Sociology/Social Work Review

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THE GCU SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

VOLUME 2

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WELCOME TO THE SOCIOLOGY/ SOCIAL WORK REVIEW – VOL. 2

Welcome to the Second Edition of The Sociology/Social Work Review. This edition came together because of the collaboration of the sociology and social work departments of Grand Canyon University. The students took the idea of a review and have made it theirs. The SSWR is a student-run review by which students participated in the article selection process, editing, and even participating at university-wide events to talk to students about the Review.

The purpose of this review is to provide students a place to express, through writing, their life experiences viewed through the disciplines of sociology and social work. Phoenix and the broader world become the social science lab to bring the students' social experience into focus, through the use of sociology and social work tools of analysis, resulting in a student-led journal. This endeavor values students' experiential learning of sociology and social work with the expressive tool of writing.

The second edition showcases our students' experience as it relates to sociology and social work content. This edition includes the examination of culture, from deaf culture to Mexican-American culture to multiple global cultures. Students also share their experience with the intersection of Social Work and Christianity. We are excited that the second edition also has articles from the MSW program at GCU. Well done to our students who took up the idea of a student-run review – from the student editors and writers to the English Department's student professional writing group's editing team. You made this happen.

Finally, a nod to the faculty and support of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, who labored in support of our students to make this Sociology/Social Work Review a reality.

Faculty Advisor and Faculty Lead – Sociology/Social Work Review
Timothy M. Larkin M.S.W., M.Div., PhD.
Professor of Sociology
Grand Canyon University

Sociological Implications of Deaf Culture

by Scott Twining

Class of 2024

Being born into complete silence, then realizing the world is not silent is like going from seeing only black and white and then realizing everything is in full color. The painting that was once just a sketch became the Mona Lisa. A person once approached me with genuine curiosity regarding my deafness, claiming I should not be ashamed of it, but instead embrace it as part of my identity. While assessing the core structures that go into forming identity, this requires a clear outline that includes personal experience, as well as the assumed identities that exist in culture, to create finally a reflection that can include all the viewpoints in relation to the larger deaf community.

Personal Background

After being diagnosed bilaterally deaf at the age of one, I was given a cochlear implant at fourteen months old and the other at three years old, establishing genuine connection with the hearing community for the first time. In learning about the deaf community and ASL during early high school years, I was culturally isolated because I did not understand why deaf people rejected devices that assisted in hearing. However, it became more understandable as people experiencing hearing loss at different times of their life can make transitioning to a hearing community extremely difficult.

Deaf Culture Background

Deafness, as a psychological condition, acquires different identities from the hearing and deaf community. Stebnicki et al. (1999) defines deafness as "a loss of hearing sufficiently severe to render an understanding of conversational speech impossible in most situations, with or without a hearing aid" (para. 2). As a condition that can hinder an engaging conversation among hearing people, deaf people looked for their own communication methods that was effective in assessing the problem. In this shift in communication methods, Stebnicki et al. (1999) indicates that deaf people condemn the attempt to be a part of hearing communities, and instead should learn ASL, so people are able to find true acceptance and value in the cultural community. As a result, they discover identities for themselves through various methods.

Identities

There are a couple identities within the deaf community and personal life that reflects the sociological concept, "The Self". Upon examining the different identities, Holcomb (1997) explains that there is a culturally isolated identity which describes a deaf person who does not want to interact with deaf people, commonly dismisses sign language, and takes pride in functioning in the hearing world. Hearing-dominant bicultural identity stems from someone "who has limited involvement in the Deaf community but who can interact comfortably with deaf people when the opportunity arises" (Holcomb, 1997, p. 90). Ultimately, these identities can also be a deaf-dominant identity or an in-between cultures identity which is broken down to what makes the self in deaf culture. "The Self", according to Charles Horton's "Looking-glass self" theory, is based on the social structures one associates with through their physical experience in society, "The Self" or identity is discovered (Cooley, p. 20, 1998). From a personal perspective, the deaf community embraces discovering oneself, however, leans towards the idea of finding identity within deafness. The different identities are broken up in what encompasses personal life and aspects of deaf culture.

Reflection

In terms of personal identity growing up, I found myself changing identities from a hearing-dominant identity to a reluctantly culturally isolated identity, then discovering my real identity in Christ. My family structure as a hearing household had a significant impact on me discovering my identity. The identity I came across was more accepting of both parties, the hearing-dominant identity, where I participated in deaf communal events during high school but I still held a preference for a hearing community. This became a reluctant struggle over time, leading to culturally isolated identity and resulting in isolation from the deaf community. Despite this, there was a bigger purpose to be sought for "The Self". In the later stages of high school and into college life, I began to discover the true meaning of Self through the salvation of Jesus Christ, who died to save everyone's sins. In moments of revelation, it shifted how I viewed deafness and others. Everyone is ultimately broken and incomplete, but through their suffering, they can be brought to God's love. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" ("The Holy Bible, New International

Version," n.d., Jeremiah 29:11). Assessing my identity allowed for a powerful purpose in Christ, as deafness does not define me as an individual.

