of these studies have broader implications for institutions of higher education to create social infrastructure to foster better learning outcomes for students.

In an interesting study of campus spaces, McClelland and Nussbaum discuss the power of space planning on psychological restorativeness amongst more than 600 student participants from a college campus. Winder et al. discuss therapeutic outcomes in the context of cultural influence and development of trust between the client and psychotherapist. They show that clients indicate discomfort and question the competence of the provider based on accent and perceived ethnic differences. The authors emphasize the importance of broaching cultural and ethnic differences in cross-cultural psychotherapeutic settings.

Wilson uses the case study of Emelle, Alabama, to illustrate the disproportionate environmental burden faced by communities of color owing to siting choices for hazardous waste plants. These siting decisions are often driven by the firms' desires to take advantage of low resource costs, including labor and land, as well as communities' need for jobs. It is well established that special power asymmetry exists between communities of color and firms engaged in siting decisions. Combined with institutional apathy, the case of Emelle, Alabama, is illustrative of the disproportionate impacts of economic development, in terms of both profit sharing and environmental degradation, among communities of color. This paper adds to the growing literature on the analysis of discrimination and structural racism in society.

In the area of public administration, Yaro and Engbers conduct a web-content subsector analysis of the factors that determine the types of disclosure provided by nonprofits. They argue that a nonprofit organization is affected by the subsector to which it belongs, in terms of online accountability (financial and performance disclosure, stakeholder input and interactive engagement). They conclude that, through targeted information disclosure that is typical of the subsector to which it belongs, a nonprofit can build trust and raise more funds.

Sociologists Rogalin and Addison draw upon the concept of “himpathy,” the sympathy extended to privileged men accused of sexual assault, in sexual assault literature. They explore the themes of blame-shifting and victim shifting in the literature to make a case for investigating this framework for empirical research on rape myths and victim blaming. In the area of criminal justice, Wyant et al. present results from surveying 400 incarcerated women in a medium–maximum-security prison in the United States. They find that more than 60% of those surveyed revealed that they faced discrimination by being denied jobs, disrespected, and seen upon their release as unrehabilitated.

Finally, Srinivasan et al. show the decline of manufacturing in the Midwest, especially in Indiana, and the associated employment loss during the Great Recession. They conducted a spatial cluster analysis of the dynamics of employment fluctuations and found evidence of disparities by geography and extent of urbanization. This methodology of cluster analysis has implications for policy in that analysis should be directed toward groups of counties rather than individual counties, suggesting that policy must be tailored differently for rural and urban counties.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

At the 94th Annual Meeting of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences, Justin Garcia, professor of gender studies at the Kinsey Institute, Indiana University, gave a keynote address titled “Love, Sex, and Singlehood in Today’s Digital Age.” In place of formally publishing the keynote address, we submit the following summary.

Garcia began his address with discussion on pair-bonding amongst gibbons, which led to the concept of monogamy amongst humans. He highlighted the research design behind the online dating company Match.com, as well as some of the findings from data gathered through the process framed within the context of the rise of singlehood. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 48% of Americans over the age of 18 are “unmarried,” not traditionally counting those in nonmarital intimate relationships. Garcia estimated that non-cohabiting singlehood was at a historically unprecedented number—more than 100 million—in the United States. He also questioned our understanding of relationships as pair-bonds in contemporary society, and the pervasive stigma against singlehood. One third of adults, according to him, were experiencing relationships, sex, and breakups, outside of long-term commitments and relationships in the traditional sense.

The use of technology in courtship suggests that people were experiencing cognitive overload due to the number of choices available to them through dating apps. In general, people who had fewer choices from which to select were happier than those who had several choices. Garcia went on to argue that there was a “touch crisis” in America,

citing that one third of people in relationships felt that they were not touched enough. Garcia shared findings on differences in happiness amongst single and married people and showed that in comparison to single people, married people consistently indicated higher levels of happiness in several life domains, such as appearance, career, family, friendships, love life, sex life, leisure time, and hobbies. The effect remained high for people who were divorced and currently single, indicating a protective effect of engaging in formal relationships at some stage in life. Garcia further found that relationship status also affects mental health across a variety of life domains, including less stress associated with social commitments, loneliness, economy/money, and more; essentially, single persons experience more stress than do people in relationships.

Finally, Garcia shared findings on “slow love.” Young people are delaying relationships and have lower sexual frequency. While there is a general concern in relation to this trend, Garcia argued that the behavior was only showing a pattern of caution. Unlike previous generations, for today’s young people, marriage is the “grand finale” in relationships. They seem to want to know everything about their partners before making marital decisions. The majority (69%) of singles polled said they were looking for serious relationships, and 49% of singles said they had fallen in love with someone they had not initially found attractive. This, according to Garcia, indicates that young singles are taking their time to get to know people before making commitments and is not necessarily indicative of a crisis.

SPECIAL ISSUE

Our guest editor, Dr. Rajiv Thakur, is diligently finalizing the publication of a special issue of the MSSJ with several invited papers. Dr. Thakur is a professor of geography at Missouri State University and an AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) fellow with the U.S. State Department. The special issue is expected to be published early in 2024, with papers from eminent national and international scholars in cultural anthropology, social justice, urban development, and postcolonial politics.

INCOMING EDITOR IN CHIEF

Volume 26 is our last as coeditors. As we retire, Dr. Surekha Rao, Professor of Economics at Indiana University Northwest, has been elected by the IASS Board of Directors to edit MSSJ during the upcoming years. Dr. Rao will steer the journal for the minimum duration of three years. She can be contacted at mssj.chiefeditor@iass1.org.

GRATITUDE

We are grateful to our copy editor, Stephanie Seifert Stringham, and our publishing advisor, Jonathan Bull, for their diligence and untiring support. Lastly, we thank Gregg Johnson, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of Valparaiso University, for his support of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences, and Trisha Mileham, Dean of

the Library at Valparaiso University, for her support for hosting the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* on ValpoScholar.

Thank you,
Nirupama Devaraj and Bharath Ganesh Babu
Coeditors, 2020–2023
Midwest Social Sciences Journal