

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

SESSION 1A

ADDRESSING POVERTY, VULNERABILITY, AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Session Moderator: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

085 MGH

1:15 PM to 2:45 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Works of Faith: Volunteering in Two Seattle Christian Organizations Addressing Homelessness

Kathryn Jean (Katy) Lundgren, Senior, Comparative Religion, Geography

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

The national government is relying increasingly on faith-based organizations for poverty relief, and especially to address homelessness. Some faith-based organizations are criticized for only addressing poverty's symptoms and perpetuating stereotypes about spiritual, ethical, mental, and moral shortcomings of the impoverished. How can these organizations instead create spaces in which traditional assumptions about homelessness and community are disrupted, and new bonds of solidarity are created between people of different socio-economic classes? I seek to answer this question by focusing on how volunteers express and act upon their faith in the context of progressive faith-based organizations. I will conduct participant observation in two Seattle Christian faith-based organizations addressing homelessness in the Aurora area. I will also conduct interviews with volunteers and organization directors in order to examine how the theological foundations of these organizations may help volunteers become more invested in and involved with the entirety of their neighborhood community. This project will reveal how small-scale, faith-based work addressing homelessness can impact the communities in which they operate by shifting perceptions of poverty through cross-class exposure and an engagement with spirituality.

SESSION 1A

ADDRESSING POVERTY, VULNERABILITY, AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Session Moderator: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

085 MGH

1:15 PM to 2:45 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Real Change Cross-Class Listening Circles: Advocacy, Empathy and New Understandings of Homelessness

Jessica Ashley (Jess) Wallach, Senior, Geography, Public Health-Global Health

Mentor: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

Current scholarship on geographies of encounter posits that situated encounters with difference, or bodies that represent difference, can create openings for new subjectivities, shifts in personal politics and new understandings of individual agency. This paper considers the possibilities of such encounters with difference in the context of the Real Change Cross-Class Advocacy Listening Circles. Listening Circles are community conversations that bring together individuals of different class backgrounds to reflect on questions of class and economic inequality. These conversations reach across class boundaries and differences to establish an open and respectful cross-class dialogue, one which is based on personal connection, empathy and understanding. Through interviews, participant observation and auto-ethnography, I investigate the Listening Circles as situated encounters with difference, where story-telling and shared experience actively (re)interpret and challenge the socio-political divisions which maintain class boundaries in everyday life. I consider how this model for disrupting class divisions in and through our everyday interactions might be applied to further the advocacy work of organizations like Real Change in cultivating critical, caring and empowered social justice actors.

SESSION 1A

ADDRESSING POVERTY, VULNERABILITY, AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Session Moderator: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

085 MGH

1:15 PM to 2:45 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Homelessness, Mobility, and the City

Samuel Laurence (Sam) Nowak, Senior, Geography

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

On October 29th, 2012, King County Metro of Washington State implemented a set of congestion reduction policies, including the elimination of the Ride Free Area (RFA) in downtown Seattle, which was once an area in which any individual could ride a Metro bus without charge. The elimination of such a service stands to have a disproportionate impact on low-income and homeless individuals as many once used the RFA to reach social service agencies clustered in the downtown area and will now have to pay to reach those destinations. This research works to understand how different groups in the city have reacted and adapted to the end of the RFA (including activists, social service agencies, bus drivers, and low-income or no-income individuals) in order to theorize around (im)mobilities of homelessness in the city. I draw on qualitative interviews, participant observation, and archival research in order to build an inductive, exploratory analysis of how homeless individuals are adapting to this policy implementation. In doing so, I call attention to the need for further research on the intersections of homelessness, mobility studies, and public transportation policy in human geography.

SESSION 1A

ADDRESSING POVERTY, VULNERABILITY, AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Session Moderator: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

085 MGH

1:15 PM to 2:45 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Coffee Culture: A Study of Social Responsibility Initiatives and their Socioeconomic Implications

Makenna Joy (Makenna) Hamre, Senior, Geography

Mentor: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

Due to the increasingly publicized socioeconomic disparities in coffee production, there is a high consumer demand for ethical bean sourcing. My research pertains to the transparency and functionality of Social Responsibility Initiatives (SRIs) within the coffee commodity chain, and their effects on power distribution. In particular, I investigate the SRIs of three Seattle based coffee companies: a multi-national corporation, a medium-sized coffee roaster and café, and a small local café. I analyze the incentives and drawbacks of these initiatives through semi-structured interviews with employees, as well as how the initiatives influence business decisions and situate power distribution along the commodity chain. In addition, I conduct participant observation while volunteering on a Honduran coffee farm in order to understand the relationship producers have with their coffee. Using SRIs as a lens to political and socioeconomic factors that influence interaction within the coffee industry, I conclude with suggestions for ways in which a more equitable distribution of power may benefit coffee producers and increase transparency in SRIs.

