

reflected appraisals

We perceive ourselves as we believe others perceive us

by amy johnson conner and ryan alaniz

homework campus cops quash breaching experiment

An engaged sociology student's class project ended in police questioning, a mental health exam, and the search of his dorm room at Loyola College in Maryland, *TheExaminer.com* reported in late October.

Assigned to act against social norms and analyze the reactions of passers by, the student donned military fatigues and began



ranting loudly on campus. His research subjects promptly notified campus security and police descended, according to the website.

A city police spokesperson said the student was taken into custody, detectives interviewed him, and staff at a local hospital evaluated his mental competency. A campus spokesperson said police searched his dorm room. They determined the student wasn't a threat.

The assignment, according to the chair of the sociology department, was patterned after Harold Garfinkel's so-called breaching experiments, which demonstrate through people's reactions that norms exist, even if people aren't thinking about them.

admiration anderson's street cred

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's Eugene Kane wrote his Oct. 13 column about Yale University sociologist Elijah

Anderson's keynote address at a conference of black columnists.

The race and urban life expert spoke about problems in the black community and how they might begin to be solved.

Because Anderson has spent some 30 years on the street and in these communities while studying them, Kane tends to believe Anderson when he says "many low-income black people in tough neighborhoods have 'a profound sense of alienation from society.'"

Kane continued: "According to Anderson, the perceptions in the inner city dictate their actions. 'They believe there's a dual system of justice, one for white people and one for blacks. They live in a place where there is structural poverty, and the underground economy is rampant. When civil justice wears down, street justice rises.'"

The solution? Anderson supports "more personal accountability and responsibility in the black community," Kane explained. "But he also feels too many ignore societal underpinnings that have created the situation where many young black men see themselves viewed as pariahs."

Further, Kane said, Anderson cautioned not to blame the victim for circumstances (especially economic) beyond their control.

courts n-word triggers suit

A sociology professor and a grad student may face off in court over "the N-word."

After a class discussion at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in which Peter Singelmann said he used the N-word and other vulgar terms to illustrate a point about free speech, a humiliated DeLana Sattarin, a sociology

graduate student who is black, dropped his class and was left with too few credits to graduate.

An investigation by the university's affirmative action office recommended the student receive an apology and full refund, which she did, and that the professor be issued a reprimand and sent to sensitivity training, the university's news service reported.

Sattarin filed suit in July in Jackson County Circuit Court.

She told the Associated Press the university was too lenient in reprimanding her former prof. The suit will help him and the university see this sort of language can't be used without consequences, she said.

A court hearing was scheduled for January.

truism page nods to soc

Nationally syndicated columnist Clarence Page covered the sociological idea that, as he puts it, "birds of a political feather flock together" in the context of the 2008 election.

"One of my pet peeves is people who don't stop to realize that the whole world might not be thinking about the world or experiencing it the same way that they and their friends do," he wrote.

Page quoted a handful of sociologists as he pointed out that we're often more influenced by our friends than the facts, and it's important to "understand the subtle but important role that the attraction of like-minded individuals plays in our political attitudes."

In the end, he cautioned and advised, "the world is complex, and sometimes discomfort is good. We learn things not only by reinforcing our cherished beliefs but also in seeing how well

those beliefs stand up next to somebody else's views. It's not easy for birds of a feather to leave their flock, but sometimes it's worth it."

limelight bell on the future

Wendell Bell, professor emeritus of sociology at Yale University, was featured among 25 "visionaries" who answered two questions for a recent feature in *Forbes* about the future.

Asked, "What's one thing you were sure would happen, but didn't?" Bell described disappointing brushes with a sixth-grade sweetheart and much later a pitcher of gin martinis, but more seriously he was sure the people of the world would have learned to live peacefully.

In answer to "What's something that totally surprised you?" the author of *The Sociology of the Future* and 2005 recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the World Futures Studies Federation said he was "surprised that the beginnings of the 21st century have not devolved into my worst fear: a future world wracked not only by violence but also by total social chaos—the breakdown of society, social controls, social norms and global ethics. What a nightmare that would be."

The entire interview is in the October 15 issue of *Forbes* and online at Forbes.com.

politics habib misses ASA

South African social scientist Adam Habib didn't speak at or attend the most recent American Sociological Association (ASA) annual meeting because the U.S. federal government failed to respond to

his visa request, according to ASA.

Executive director of the South Africa-based Human Science Research Council's Program on Democracy and Governance, Habib is critical of the Iraq war and some U.S. terrorism policies. An ASA statement on the matter raised concerns about ideological exclusion.

"Academic freedom is the hallmark of American democratic culture. It has allowed scientists, intellectuals, and their scholarly societies to flourish and create one of the world's most dynamic educational systems and robust knowledge-based economies. ASA opposes the use of visa denials or de facto denials on ideological grounds, because such action suppresses free intellectual exchange," the statement read.

More than a year ago, too, Habib was detained in New York and sent back to South Africa when he arrived for a series of meetings.

technology soc of facebook



Social networking Internet sites might be doing more to drive us apart than bring us together. At least that's what the *Washington Post* suggested as summer wound down and it took a look at the "Facebookification" of our lives.

From the 1954 work of J.A. Barnes to Columbia's Duncan Watts' *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age*, the report spanned the sociological trajectory behind the actual and electronic networks that, throughout history, have done everything from help us find jobs and homes to read about the minutia of

our lives that we post to the Internet.

Perhaps, interviews with sociologists suggested, these sites miss the mark because we're busy adding "friends" to our network and not busy networking with friends.

In the end, the *Post* asked how we "prevent social networking sites from becoming the death of social networking"—perhaps the fundamental question of this new cultural form.

released holm freed

German authorities released Berlin sociologist Andrej Holm after three weeks in custody for his alleged support of a militant group that is thought to have orchestrated 25 arson attacks since 2001.

Arrested with three other suspects, the Humboldt University professor was charged with being a member of a terrorist organization. He was suspected of helping a militant activist organization because his writings and those of the group overlapped in striking ways "not to be explained through a coincidence," *The Guardian* reported.

Further, he was said to have met with one member of the group who was later arrested for attempted arson.

Some 50 academics from universities around the world protested his detention in a letter to the German federal prosecutor, who made it clear upon Holm's release on bail that the case against him was still strong and that he could be arrested again in the future, *The Guardian* said.