Sociology/Social Work Review

Sociology/Social Work Review

THE GCU SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

VOLUME 3

WELCOME TO THE SOCIOLOGY/SOCIAL WORK REVIEW – VOL. 3

Welcome to the Third 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, 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, using 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 third edition showcases our students' experience as it relates to sociology and social work content. Students wrote about micro- and macro-social processes and issues. The micro issues include the personal journey of a changing family structure, college experience, cross-cultural experience, and living with a chronic health condition. The macro content includes urban spaces and homelessness, drug dependency and social bias, mental health and collegiate sports, and funding issues in U.S. public education. Students also share their experience with the intersection of Social Work and Christianity. The student writers for the Sociology/Social Work Review demonstrated courage in writing about very personal experiences; as well as analyzing our larger social world.

"Well done" to our students who took up the challenge of a student-run review – from the student writers to the English Department's professional writing group's editing team. Students, you made this happen.

Finally, a nod to the faculty and support of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Grand Canyon University, 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, MSW, MDiv, PhD

Professor of Sociology
Grand Canyon University

TABLE OF *Contents*

Narcolepsy As an Identity: Society's Understanding vs. Reality

Walter Duncan
Class of 2025

Introduction

When I was eight, I wanted to be like all the other kids. I was not particularly athletic, or tall, or good at math, and it seemed no one else was as interested in the Percy Jackson series as I was. I had never been able to reach the pull-up bar on the playground, but one day, I had decided I was going to do it. If not for anyone else, then for myself. I jumped up, I reached and grabbed, I pulled myself up – and woke up on the ground, my peers looking down at me with concern. I broke my wrist. I did not think anything of it at the time, and neither did my parents. Who would? Kids get hurt sometimes. But as each year went by, I got more and more tired, barely able to stay awake enough to pass fifth grade. By 9th grade, I had broken three more bones. I would not know it at the time, eight years old and staring up at the sky in confusion, but I had narcolepsy with cataplexy.

Definition of Narcolepsy and Society's Perception

Narcolepsy is a chronic sleep disorder that impairs the brain's capacity to regulate its sleep/wake cycle. It is an autoimmune illness characterized by the absence or slow degradation of hypocretin neurotransmitters in the brain (Bonvalet et al., 2017). Hypocretin is the neuron that promotes wakefulness. Narcolepsy presents itself in two forms: narcolepsy with cataplexy, and narcolepsy without. Cataplexy is sudden muscle weakness that is triggered by strong emotions, like laughter, fear, or excitement. In my case, I quickly need to grab onto someone or something when I laugh, I am fighting the losing battle of my legs giving out. When I am asked to describe what narcolepsy is, I typically describe it as this: I am permanently tired. I could sleep for 24 hours or be in a coma for an entire year, and I would still wake up exhausted and need to rest again. But this does not mean I fall asleep at random, like many in society think. Society's general perception of narcolepsy is quite different from what it is in reality.

To most, falling asleep instantly and at random, regardless of if one is standing, walking, or sitting, is all that narcolepsy is. It is an almost mythological disease that one can lightheartedly poke fun at or make a joke out of. Its severity is not known, because so little of the world experiences it. These misconceptions about narcolepsy are rooted in a lack of medical understanding. For most narcoleptics, it can take anywhere from 8 to 22 years before they receive a diagnosis (Golden & Lipford, 2018). In my own experience, it took seven. Narcolepsy shares a great deal of symptoms with other disorders, allowing for

many to get misdiagnosed. Recent advancements in medical understanding have only been made in the past two decades – there are very few doctors besides specialists who are familiar with narcolepsy, meaning they are unable to recognize a pattern of symptoms in patients. During my seven-year journey to a diagnosis, I was misdiagnosed many times and called many things by doctors, because they did not understand what was wrong any better than I did. I was misdiagnosed with depression, and then a panic disorder. I was called lazy and making it all up. The restless nights, bad grades, and constant feeling that I was sick were merely symptoms of growing, and nothing to be worried about. Their lack of understanding and education on it resulted in my concerns not being taken seriously, delaying a diagnosis for years.

