Sociology Thesis Abstracts

Bates College
Class of 2022

Introduction

Throughout the fall semester, every senior sociology major enrolled in SOC 405, a capstone course in which students explore the thesis writing process and discuss sociology and sociological research more generally. As part of the course, we have compiled this e-book of thesis abstracts (which we then updated in May to include final abstracts for students writing thesis the following semester).

One of the student learning objectives for sociology majors at Bates is to "apply a sociological perspective to a substantive area within the discipline through the completion of a senior thesis that is focused around a research question or questions, integrates theoretically and empirically-informed ideas from sociology in framing and defining the question(s), and offers an argument with systematically-analyzed empirical evidence to support it." Writing a senior thesis fulfills these goals, as students are expected to develop a research question based on their specific interests and create and execute a research design that appropriately answers their question.

Theses for the Class of 2022 include a wide range of topics and research methods. This e-book is organized into seven sections based on those topics, representing categories that thesis writers helped develop. Each section includes all thesis abstracts that fit best within that particular section, and within each section are arranged in alphabetical order. The sections are: Crime & Justice, Health, Social Movements, Social Media, Race & Immigration, Education, and Family & Social Norms.

Crime & Justice

Emma Block
"These People, Do They Care?" Facilitating Connections to Post-Incarceration Reentry Support

The Maine Prisoner Reentry Network (MPRN) is a statewide organization with the mission of connecting and supporting Maine's reentry community. In April 2020, MPRN began conducting remote meetings with incarcerated individuals prior to release, a practice that had not previously been permitted by the state Department of Corrections. This allowed for advance reentry planning and the opportunity to introduce returning citizens to reentry supports. MPRN strives to be equitable and sought a research partnership with me in hopes of expanding their reach and impact. My research is thus motivated by two questions: what are structural barriers that impact reentry experiences or curb access to reentry supports? How is MPRN able to meet the needs of returning citizens, and what role has conducting remote meetings prior to release played in the supports provided by MPRN? I conducted 28 interviews with returning citizens and reentry-related service providers across Maine. Findings suggest that given the challenges faced by returning citizens, these remote meetings should continue because they have positively impacted the process of reentry planning. Findings also document that most participants found the full range of supports provided by MPRN to be highly valuable, not just material supports but emotional supports as well. Findings further raise some concerns about equity of access to MPRN's supports, suggesting that broader advertisement could enhance the organization's operations. Other suggestions include increased support for people with serious mental health challenges, more transparency around whether or not resources can be guaranteed, and prioritizing racial representation among leadership.

Tess Coutu
A Comparative Analysis of the Norwegian and American Prison Systems

When considering the criminal justice systems of developed countries, the United States and Norway appear on opposite ends of the spectrum. The Norwegian criminal justice system is focused on restorative justice that rehabilitates convicted individuals to successfully reintegrate to society, whereas the US justice system is built upon the idea of punishing convinced individuals. There are large differences in the incarceration and recidivism statistics in Norway and the United States and this paper studies the effectiveness, justification, and rationale of these correctional systems in order to discover what systemic differences cause such a large statistical gap between these two systems. In order to do so, data for this project was collected by synthesizing qualitative and quantitative information from relevant literature, organizations, and news sources. The findings of this study suggest that the Norwegian prison system rehabilitates inmates in ways that set them up for success, whereas systemic factors in the United States' criminal justice system work negatively towards an inmate's chances of successful rehabilitation and reintegration.

Anne Karolyn Doig

The Growing Rate of Racial Disparities in the United States Prison Systems Since the Coronavirus

Racial disparities in the United States have excited since the foundation of the country and it has been rooted into our society. Marginalized groups encounter racial disparities in today's economy, educational system, and criminal justice system. Since the 2019 coronavirus the racial and ethnic disparities have worsened for minority communities especially in the criminal justice system. The virus harms communities of poverty who lack healthcare, which creates challenges for marginalized groups to access health resources. Racial and ethnic groups endure these obstacles within correctional facilities as the infection rate of COVID-19 rises the health disparities increase as well in regards to infection rates and pre-existing health conditions. The following literature examines the disparities racial and ethic groups encountered before the pandemic and during the pandemic.

Garrett Evans

Cold Blooded Consumption: A cross-analysis of what draws individuals to consume serial killer and/or vampire content

When an individual hears the words killer or vampire it would presumably grab their attention. These two "monsters" are notorious for their violent crimes and have even garnered a great deal of attention in pop culture (Latora, 2020; Ross, 2015; Lusted, 2010; Schmid, 2005). Pop culture phenomena such as the rise of the Twilight Saga and the attention surrounding the docuseries and major films Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile, which both cover the crimes and trial of Ted Bundy, certainly warrants a study into why these two genres have become massively popular. This study aimed to answer the following research questions: Why are people interested in serial killer and vampire content? Are there any commonalities between the two in terms of interest and reasoning? In order to answer these questions a convenience sample using the Bates College student body as a population was surveyed. This survey collected qualitative and quantitative data with questions formed using preliminary data collected in prior research relating to the subject. Based on the collected data this paper argues that although on paper serial killers and vampires may seem like similar beings they have been represented in vastly different ways in entertainment media. The findings show that serial killer content is used as a tool to understand the criminal whereas vampire content is used as an escape from reality. The primary difference stated between the two beings is that one is fictional. This paper argues that this likely allows consumers to overlook the brutality of vampires and focus on the deeper story. Further implications of this study both positive and negative will be discussed.

