Current research projects of: Carol Minton, Ph.D.

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Worlds of Warcraft: Creating Gender, Race and Group Identity (SB004)

Presentation at PSA 2008 Conference

The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) is an organization that conducts business and consumer research regarding video games. “The average game player is 30 years old and has been playing games for 9.5 years. In 2005, 95% of computer game buyers and 84% of console game buyers were over the age of 18.” (www.theesa.com). These significant numbers suggest that there is a need for sociologists to critically look at the impact of video games on young adults in all aspects of their social interactions including virtual identity. The online role-playing game “Worlds of Warcraft” allows participants to assume various roles of Warcraft heroes through which the players create a virtual identity with choices of ten possible races, nine classes, multiple professions, and four realm types. The primary website for the game suggests that these virtual heroes or heroines then form various friendships and alliances to defeat the enemy. Our research questions will be: How do males and females of various real ethnicities and genders choose their virtual identities and why? How is their virtual identity responded to? Does this hinder or enhance face to face relationships with others? Do their virtual heroes follow typical gender role behaviors? How is status achieved? Our convenient sample will be drawn from college students attending community colleges and universities both public and private on the west coast.

Gender Inequality in Malawi and the Ritualization of Duty (SB006)

Co-author Dr. David Knottnerus

Submitted for publication

Despite legal, political, and economic reforms that have occurred in recent years in Malawi, significant forms of gender inequality continue to characterize the lives of women. We suggest that part of the reason for this may be due to the significant symbolic meaning of seemingly insignificant social interactions and behaviors. In addressing these issues this research contributes to what various commentators suggest are under examined aspects of social inequality involving social interaction and micro-level dynamics. The implications of this research and possible directions for future research are also discussed.
An Interactive Lecture: Understanding Diversity Through Popular Music (SB008)

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One important concern in academia is not only teaching course content but helping students apply these concepts to their daily lives. This accidentally occurred when I began playing the music of various girls’ groups from the 1960s, for my lecture on changing gender roles in an introductory sociology class. Some of the students began to express their desire for me to include music expressing their feelings about current experiences. As I incorporated some of the new music (from both male and female students’ suggestions), formerly passive students began to take an active interest in class. Additionally, a new dynamic dialogue developed between my students and I, as well as a deeper understanding of my students’ experiences as expressed in their discussions and writings including the chaos of being young, anger at absent fathers, the desire to better fathers, and frustration with society’s expectation of a perfect body image. Recently, I began teaching at a community college which was a small class of predominately Latino students. After my music lecture, these students expressed a desire for me to share their music. At the end of this class, I am preparing to conduct a survey to see if perhaps the incorporation of Latino music increases understanding of their experiences and a sense of greater acceptance. In addition, I am opening the data collection process to students and increasing the topics, including the political and the post-modern.

Voices from Behind Prison Walls (SB012)

One of our faculty members interviewed 22 women who are serving life sentences and who have participated in a program to train dogs for disabled individuals. The goal of the qualitative research is to give a voice to these women, allowing them to express how the training program impacted their lives.