It is important to understand that like many other neurological disorders, the severity of narcolepsy is case-by-case, so it would be negligent to say the severity of my experience is true for all other narcoleptics. This is incredibly important to understand, as the disorder affects 0.02% of adults worldwide (Dauvilliers et al., 2007). I cannot work a full-time job for the rest of my life, but there are many narcoleptics who do. I cannot play any sports, but many narcoleptics do. Most narcoleptics do not break bones when they fall from cataplexy, but I do. And while most narcoleptics do not fall asleep suddenly, at random and in public, there are severe cases of narcoleptics who do. All of this is contradictory to society's perception of what narcolepsy is.

Perception Shaping Identity

According to Henri Tajfel and John Turner's (1979) social identity theory, the groups to which people belong or identify themselves play a significant role in determining self-worth and identity (pp. 2-3). When people identify as members of a group, they take on the group's identity. Following that, they will compare their group to others. This creates in-groups and out-groups – the in-group being the group with which an individual identifies, and the out-group being a group with which an individual does not identify. However, defining oneself and society under a variety of different, distinct categories increases the risk of stereotyping. Because narcolepsy is such a rare condition and so few people have been diagnosed with it, it is indisputably the out-group of society and has been heavily stereotyped. There are simply not enough people familiar with narcolepsy to refute these stereotypes.

Whether intentional or not, society's perception of narcolepsy has not been a positive one. In many forms of media, whether it be a movie, TV show, book or podcast, narcolepsy is usually depicted as the butt of a joke. It is seen very comically. A character is sitting at a table at a restaurant eating joyously, and suddenly they have suddenly fallen asleep, faceplanting in their food. They must have narcolepsy – and everyone laughs. To my understanding, this characterization of narcolepsy is not seen as harmful by most of society, because is nobody speaking up or protesting it. This stereotype is not harmful, because its harm cannot be seen. If I could earn a dollar off every time I had

been saddened and disappointed by media content, I enjoy that makes fun of narcolepsy, well, I would not be a millionaire, but I would have enough to afford a nice holiday cruise to Hawaii. This lighthearted characterization of narcolepsy is quite harmful and diminishes the disabling experience most narcoleptics have in life. Let me repeat my experiences once more – I will not be able to hold a full-time job. I cannot participate in sports, and I am afraid of laughing at my own jokes. I am afraid I will collapse at weddings, funerals, birthdays, or from anything that causes strong emotions. I cannot drive during road trips, and I will rely on medications for the rest of my life.

This negative perception on narcolepsy has led me to "depersonalization" and attempting to live "past" my narcolepsy, despite it being an inherent part of my identity. I do not want to be seen as just narcoleptic, i.e., the comic relief – I do not want to feel restricted by my own disability, and I know many narcoleptics feel the same way. I go to school full-time to obtain a degree, I work a part-time job, I run a club, and I drive regularly. Many narcoleptics even obtain their doctorates and work full-time as doctors. But there are narcoleptics who do not hold jobs or seek higher education, who do not drive or go out very often. And while there is nothing wrong with this, society's negative view of narcolepsy as an out-group has created in-group conflict.

Conclusion

There is a back-and-forth struggle with narcoleptics on wanting to embrace their identity, but also conform to society's standards so that they can be seen positively. Society's lack of understanding about narcolepsy has resulted in negative perceptions. To my knowledge, these negative stereotypes have resulted in many narcoleptics feeling insecure about their social identity. They will work to get to a point where their disorder is as invisible as possible, so they can be seen as normal and accepted into the in-groups of society again. As I have shared earlier, this often means pushing their own boundaries by doing things like working full-time jobs despite the risk of falling asleep or being active in a sport despite the risk of cataplexy. Every case is different, but the shared want to be or feel normal remains the same. This will only change when society's view of narcolepsy changes. That change can only be made through increased education – from a social standpoint and a medical one. The more medical professionals can recognize and properly diagnose this disorder, the less stigmatized it will become.

References

Bonvalet, M., Ollila, H. M., Ambati, A., & Mignot, E. (2017). Autoimmunity in narcolepsy. *Current opinion in pulmonary medicine, 23*(6), 522–529. https://doi.org/10.1097/MCP.0000000000000426

Dauvilliers, Y., Arnulf, I., & Mignot, E. (2007). Narcolepsy with cataplexy. The Lancet, 369(9560), 499–511. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)60237-2

Golden, E. C., & Lipford, M. C. (2018). Narcolepsy: Diagnosis and management. *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine, 85*(12), 959–969. https://doi.org/10.3949/ccjm.85a.17086

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J.C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict.