Sarah Gillis

Discrepancies in Traffic Stops for Elite College Students: The Role that Discretion Plays Within United States Law and Order

Traffic stops are the most common interaction that an individual in the United States has with law enforcement officers. This thesis explores motor vehicle traffic stops for college aged students who are enrolled at New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) schools. The NESCAC schools provide a sample of elite college students, which was decided on both for its feasibility and because of their access to countless resources, leaving the results of this study generalizable to elite college students. This study will closely look at how gender, age, and race may have an effect on outcome of traffic stops, uniquely discussing how these three demographic variables may lead to drastically different outcomes for similar wrongdoings in the literature review. It will also touch on notions of discretion, discussing how officers can utilize their position of power in a sometimes differing manner, potentially favoring certain individuals and not others, suggesting biases in the profession of law enforcement. It will then explain the quantitative survey methods used for analysis where variables race and gender are researched while age is an already controlled variable within the study. The sample of participants from the survey was 31 with almost all students identifying as white. Once analyzed, the data found that male students were pulled over at a higher rate than women and given tickets at a slightly higher rate. Further research could benefit by exploring these ideas concerning traffic stops through increased sample sizes, expansion of diversity and age analyzed across multiple cohort groups.

Chloe Leong
Who Do You Consider to Be "Homeless"?: An Understanding of Bates Students' Perceptions of Unhoused Individuals

The issue of housing insecurity has become increasingly visible in the last decade. This thesis analyzes the process of how we come to define "homelessness" and reckon its growing prevalence, coupled with intense stigmatization. Through the distribution of a survey, this thesis specifically analyzes the perceptions of students at Bates College, including their understanding of what being homeless means, the stigma associated with being unhoused, the leading causes, and whether or not it is possible to eradicate homelessness.

Health

Darby Glenn

"It's hard to care about somebody so much and know you can't do anything about it:" An Exploration of Secondary Traumatic Stress, Vicarious Traumatization, and Compassion Fatigue among Mental Health Professionals

Approximately 5-15% of all mental health professionals experience secondary traumatic stress which may entail hyper-vigilance, avoidance, hyper-arousal, difficulty sleeping, and flashbacks (Bercier 2014). Almost all symptoms of secondary traumatic stress, which occurs when an individual is frequently exposed to trauma, overlap with that of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Despite the prevalence and severity of secondary traumatic stress among mental health providers, prior literature has only just recently started to focus on its impact on feelings of burnout. This thesis analyzes the impact of secondary traumatic stress, vicarious traumatization, and compassion fatigue on feelings of burnout among a group of 20 behavioral health interventionists at Washington County Mental Health Services, an organization in Vermont. Through the description of client stories, self-care strategies, motivation for working this position, and identifying areas of improvement in the organization, I aim to answer the following: How do mental health professionals who engage with the trauma of clients frequently protect their own mental health to prevent the negative effects of secondary traumatic stress, vicarious traumatization, and compassion fatigue? Qualitative interviews demonstrate that although there is no singular self-care strategy to avoid feelings of burnout and the adverse effects of trauma, many behavioral interventions employ reflective activities and maintain work-life boundaries to protect themselves.

Carla Guichard
Fitness Apps and Sports Teams: An Exploration of Consumer and Athlete Retention Strategies

Note: no final abstract submitted, so this is the abstract for the senior's proposed Winter 2022 project as submitted in late fall 2021...

For my thesis, I would like to conduct a study that measures how fitness tech startups work in the same way as sports teams when it comes to athlete and consumer retention. I would focus my research on a handful of startups which all have similar goals in creating a community or a 'team' of sorts among their app users. For the sports team, I would use the Bates Rowing team which has had a high athlete retention rate while maintaining one of the largest rosters at Bates. Since I have personally been on the team and have experienced the measures that my coaches, captains, and teammates take to ensure that we do not experience burnout, I believe that I have ample knowledge about the topic and I can get more through interviews with my coaches and teammates. As for conducting studies on the start-ups/fitness apps, I would like to use data that is already available to study customer retention rates as well as reviews from past and present users, and ideally I would like to conduct interviews with people working at these companies to get a better understanding of what their goals are and how they create senses of belonging in a virtual community.