Conclusion

Identity is constructed from the social foundations of society and personal experience. For the deaf community, growing up with their culture is crucial to understanding one's identity in deafness. It is important to be confident in one's identity when put to the test; similarly, I was able to persist and discover Self the moment I found Christ. The discovery of identity can be found through personal experience and interactions.

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The Time I Saw the Power of God in Social Work

by MicKenna Thompson

Class of 2025

I will never forget the moment. This single moment redefined my whole perspective on my future. This is the moment that confirmed that I was called to be a social worker. I see social workers as those who are called to show love and compassion. This is evidenced by their desire to advocate for those that do not have or are unable to use their own voices. This is not always an easy undertaking, but social workers face any challenges they encounter with ethics and dignity as they fight to support those that may not be able to fight their own battles.

I have known since I was young that I wanted to help people and be someone that encourages and supports people. Through volunteer opportunities, I was exposed to many communities where I witnessed diverse communities and community services. My most recent experience had to be one of the most impactful events of my life, it opened my eyes and brought to life my passion for helping people.

Through my local church I found City Hope, a food pantry in downtown Phoenix. At City Hope people who cannot afford their own groceries, clothes, hygiene products, etc. can come sign in, walk around the facility which has shelves loaded with items, and take whatever they need for their families. During my time there, I observed the lead workers and saw how they went about helping people. They took the grocery carts and walked around helping them to choose which items they wanted and/or needed. The whole time, the workers made conversation and created a connection and built a rapport. One moment I observed amazed me. The worker had gone through the whole line with a man who looked seemed eager to get his groceries and go. He looked older and tough, there wasn't much emotion behind his eyes. But, once they arrived at the section filled with Bibles, the-worker asked if he had one or needed one. The worker also asked if he could pray for the man. The man allowed him to, although he mentioned it probably wasn't going to help. As the leader prayed over him, the man's hardened exterior began to crumble, and he cried. He heard the words of God and he cried. Something touched his heart deeply. I became choked up at the unexpectedness and beauty of the moment. There are times when you have to give glory to God because, only He can touch people in that way.

There is something magnificent about assisting people in bettering their lives. God called people to continue to do His work and commanded, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39, English Standard Version). The Bible asks us to care for each other and lift each other up. Social workers do this on most days, and it truly is an honor. I've come to realize that when one is working it can be so easy to put all your efforts into your clients and forget to take time for yourself. I believe it is important to prioritize one's emotional and mental health while working in the field of Social Work. Another important factor that helps to keep life in balance is the professional organization of Social Work. The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics provides useful guidelines. The NASW states "social worker's primary goal is to help people in need and address social problems" (NASW, n.d.). I see the ideas asked of us in the Bible and the job of social workers as going hand in hand. Also, part of balancing our life is to realize that by utilizing compassion, gaining experience and education, and encouraging people exemplifies the word of Jesus. In that, we see Jesus' selflessness of showing kindness to individuals and communities in the purpose of a social worker.

In social work you can work with all different populations in need. Social workers can be seen everywhere, which I find fascinating. During my time serving the community, I have become better prepared for working with people from all walks of life. It has equipped me with the correct skills to do my job properly. I want to have an impact in the lives of as many people as I can. I want to partner with people to access needed resources. I also understand, we alone do not bring goodness upon other people. God controls and provides every good thing. He works through us to spread love and care to His people. Jesus deserves all the praise as He fills our hearts to touch lives with His compassion and resources. Social workers help people get back on their feet. We help others grow and it is all done in the glory of our Lord.

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Foreign Mirrors

by Lydia-Marie T. Mosher

Class of 2025

Modern Society tends to see identity as something fluid, constantly changing. The self is complex, and it is not something that can be fully understood without understanding the social world around us. Sociology dives into identity by exploring the social self. The social self is how one sees themselves in relation to others (Cooley, 1902). This is developed through self-awareness and self-image (Mead, 1913). Many Sociologists explain the self and how it develops differently; however, Charles Cooley's theory of the Looking Glass Self best explains my personal experiences. When I was eight years old, my family moved from America to Rwanda. After seven years of living in Rwanda, we moved to China for two years. While living in Rwanda, China, and America, I quickly learned how people perceived me. Whether the perception was because of my race, or how much money it was thought that I had or being a girl.

According to Cooley's theory of the Looking Glass Self, each person receives messages of who they are from the interactions they have with others. There are three interactions in the Looking Glass Self: People imagine how others perceive them, how others judge them due to these perceptions, and how people feel about them as a person due to the judgements (Cooley, 1902). This basically means that one's identity comes from realizing how others perceive them and accepting the attributes from others that they see in themselves. People want the image that they present themselves to match the judgments or messages from others.

The messages I received from others were often contradicting to another, which made it difficult to identify the attributes that fit me. In Rwanda and China, I would often hear "Muzungu" or "Waiguoren," the equivalent of the word "foreigner." This is often what I imagined people thought of me. In Rwanda, they were wary of newcomers because many had agendas, to convert people to Christianity or "help" them out of poverty. At the same time, some Rwandese were friendly to those who were trying to embrace the Rwandan culture. It was difficult to fully embrace the culture as I was at an international school that spoke predominately English. Therefore, people perceived me as foreign, judged me because even after seven years I was still foreign, and they seemed to have disapproving feelings toward me. In my school, people

used language as a barrier to keep the people they disapproved of out of their social circles. Some Rwandese students only wanted to get to know people who were like them, who understood their history, culture, and language. They would speak in only Kinyarwanda at lunch, in sports, and in class which excluded anyone who was not fluent, including Kenyans, Koreans, and other Americans. As a result, many of my friends were not fluent in Kinyarwanda and were not from Rwanda. The experience of being a foreigner was something many of my companions shared, which is why we became great friends.

