

SOCIOLOGY

Section Moderator: Dr. Ken Spring

Room: Hitch Science Building 109

Time: 2:00 – 5:00

2:00 – 2:20

“The Artists and Social Networking”

Hilary N. Blakeney and Paul F. Fenner

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ken Spring

The internet is critically important when it comes to studying and observing society and social structures. It is an important part of media in general, as well as what we are studying, music and music culture. Online social networking affects many people in many ways. However, more specifically, online social networking has greatly impacted and shaped artists and band recognition and advancement in many ways, shapes, and forms. While discovering and learning about the possibilities between online social networking and musicians, we as a team, used the six different social research methods; surveys, secondary data analysis, observation, content analysis, and interviews, to further our research in the two subjects. Using these six methods we reached a considerable amount of knowledge of the social implications of both online social networking and musicians and how they are both socially interconnected.

2:40 – 3:00

“Risk and Travel Habits”

Taylor Blackwell and Chris Speed

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ken Spring

Through five different research methods, we explored the creation of identity involved in alternative styles of tourism, namely the couchsurfing project. We looked at the influences of class, and to a lesser extent race and gender, on risk taking in travel habits. By studying different forms of mass tourism and the unique culture of the couchsurfing project, we hope to understand the rise of alternative tourisms and the networks created to facilitate them.

3:00 – 3:20

“Gender Differences Study: Volunteerism among Belmont University Students”

Brittney Mitchell, Rachel E. Ponder

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ken Spring

Do men volunteer more than women? We propose that, among college students, we will find a higher number of male college students participating in volunteer activities than women, for whatever reason. In reviewing previous literature on the subject, we found that women have proven to be more altruistic in their motivations for volunteering, whereas men have shown to be more career-driven. Through methods such as surveys, observational research, secondary data analysis, content analysis, and interviews, we were able to conduct our own research into the gender difference in volunteering among college students. We found that on-campus volunteer events have a generally high turn out when offering some sort of incentive, like Convocation credit. Over the span of two weeks in February, we collected the volunteering histories and habits of approximately 60 Belmont University students (30 male and 30 female). Our questions consisted of what sort of volunteering he or she currently does, why they do the volunteering they do, and who influenced them in their current volunteering. There are some respondents who do not have volunteering histories. One of the few trends that we noticed was of students who had high grade point averages and the increased volunteer activity associated with it.

3:40 – 4:00

“Variables that Develop Personal Views on Cohabitation”

Elisabeth D. Cairnes & Erin P. Cleary
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Kenneth M. Spring

Cohabitation is thought to be a growing trend within American society. Individuals, however, can have supportive or non-supportive opinions on this phenomenon based on various independent variables. Through the use of diverse methods of research we have decided that the most productive to use for this project is for us to interview our respondents. This method permitted for the gathering of the most informative and in-depth responses. These responses allowed for us to learn the most about the independent variables that do shape people’s individual views on cohabitation.

Literature supported the idea that the most popular reason for people to cohabit is to experience what marriage could possibly be like, but without being confined to the boundaries of wedlock. Knowing this we wondered what factors helped in the shaping of this idea. The key variables that we researched were: religion, gender, age, race, social economic class, and parental influence. Each of these, when weaved together to form an individual’s opinion, appeared to have strong significance.

4:00 – 4:20

“Piety and Patriarchy: Perceptions of Gender Roles in Christian Communities”

Cheyenne Metzger and Heather Snodgrass
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ken Spring

Historically, Christianity and the Bible have been interpreted as prescribing distinct gender roles to both men and women. These attitudes and beliefs have evolved over time and often extend beyond the church into other life areas, specifically the Christian family. Women in the church have been excluded throughout much of Christian history and the emphasis on male leadership continues to be present in many Christian communities. However, the shift of gender roles in society has caused many churches to re-evaluate their positions.

In our research, we aim to uncover the current perceptions of gender roles within committed Christian communities. Through careful observation and analysis, we were able to examine the ways in which these roles become manifest in the lives of Christian communities. We found that while individual views align with methods of practice, denomination, etc., the more generalized Christian community continues to identify with a set of patriarchal roles,

perpetuated by daily activities, consumption and behaviors. It is likely that this traditional approach to gender roles and expectations might continue to obstruct societal reform in specific and necessary areas.

4:20 – 4:40

“Online Social Networking”

Olivia Bishop, Christina Jezioro, and Jack Whitis

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ken Spring

The question that we sought to investigate in our study dealt with how identities are constructed within online social networks. Inspired by the symbolic interactionist theory of Cooley, Mead, and Goffman, we had hoped to investigate the motives that drive the creation of online personas, particularly among college students. We collected data using five different methods of research: surveys, secondary data analysis, observational research, content analysis, and interviews. Each method somehow transformed our question as per its strengths and limitations. In conducting our survey, the focal point of our research became how personal investment in online communities relates to the amount of information that users post about themselves. This seemed to be the best way to approach our question given the lack of qualitative depth associated with this method. Through secondary data analysis, we searched for specific demographic traits that might directly implicate involvement in online social networks. We were restricted, however, by the types of secondary data available. In this case, most concerned questions of time use. Observational research and content analysis were much better equipped to address our question. By examining the infrastructure of various websites, we were able to make inferences regarding the social implications of their respective layouts. Ultimately, interviews were the most pertinent method of research for our study. As our original question was fixed upon the communication of constructed identities, it was useful to engage members of online social networks in conversation, asking them to articulate their own perceptions of the process.

4:40 – 5:00

“Institutional Religiosity and Its Effects on Deviance ”

Rachel C. Coleman, Colleen Iulucci, Renée T. Pilch

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ken Spring

First, we started with survey variations. We surveyed students, equally divided between Belmont, Middle Tennessee State, and Vanderbilt. Early on, we asked questions seemingly in-depth but did not help as much as we anticipated. They garnered good responses. For example, “Did religion affect your major?” yielded bad results because almost everyone said no, therefore, no variation. Consequently, “Rank which acts you consider to be most deviant” gave us sufficient answers but lacked clarity.

Next, we looked at secondary data that gave us vocabulary definitions, good question formats, and good things to note and observe the next time we research. We learned how to rewrite our survey questions making them more understandable for students filling them out, but also gave more information.

The third and fourth methods of research, observational and content analysis could have been extremely useful, but time was an issue, so we didn’t take much from these. They added some content to our research, but not the types we wanted to see.

Finally, interviewing was most helpful with our research. We were able to fill in the gaps of research that we did not get to inquire about before, and we got better answers because of the setting where time was not a problem (to further elaborate on questions previously asked).

After doing all five methods of research, our question did not change as much as we thought it would. However, our focus of research narrowed greatly, and we picked a narrower approach to better answer our question.