Daniel Logan
Studying the Affordable Care Act: A Sociology of Knowledge View on Causality Literature

Healthcare policy can have huge impacts on the lives of millions of people in ways which can be difficult to predict or even to explain after-the-fact. With this in mind, the scholarship evaluating the causal effects of healthcare policy should be rigorous and thorough in detailing all possible factors which may have influenced the research itself. This paper applies a critical lens, inspired largely by the sociology of knowledge, at the scholarship evaluating the Affordable Care Act's expansion of Medicaid in order to better understand how social scientists' conceptualization and methods could have shortcomings in understanding possible causal interpretations of the policy. The analysis reveals how 'truth' is constructed in the existing scholarship and explores possible limitations stemming from the dominant approaches. Specifically, social-scientific assessments of the expansion and its effects frequently assert their own way of viewing available data on the expansion as being the only way to seek the 'truth' of the expansion. At the same time, a number of unquestioned assumptions, differing somewhat depending upon the field of study, underlie the work that has been done. These assumptions include assertions that the researcher is impartial and detached from the social world being studied, that decisions on which data to consider and how to consider it is not based on the lenses of the researcher, and that the effects of the Medicaid expansion can be moralized in an objective way.

Social Movements

Ellie Bauer

Social and Linguistic Change: Analyzing the creation of new words during the outbreak of Covid-19

An etymological analysis of the word coronavirus illustrates how the Latin word "corona" refers to the crown-like spherical shape of the virus which is viewable under a microscope. This is an example of understanding neologism. Neologisms related to Covid-19 occur online and can be seen through monitoring language data associated with the pandemic. Assessing linguistic trends as the pandemic continues provides valuable insight on people's lives during Covid-19. In this study, I explore the way new coronavirus-inspired terms are created and how they reflect this unforeseen and uncertain time in our lives. This study seeks to understand neologism in both Chinese and English in order to understand social and linguistic change through new words associated with the pandemic. It is evident that language plays a key role in establishing group identity, and examining social factors that drive language change can shed new light on the hidden structures that shape society as a whole. When interviewing the Bates students, I asked questions that focused on student experiences, challenges, and successes throughout the pandemic. These interviews were conducted in the Fall of 2021 and all of the interviews allowed space for open-ended conversation about experiences which were sparked by the list of 10 words associated with the pandemic. This study unravels palpable pandemic chaos and Covid-19 rhetoric depicting social and linguistic change. The results show the lifecycle of a word begins with the desire to explain the unexplainable and offers aa micro level analysis of one's mental well being and physical health, as well as macro level analysis of terminology related to xenophobic implications and the societal impact.

Benjamin Powell

An Examination of Chilean Generational Differences caused by Traumatic Memories and their Manifestations

During the 2019-2021 protests, millions of Chileans took to the streets to add their voices to the social frustration over political inefficiency that failed to address growing economic inequality. When COVID-19 struck Chile, and people were forced into their homes as political tensions were at their highest. Suddenly, differences in political opinions and the trajectory of the country were all anyone could talk about, while also being stuck inside with family. It is from hearing from friends complain about heated discussions with family that the idea of common generational differences became evident. A common topic of debate was Chile's military regime and its legacy. The literature on mass trauma explains how trauma can be understood and internalized through the assertion that traumatic experiences live on as traumatic memories. Literature on memories and movements established how memories feed into, affect strategies for mobilization, and are processed through social movements. These discoveries seemed to fit into Chile's unresolved national trauma and its penchant for protests. This study seeks to add to the gap in existing research that puts these assertions into practice. Collective trauma and memory studies are a relatively new field and benefit from any additions to the range of studied populations. The findings from this study strongly support the assertion that there exists a strong generational divide, with a potential link to trauma, between those who experienced the much more violent initial stages of the military regime, and those who did not. This study eases social tensions by contextualizing the trauma these differences stemmed from, and by revealing where people agree the most.

Alex Rotival

Spatial Inequalities within Public Memorials: The Case of the AIDS Memorial at St. Vincent's Triangle

Note: no final abstract submitted, so this is the abstract for the senior's proposed Winter 2022 project as submitted in late fall 2021...

The dedication of New York City's AIDS Memorial Park as part of a large-scale neighborhood revitalization project presents an opportunity to consider the role played by public memorials in community place-making and identity formation. Scholars point to the contemporary governing ethos in cities as reinforcing certain aspects of neoliberal ideology: the prioritization of economic growth and privatization of public services, as they manifest in a redefinition of urban citizenship and depoliticization of identity. How then are these neoliberal logics made manifest as spatialized experiences of inequality? The case of New York City's largest AIDS memorial suggests that while these dynamics are reflected in the design and nominal private control of the space, its public nature provides the necessary opportunities for remembrance and activism, which does not comport with elite projects to minimize disruption to the flow of capital and reification of certain attitudes and norms.