My College Experience as a First-Generation Hispanic Student

Alejandra Merino
Class of 2024

On the first day of classes my freshman year at Grand Canyon University, I noticed many students did not look like me. It was a significant shift from attending a mainly Hispanic public high school to then attending a predominantly white private institution. My first two and a half years of university were a difficult journey, but I persevered, and I am happy to say I am graduating in December. Many first-generation college students must overcome obstacles other students do not: the impact of socioeconomic status and self-image on first-generation Hispanic college students' higher-learning experiences.

My experience attending Grand Canyon University as a first-generation college student is a complex space to navigate and succeed in. Freshman year was the hardest. I had to adjust to the new environment, new schedule, and new material inside the classroom, while also working a part-time job to pay for school tuition. Every time I heard my classmates mention their parents' degrees or their successful careers, I felt discouraged. Classmates had support from parents who understood what it is like to be in college. If I told my parents about school issues, they would not understand. I felt alone, as if I was not smart enough or did not belong in this space. However, I proved myself wrong and obtained straight A's that school year. My sophomore year was better because I was familiar with academics, the environment, and my routine. The real problem was the financial struggle my family dealt with during that time. Not only was I worried about paying tuition and completing my coursework, but I also worried about my parents. I was not able to help them the way in which I wanted, and that took a mental toll. It was hard to focus on my academics while knowing I could not help them financially because I also had other responsibilities. Nevertheless, I pushed through and earned a 4.0 that school year. A few months before, I had decided to take a summer class but could hardly afford it, so I worked more shifts and paid it off. In the fall semester of my junior year, I worked two jobs. I worked at an Amazon warehouse and also as an intern for the Maricopa Superior Court. I could not afford to quit my regular job. Therefore, I had to balance academics, two jobs, and a social life. I struggled to navigate it at first, but because I already knew what to expect, I excelled in my academics.

A person's socioeconomic status can make the college experience difficult for first-generation Hispanic students. Socioeconomic status refers to income, wealth, education, and occupation of an individual or family (Marger, 2014). First-generation college students are the first in their families to attend college (Gibbons et al., 2019) and typically come from families with lower economic

status. These students likely have parents without a college background or degree and tend to have an occupation with a low income. Around 47.8% of first-generation Hispanics fall into this category of families (Latino et al., 2020). First-generation Hispanic college students are the hope of their families. They are more likely to work part-time or full-time jobs while in school to pay off tuition fees (Gibbons et al., 2019). I come from a low-income household and work to pay tuition. There have been financial concerns regarding whether I had enough to pay for a class or a semester within the two years at Grand Canyon University.

The second factor, the self, explains how interactions and environment shape one's identity (Owens et al., 2010). First-generation students interact with their classmates and professors every single day. In the college experience of a first-generation student, one feels as though they do not deserve the opportunity to pursue an advanced education or feel like they are not enough (Gibbons et al., 2019). Environment reinforces these negative thoughts about their identity and can lead to imposter syndrome, which consists of feeling like an intellectual fraud (Wilkinson, 2020). This feeling can occur among first-generation Hispanic college students due to the underrepresentation in higher education. Inside the classroom, I try to be at the same level, or higher, as my peers so no one would question my abilities. I must prove to others and myself that I am deserving of a spot in any room into which I walk.

I am one of many first-generation Hispanic college students in the United States. When adjusting to the college environment, I viewed myself as ungrateful for having trouble in a space in which it is a privilege to be. Right now, I still have those moments where I doubt my abilities and compare myself to my classmates. That feeling, I suppose, does not go away completely. I am a senior attending Grand Canyon University and will graduate this winter in December of 2024. I have overcome doubts, insecurity, comparison, and financial struggles while succeeding academically and obtaining accomplishments. While my story may be different from others, my experience as a first-generation Hispanic college student has taught me many things about determination, hard work, and the ability to overcome new challenges.

References

Gibbons, M. M., Rhinehart, A., & Hardin, E. (2019). How first-generation college students adjust to college. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 20*(4), 488-510.

Latino, C. A., Stegmann, G., Radunzel, J., Way, J. D., Sanchez, E., & Casillas, A. (2020). Reducing gaps in first-year outcomes between Hispanic first-generation college students and their peers: The role of accelerated learning and financial aid. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 22*(3), 441-463.

