

MASTER OF ARTS IN CULTURAL STUDIES GRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

May 30, 2015

Research Abstracts (*listed alphabetically by last name*)

Ryan Blanco

Interstate Diaries: Searching for Freedom, Authenticity and Self along the American Highway

My research visits the American highway in the effort to reflexively engage my conception of freedom, nostalgia and self-identity through autoethnographic performance. I concern my analysis with observing the intersections of these along two separate research experiences traveling along the roadways of the United States. The first involved hitchhiking 4,793 miles of interstate across America interrogating my conception of freedom and the right of travel. The second experience investigates the cultural politics of nostalgia along Route 66 in the American southwest. What emerges is an intimate reflection and interrogation of myself against the social realities of race, class and gender along the roadways of America. Revealed are the uncomfortable truths about privilege on the formation of my understanding about America particularly along the highway. What I achieve through my work is a wider social and cultural understanding necessary to reimagine a more honest representation of a significant American cultural space.

Suzanne M. Cohen

Feed Your Mind: Expanding Perspectives with Nontraditional Casting and Post-play Discussions

Performance offers unique ways of knowing that can challenge entrenched paradigms, contribute to pluralism and expand the range of meaningful action. In my capstone thesis, I investigate ways in which nontraditional casting and post-play discussions can help mainstream (mostly white) theatre audiences navigate the cultural politics of racial identity, expand their perspectives and co-produce meaning. I begin by tracing the genealogy of colorblind and non-traditional casting practices in the United States to establish the historical representation of racialized bodies on stage. I then analyze audience, spectator and reception theories to refine models of how audiences make meaning, building a case of support for Mirror Stage's Feed Your Mind approach to disrupting reductively essentialist assumptions, and engaging "traditional" theatre audiences in discussions that help them recognize the experiences and perspectives of others.

Janelle L. Davis

“Trickster Remembers:” Negotiating Morality and Identity in Tabletop Gaming through Trickster Mythology

This paper draws on an interdisciplinary analysis of narrative logic and performance studies theories to question whether cultural intervention can be achieved through the lens of tabletop roleplaying games. Using the author-created tabletop roleplaying game “Trickster Remembers” as a case study, this paper briefly examines the game's invocation of the Trickster archetype and foundation in Native and First Nations myth, literature, and memoir. This research uses focus groups for playtest sessions to investigate player responses to a game situation in which they adopt personae of children attending an Indian boarding school in 1909. The purpose of this approach is to determine if active and thoughtful engagement with cultural/historical processes through a game system rewarding nonviolent dilemma negotiation represents a viable avenue for resistance to dominant cultural narratives around race and history, and to test the effectiveness of applying the narrative and performative paradigms to tabletop role-playing games.

Stephanie D. Driessel and Mahala K Lettvin

Fall on Your Knees: Sex worker Outreach Groups and the Rights versus Rescue Discourse

Sex work is an emotionally charged moral quandary for many in academia, activist organizations, and feminist schools of thought. In simplistic terms there are those who argue for the agency and rights of a sex worker (rights) and those who view sex work as inherently violent and thus seek to rehabilitate sex workers (rescue). In this research, Stephanie Driessel and Mahala Lettvin explore two outreach organizations: the Genesis Project and the Sex Worker Outreach Project - Seattle chapter. Through participatory observation and interviews with each organization, we conduct a comparative analysis of the different approaches these two organizations employ to reach the same target population. Exploring the power of discourse, we reflect on the ways stigmatizing discourses are challenged, reinforced, or internalized. As we position ourselves within these discourses, our research highlights the power of images, text, and language, and shows the ways in which harmful dominant narratives are being combated by rights organizations.

Nafasi B. Ferrell

Towards A Vision of Intergenerational Pedagogy Through Hip-Hop and Poetry

How can dialogue be used to redefine the social world that is continuously shaping society through texts and language? My educational journey has focused on using the arts to further forms of pedagogy that are dialogical, critical and creative. Through the foundations of critical pedagogy and critical literacy, my research focuses on affirming the power of dialogue and knowledge that can provide everyday community members with basic tools to begin challenging and re-imagining their social positioning in society. This presentation highlights my

capstone workshop, LET'S TALK! Race and Class Through Hip-Hop and Poetry. Using the mediums of hip-hop and poetry, the workshop provided participants with new ways of telling stories, sharing experiences and creating collective knowledge through counter-language and counter-texts. Based on conclusions drawn from this workshop, I argue that this form of community engagement advocates for the development of community spaces where people across generations can come together to discuss and imagine new ways of transforming the oppressive social structures that govern our world.