Rebecca Willis

Origin Stories: Examining The Bible's Influence on Contemporary Constructions of Gender in Conservative Podcast Shows

While gender as a concept is a substantive aspect of many areas of sociology, seldom sociological work explores the connection between historical religious influences on understandings of gender and the current discourses on gender that the U.S. faces today. This paper explores contemporary conservative rhetoric around gender and sexuality through a medium of podcasts. A review of existing literature and a content analysis of the Catholic Bible was conducted to establish a conceptual framework for measuring traditional religious gender ideologies and roles. Transcriptions from 25 conservative podcast episodes were collected and analyzed for their alignment with themes within this conceptual framework in order to assess the enduring, if at all, influence of traditional religious gender ideology. Themes derived from the Bible include (1) Biologically and fundamentally attributed differences by gender, (2) Critiques of female sexuality and gender nonconformity, and (3) Support for the separation of social and cultural roles by gender. Results show that four of the five most popular conservative podcast shows today put forth content which supports such traditional and biblical notions of gender and the roles ascribed to men or women. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Hermione Zhou

Populist Through and Through: Consistency, Variations, and Framing Anchors of Populist Parties' Environmental Agendas

Scholarship on the intersection between populism and the environment is growing. These works generally describe populist parties as negatively disposed toward the environment. For instance, those parties are seen as promoting climate denial and skepticism, and as resisting pro-environmental policies and partnerships. Scholars have offered three types of explanations to account for such negative positions: structural, ideological, and strategic. While valuable, these works suffer from three important limitations: they predominantly focus on populist parties from Europe, consider only right-wing populist parties, and give little attention to parties with potentially more positive approaches to the environment. This thesis addresses these limitations by extending the analysis to Latin America and the U.S., left-leaning parties, and parties that adopt broadly pro-environmental agendas. The empirical analysis shows the landscape is significantly more varied than is currently understood. The thesis then argues that, despite the observable variations, populist parties' environmental agendas are ultimately anchored in their populist rhetoric. They are specifically grounded in three key populist features: people-centricity, nationalism, and anti-elitism. With that in mind, there are considerable variations in how these parties articulate the populist framing of their environmental agendas to fit their distinctive brand of populism. Overall, this thesis advances a fuller understanding of populism and populist parties' relationship to the environment.

Social Media

Walter Lawless Braun
Conspiracies in America: COVID-19, Media Outlets, and Political Actors

Over the past thirty years, democratic nations have increasingly elected populist politicians into executive office; not so coincidentally, these nations have also seen and experienced rises in conspiratorial ideation and the dissemination of conspiracy theories and misinformation. Conspiracy and misinformation beliefs are not unique to the 21st century, as they historically manifest from anti-institutional and anti-elitist sentiments. Further, the ways in which conspiracies and misinformation are disseminated have remained the same. Despite these consistencies, the rise in populist rhetoric in the U.S. compounded with the normalization of conspiracies and misinformation on media outlets have exposed public susceptibility to falsehoods. Susceptibility to misinformation and conspiracy theories is caused by the selective retention of information to complement and reinforce individuals' ideological beliefs. Similarly, individual susceptibility is bolstered by subscriptions to the allure of populist agendas, which ultimately create contention, fragmentation, and animosity among the public. Social polarization in turn leads to echo chambers, which further contributes to individual beliefs in conspiracies and misinformation. COVID-19 presented unprecedented social, economic, and political circumstances, and provides insight into the exacerbating factors that underpin beliefs in conspiracy theories and misinformation and ultimately help explain COVID-19 related conspiracy phenomena.

Kate Richards

"Blah Blah Blah:" Rhetorical Strategies of Youth Climate Activists on Twitter

Social movements have long used media and technology to spread a narrative, call global attention to their issues, and attempt to bring visibility to their collective cause. Both the evolving field of social media and the broad coalition of youth seeking new routes of political participation stand as significant potential actors in the future of activism. I connect the two growing literatures of rhetorical strategies on Twitter and contemporary youth activism to study collective identity, collective action, and environmental justice in youth digital activism rhetoric. With these three concepts as a framework, I ask how youth climate activists use rhetorical framings on Twitter to sustain their movement during the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). I conduct a content analysis of tweets from 20 youth activists' Twitter accounts over a 15-day period around the conference. The youth activists range from 15-25 years old and are from 14 different countries. I identify three rhetorical strategies youth climate activists evoke to connect with the larger movement: presentation of self as a persuasive tool, a multidimensional approach to physical and digital protest with the linguistic functions of Twitter, and the utilization of emotion to drive a moral imperative for their cause. These strategies demonstrate the potential of social media activism and the power of youth culture together to create a collective identity within a diverse generation as well as evoke values around environmental justice to drive collective action.

Emily Samar
A Study of Social Media Influencers

This thesis addresses the growing phenomenon of social media influencers (SMI) and the harmful effects that they have on young females in society today. Social media influencers have the ability to inspire and guide others to purchase products that they promote, alter behavioral tendencies of their followers through fitness and eating habits, and SMIs can also change the way one may think about their life path and career goals. In an effort to uncover how SMIs have been negatively impacting young females I look at scholarly literature and secondary sources to understand the growth of SMIs today. Additionally, I dive into information surrounding the Facebook whistleblower and the research that was uncovered about Instagram and it's harmful effects. I conducted surveys and sent them out to the Bates community asking for voluntary participation to gather data from this population to understand how social media influencers impact their everyday lives and mental wellbeing. Following this, I identified two theoretical frameworks that allow for a further understanding of this phenomenon, social learning theory, and strain theory. These theories enabled me to uncover cultural and societal pressures that are presented and created by SMIs through the use of social media and how they further harm our society. Throughout this process I found that the literature presented information about how SMIs are now seen as marketing and advertising tools and this can lead to individuals feeling as if they have to mimic and copy their behaviors in order to achieve that perception of being perfect. Secondly, my survey responses highlighted that the sample population did not believe SMIs to be authentic and that they do sometimes struggle while engaging with SMIs on social media and they begin to question their worth.