Marger, M. (2014). *Social inequality: Patterns and processes* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Owens, T. J., Robinson, D. T., & Smith-Lovin, L. (2010). Three faces of identity. *Annual Review of Sociology, 36*, 477-499.

Wilkinson, C. (2020). Imposter syndrome and the accidental academic: An autoethnographic account. *International Journal for Academic Development, 25*(4), 363-374.

The Sociology of Mental Health in Division 1 Athletics

Delaney Miller
Class of 2025

Introduction

I arrived at GCU with an extraordinary journey. As a star athlete since childhood, excelling in soccer and volleyball, I faced challenges in college recruitment due to my height. Opting to prioritize education, I concluded my volleyball career in 2021. Inspired by my high-jumping boyfriend, I joined the track and field team in April, impressively securing a spot in state standings within weeks. Despite a short stint, my success led to a NCAA Division 1 opportunity at GCU, where a spontaneous email to the coach marked the beginning of my Division 1 athletic career in a sport I had pursued for less than a month. As a Division 1 athlete with an unconventional athletic journey, I aim to unravel the complex tapestry of mental health and societal dynamics that shape the experiences of students in collegiate sports. The provided testimonial sets the stage for an exploration of the challenges, triumphs, and sociological nuances inherent in the world of Division 1 athletics.

Time Commitments

Being in Division 1 athletics brings a lot of mental challenges because of the busy schedule and tough training. I went from quitting sports after high school to having an extremely rigorous training routine. Every day, I had classes from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., practices from 3 to 4 p.m., and weight training from 5 to 6:30 p.m. I hardly had any personal time, and this made me feel stressed. We had meets every weekend from January to April, which added more pressure to perform well. The mental strain increased during the preseason. Oftentimes, we had to run in extremely hot temperatures over 100 degrees. The hard physical work, along with the intense heat, made me feel tired, dehydrated, and more stressed. Being a Division 1 athlete means dealing with not only tough physical demands but also needing a strong mind to do well. The difficult schedule affects many parts of an athlete's life, like sleep, socializing, and overall mental health. Personally, I faced heatstroke three times during my first preseason, and I was not the only one struggling. Even though it is really hard, I love every part of it. I am grateful for the chance to be in Division 1 athletics, and I thank God for giving me this opportunity. Going through challenges has taught me to be strong, and I find joy in my love for the sport, the friendships with my teammates, and the personal growth that comes from this difficult but fulfilling experience. These challenges truly came to face when I began experiencing imposter syndrome.

Imposter Syndrome

My personal journey resonates with imposter syndrome, a feeling deeply

rooted in the swift and unexpected success I experienced in transitioning from high school volleyball to Division 1 track and field (Raypole, 2021). Despite achieving remarkable results and even standing on the podium at the state meet, I find myself grappling with disbelief and gratitude, questioning if I genuinely belong among elite athletes. Imposter syndrome has taken root as I downplay my achievements, attributing success to external factors and questioning my own legitimacy in the competitive arena. The abrupt shift from a novice to a podium finisher has left me questioning my true competence, especially as I compare myself to athletes committed to prestigious programs. The societal expectations and standards for Division 1 athletes, coupled with my own comparisons, contribute to this heightened sense of imposter syndrome. Despite tangible success, there is an ongoing fear of being exposed as someone who does not truly belong at the Division 1 level, a fear that lingers even as I stand among other accomplished athletes on the podium. Imposter syndrome can significantly impact mental health by fostering feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and persistent anxiety. After experiencing imposter syndrome, I often harbor a deep-seated fear of being exposed as a fraud, despite my accomplishments and continued success. This chronic self-doubt led to heightened stress, anxiety, and a pervasive sense of not measuring up to the perceived standards I set for myself. Going into my first semester of college with these new feelings made it hard to do well in my classes as well as presented mental stress I had never experienced.