When I moved to China, I expected people at my school to have the same opinions of me. The people in China did perceive me as a foreigner. However, their judgements and feelings towards me were more positive. My Chinese language abilities did not seem to dictate how people felt about me or how they treated me. One Chinese girl in my class told me that she was surprised that I was not the typical American "white girl" that she thought I would be. On another occasion, an American told me that I did not appear very American because of my previous international experiences. I attributed their confusion to my international experience of having many cultures within me and not knowing which one to embody. My school in China allowed me to blend my experiences instead of representing one particular culture. This gave me confidence, something I had not known I lacked before.

Finally, when I moved back to America for college, I found that people perceived me the way that I wanted them to. For those I did not know well, it seemed like I fit in well because I would act the way they expected me to. But those who got to know me further noticed that there was something odd about me. My friends would comment on my abnormal accent when I got excited. Or they noticed my behaviors such as, taking shoes off at the door and greeting and saying goodbye to everyone in the room. These actions led them to label me as a foreigner once more.

Though feeling like a foreigner everywhere can be discouraging, I have found hope in my spiritual identity. As a Christian, I believe that I am supposed to be a foreigner on this earth, as it is temporary. I have hope in a permanent home with God. Ephesians 2:19 says, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (ESV, Ephesians 2:19, 2019). It no longer matters what others attribute to my identity because I know the truth of who I am in Christ and that I have an eternal home among foreigners.

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The Reality of Being Undocumented

by Yarely Orozco Paniagua

Class of 2025

What if I told you "second-class citizens" are more than a societal status? There are many individuals who fall within this category, but refuse to accept their so-called destiny. I am one of them. There are several components that determine success, but I believe a variable that cannot be controlled should not be one of them. I am a successful student who has flourished in my academic journey despite the odds. And I am a DREAMer. This paper analyzes citizenship and policies from an undocumented university student's perspective.

I grew up in the United States just like any other American kid. In May of 2022, I graduated high school with a 4.95 GPA and was ranked in the top 1% of my graduating class. I took advantage of any opportunity I was given and was heavily involved in extracurricular activities. Despite all my accomplishments, I struggled navigating my academic journey. Why? Because of my immigration status. My grades and academic success were not a barrier; however the lack of resources was challenging. I am now a first-year student at Grand Canyon University. I will be graduating a year early due to my achievements and accelerated learning. I am a DREAMer, but my status does not define who I am as an individual. DREAMers are just as capable as any other person. I am an honors student, a daughter, a friend, and so much more. Arizona has been my home since I was 10 months old. I grew up in Arizona schools with Arizonian neighbors just like my peers. In school we are generally taught that hard work and effort behind one's education will inevitably open doors; however, for us, the undocumented, this is not the case.

By definition, second class citizens are "individuals, generally from a minority group, who are denied social, political, and/or economic benefits of other citizens." (WordPanda, n.d., p.?) Anyone who has been discriminated against and viewed as less worthy of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness is often considered a second-class citizen. "These individuals are neglected of rights or opportunities by uncontrollable characteristics" (WordPanda, n.d.). I am considered a second-class citizen due to my immigration status. Individuals who immigrate, such as my family members, search for a better life and more opportunities with the goal of achieving their own version of the American Dream. It was not my decision to move to the United States, but I am

grateful that I did. Living a life with obstacles and disadvantages in the United States continues to outrank a life in a country dominated by violence; however, this does not mean that things should be this way. Conover proposes that by, "treating citizens as equals therefore requires equal support and protection for their cultures through policies that range from giving their beliefs and practices recognition in the educational system and public events, to institutionalizing minority rights in affirmative action programs and the legal system, to group representation in political and civic institutions" (Conover et al., 2007, p. 1039). As discouraging and dispiriting as it may be to be classified by a societal status that is prone to discrimination, second-class status can only mentally oppress someone as much as they permit. I am an undocumented, Latina young woman who has all the odds stacked against me; yet I refuse to allow a status to define who I am and who I can be.

Policies around immigration have fluctuated throughout the years, including in higher education. In recent years, education is a sector that has experienced vital social change in Arizona. In 2006, Arizona voters passed Proposition 300, a law that denied undocumented students financial aid and in-state tuition for public universities (Ballotpedia, n.d.). This law affected the resources that many Arizona DREAMers relied on. Any scholarships public Arizona universities offered were no longer options for undocumented youth. Higher education is a challenging journey by itself. The distress of not being able to afford higher education due to the lack of resources was the straw that broke the camel's back. Many Arizonians, including myself, were not aware of this Proposition, until I was a senior in high school applying for college. I quickly realized there are a lot of disparities when it comes to the American Dream. Fairness in America is limited. Ambition and aspirations are valid but require a great deal more than just hard work and effort. Second-class citizens are forced to advocate for themselves and for their achievements to be recognized. Anyone who moves to America hopes for a better life, but they are frequently met with obstacles. The lack of resources available to pursue higher education was extremely relevant to me as a high school graduate in the state of Arizona. I was very grateful to have received a full-ride scholarship to Grand Canyon University, but not all DREAMers had the same opportunity.

