

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 20, 2016 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

2C

GENDERED HIERARCHIES IN CULTURAL AND GLOBAL TRANSITION

Session Moderator: Judith A Howard, Sociology

MGH 231

3:30 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Women and Their Dress as the Visualization of National Morality in Twentieth-Century Tehran

*Rhoya Sousan (Rhoya) Selden, Senior, History, Drama
UW Honors Program*

Mentor: Lynn Thomas, History

Mentor: Arbella Bet-Shlimon, History

What Persian politicians dubbed as ‘the woman question’ in the early twentieth century towards the end of the Qajar Dynasty became, and still remains, a hotly debated topic in Iran that is undeniably intertwined with Iranian ideas of nationalism. The question asked what the new role of women should be in society and what should be done to accomplish it. My honors history thesis examines how both the Pahlavi monarchy (1925-1979) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (1979-present) used women to visualize the national state of well-being. This thesis is rooted in extensive research in primary sources conducted over five months; my main sources include oral interviews of local Iranian-Americans, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi’s autobiography, *Women and Her Rights in Islam* by Ayatollah Motahari, Tehran’s most popular women’s magazine, *Zan-e Ruz*, private family photo collections, newspaper articles, and speeches by the main political figures of the time. I answer the questions: how did each of the respective governments use control of women’s clothing as a strategy to implement their contrasting nationalist ideologies, and what was their reasoning behind the specific compulsory dress codes? Through analysis of books and speeches by Mohammad Reza Shah and Ayatollahs Khomeini and Motahari [leading Shiite clerics of the creation of the Islamic Republic], I conclude that parallel to the cultural notion that women represent familial honor, both regimes viewed women as symbols of national honor, and thus sought to control their clothing and socialization. Through poetry, political cartoons, and advertisements found in *Zan-e Ruz*, I investigate the transitions between mandatory hijab to Western clothing in the 1930s and back to mandatory hijab after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Using oral history methodology, I determine a

paradox that shows that despite outward appearances, a new contrary culture developed in the private realm.

An Exploration of Friendship among Kuwaiti and Saudi Men Studying Abroad in Seattle

Bader Alfarhan, Senior, Anthropology

UW Honors Program

Mentor: Michael Vicente Perez, Anthropology

Every fall, thousands of Kuwaiti and Saudi men depart for the U.S. in hopes of achieving a state-of-the-art post-secondary education that many others can only dream of. For many of these students, the challenges of maintaining a sense of identity in America turns out to be much more than they bargained for. Now that these students are no longer directly impacted by the societal expectations of the homeland, they may choose to act in ways that were never permissible. However, for this particular community, adjusting to life in the U.S. is anything but stress-free. Navigating language and cultural barriers, as well as resisting institutionalized bias, such as the growing rise of Islamophobia and anti-Arab sentiment in the U.S. public sphere has left these students feeling unnerved and unsettled. With the expectations of their overseas family members and friends still weighing heavily on their minds, and the expectations of a foreign nation that holds a polarized set of values and traditions looming large in their lives, these students are forming friendships that would have not been formed otherwise. Through semistructured interviews and participant observation, this study explores the impacts of temporary migration on the ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and gender identities of Kuwaiti and Saudi men who are studying abroad in Seattle. By challenging hegemonic societal expectations from the homeland and defying the assimilatory practices of their new, temporary home, these students have managed to craft a new sense of identity that has never been experienced before. Optimistic, yet uncertain, these students have much to consider before embarking on their next

steps in life. This study seeks to shed light on the resiliency and the solidarity of a young group of Kuwaiti and Saudi men who are studying abroad in Seattle and offers insight into the various intersectionalities of their identities.

Fraternal Expectations: A Case Study in How Fraternity Men Navigate Ideals of Masculinity Fraught with Contradiction

*James Farel Jr (J.J.) Strosnider, Senior, Neurobiology,
Anthropology: Medical Anth & Global Hlth
UW Honors Program
Mentor: Rachel Chapman, Anthropology*

The Beta chapter of Alpha Fraternity (pseudonyms) was re-founded in 2013 at a large, western public university. The birth of this house was one situated in a national climate of suspicion for collegiate Greek organizations as instances of discrimination, sexual violence, substance abuse and hazing began to well up from all corners of the nation. Initially recruited under the slogan of “Redefining the Fraternity Man,” the inaugural pledge class set forth to craft a house culture that would negotiate seemingly irreconcilable standards of masculinity – that of a gentlemanly, yet raucous, “frat bro.” The creation of said culture was fraught with frictions between founding members, both in what they valued as individuals and how they envisioned the conduct of the burgeoning collective. This project aimed to document the trajectory of cultural standards of masculinity in the chapter, established in practice by its founders, and negotiated by subsequent men brought in to the organization. This project also investigated how manifestations of productive and destructive behaviors were intertwined with dominant beliefs and values about what it means to be a fraternity man. By utilizing participant observation, interviews of house members, focus groups, and auto-ethnography, this study examined the barriers and opportunities that exist to changing hegemonic ideals of masculinity that fraternity houses stereotypically reproduce and reinforce. Key findings of the project include the following themes: cultural creation, masculine collectives, and identity. By examining the house’s fledgling development, the significance of this project lies in critically evaluating the possibility of fraternities being a place of positive socialization – or whether the inherent qualities of fraternal masculinity are damaging to house members and toxic to their broader communities.