Dominique Garcia

What Brings You in Today? The Embodiment of Structural Marginalization in Patients

The interaction between a physician and their patient is a critical moment where trust and care are established. This study evaluates the ways patients from marginalized groups interact with their primary care physicians, and how these physicians perceive and interact with their patients. I examine how stigmas and biases held by both patients and physicians can impact the kind of health care received and delivered. This pilot study explored these questions during 13 semi-structured interviews with primary care physicians and patients. The qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed for thematic content, and used to create a report with a summary of the findings and recommendations for primary care physicians, created in collaboration with patient participants. While patients were often aware of structural limitations their physicians were bound to, such as inadequate time or volume of patients, many of them valued time spent with them, empathy shown by physicians, and continuity of care by the same provider. This project is to serve as a catalyst to challenge physicians' preconceived notions of care, and to inspire a partnership between physicians and their patients.

Lacey Grove

Defaulting on Representation: Native American Cultural Identity in the Space of the Museum

Cultural institutions like the museum have a staked claim on culture and are seen as an authoritative voice on the cultural narratives that they provide. While the institution of the museum has changed significantly with modern social demands, it still retains some of the characteristics and practices of alterity from its imperialistic past. Within the context of this space, Pacific Northwest Native American tribes are often described and represented. The local native tribes are a significant part the history in the Pacific Northwest, but still are only remotely visible. Using Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, I will explore the narratives and representations of Pacific Northwest Native Americans within the space of regional museums, and inquire how the museum space interpellates and reproduces a narrative of Native American cultural identity.

Alexandra Holien

Our House: The Soul of Seattle's Central District

William Grose was the second African American to move to Seattle, and after racial restrictions kept him out of Washington's thriving industrial sector, he instead opened a restaurant and a barbershop in Seattle's Central District called Our House. This restaurant and barbershop would later become the foundation of the African American community in Seattle. This project sets out to examine the historic and existing connections that African Americans have to the four square mile area in Seattle known as the Central District (CD). Through ethnographic interviews, this study explores why African Americans in Seattle's CD value, nurture, and need, the physical space of the CD. To not only to feel as though they are included in a greater, whiter Seattle, but also because SPACE is what serves as the vessel that spurs on black identity production and culture throughout the community. By connecting notions of place-based "belonging", to how that sense of belonging perpetuates black cultural identity in the CD, this work also speaks to larger conversations around gentrification and the need to protect culturally significant neighborhoods.

Julie K. Hurst

Self(ie) Exploration: Identity and Representation in Study Abroad

As US-based institutions seek to increase awareness of study abroad opportunities while advocating for diversification of program opportunities, it is safe to say that marginalized students' experiences can be far different from those of their counterparts in the majority. This project examines how students traditionally underrepresented in study abroad make meaning of their experiences and highlights my UW Bothell community-based storytelling workshop, Self(ie) Exploration: Identity and Study Abroad. Through the use of storytelling and selfie photos, students were invited to critically reflect on their experiences abroad in relation to their identities. With selfies, the camera is directed at oneself, and the literal lens changes. Is the selfie and the act of taking it, then, a way to disrupt the dominant narrative that seeks to determine for whom the benefits of study abroad are most valuable?

Heather M. Kosaka

New Discourses in the Alberta Oil Sands

My research proposal demonstrates how the Athabaskan oil sands stand at the confluence of some of the most prominent global socio-economic processes of the 21st century. The shift in corporate culture and strategy that has led to outward gestures of ethics-based corporate self-governance as a puzzling but perhaps predictable rejoinder to the Environmental Justice and Indigenous rights movement and activism against oil extraction. In light of the increasing prevalence of neoliberal governmentalties that emphasize "responsibility" and "self-governance" the discursive grounds for collective action are continually shifting. How these shifts impact what kinds of action can take place is a very important question to be answered.