Arizona was a state that prohibited Arizona DREAMers from paying in-state tuition to attend public universities. Instead, we were forced to pay out-of-state tuition which made the path to college more difficult. The 2022 November election changed

Arizona policies by passing Proposition 308. In the summer before my freshman year at GCU, I encountered the community organization, Yes on 308. Prop 308 is a ballot initiative that fought for fairness by advocating for Arizona DREAMers to have in-state tuition and the eligibility of local scholarships (Yes on 308, 2022). Yes on 308 became my first fellowship and my introduction into the world of advocating and embracing my story. Before this year, I was constantly scared of being seen as different, but I now realize there is nothing wrong with being distinct; in fact, it is incredibly beautiful. We all have different obstacles and mine just happened to revolve around immigration. In the November 2022 election, Arizona voters passed Prop 308, changing Arizona history. Advocating for other undocumented students was incredibly beautiful and a triumph I will continue to celebrate. Our voices were loud, and our voices were heard. All our press conferences, efforts, and events paid off. The arena of politics can be daunting, especially as a teenager advocating for other undocumented Latinos who also hide in the shadows.

Still, being a DREAMer, is more than an experience, it is my life. My background continues to influence my daily life and decisions, but it does not limit me. I am undocumented, but I also have a voice and can proudly say, my status does not define me! And neither does yours!

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Seeing Social Work in the Community and in Me

by Madalyn J. Larson
Class of 2025

Introduction

With every minute that goes by on earth, I am learning that service is the wild and humble act of surrendering one's own desires at the cost of meeting someone else's needs. The beauty of service is found in the mundane and inconvenient, as well as the detrimental and terrifying realities of the world. In its simplest form, service is the ethical principle to address social problems (University at Buffalo School of Social Work, n.d.). Through service, humanity can experience the world in different ways. I have gained experience and learned from the world of camp cabins and orphanages.

Experience

It is impossible to ignore the inevitable gratitude that blossoms in one's heart while serving. In my experience, I have been humbled and extremely blessed to learn about myself, God, and others while serving. There has been a pattern in the ways the Lord has most exemplified His purpose for my life. One way has been through Wyldlife, an outreach mission to introduce and connect middle schoolers to the Gospel. This program helps to build relationships with them and foster within them the ways Jesus calls us to live. On my eighteenth birthday, I was in Flagstaff with my middle schoolers for our yearly winter camp. Minutes after the clock struck midnight and my birthday began, I heard a girl in distress in the bathroom and saw her friend walk out with a worried face. Upon walking into the scene, I found her throwing up. I put her hair up and comforted her; I never thought I would be scooping throw up out of a sink with a paper towel on my eighteenth birthday. In that moment, I was reminded of the beauty of putting others before yourself. There is no amount of recognition or worldly treasure one can get for their work that could amount to the fulfillment of joy that comes from genuine service. Personally, I have discovered that the gratitude I achieve while serving is enough to sustain me. Therefore, I cannot help but continue to look for it.

Further, I have been touched by Kid's Kingdom, an orphanage in Imuris, Mexico where the goal of our trip was to love people and give our time to the children through projects, support, and simply being with them. Children have a magical way

of representing the art of surrender; one sweet girl named Judy had a bigger impact on my life than she will ever know. The pure joy that flowed from her smile was inspiring and still leaves me in awe. One morning when Judy and I were hanging out and waiting for breakfast, we started playing with bubbles. As we twirled around and her giggles woke up the sun, I spilled a few bubbles on my hand and immediately saw her reach for her shirt to clean up my mess. Judy and I could not so much as speak the same language, yet this four-year-old orphan, in her loving kindness, used her own shirt to wipe my arm. Holding back tears, and completely flabbergasted, the only thing I could do was stand in awe of what I could learn from the people around me. While these are only two snippets of Heavenly moments that I have experienced from serving, they have helped to shape me as a person and prepare me for the future I have in the social work field. Whether it is local or global, with children or teenagers, every act of service I have experienced has collectively set me up for my career in Social Work.

Social Work & My Experience

When looking at my life experience through the lens of social work, I see one of the most important fundamentals of a social worker – the core value of service (National Association of Social Workers, n.d.). In other words, the number one job of a social worker is to help people first, in efforts to restore or enhance a healthy balance in their lives. In my experience, I have worked closely with children and teens, which correlates to child welfare and family social work. The work social workers do is powerful because changing one person's life can have a domino effect on future generations: social workers impact people directly, nationally, and internationally (Touro University WorldWide, 2020). The continuing efforts of "social work practices" in my volunteer experiences shared with the professional pursuit of this career will not be a big enough impact on the growing number of people who need help, however it does make a difference in that one person's life. Still, I have shared in experiences with others that have strengthened our bonds and created a sense of community. It is obvious that this value of social work will help me exponentially in the field. What I have learned through service is that your impact is bigger than any fleeting feeling that temporary accomplishment or satisfaction could give to you. With that, the element of service in social work is of the most importance as it sets the stage for a posture of selflessness.