Dana Swartz
Why TikTok Deserves More Credit: An Analysis of the Way Social Activism Manifests on the Modern Platform

With over one billion active users, TikTok is the fastest growing social media platform in existence. What is known to be strictly an entertainment app flooded with dance routines, comedy sketches and cooking tutorials has now become a successful space for social activism. This thesis is situated within the cultural relevance of social media activism and how it functions differently on each major platform. My research specifically focuses on what makes TikTok's approach successful and unlike any platform we have seen before. In an effort to understand what exactly makes social activism on TikTok different, I analyze a number of diverse videos by examining their content, presentation, and age demographic dimensions. The main findings are that TikTok creators are finding innovative and trending ways to facilitate discussion surrounding social justice issues. Given this, the app has attracted younger audiences to engage and participate in social activism. This thesis is concluded by reflecting on what it means for the future of social change as TikTok bridges the gap between young people and social activism.

Race & Immigration

Nana Baffoe

Double Veil, Triple Consciousness: A DuBoisian examination of Black American Muslim racialization and placemaking

Over the last several decades, the religious epithet "Muslim" has evolved into a quasi-racial category both in sociological scholarship and popular reckoning. Some scholars posit that in the post-9/11 United States, "Muslim" has come to refer to Americans who appear to be of Arab or South Asian descent. This recent racialization of Islam has led scholars of race to study the Muslim American experience in ways that obfuscate the experiences of Black American Muslims, who make up a quarter of the USA's three and a half million Muslims. As a result, there is a formidable want of sociological literature on how belonging to two differently racialized identities affects Black American Muslims' assimilation and placemaking. This paper draws on W.E.B. Du Bois's theory of the Double Consciousness to argue that Black American Muslims face a triple consciousness by virtue of being Black, Muslim, and American. Then, using qualitative semi-structured interviews, the author finds that gender, ethnic identity, physical appearance, location, and personal disposition affect how this triple consciousness manifests itself. This study reveals the need for the de-racialization of the term "Muslim" and the need for further scholarship considering the role of religion in American racial identity formation.

Jeremy Bruce
"A lot of folks out here on campus think it's a utopia that they're living in": A Student-Centered Exploration of Racial Separation at Bates College

Scholarship on racial separation at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) investigates why students primarily form friendships and conduct their social lives around people of the same racial backgrounds as them. Generally, findings show that racial separation on campus is perceived by students to be either 'normal' and 'natural,' or, caused by students of color. Sociologists refute these claims, arguing that the phenomenon stems from the unmarked whiteness of institutional structures that normalize segregation, and white students that use their power to exclude students of color from their social lives. This thesis employs qualitative data from 14 semi-structured interviews to explore how Bates students experience and perceive racial separation on campus. My research differs from past work on the topic in that most respondents, regardless of their race, attributed racial separation to either white students' attitudes or institutional failures. Grounded in social boundaries theory and Elijah Anderson's theory of white space, I argue that racial separation at Bates College is mainly caused by (a.) the institution being a white space and (b.) white students' exclusivity on campus. These lead to students of color feeling unwelcome and alienated in the environment, necessitating informal connection with their peers and investment in racial affinity clubs.

Ronan Goulden

The 'Forever Migrant:' An Intersectional Analysis of L/A Workplace Discrimination on the Basis of Race, African Accent, and English Language Proficiency

Sociological literature has well documented patterns of workplace discrimination on the basis of racialized identities. This thesis analyzes a specific pattern of perceived workplace discrimination against those who are non-white, have African accents, and lack English language proficiency in the Lewiston-Auburn area (L/A). To understand this problem, a community-based research semi-structured interview about barriers to accessing the L/A workforce was conducted. I argue that utilizing Rosa's and Flores' raciolinguistic perspective, workers with African accents and English language barriers face workplace discrimination within the intersection of their race and linguistic identity. Those with African accents are perceived to be a L/A area archetype of African refugees and migrants which I call 'a forever migrant,' being assumed to have little education, job skills, intelligence, and trustworthiness within the workplace. Meanwhile, non-white individuals with English language barriers are perceived to be unemployable no matter the importance of English language skills in the job they are applying for, being sometimes seen as a burden to employers. These patterns of linguistic discrimination are found to proliferate in part because those with African accents and English language barriers assume responsibility to be a 'good neoliberal citizen,' through personally attempting to rid of their accent or language barrier. This allows white supremacy to proliferate in the L/A workplace, giving those with African accents and English language barriers an ultimatum to either assimilate to whiteness by ridding of their accent and native language or be subjected to linguistic discrimination by their employer.