The Sexual Politics of Veganism in Fitness

*Meghan Leean (Meghan) Jones, Senior, Political Science,
Comparative History of Ideas
Mentor: Maria Elena Garcia, Comparative History of Ideas*

Though the post-colonial mainstream American diet has changed over time, what seems to remain constant is the emphasis of a protein source (typically meat) at every meal. New trends have emerged which advocate for deviances from this dominant paradigm, such as veganism, a diet that excludes

meat, eggs, dairy, and any product or by-product of non-human animals. Some scholars such as ecofeminist and animal rights author/advocate Carol J. Adams have set out to demonstrate how societal expectations of gender roles have shaped the dominant discourse surrounding our diets and those who choose to opt out of these dominant food ways. But no one has yet addressed how the alignment of masculinity with meat is addressed in male-dominated sports, and how the current infiltration of the vegan diet into these realms may be changing the way we look at meat vs. plant-based diets. I seek to investigate what happens when the epitome of muscle and masculinity, male bodybuilders, adopt what is sometimes referred to as a “feminine” vegan diet. I also seek to explore whether marketing or demonstrations of one’s ability to build muscle on a vegan diet help to change people’s perspective of vegans as “weak” or “feminine”, or if these carnophallogocentric ideals rather promote and prolong the ideology of necessity of meat in the diet. Through analysis of mainstream media representation of veganism, online responses to well-known bodybuilders “gone vegan”, and critical readings of current pro-vegan advocacy works, I seek to discover if it is truly possible to adopt a vegan diet while separating oneself from a dominant post-colonial dietary paradigm. I expect to find that gender and diet are intricately linked, and that until our society addresses the underlying ideology which places femininity on a hierarchy below masculinity, veganism will continue to be viewed as feminine, and therefore inferior.

The Failures of Consent: How the (En)gendering of Sexual Scripts and Desire Regarding Consensual Sex Preserves Rape Culture within the University

*Tomas Narvaja, Senior, Gender, Women, and Sexuality
Studies
Mary Gates Scholar, UW Honors Program
Mentor: Nancy Kenney, Psychology*

The epidemic of sexual assault on American University campuses has resulted in the centering of consent as a key way of distinguishing between acceptable, normal sex and unacceptable, punishable sex. Unfortunately, various experiences of sex that fit within the acceptable, normal sex category according to university policy frameworks can often have just as detrimental side effects on women as rape does. The need to investigate how consent might be failing women in challenging rape culture then becomes paramount. This presentation provides an analytical review of contemporary writings and studies derived from various books, journals, and news articles available through the University of Washington Library or various online resources. The findings include how various forms of consensual sex such as coerced sex, compliant sex, and even enthusiastic, pleasurable sex can play into upholding rape culture, harm women disproportionately, and uphold men’s systemic power. By becoming involved in the continued modern discussions of consent, this presentation seeks to

redirect the current discourse on sexual consent now common on university campuses in hopes of broadening our perception of consensual sex and more adequately challenge rape culture.

Public Discourse, Meaning-Making and the Failure to Protect Transgender Workers

Brian David (Brian) McQuay, Senior, Law and Policy (Tacoma)

Mary Gates Scholar, Undergraduate Research Conference Travel Awardee

Mentor: Sarah Hampson, Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, University of Washington Tacoma

Workplace discrimination is a factor affecting many Transgender individuals on a daily basis, which greatly affects how they are able to provide for themselves and their families. Unfortunately for Transgender employees there is little protection that they can call upon to help fight workplace discrimination. We posed the question: is there a lack of conversation in society around Transgender worker discrimination and how does that reflect in the policies that are created? With our research we demonstrate that due to the way the conversation around this issue is being discussed, laws are not being developed to protect the rights of Transgender Workers. We conducted a discourse analysis of The Washington Post and The New York Times to examine the state of public discourse around transgender workers over a five-year period. We then compare this dialogue with the self-reported experiences of transgender workers in the National Transgender Discrimination Survey completed in 2011. Our research shows that there is a correlation around how we discuss the issues and the lack in legal protection for this group. We argued that there is a clear disconnect between public discourse on this topic and the lived experiences of transgender workers as reported in the survey. Our findings correlate that we are not discussing the issues that are being faced by Transgender workers and with that lack of societal discourse public policies are not being developed to protect them.

Representation of Race and Gender within *People Magazine*

Kelsey Bolinger, Senior, Society, Ethics, & Human Behavior (Bthl), Media & Communication Studies (Bothell)

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Julie Shayne, Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences

This research project inspects the ways in which race and gender are portrayed in *People* magazine and how these representations contribute to internalized identities, specifically focusing on women's lived experience, and how these internalized identities manifest into real socio-economic life outcomes. This research uses a cultural studies framework to examine the ways in which power operates within societies, and specifically how power is embedded within the images

of *People* magazine. My preliminary data has been collected using critical visual analysis. This method is used to contextualize images through its rooted historical placement as well as its image production and consumption. This process has involved collecting data on over 800 images per magazine edition and reorganized based off of perceived gender and race. This magazine is central to my research due to its capacity to reach over 12.3 million users, according to their published statistics, and its inherent message "People Magazine" to cover all people, including diverse populations. The majority of people in this magazine, over 6 months, has been White women. It is imperative to understand how diverse audiences actually read media texts and to what extent these texts impact or influence the audience. One focus group is comprised of approximately ten, 13-15 year old females and the second group is comprised of approximately ten 18-21 year old females. Questions asked of these groups are focused on the lived experiences they have with popular media in general and specifically with *People* magazine. However, this research is focused on *People* magazine, I claim that (mis)representation of race and gender happens throughout all forms of popular media. Primary sources include *People* Magazine and the testimonies of those involved in the focus groups. Secondary sources include works focused around popular media, identity and race and gender studies.