Conclusion

The true art of service is in the pursuit of helping the vulnerable, which is the value from which all other values of social work stem (Tulane University School of Social Work, 2021). Oftentimes, it is in the act of releasing one's desires that they find their true desires. Personally, I can say that my heart has been more blessed by the people I have served than what I accomplished by serving. Service is the leading principle of social work. Therefore, it is most important for a social worker to have an attitude of service, as their job is to advocate for the vulnerable and build them up.

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Reconsidering My Obligations as a First-Generation Mexican American

by Alejandra Merino

Class of 2025

When I walk, I have in mind an image I create of myself. Every time I talk, I keep my reputation as the golden child. In my family, everybody has a part to play. I am a first-generation Mexican American. That means being the perfect, grateful, resilient, well-mannered daughter, doing everything to give back to her parents. I have played this part so well it became my identity, my sense of self , also known as "Self-formation", is a concept proposed by social theorist George Herbert Mead. He suggested that developing a self is something that emerges in stages, arising from our interactions with others (Claerbaut, 2022). Inevitably, my sense of self as a teenager in relationship with others would change; it was only a matter of time. This paper will emphasize my process of rediscovering my identity in a Latino community that values collectivism. Every waking moment, I knew I was molding myself into someone my parents wanted me to be. From a young age, I learned that valuing my parents' sacrifices was important. Everyone in my family told me I was responsible for graduating college, having a great career and being successful. At the ripe age of six, I had to carry the burden of being a first-generation Mexican American. During my early teenage years, I did everything I could to make my parents proud. When I got older, the pressure and expectations on my shoulders became more burdensome. It was getting difficult to manage the image of the perfect child. When I was 17 years old, everything I created fell apart: my purpose, my passion, and my reputation. I came to a crossroads in my life where I realized I needed to reconcile who I was and who I could become while turning away from an unattainable image of what I thought others wanted me to be. I aspired to bring greater honesty into my life, of finding my true sense of self while staying connected with my family and community. Within the Latino culture, it is common for young people to look to their families when making life decisions (Gloria et al, 2005; Yan et al. 2022). But I felt I was overly focused on valuing my parents' sacrifices and meeting their expectations, to the point where I could not recognize myself. I felt lost.

At 18 years old, I decided to get to know myself. I found my love for reading. I began to explore ways to connect with the natural world. My favorite color is sage green

because it reminds me how peaceful nature can be. I learned I wanted to live a life outside of my family and felt guilty for considering what was best for me, apart from what my family wanted. I thought I was ungrateful for putting myself first or at least for forging my own path independent of my family. Members of my family were my primary "agents of socialization", introducing me to social norms and a way of being in the world (Claerbaut, 2022). Now, I was reflecting on what it might mean to pay attention to my own internal cues and seek a life more consistent with my own personal values and interests.

The Latino community is family oriented and believes collectivism should be valued. Collectivism refers to people prioritizing the group identity more than their individual identity (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). Many Latino families who immigrate to the United States are united due to financial, social, and language barriers (Rodriguez et al., 2021). Immigrant parents live every day in survival mode, trying to provide for their families and wanting the best for their children. Growing up and seeing my parents put themselves aside to build a foundational home in a foreign country fueled my motivation to accomplish my goals for them. This dynamic relates to conformity, the "adherence to accepted behaviors, norms, standards, and values" (Bell, 2020, para. 1). To express my gratitude to my parents, I believed I needed to do certain things and behave a certain way. I did everything people asked. I felt obligated to exceed expectations and play a vital role in my family. But over time, trying to be everything for everyone has been harmful because I came to believe that I, as an individual, was not important.

The "self" as a sociological construct, is "an individual's sense of their own being" (Bell, 2022, para. 1). My parents did not have the luxury to learn about themselves. I grew up observing my parents work all the time and not take care of themselves. Like them, I worked nonstop because that was all I ever knew; I did not consider the emotional toll this might take or how it might affect my mental and emotional well-being. Now, at 19 years old, discovering my identity and my potential has become a priority.

Growing up in an environment where everybody is in survival mode affected me. I have had to unlearn certain bad habits and my tendency to dismiss my emotional health. Starting this journey was difficult because acknowledging myself felt foreign. One thing I learned was that I could still give back to my parents, but it should not be at the expense of my well-being. Being a first-generation Mexican American, I always

thought I would be the one to break generational cycles, and without knowing it, I am taking that first step.

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Hate This Place

by Esmarie DeJager

Class of 2025

I hate this place. I hate not knowing. I hate these unfamiliar faces. My mind swirls as tears flow down my face. The food sucks. Why does everything look different? I want to leave… A few deep breaths… My hatred dies down… I like it a bit more… These people aren't the worst… I'm getting used to it…

Culture is a powerful force, shaping how we view ourselves and the world in which we live (Claerbaut & Larkin, 2022). As defined by Claerbaut and Larkin (2022), culture is "the shared learning of a group, consisting of behaviors, language, knowledge, and material objects."