SESSION 2E

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH IN ECONOMICS

Session Moderator: Levis Kochin, Economics

234 MGH

3:45 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Looking Beyond the Letterhead: The Curious Relationship between China's Trans-National Corporations and its Foreign Policy

*Charlotte Franklin, Senior, Political Science (Political
Economy)*

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Kam Wing Chan, Geography

In this presentation I will argue that regardless of whether owned by the state, private capital or publicly traded on Chinese stock exchanges, Chinese corporations doing business outside of China inevitably become instruments of China's foreign policy. In a feedback loop in which both the state and the enterprise benefit (sometimes in counter-intuitive ways), the actions and fates of corporation and state become inextricably linked in a way that could not be replicated outside the unique world of "capitalism with Chinese characteristics". From the alleged links between telecommunications equipment manufacturer Huawei and the People's Liberation Army to the official designation of Chinese IT industry hero Lenovo as a foreign-owned enterprise within China, divining the precise ownership of Chinese firms presents a Gordian knot to international customers and governments alike,

encouraging suspicion and nationalist rhetoric in response to Chinese contract bids in developed economies, while simultaneously paving the way to lucrative deals in developing nations. But what does Chinese state support for industry really mean for non-Chinese trans-national firms? What is the significance of the state-encouraged acquisition spree that has seen Chinese firms purchase IBM's PC business, Volvo and the firm that manufactures London's iconic black cabs, among others? How should other trans-national firms compete with Chinese bids for major international infrastructure projects and what is really at stake beyond the initial projects in question? This presentation, based upon an examination of the ownership and activities of Chinese firms competing in international business, will offer an alternative lens through which to view the international activities of Chinese enterprises, suggesting that to truly evaluate the potential profit and loss of any specific commercial activity one must first look beyond the letterhead.

SESSION 2M

POLITICS AND POLICY IN AMERICA

Session Moderator: John Wilkerson, Political Science

284 MGH

3:45 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Partnering for Health: Emerging Forms of Health Governance in Washington State

Helen Elizabeth Olsen, Senior, Geography, Public Health-Global Health

Mary Gates Scholar, Undergraduate Research

Conference Travel Awardee

Mentor: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

Mentor: Sarah Elwood, Geography

My research details how the austerity measures enacted at the federal, state and county levels have impacted women's reproductive healthcare in Washington State since 2008. This project examines how public-private partnerships have emerged in response to widening disparities and cutbacks in women's reproductive healthcare access and provisioning. Through a case study of an NGO dedicated to enhancing women's access to reproductive health care, I demonstrate that new models of public health provisioning are emerging to fill the void left by the neoliberal rollback of state sponsored public health programs. In order to examine the ways in which austerity measures have impacted women's access to reproductive healthcare services in Washington State, I engaged in archival analysis of State budget documents detailing cutbacks/shifts in public health funding for the past five years. Additionally, I interviewed employees of the Washington Department of Health (DOH) and King County Pub-

lic Health (KCPH) about the impact of funding decreases on their service provision programs. After establishing this broad landscape of state disinvestment, I moved into an examination of my case study organization and the ways in which shifts in funding structures for public health have facilitated the creation of new models of health governance.

POSTER SESSION 3

Commons West, Easel 43

2:30 PM to 4:00 PM

Facilitated Public Transit Access and Socioeconomic Inequity in Seattle, Washington

Zak Lee, Senior, Geography

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Luke Bergmann, Department of Geography

Mentor: Lucy Jarosz, Geography

In the next 50 years, global population in urban areas will double; mass transit systems are one area where both policymakers and planners have the ability to ameliorate potential negative environmental and social impacts of urbanization. Research in the United States has found that socioeconomic status (SES) is related inversely with physical access to employment and public services, partially due to underlying inequalities in spatial distribution of housing and transportation. Thus, mass transportation projects that provide mobility across neighborhood SES boundaries have the potential to positively impact the quality of life and future opportunities for billions of urban dwellers by improving inequalities of access to important urban areas. Examining the case of Seattle, Washington, I investigate how inequalities are addressed by the public transportation planning process and how SES is linked with differing levels of transit service. Interviews with individuals involved in transit planning explore transit characteristics unique to Seattle, steps taken to address inequity in the planning and design stages of transit provision, and broader factors that impact building and maintaining equitable transit services. A complementary GIS-based examination of the relationship between SES and the level of access granted by public transit to other areas of the city is performed. SES is measured using census and property value data, while transit access is measured using a novel network-based, parcel-level approach. Preliminary findings indicate that a significant tension exists between maximizing ridership and providing similar mobility to neighborhoods of differing SES; this problem is poorly addressed by methods currently used for incorporating equity in transit design and further aggravated by overlapping jurisdictions of power and systemic funding uncertainty. Informed by these results, I present both new techniques for evaluating mobility granted by transit in relation to spatial equity and a discussion of challenges to providing equitable public transit beyond measurement.