

## Undergraduate Research Symposium May 18, 2018 Mary Gates Hall

### Online Proceedings

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#### SESSION 1C

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##### **BLURRED REALITIES, ETHICAL QUESTIONS AND MEDIA CRITIQUES**

*Session Moderator: Barbara Miller, Art History, Western Washington University*

**MGH 171**

*12:30 PM to 2:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

##### **Pokémon GO: A Historical and Analytical Consideration of Big Data in GPS Based Applications**

*Yurika M Harada, Senior, Geography*

*Mary Gates Scholar, UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: Sarah Elwood, Geography*

*Mentor: Julian Barr, Geography*

*Mentor: Josef Eckert, UAA Advising*

Digital media and mobile applications used for leisure have become increasingly interwoven into people's daily lives. Although playful mobile applications and their effects on society have been studied from a psychological, business, and computer science perspective, they have not been heavily engaged in the field of geography. Using Pokémon GO as a case study, this work aims to explore the ties between the corporate history and digital data of Niantic (the company that made Pokémon GO) and the effect it imposes on the "real world". It aims to conduct a spatial analysis of pokéstops and pokégyms in King County, Washington. In order to do this, a discourse analysis of online documents from Niantic, newspapers, social media, and fan websites recounting the company's history with previous applications and press interviews was conducted. In addition, a hotspot spatial analysis of Pokémon GO (pokéstops and pokégyms) overlaid on American Community Survey data was created. The purpose of this analysis is to see potential spatial inequalities that the application may have created. The findings show Niantic's lack of ethical consideration by how it deals with users data and privacy and as a result shows how the users have responded to issues in the past. The results also illustrate the skewing of data toward urban tech centers and the relative sparsity in rural areas, rendering use of the app pointless for certain users. Pokémon GO is the first location-based augmented reality mobile application to garner worldwide attention, and many application developers will likely use it as a point of reference when

creating their own applications. It is imperative that developers and researchers learn from this application's successes as well as its failures.

#### POSTER SESSION 2

**Commons East, Easel 63**

*1:00 PM to 2:30 PM*

##### **Exploring Sense of Place Across Mediums**

*Laura Ann Seniow, Senior, Geography*

*UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: Sarah Elwood, Geography*

*Mentor: Luke Bergmann, Department of Geography*

Geographers generally define sense of place as the meaning an individual ascribes to a particular location. Collectively, sense of place creates the identity and character of a region and is represented through culinary, literary, visual, and many other forms of art unique to the local culture. Technological advancements in communication have changed sense of place by affecting how these cultural differences are maintained, but also offer new ways of capturing and sharing sense of place. What elements and by which means individuals choose to capture personal representations of an environment shape the way communities as a whole perceive, ascribe meaning to, and amass their own descriptions and representations of that place. My project explores this iterative relationship between visual representation and written description of place. I have selected a collection of crowd-sourced pictures of the local landscape using an app that pulls up publicly posted Instagram images that have been geotagged near the location of the user. I consider these pictures to be modern forms of landscape folk art and conducted visual content analysis to code the images with descriptive terms. I have also created an in-person, crowd-sourced cartography installation consisting of three simplified maps of Seattle that was placed in a gallery where patrons were asked to write, directly on the maps, descriptions of their own sense of place associated with the locations. I then compared the language from the installation to that from the analysis of the Instagram images. Strong similarities between the two suggest the possibility of using crowd-sourced visual representations of place from social media to offer a greater understanding of how natural and built environments evolve and what they mean to the people who inhabit them.

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## SESSION 2I

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### PURSUING JUSTICE

*Session Moderator: Steve Herbert, Geography*

**MGH 254**

*3:30 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

#### **The Construction of Value, Race, and the "Other" in Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter**

*Rebecca Zhi Rose Kuhn, Senior, Geography*

*UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: Sarah Elwood, Geography*

*Mentor: La TaSha Levy, AES*

This study explores the use of media to construct social valuation and devaluation in racial discourse on the internet. The use of social media and on-line platforms contribute to complex power relations that mediate social and racial difference. I am investigating how both news sources and social media are used in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement and All Lives Matter campaign to expose the relational construction of value, race, and the "other." Through an inductive content and discourse analysis of primary movement resources, news media, and Twitter, I reveal the controversial ways in which the value of Black lives is affirmed and challenged on public platforms. This project is significant for understanding how social media and online news sources have created new opportunities for protest as well as new revelations of how the process of "othering" racialized groups persists in the twenty-first century.

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## SESSION 2I

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### PURSUING JUSTICE

*Session Moderator: Steve Herbert, Geography*

**MGH 254**

*3:30 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

#### **Under-Representation of Climate Change: A Content Analysis of Explanations for the Syrian Civil War**

*Anirudh (Ani) Ramanathan, Senior, Geography*

*UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: Sarah Elwood, Geography*

*Mentor: Michael Brown, Geography*

Despite the intense coverage of the Syrian Civil War in US media, consensus about what started the Syrian Civil War is highly debated. The variety of explanations cited as leading to the Syrian Civil War range from: corruption, protests, sectarianism, climate change, and drought. My mixed methods

research begins by exploring whether certain conflict explanations like the Arab Spring Protests are overrepresented in discourse whereas conflict explanations using climate change are underrepresented. A manifest content analysis of 134 American newspaper articles of causes for the conflict from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* yielded that they did indeed favor Arab Spring protests but that the results varied by newspaper. The right-leaning *Wall Street Journal* failed to mention climate change in a statistically significant manner whereas the *Washington Post* repeatedly mentioned climate change as a major factor for the Syrian Civil War. Interpretations and analysis of the same conflict produced different ideas about what started the conflict. The second part of my research involved an inductive latent content analysis of these news sources to truly understand the perceptions that drove news organizations to report the way they did. Here I report two key findings: a better understanding of how causal factors for conflict are explained in American media and how media organizations justify and convey narratives of importance to them. Such research is important because climate change and conflict is an issue that is important to the stability of the globe. Understanding how and why it's importance is overrepresented and underrepresented in news sources can help determine how popular geopolitics shapes perceptions and how to make discussions of climate change in the lens of conflict more acceptable.

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## SESSION 2M

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### CITY STORIES: THE LIVED URBAN ENVIRONMENT

*Session Moderator: Phillip Thurtle, Comparative History of Ideas*

**MGH 288**

*3:30 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

#### **Understanding Geographies of Fear and Safety in the Urban Transit Space**

*Adrienne Hubbard, Senior, Geography*

*Mary Gates Scholar, UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: Sarah Elwood, Geography*

Public transit is a quasi-public space between the public and private, acting as a fabric connecting the lives of many different types of people. Working within a framework of feminist urban geographies, this research seeks to understand how fear, safety, and emotion are constructed and interpreted within transit space in the city. With a particular focus on the experiences of women and queer individuals, I questioned how geographies of fear and safety impact movement and behavior in the city. Additionally, I examined the role of city officials and policy makers in creating safer transit

spaces. Using a synthesis of qualitative research, media analysis, and autoethnography, I present the policies and practices that have, and have not, been successful in cities across the United States. The results of this research have shown that women and queer people consistently report feelings of insecurity and lack of safety in urban spaces. Policies and campaigns introduced in major cities such as New York and Los Angeles have had measurable success in combating harassment and violence, while smaller cities such as Seattle have yet to implement policies to do the same. This research is intended to contribute to the larger discourse surrounding feminist geographies and urban studies.