A stable culture is one of the normative factors of most individual's lives; all the norms, customs, religious beliefs, languages, food and clothes of a group of people defines their culture. In each person's life one belongs to at least one cultural group and often comes across a few others. Through socialization into our primary culture, we learn what clothes to wear, what foods to eat, how to interact with others, and what taboos to avoid. Through growing up in one place, a person becomes rooted in their culture. Naturally, in each culture there are people who go with the flow, people who choose the direction of the flow, and people who strongly oppose it. But regardless of whether someone is an influencer or a social misfit, they understand their surroundings; they know the norms. The incredible result of this understanding is a primarily unconscious stability, which most people take for granted (Claerbaut & Larkin, 2022). A certain security comes from knowing that the same people are going to be there tomorrow, the same foods will be available, and the same general challenges will be there to face. As time goes by, people move a little – to the house down the street or to a different city. Some, however, move to different nations, to unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable new locations (Sabirjanovna, 2023). After being born in South Africa, my family moved from country to country, traversing eight countries and four continents. Each new place was an adjustment for my family; new homes needed to be found, new relationships built, new food tried, new languages heard and learnt, and new religions grown accustomed to. With time, my family and I learned to hold onto our culture and language while being completely submerged in another, but many times a sense of being unknown and

unknowable persisted. As I grew accustomed to certain places, things I originally despised about a country became the exact things I missed when I left. My experience all over the world taught me a lot about people and cultures, and I learned to love and appreciate aspects of every culture. I learned to love the tastes, smells, sights, sounds, and norms. However, I never learned to love the change. I never got used to saying goodbye. I never started loving the unfamiliarity.

I remember sitting in my room one day feeling culturally frustrated after yet another goodbye. I asked myself where I belonged, where my home was, who my people were. I shed a few tears as I poked holes in the ideal life which I had seen myself living. I knew that every relationship that I built would fade whenever I moved again, and that I would inevitably have to loosely anchor myself in another foreign culture. So many moves can be disorienting, resulting in culture shock (Sabirjanovna, 2023). Culture shock is the sociological and psychological phenomenon in which a person experiences "disorientation … when leaving their culture to live in a different culture" (Zukauskas, 2022). Many different emotions play into that disorientation: loneliness, fear, frustration, anger, and homesickness. In that incredibly challenging moment of personally facing culture shock, I held close to the two things that proved themselves to be ever-present –– my family and my faith. Through the support of my family, the understanding of my faith, and my relationship with God, I began to see myself as a sojourner in this life. By realizing my home isn't truly on this earth and my culture is a unique concoction of all the different places I've lived and all the people I've come across, I began enjoying my life despite the challenge of change.

Culture shock is one of the many trials that people can learn to overcome when navigating transitions between different cultures (Furnham, 2019). Neglecting to thoroughly work through the emotions associated with culture shock can result in "psychological stress such as depression, anxiety and feelings of helplessness" (Xia, 2009). It is crucial to work through the emotions and stages of culture shock to ultimately experience a sense of well-being and accept a complete understanding of a culture.

From experience, remembering that identity is not solely formed from the culture surrounding you is the first step to accepting and adjusting to a new place. Secondly, anchoring yourself in stable relationships and beliefs helps to overcome the temptation of yielding to the anxiety of uncertainty. Learn to trust the process. Knowing that the emotions I was experiencing was a natural part of transition and

that the unknown would eventually blend into the habitual, significantly helped reduce the tension of culture shock. The most vital part to overcoming culture shock, however, is to keep going. If nothing else, try.

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A Review of Symbolic Interaction in Political Engagement

by Niles Corder

Class of 2026

People judge products, advertisements, and other people based on the tenets from Symbolic Interactionism and their own personal bias. Political action committees have a long history of trying to understand what sways the average voter. The vast but highly scientific study of proper communications and marketing has demonstrated that changes in tone, language, and minor changes like colors, can greatly alter a brand's image (Labrecque, L.I., Milne). This article will provide definitions for bias and symbolic interactionism and give a personal (first person) illustration of the impact in public policy discussions.

Political Canvassing

Throughout the previous election cycle, I worked as an election staffer for the local labor union federation, the Arizona American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations. I walked door-to-door, speaking with the intention of having personal discussions with the average voter on several labor-related issues on the ballot. The Arizona AFL-CIO is one of the state's most notable non-partisan organizations. Still, local activists are often met with the political strife of working in a largely partisan political atmosphere. The sole purpose of political canvassing is to create a personal and educational connection with people regarding issues facing their communities.

Although the impact of differing terminology on the public opinion of policy is debated, the exact phrasing an individual uses for political education can significantly shape others' willingness to discuss these topics. Terms such as 'oil drilling' or 'energy exploration,' 'gambling' or 'gaming', and 'estate tax' or 'death tax' have severely altered the public opinion of these issues (Luntz, 2007). While politically canvasing, I decided to experiment with these terminologies. I found out that individuals related more to issues of air quality than they did to issues regarding climate change. In fact, political scientists have a long history of altering terms to express a symbolic or personal viewpoint with the intended audience (Luntz, 2007).