Ashley Koman

Stigma and the American Jewess: Testing Goffman's Theories on Stigma Through the Experiences of Early Twentieth Century Jewish Immigrants

Early twentieth-century Jewish immigrants in the United States were stigmatized by non-Jewish people for their religion and by fellow Jewish people for their nations of origin as they navigated their growing and changing identities in a new country. Many of these immigrants left their homelands due to religious persecution, and while they did not necessarily find quite the same degree of hate in the United States, Jewish immigrants still had to grapple with stigmatization for who they were. Faced with the choice between assimilating to the new country or holding fast to the old, this period represents a tumultuous navigation of identity as immigrants either made a choice or resisted the pressure to choose how they would align. In this thesis, I employ Erving Goffman's stigma theory, which discusses the ways in which individuals will react to being stigmatized, including theories revolving around group alignment and ambivalence. I test these theories by analyzing their applicability to the experiences of these early-twentieth century Jewish immigrants as they faced assimilation and stigmatization. Ultimately, I find that Goffman's 1963 work, Stigma, largely applies to the stigmatization of early twentieth-century Jewish immigrants, as well as their reactions to such stigmatizations.

Abdulwahab A. Mohamed

Somali Racialization: Exploration in the Social and Cultural Difference Between First Generation Somali Immigrants and Second Generation Somali-Americans

The Somali Diaspora has been an integral part of the way Somali across the world live their lives. Since the first wave of Somali immigrants arriving to America in the early 1990s, there have been processes of assimilation and racialization that many don't speak of due to the nature of categorizing them as "immigrants." The two questions that drive my research are: 1) How are Somali immigrants and Somali-Americans racialized during their assimilation process? 2) How does this influence the generational experiences of Somali immigrants and Somali-Americans socially and culturally? By diving deeper into the understanding of these processes, I conducted a qualitative analysis where I interviewed 7 Somali immigrants and Somali-Americans about their experiences regarding race, gender, and identity. My findings show that Somali immigrants carry their traditions when making decisions that may affect the way they are racialized compared to Somali-Americans who are more keen to acknowledge who they are racially.

Paige Sonoda

Beyond the Model Minority: An Exploration of Asian and Asian American Student Experiences Through the Lens of Settler-Constructed Racial Hegemony

This study explores the racialized experiences of Asians and Asian Americans at Bates College. Analysis of these experiences is situated within the lenses of settler colonialism and Claire Kim's (1999) theory of racial triangulation. While much of the contemporary rhetoric surrounding Asian and Asian American identity centers the model minority myth, historically the community has been racialized as the "yellow peril" or "forever foreigners." These images are juxtaposed with the white-constructed model minority narrative, and prove formative to both the identity formation and social experiences of students at Bates. As a predominantly white institution (PWI), Bates offers a unique setting in which to analyze Asian and Asian American racialization. I conducted 15 semi-structured virtual interviews with Bates College students via Zoom. Participants ranged in age, gender identity, ethnic identity, and nationality. The following themes emerged based on interviews: (1) lack of collective identity, (2) social exclusion, and (3) gendered racialized experiences. The construction of Asians and Asian Americans as proximal to whiteness overshadows the diverse range of experiences within the community, silencing the most marginalized voices and overemphasizing those who embody the white-constructed model minority myth. These findings suggest that future research should continue to interrogate the impacts of white-constructed frameworks of Asian and Asian American identity, highlighting the need to move beyond the model minority narrative. Understanding the ways in which settler colonialism and white supremacy undermine Asian and Asian American racialization is essential in achieving collective liberation.

Education

Eben Cook

A Voice of Rhyme and Reason: Using Critical Race Theory and Freirean Pedagogy as Frameworks for a Hip-Hop Education on Police Violence

Since its conception and eventual ascension into the commercial space, rap music has been placed under a unique microscope of public perception, widely regarded in the US as a perpetuating force rife with themes rooted in violence and misogyny. Despite these omnipresent sentiments, this art form — birthed as a platform for black and brown individuals to voice their resistance against oppressive forces — has evolved into a staple of mainstream popular culture with roughly 75% of its audience being white by the beginning of the 2000s (Rose 2008). This study adds to existing literature that views rap music not as a brainwasher of our youth, but as an educational tool with the capacity to provide potent commentary on social issues such as racialized police violence. More specifically, this research acknowledges the surge of white rap consumers and shares stories of racial discrimination at a Predominantly White Institution using an interweaving of Critical Race Theory and Freirean pedagogy frameworks. I "teach" an hour-long, seminar-style focus group composed of eight students at Bates College who listen to rap music, and subsequently conduct a qualitative analysis of the discussions and written reflections that filled the hour. Findings of the focus group shed light on a plethora of social issues and themes that permeate rap music related and unrelated to the police, both in its content (violence, misogyny, racial inequality, etc.) and artistry (production, lyricism, storytelling, etc.). I propose that the CRT and Freirean pedagogy frameworks foster an engaging and vulnerable learning environment in which students can grapple with their positionality within the context of stories shared by the actual teachers: rap artists.

