

Undergraduate Research Symposium MAY 21, 2010 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

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QUALITATIVE RESEARCH, HEALTH AND GLOBALIZATION

Session Moderator: Clarence Spigner, Health Services

Mary Gates Hall Room 238

3:30 PM to 5:00 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Grass without Roots: Foreign Funding, NGOs, and the Underdevelopment of Nicaraguan Civil Society

Dean M (Dean) Chahim, Senior, Civil Engineering

Mary Gates Scholar, NASA Space Grant Scholar

Mentor: Aseem Prakash, Political Science

How does dependence on foreign funding affect the relationship between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the communities they intend to represent? Can NGOs serve as downwardly accountable advocates for social change? This study draws on interviews with staff, volunteers, and recipients in a wide range of local NGOs in Nicaragua as well as an extensive analysis of NGO publications, Nicaraguan news media, and the academic literature on NGO accountability, organization, and relationships with the grassroots. We find that dependence on funding strains the ties of NGOs to constituencies and pushes them from long-term advocacy and organizing towards short-term service and ephemeral mobilization. The result is a disproportionately influential NGO sector which leaves little room for traditional grassroots membership organizations. These results necessitate a rethinking of current funding models and the roles of foreign-funded NGOs in building civil society and catalyzing social change to benefit the marginalized.

NGO's Positioning: A Study of NGO Outreach

Gillian Frackelton, Senior, International Studies

Christopher Paul (Chris) Schulz, Senior, International Studies

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Sabine Lang, International Studies

Organizations (NGOs) constitute a democratic element of civil society: Are these institutions inclusive of their followers and welcoming toward new participants, or do they act as exclusive membership groups that effectively act on behalf of the public which has a vested interest in their campaigns? In other words, in what sense are these NGOs "representative" of civil society? Our group worked to compose a codebook

which we could use to methodically classify the outreach undertaken by these NGOs in their monthly newsletters. Before the quantitative exercise of going through the content of the newsletters, it was necessary to meticulously define our concepts in a way which would be applicable to each NGO in the study. After coding twelve months of newsletters for three separate NGOs, we are now at a point where we can step back and take a holistic and comparative view of the NGOs we have researched. The conclusions that we have observed from our research and coding of the newsletters for the European Women's Lobby, Women Against Violence in Europe, and WIDE show that these networks predominantly function as exclusive groups and are not concerned with seeking out collective participation. We have also observed that much the information about events usually comes in the past tense, as a summary of what has already been done. We discovered that many of these networks function as 'umbrella organizations', and the majority of the events that they participate in, and report on, are products of other organizations. Based on the communication through newsletters, these organizations function primarily as a report on past events, but do not fulfill their stated purpose as a voice for the 'common citizen' nor do they actively promote participation.

NGO's Positioned: A Study of NGO's in American Print Media

Aylan Matthew Lee, Senior, Geography

Mentor: Sabine Lang, International Studies

This research examines Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as a dynamic and important element of civil society. As a component of a larger research venture, my work focuses on NGO's portrayal in American Newspapers. I seek to define the discursive positioning manifested through news articles focusing on and relating to our sample of Urban and Women's NGO's. The research process makes use of an exhaustively produced codebook employed to methodically classify the primary documents, newspaper articles from one

of four news sources, published in 2004. The coding process records both manifest and latent content in the articles. The first set of measured and recorded variables provides a ledger of structural details about the article, including title, newspaper, word count and number of times a specific NGO is mentioned in the article. The second set of variables delves into the presentation and reporting taken on the part of the newspaper in regards to the specific NGO. The questions in the codebook encompass a wide range of description which allows for a subtle spectrum of values, as recorded through the different provided answers to each of the questions on the code sheet. The project is now at the stage where coding is predicted to be finished in the near future. From that point, analysis can begin on the data compiled from the complete coding efforts. This analysis which points to the discursive positioning of NGO's, as manifested in American newspapers, will then be integrated with research being currently conducted by other members of the research team, in order to more broadly assess the roles, manifested and described, of NGO's in civil society.

The Relationship of Substance Abuse and Risky Sexual Behavior in Incarcerated Women

Chelsey Lee (Chelsey) Swan, Senior, Spanish, Women Studies

Mentor: William George, Psychology

Mentor: Kelly Kajumulo, Psychology

In the U.S., the number of HIV infections has continued to increase in women. In 1992 women accounted for an estimated 14% of adults and adolescents living with AIDS in the U.S.; by the end of 2005, this proportion had grown to 23% (CDC, 2007). High-risk heterosexual contact was the source of 80% of the newly diagnosed infections in women, and previous research indicates that drug and alcohol use is linked to risky sexual behavior (CDC, 2007; Leigh & Stall, 1993). Specifically, incarcerated populations of women tend to have higher rates of HIV diagnoses than the general population because they are more likely to engage in high-risk behavior such as drug use and unsafe sex outside of prison (Staton-Tindall et al., 2007). I have conducted a literature review of the condom use and risky-sex behaviors of women who have a history of incarceration and the relationship to their drug and alcohol behaviors. I compiled information from published research studies, newspapers, other media articles, and public health reports. I have found that there is a strong connection between drug and alcohol use and risky sex among incarcerated women, as well as a higher prevalence of HIV and STD's. Current HIV prevention programs in prisons tend to specifically target men, leaving incarcerated women uneducated and likely to continue their cycle of risky behaviors upon release. This indicates that special gendered programs geared specifically towards incarcerated women both pre and post release need to be implemented in order to give the women in this high-risk population the skills and information they need to

either stop the spread of HIV or STD's to others or to decrease their chance of contracting the disease themselves.