Personal Relationships and the Political Exchange of Meaning

The things people hear are continuously passed through their preconceptions (Luntz, 2007). Bias can be defined as inclinations a person has acquired through past experiences. Symbolic interactionism is the idea that biases, past experiences, and inclinations are the defining components of society. Society is established and changed through the exchange of meaning which is at the core of Symbolic Interactionism (Grand Canyon University, n.d.).

Dr. Amish Shah is a local representative in Arizona for the 24th district. The 24th District of Arizona is known as one of the most Democrat areas in the state, a stronghold for the political party. Dr. Shah and his Democrat ticket partner Jennifer Longdon won 40.27 and 39.80 percent of the votes, respectively whereas their closest Republican candidate, only received 19.94% of the vote (Arizona Election Results, n.d.). Primary districts are districts where the party's primary decides the election; in this instance whoever wins the Democratic nomination will be victorious. In these regions, one may think political canvassing is infrequent, and candidates receive less attention. However, after the regions redistricting in the year 2022, Dr. Shah had a highly active campaign and regularly met with voters on their doorsteps. In this district, where voters decide the election early, Dr. Shah gave the most time to early voters through these direct conversations and, as such, is seen as a personable figure in the community. From this interaction, individuals were able to go beyond bias and exchange meaning with a direct originator of the message for political change.

Conclusion

Symbolic Interactionism shows us that the words (language as symbols) that are used in political discourse, helps or hinders (at times because of bias), the public to create political action. Politicians, policies, and government officials all represent a marketable and nearly tangible product. In his 2008 book, Words that Work, linguist Doctor Frank Luntz explains the necessity of consumers to see themselves in a product. In a similar light, politicians must find ways to make political issues relevant and to humanize and connect themselves with the voters (Luntz, 2007). Some see this strategy as manipulation, but the "humanizing and connecting" by the politician works to sway voters' emotions about a local policy. One's past experiences and personal bias can significantly impact politicians' ability to create personal relationships with the public effectively. Dr. Eitan Hersh (2020) discusses the ongoing battle between short-term goal-oriented political organizations and long-term civic

leadership. When long-term civic leadership references the emotional and symbolic experiences of the voter, they create a mutual understanding and set the stage for actionable goals. In the final analysis, individuals judge products, advertisements, and other people based on a symbolic understanding. Politicians market themselves as if they are a product for people to judge.

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Spirituality: More than Resilience

by Virginia Hatch-Pigott

Grand Canyon University Graduate

MSW, Fall 2022

The graying gentleman strode confidently into the office and sat down on the sofa. He promptly leaned back and put his feet up as he laced his fingers behind his neck, reclining his upper body on the armrest. "I am not sure if you can help," he said. "Well," I replied, "why don't we get to know each other a little bit and you can tell me your story."

"OK," he said calmly as he gazed alternately between me and the ceiling. He then relayed how he had a good childhood, grew up in a middle-class, two parent home with one sibling in a nice neighborhood in the suburbs of a large city. He had no adverse childhood events. His family attended church regularly. He went to a small Christian college in the city where he grew up.

"I was raised a Christian," he said, "but that's all a bunch of fairytales. I believe in science."

"So, you are agnostic?" I reflected.

"Well, atheist, agnostic, whatever," he replied. He went on, "I married young, but after a while it was just too much."

"Marriage can be challenging. Can you explain more?"

"Well, I love my ex, but I just wanted more freedom. You know, being stuck with one person gets old after a while," he said matter-of-factly. "We have one son together. I think that is the biggest lie people are ever told; That children are a blessing. What a lie!" He went on to explain that he left his wife when his son was 13 years old. He had recently traveled across the country to visit his now adult son where he was living and trying to start a new business. "I was miserable. No fun. I shouldn't have gone," he snorted. He went on to detail his many jobs, business endeavors, travel highlights, and current living situation. He owned several homes across the country, many nice cars and had retired early with a comfortable amount of money in the bank. He had a girlfriend who he enjoyed having sex with but could not detail much else about their relationship. "So, anyways," he said "I don't know if you can help me."

"Well," I replied, "what are you hoping we can help you with?"

"I am suicidal," he stated bluntly, "but I don't think I am depressed."

"You don't want to live, but you're not feeling sad or hopeless?" I reflected.

"No, I am not sad or down or depressed. I just see no reason to live. Like, what's my purpose? I don't see the point of living."

Mental health practitioners have traditionally been taught to avoid the subject of religion and spirituality in counseling. In fact, some mental health care professionals regarded religiosity as psychopathology. However, recent studies have suggested that spirituality and religiosity may be a source of resilience resulting in a call to reconsider this admonition (Charzyńska & Heszen-Celińska, 2019; Duñó et al., 2020). The most notable study is the recent study from Harvard Medical School in 2020 which demonstrated a significant decrease in deaths of despair--drug overdose, alcohol poisoning, liver disease/cirrhosis, and suicide – in individuals who attended religious services at least one time per week (Chen et al., 2020). The researchers suggested several reasons for the resilience seen in these individuals, primarily connection with a community and a safety-net when times get hard. I believe it is much more elemental than that. Religion is an organized form of spirituality and offers its followers a coherent worldview. Worldview, simply stated, is the way one views reality. Specifically, one's worldview offers answers to the essential questions in a sentient life:

1. What is my *purpose* in life?
2. Why am I *suffering*?
3. Is there anything after this life (is there *hope* for something better)?
4. How should I live rightly (what are my *boundaries*)?
5. What do I do with all my guilt/shame (how do I obtain *forgiveness*)?
6. How do I know what is true, right, and good (*security*)?
7. Is there any benefit to living a restrained life (*reward*)?