Mary Corcoran
Restorative Practice Implementation at Lewiston Middle School: A Community Based Research Project

American school systems hold great potential to foster intellectual and emotional growth for youth of all identities and backgrounds. Unfortunately, due to the shift towards zero tolerance policies, places of education have become key contributors to the school to prison pipeline, and the disproportionate discriminatory disciplining of BIPOC students has led to the criminalization of these youth within schools. Restorative practice (RP) is one of the most promising solutions to address this crisis. In this community-engaged research project, I interview members of the Lewiston Middle School Restorative Practice Strategic Planning Team (LMS RP SPT) to help answer the question: How do members of the LMS RP SPT imagine successful implementation of restorative practice in consideration of the identified needs and strengths of the school and community? I argue that the LMS RP SPT shares widespread agreement that there is great potential of RP to create a more inclusive school culture and better discipline outcomes, particularly for BIPOC students. Team members varied more in the specific aspects of RP they are most excited about and in the mechanisms they identify for realizing the potential of RP, but overall three key mechanisms emerged as important to them: clearly defined systems of both communication and response to perceived misconduct, staffing adjustments, and culture changes to relationship dynamics and antiracist restorative practice understanding.

Olivia Skillings

Teaching Children about Race and Racism:
A Community Based Research Project
Exploring Elementary Curriculum

Discussions of social identity and race often do not begin in a child's education until college. However, recent literature and research indicates that children are ready to engage with these subjects at a much younger age. This thesis argues that elementary aged students should be taught about race and racism through the three frameworks of critical race theory, anti-racism education and social justice pedagogy in conjunction with social-emotional learning. For this thesis I perform community-based research and conduct informal interviews at Farwell Elementary School in Lewiston Maine to conceptualize how race and racism should be taught to young students. This thesis, situated in sociological literature on racism and education, suggests that elementary school students should be taught about race, and racism at a young age through the reading of diverse picture books, activities, and discussions. Critical race theory, anti-racism education, and social justice pedagogy in conjunction with social emotional learning competencies offer frameworks that can guide education on race and racism for elementary aged students. Throughout my partnership with Farwell, I developed a curriculum centered on diverse picture books and included the three frameworks of critical race theory, anti-racism education, and social justice pedagogy.

Caroline Sweeney

It Goes Beyond the Classroom: The Social and Emotional Impacts of Being Diagnosed with a Learning Disability

Participating in classroom discussions, group projects or raising one's hand to answer a question can be intimidating for some individuals. For example, it can cause a sense of anxiety for fear of what peers or professors may think if you answer the question wrong. For some, the thought of being nervous when contributing to the classroom seems the complete opposite. For these individuals, they love to contribute, ask questions, and raise their hands. Nonetheless, each experience in the classroom is different for every student. This thesis explores classroom experiences of students who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and have registered accommodations with Bates College. The students took part in a zoom interview that lasted between twenty and forty five minutes. Within this time frame, the students explained their middle and high school experience, relationships with peers and teachers, and how their mental health has been impacted. It was found that the students' time of diagnosis had an impact on their overall experiences with peers, teachers and change of mental health. Students who were diagnosed at Bates experienced an increased sense of anxiety, had peer comments, and felt that they were impacted outside of the classroom. Students who were diagnosed prior to entering Bates College had various impacts. Some had a similar experience as those who were diagnosed at Bates, and others experienced no peer comments, yet felt an increased sense of anxiety. Therefore, I argue that the time of diagnosis impacts the individual's experience, and overall learning disabilities no matter the timing, increase a sense of anxiety. This thesis portrays the stories and memories of those who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and how their diagnosis impacts them in various aspects of life.

Emma Vieten

Massachusetts to Maine: A Comparative Case Study Examining the Ways in Which Location and Identity Impact Access to Special Education Services

Within the realm of inequality in American Public Education lies inequality in the instance of special education resources and access. This research examines the ways in which an individual's race and socioeconomic status impact their access to special education services and resources in public schools. Reflection of published literature suggests that students of color and students from lower socioeconomic status have a harder time accessing special education resources. In this research, I employ a comparative case study approach to compare the accessibility of special education resources in two school districts with drastically different racial and socioeconomic demographics. The results of this case study support the ideas suggested in literature regarding students of color and students from lower classes facing more barriers to accessing special education resources than their white, upper class counterparts. These findings offer further proof that reform is necessary not only in special education, but in American public education as a whole.

Social Norms & Family

Anthony Costa
The Stigmatization of Single Parenthood

The stigma of single parenthood fosters subjective perspectives held throughout society in which the parent and child, or children, encounter non-inclusive marginalized interactions and experiences. The role of parenthood plays a crucial part in one's upbringing because parental figures hold influences over those they care for (Sprey 1967). Having said that, this paper examines the degree to which parents can care for and support their children, and how it is heavily reliant and influenced by the perceptions held by members of society. In order to address the disparities against single parent families, programs and therapeutic interventions regarding substance abusers and ex-offenders can minimize the degree to which single parents come across stigmatization. By the same token, a child's upbringing can be improved through the utilization of these programs, where they possess more opportunities and resources that they may not otherwise have. Creating welcoming environments, accepting of single parents with the urgency to improve their living conditions creates opportunities for these families that deal with stigmatization daily (McClanahan and Adams 1989). Single parenthood implies social consequences, as does substance abuse and ex-offender status. When integrating these personas and the levels of stigmatization each encounter, there are similarities that can be combated through the usage of therapeutic programs and interventions.