Concetta Leggio

Representations of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Prime Time Crime Television

This paper looks at representations of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on crime television shows. Specifically, *Law and Order: SVU* (Wolf et al., 1999), *NCIS* (Bellisario, 2003), and *Minds* (Gordon, 2005). Each of these shows follows a team of characters who track down criminals that have committed violent crimes. The characters that make up these crime solving teams are exposed to violence and the threat of death or actual deaths of characters in every episode. This paper discusses how PTSD is represented in the characters and storylines in response to trauma; specifically focusing on gender. Using visual and textual analysis to understand how gender is represented in the construction of the characters that are identified in the episodes with post-traumatic stress disorder after experiencing trauma. This paper discusses how these portrayals inform or interrupt existing narratives of what PTSD is and who is at risk of developing it.

Lisa Mackie

Humanizing the Public Education System through the Reprioritization of Arts Learning

This project explores the question of how Arts Learning is correlated to the development of non-cognitive skills that are essential for student success in school. It was born out of a combination of personal experience and an interest in a project that Seattle based nonprofit, Arts Corps, is undertaking around an arts integrated approach to developing academic mindsets. Using my experience as a disenfranchised student and the observation of my younger brother's turn away from a punitive education system, my hope is to shed light on the ways art can be used to open students to learning by connecting with their human proclivity towards divergent thinking, embodied ways of knowing, and honoring a variety of forms of knowledge production. Harnessing the power of the imagination to engage students, this project seeks to contribute to the collective work of rectifying the looming inequalities that currently plague our public education system.

Joyce K. Mwangi

The Green Card as A Global Relationship: Understanding Representation, Meaning and Experience from a Cultural Studies Commodity Chain Approach

A green card is the legal document that grants individual's lawful permanent resident status in the United States. However, a green card has a much more complex meaning that goes beyond the legal government definition. This research employs a green card commodity global chain analysis as strategy to understand what the green card means. Specifically the research claims that; a) Public media representations of the green card shape public understanding of the meaning and value of a green card, b) the media representations are used in framing discourses that form the knowledge about a green card. This knowledge translates into practice that shapes a green card holder's experience as an immigrant in the United States, and c) the green

card, like any other commodity, involves commodity exchanges, and its flows create complicated networks of the meaning and value of a green card. This research introduces a Cultural Studies commodity chain approach to understanding representation, meaning and experience.

Chrysta Storm

Personal Reflections on being a Gatekeeper: Deconstructing the Mandated Reporter and Challenging Narratives of “Bad” Parents in Social Services

I have been exploring the cultural productions and meanings surrounding social service institutions and child welfare systems and the many ways they interconnect and construct meanings. I take an internal view, performing auto-ethnographic research to look at my own role in the systems I am attempting to question. In my research I focus on child welfare and my role as a mandated CPS reporter, I use multiple sources of data to interpret the cultural construction of the role and how I interpret its meaning through others. I also look towards alternative ways of protecting children and thinking about radical allyship as an important aspect of social services moving towards a social justice frame. I have found that looking both internally and externally is an ongoing process that I must work towards to keep from ignoring the pivotal impacts good intentions can make on people's lives.

Mollie Wolf

Holes in Hegemony: Reimagining Social Movements through a Politics of Care

Social movements, positioned at the forefront of resistance and social transformation, provide a ripe territory for collectively visioning and creating the world we want to see. This work explores the politics of care in social movements, focusing on building relationships and structuring economies, including and beyond through financial processes. My work integrates the process of transformation (the *how*) with the goals (the *what*), taking seriously the ways that people relate to and care for each other as an integral aspect of struggle. This work emerges from my engagement with three projects in the Seattle area from 2014-2015: a grassroots philanthropy and donor organizing project that re-envision nonprofit fundraising, a solidarity economy based on farmworker justice and food sovereignty, and a direct action supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. Through them, I argue that social movements can be exponentially more effective and generative when we take seriously the possibilities of finding holes in hegemonic structures of capitalism and neoliberalism, imagining and enacting relationships and economies based in a politics of care. This project lays groundwork for a zine I will create featuring voices of social movement participants about the politics of care.