For the middle-aged gentleman in the mental health clinic, answers to these questions matter. He reports no purpose because "science" does not offer one. Nor does atheism. There is no reason for suffering. There is no hope for anything better than what he is experiencing day to day, or after this life. There are no boundaries for living. He gets to choose what brings him the most pleasure and the least suffering and hardship. He relayed some feelings of guilt about abandoning his family but was not quite sure what to do with it. In his worldview, truth is relative to the personal view, so there is no security or assurance that he is living the best life, if that is even possible. Death is the end, so his statement is cogent and important: "What is the point?"

Every worldview has answers to these questions, including atheism and agnosticism. The answers matter. They matter more than one day a week. They matter every minute of every day.

The way an individual views reality is imperative to understanding one's social and emotional struggles. Thus, spirituality is not an optional part of the biopsychosocial assessment, it is foundational. If social workers don't address spirituality early and encourage exploration often, we miss out on the most vital aspect of an individual's mental health.

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Hip Hop Heals

by Mitchell W. Roush

MSW – Spring 2024

Overview

Recently, I completed my first 480 hours of an MSW internship at an alternative charter high school. The inner-city school serves students who are under credited, over-aged, and discarded by the public school system. The majority of the population I served were Latino and African American youth, many of which had traumatic experiences in their childhood. The learning environment was almost completely sterile of social interaction as the students are focused on their computer-based education while in the classroom setting. In the wake of a global pandemic, mental wellness initiatives are on a top priority for educational institutions.

Implementing Social Work Concepts

As an MSW intern, I was commissioned to implement a social-emotional learning SEL curriculum at this alternative high school. However, not finding a program that was both culturally responsive and evidence-based, I decided to explore the therapeutic application of utilizing Hip-Hop from a podcast series on the Trauma Research Foundation (Therapeutic Applications of Hip Hop (COLLECTION), August 6, 2021) as well as the fantastic work occurring in Mot Haven High School in Bronx, New York (Hip Hop Therapy, 2020).

As a result of these programs, I began to view social work in the school setting through the lens of Positive Youth Development (PYD), as well as an individual and community empowerment framework. My assessment tool for my hypothesis was built upon the LCSW Travis's Individual and Community Empowerment (ICE) inventory (Travis & Bowman, 2011). The results of this informal study will be shared in a forthcoming article near the end of the school year.

My Experience

I teamed up with a rising local artist/producer to pilot a social emotional learning (SEL) program called Hip Hop Heals that has lasted so far for12 weeks. Every Friday for the last 30 minutes of the day, we collaboratively facilitated the whole campus (N=40+ students) in various "sessions" ranging from beating making, song analysis, lyric writing, and critical discussions involving the Hip-Hop culture. Below are a few of those highlights.

When critically discussing lyrics, students completed a lyric analysis worksheet with: their perspective of what the song conveyed, connection to the song, and favorite lines from the song. During group discussion, we heard from the students on their take behind the lyrics and how they connected with them. I witnessed students with social anxiety eager to share and others who are typically socially isolated willing to participate. When they did not share verbally, their thoughts on the worksheet displayed great insight into the perspectives/experiences of our students surrounding certain topics.

During our lyric writing session, I observed one student zealously sharing a lyric he had previously started writing to a beat he enjoys and got the whole group talking about it. I heard another student, who is fairly quiet, share how she is excited to continue writing over the weekend. With composition notebooks given to all those writing lyrics, I saw students pulling out their notebooks throughout the day to transcribe what is on their mind and heart. They were eager to share with me and with one another. What was on our students' hearts was both insightful and compelling. Not only that, but many students have also taken on the challenge to incorporate rhyme schemes and build double meanings into their lyrics. We have students who had never written lyrics before (or even journaled) and are now enjoying the experience while displaying their writing talents.

While creating beats, I saw a young man learning how to use the launch keys- portable and compact keyboard that can be plugged in through any USB port- for the first time. For context, he is a very hyperactive individual and to see him have the opportunity to make music and focus on creating was extremely rewarding. He was totally in his own zone. He surprised both the artist/producer and myself on how he was able to translate a melody in his head through the instrument into the program without prior knowledge.

Conclusion

Providing accessible social-emotional learning interventions is absolutely necessary for the overall growth and development of young people. As depression, anxiety, suicide, and social disturbance floods the younger generation, it is time for the education system to stand in the gap for holistic learning environments. My take-aways from this on-going experience has helped me see: 1) the value in gaining collaborative support, 2) the vast potential in tapping into the hip-hop culture for therapeutic outcomes and 3) the hunger for young people to be empowered using

their strengths and original thoughts/experiences. If it weren't for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to adventure down this "unconventional" path, I wouldn't have the confidence and knowledge to reach young people where they are for the purpose of restoration in such an authentic way.

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