Meredith Lane

How Social Norms Exist, Manifest, and Perpetuate: A Study of the Bates College Dining Hall

Social norms are a foundational aspect of society, as they are the unwritten rules that provide us with social order and accepted standards of behavior. Different groups of people develop their own social norms over time that correlate with their attitudes and beliefs. Social norms are what bring people of shared identities together, but also separate groups from one another. Therefore, they can be viewed as beneficial in some instances, but also problematic in others. While there is a substantial amount of research on social norms existing and manifesting, there is less research on the exact modes for how specific social norms are passed down to new members of a community. To provide a better understanding of this process, this study aims to examine how social norms play a role on the Bates College campus. Particularly, this study looks at the Bates Dining Commons (Commons), which is the single dining hall on campus, where students of different backgrounds, identities and cultures come together in a shared space. Five specific dining areas were identified. One-on-one interviews were conducted with students that regularly sit in each of these areas of Commons. During the interviews students were first asked if social norms exist and how they manifest in Commons. They were then asked questions about specific ways the social norms are passed down in Commons. Qualitative analysis of the interviews involved coding responses into six key categories looking for overlapping and differing ideas. In filling the gap in the literature, this study showed that while social norms consistently exist and manifest in Commons, they are perpetuated either by verbal communication or they are demonstrated and observed. In analyzing these findings, additional data offered some possible reasons behind the nuanced pattern of how social norms are perpetuated.

Sarah Mehrberg

Are People Judging Me?: A Study of Bates College Students' Perception of Eating Alone in Commons

My thesis explored the experience Bates students have while eating alone in Commons. Starting from when students first arrive, and even up until senior year, I have always heard comments that people are afraid to eat alone in Commons. I found that this comes from a combination of factors including thinking of how others perceive them due to social anxiety, or simply just schedules not lining up. Even when we do finally venture out and go alone to Commons, students often feel pressure to look "busy" while eating. Through my online survey I analyzed why there is such a negative perception of eating alone here, and what students do to navigate this stigma. Some aspects I will consider include: who do students think is judging them, what do students do about this, and what are the everyday pressures around eating alone, including how they are shaped and negotiated by individuals and the student body as a whole. I also provided some background about both eating alone and commensality, including some global perspectives on eating alone. My thesis centered around the question: "how do Bates students negotiate the complexities of eating alone in Commons?". I also focused on Bates' goal of Commons and the college as a whole as being a place of togetherness, and the reality of the divisions and stress that Commons actually creates. This allowed me to conclude my thesis with suggestions for both the Bates administration and students, including the urge to create more two-person seating options in Commons.

Henry Morjikian
Are You My Brother?: Constructions of Family in the Fraternity

For the past several years, cases of sexual assault and hazing-related death in fraternities have caught the public eye. As a result, backlash against fraternity culture has ensued, with many raising questions as to the merit of their presence on college campuses. Research has looked into, for example, how pressures to uphold traditional masculine norms give rise to inappropriate behavior, however few have dug into the true essence of a fraternity. This thesis brings a new perspective. The fraternity operates with a similar dynamic to that of a family, emphasizing tight-knit bonds and lifetime loyalty. I thus ask two questions: What connections can be made between the family and the fraternity, if at all? And of those connections, what consequences do they produce? In this thesis, I conduct a content analysis of websites as published by eight fraternities. To test the presence of familial relationships in the fraternity, I apply Talcott Parsons' four dimensional model for social interactions between family members. By coding website content, I look to see whether the nature of intra-fraternity relationships fit the theory. The findings suggest that the relationships between fraternity brothers are congruent with those of family members, or at the very least are founded on a deliberate effort to be so. Subsequently, a theoretical sketch is drawn that labels the fraternity as a "pseudo-family." Implications, both positive and negative, are discussed.

Liam Orifici

The Use of Psychedelics in the Formation of Western Society: What are the Effects of Their Criminalization on Society Today

Note: no final abstract submitted, so this is the abstract for the senior's proposed Winter 2022 project as submitted in late fall 2021…

Throughout history and to this day, various societies around the world emphasize the importance of psychedelic compounds within their cultures as an aid to the development of the individual and the collective consciousness of those societies. The last fifty years represent a massive shift away from the norms in how western societies approach the use of psychedelic drugs within society. People in power have made an active effort to suppress these compounds from being used by the masses, with propaganda efforts lying about the effects of these substances and keeping scientists from studying these substances for medical purposes. Over the last fifty years, our global society has also been revolutionized by globalization, technological advancement and burdened by issues such as climate change, overpopulation, and social divide domestically and internationally. In this proposed thesis, I will examine the roles of psychedelic substances in ancient and current societies around the world whilst gaining an understanding of why these substances have been framed so negatively in western society today.