

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 19, 2017 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

2A

POWER MADE VISIBLE: IMAGE, IDENTITY, NARRATIVE ACTIVISM

Session Moderator: Juliana Villegas, English

MGH 171

3:30 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Embodying the Image: An Exploration of Identity, Intimacy, and Authenticity on Instagram

Vivian Demi (Vivian) Lu, Senior, Mathematics, Comparative History of Ideas

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Stephen Groening, Comparative Literature, Cinema and Media

In the age of self-branding, viral memes, and the Kardashians, Instagram has played a critical role in developing the attention economy. Attention has become a form of capital itself, where value is assigned to the most popular, aesthetically-pleasing content on channels like Instagram. When users construct their online identities within the context of late consumer capitalism, they participate in a cycle of desiring and being desired, in order to generate attention. This process enforces the notion that you are what you post, where one's identity is represented by the signifiers one displays online. As a consequence, Instagram has radically reshaped the ways in which individuals conceive of themselves and interact with others in contemporary society.

Seeing Red: Maoist Rumors, Hidden Transcripts, and the End of the 2014 Everest Climbing Season

Ian Daniel Bellows, Senior, International Studies

UW Honors Program

Mentor: Maya Magarati, School of Social Work

Himalayan adventure travel is a burgeoning industry in some mountainous regions of Nepal. The development of a trekking and expedition mountaineering infrastructure has created vital employment opportunities in remote areas and allowed visitors to embark on life-changing explorations. However, with the rapid, uneven, and largely unregulated growth of this industry have come environmental and resource challenges, the creation of new economic and social arrangements, and renewed questions of equity and safety. This intersectionality revealed itself dramatically on April 18,

2014, when a serac collapsed on Mt. Everest's Khumbu Icefall and killed 16 Nepali high altitude workers. After several contentious days of deliberation and protests at Base Camp, the climbing season effectively ended when rumors began to circulate that attempts to continue climbing would be met with violence by individuals purportedly associated with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist). In this investigation, I combine the theoretical framework of James Scott's transcript theory with the interpretive frame of Susan Birrell's treatment of Everest as a text to be read and analyzed to show how rumors of Maoist involvement, though unsubstantiated, encapsulated specific anxieties and dominant preconceived notions about the structure and function of the Himalayan adventure travel industry. A traumatic and seemingly incomprehensible event created an ambiguous space where dominant discourses could be anonymously engaged with and challenged even as they shaped events in real time, a process of recontextualization that blurred the boundaries between a jointly-constructed public transcript of heroic adventure and hidden transcripts that portray far more polarized and nuanced views of sociopolitical orderings. My research reveals how spread of this particular rumor at a particular moment in time betrays both the discursive power of Everest itself and reveals quite unconsciously the essential structural features that order the social, economic, and political life of the remote Himalaya.

Considering Animal Rights Activism

Jack Hansen (Jack) Mc Bride, Senior, Anthropology: Human Evolutionary Biology

UW Honors Program

Mentor: Radhika Govindrajan, Anthropology

My investigation explores how two factors affect individuals in the animal rights (AR) movement. 1) the empathetic connection between human and animal formed when certain humans are exposed to suffering or death of another living

being and relate to it, and 2) how these individual's conception of animals subsequently differs from the societal view: that is, as resources for our use. I was inspired by Coetzee's "The Lives of Animals." He describes an AR activist ridiculed by academics (who had themselves invited her to speak) due to her "irrationally" emotional perspective. This led me to interview my peers, members of Northwest Animal Rights Network, and members of various campus activism groups to observe whether this character's experience was felt by UW's own AR activists. I noticed a difference between AR activist's experience and the experience of activists in other fields. This difference is demeaning or accusatory tones, and an unwillingness to take seriously the actions of the activist. Activists of all forms can become isolated; this is inherent in activism (defined as action to bring about change). However, the relative novelty of AR, institutionalized use of animals as resources, and the cultural-social-political discourse which shields many from seeing how we use animals, creates a unique form of pressure on AR activists here at UW. The existing AR literature focuses upon the 'emotional' aspects of witnessing and killing, and has investigated the stress this puts on individuals combined with the lifestyle changes required (refusing meat, etc.). I have observed something equally important: the existing discourse contributes to how strenuous and encompassing the commitment required from AR activists is. The existing discourse needs to be expanded from focusing solely on 'witnesses' to examining other ways AR activists are 'created.' It also needs to stop framing emotions as inherently non-academic, or wrong.

Race, Colonialism, and Identity in 20th Century Caribbean Literature

*Rebecca Lynn (Rebecca) Gross, Junior, English
UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: Louis Chude-Sokei, English
Mentor: Charles LaPorte, English*

In "Writing Against Culture," Lila Abu-Lughod writes, "The process of creating a self through opposition to the other always entails the violence of repressing or ignoring other forms of difference." This complicated discourse Abu-Lughod describes emerges from 19th century colonialist practices, which oppressed colonized peoples, and therefore rendered their "identities" troubled. As literary modernism gained traction in the 20th century, Caribbean writers such as Frantz Fanon and Jean Rhys responded to the suddenly complicated identity paradigm in which they become marked as the "Other." How do Fanon and Rhys untangle modernist notion of the self while being deeply entwined with constantly alienating effects of colonialist practices? In this paper, I explore the extent to which "the violence of repressing or ignoring other forms of difference" causes colonized people to react loudly against these forces with their own newly constructed identities. Rhys and Fanon reacted loudly in their

work, but other colonized people would react loudly through force and violent resistance. Black Power movements in the Caribbean and America, for example, feature the colonized seizing upon new identities in order to break free of colonialism and the identities it imposed. Fanon's reaction to break free of those shackles are manifested in *Black Skins, White Masks*, which becomes essential for these Black Power movements. Rhys creates *Wide Sargasso Sea* to problematize the racism of 19th Century colonialism itself and highlight the vicious process of identity formation via a famous work of Victorian literature. Through my research, I have ultimately come to the conclusion that colonialist oppression produces identities contrary to it, whether that may be in the form of writing or other violent movements; it is that very narrative process by which colonial power breeds its own undoing.

Asian American Reflections on Mass Media Representation

Brooke Hannah (Brooke) Byun, Senior, Biochemistry, Communication

*UW Honors Program
Mentor: Carmen Gonzalez*

Minority actors continue to be under-represented in major Hollywood films, something brought to national light last year through the return of the "OscarsSoWhite" hashtag on Twitter. Though there have been some efforts to increase racial diversity in blockbuster roles, there has been serious backlash from minority actors and viewers who have reacted vehemently to the "white-washing" of minority roles, including characters in Doctor Strange, The Great Wall, and Aloha. This study aims to gauge young (ages 18 - 25), self-identified Asian American adults' responses to this issue of unequal media representation using an interpretive perspective. Data will be gathered through initial survey "screeners" and in-person semistructured interviews. First and foremost, I will ask Asian Americans if they interact with and/or view forms of media. If so, do they feel (accurately) represented in the media? Do they perceive differences in minority roles in major films versus television? Key terms such as "representation" and "white-washing" will be clarified during the interview, as needed. This research will lay important groundwork for assessing Asian American consumers' views regarding media representations, especially regarding the intersection of identity and mental health. With this work, we can establish need for future quantitative studies and hopefully address issues associated with unequal representation.

Impact of Video Exposure to Fatal Police Violence on Black Males

Havana Jane (Havana) Mc Elvaine, Senior, Sociology

Mary Gates Scholar, UW Honors Program

Mentor: Hedwig Lee, Sociology

Mentor: Ralina Joseph, Communication

Mentor: Brian Sargent, Sociology

Black men are disproportionately represented among the number of people killed through the use of police deadly force each year. With the development of technology and the pervasiveness of social media in every day life, people have the ability to watch and re-watch these deaths on a daily basis. This phenomenon has become particularly prevalent in recent years, sparked by the graphic videos of deadly force used on Eric Garner and Philando Castile. Although there is a significant body of literature on the impact of racism, discrimination, and violence on black male self-perception, group identity and political attitudes, little is understood about the impact of this new form of publicized fatal violence. For this research project, I explore how black men are being exposed to this specific type of fatal violence, and outcomes related specifically to changes in political response, attitudes, and group identity. This process included a series of three open-ended focus groups, each comprised of 7-8 black male undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Washington. From these focus groups I identified 4-5 individuals and conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews to build on themes established in the focus groups. The information from these focus groups and interviews provide a unique insight into changing forms of discrimination and violence black men face, and the implications this violence has for their own political actions and behaviors.

Graffiti of Innocence in the Syrian Refugee Crisis: Use of Children to Manufacture an Alternative Image

Hannah Lehman, Senior, Art History, Politics and

Government, University of Puget Sound

Mentor: Kriszta Kotsis, Art and Art History, University of

Puget Sound

Mentor: Patrick O'Neil, University of Puget Sound

Amongst the graffiti blanketing the cities of Athens and Berlin, depictions of children stand out as a solemn reminder of the dire nature of the current refugee crisis in Europe. Due to the large number of refugees passing through, or settling, in various European states, governments have reduced individuals to statistics. This data-driven approach, focused on the number of people and the cost of providing basic resources, dominates the news and international discourse. Combating this statistical discussion, artists have created works that demonstrate the humanity of the crisis. Because paint and printers are easily accessible, street art portrays a broader public sentiment towards the crisis, countering the governmental narrative. This project examines graffiti in Athens and Berlin,

and the insights it provides on the refugee crisis that cannot be derived from the official discourse. Using images of children, artists in both cities have manufactured an alternative narrative articulating the challenges facing the individuals involved in the crisis and highlighting their struggle in Europe. Because Athens and Berlin function as endpoints of the refugees' journey, as many enter through Greece before traveling northwest to Germany, a study of the graffiti responding to the migration in these cities is of particular importance. After collecting hundreds of images in-situ during July of 2016, using geo-tagged web-based content and information from locals on hubs of graffiti, several themes emerged, the most prevalent being representations of children. The lack of scholarship on graffiti pertaining to this refugee crisis necessitated the use of art historical images of children in conjunction with current graffiti scholarship to create a methodological framework. Employing the iconographic, semiotic and socio-economic methodologies, I conclude that the works promote the humanization of the crisis and force recognition of the refugees as individuals, thereby opposing the governmental narrative.