Finding Balance

It took an entire year of an unbalanced college lifestyle to figure out how to manage my new lifestyle while keeping my mental health steady. Unique to student-athletes, I benefited from resources that set my experience apart from the typical college student. The mandatory allocation of at least six hours of chaperoned study hall each week proved to be a major help. This structured time not only ensured the completion of assignments well ahead of deadlines but also significantly alleviated the stress that often came with the lack of time to complete my work during season. Along with finishing my assignments ahead of time, this transformative journey involved mastering the art of meal prepping and crafting nutritious meals within the confines of my dorm room. The positive impact on my overall well-being was tangible, with my body feeling more resilient and less fatigued after rigorous training sessions and weightlifting. This nutritional shift became an essential component in maintaining my physical and mental health amidst the demanding athletic commitments. Along with these lifestyle adjustments, forging deeper connections with my teammates emerged as a pivotal factor. These relationships not only enriched my collegiate experience but also fostered a healthier and more sustainable relationship with the sport itself. The relationships and mutual support within the team became a source of motivation and resilience, contributing to a positive mindset and overall mental well-being.

References

Raypole, C. (2021). *Imposter syndrome: What it is & how to overcome it*. Healthline. www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/imposter-syndrome

Living in Conflict: Challenging Family Structure and Dynamic

Caitlin Clinch
Class of 2025

The concept of family is an integral social institution, as it primarily impacts the development, well-being, and socialization of every individual. Whether positive or negative, the relationships and experiences within this group influence one's values, beliefs, and behavior. Although family dynamics are often complex as they establish the patterns of interaction and roles within the family structure, researchers have identified characteristics such as transparent communication, flexibility, organization, closeness, and belonging are vital to a healthy family dynamic (Jabbari et al., 2023). Several factors can modify and influence family dynamics, proving either beneficial or harmful for the family and its members. I find this to be true in my family, as living in a conflict-driven family dynamic and turbulent environment influenced my behavior and understanding of the world.

Oftentimes life's serious concerns fly over a child's head, increasing the significance of sudden and major changes. Furthermore, they often lack a complex understanding concerning the differences of family structure, dynamics, and theory. However, it is not difficult for children to grasp the foundational elements of an individual and their actions. This makes it challenging for rising tension to go unnoticed, especially when it is directed toward you.

My father was a strict man when I was young, ensuring rules were followed, punishments were dealt, and questioning them was never an option. Talking to him now, it's evident that his methods, beliefs, and values stem from his own childhood, acting on the teachings of his father. He also regularly demonstrated love and compassion, but these unpredictable changes in behavior contributed to a complex and confusing perspective. Arguments were not a foreign method of communication within my household, as values, and a desire for transparency did not align. Most would assume this aggression between the adults would increase the sibling bond, but as sides were chosen, the lines were drawn. The power struggle between my parents, and my older brother and I, persisted through much of my adolescence. He followed after my dad and I latched onto the hip of my mother.

My mother is incredibly strong and outspoken, but when I was 11, she grew fearful. She could not stay in the house, as her biggest concern was our emotional and physical well-being. She was tired of living with the disrespect, manipulation, and a lack of control, so she removed herself and I from the house. This familial separation hit my brother hard, especially once his actions and emotions became a consistent topic of conversation. He was impressionable and searching for independence, so he decided to stay in the company of my

father. The changes during this time contributed to the unhealthy coping mechanisms he is still reliant on today, as well as my own.

Conflict is the term I identify with my initial family experience. Urie Bronfenbrenner explains in his bioecological systems model that family is the primary influence on an individual and their development as it exists within the microsystem (Anderson et al., 2017). This group dynamic and the environment have the most influence on the creation of values and norms, solidifying behavioral patterns, methods of processing, and responses to situations. I can identify the characteristics that the inability to manage conflict and balance power has established within me and my actions (Arias & Punyanunt-Carter, 2017). It is through my experience in a family with a conflictual dynamic that I have acquired undesirable characteristics, a fear of judgment, and a likeliness to comply. On the other hand, I found it helped me better understand the emotions and authenticity in the actions of others. When the peace of the household is dependent on the mood of an individual, children will often become adept at reading the emotions of others (Frankel et al., 2000).

I appreciate the changing norms surrounding family structure and how this social group can be defined. Through therapy and education, I have a better understanding of my experience. Creating a close and comforting group of friends and family has benefited me in terms of personal growth. My mother's resilience has helped her stretch gender roles and familial structure. I am proud of her determination and efforts towards a better life. I am grateful for my best friend's love and support, as she has become an important part of my family. These characteristics, alongside the others mentioned, are necessary factors that constitute a healthy family. It is important to mention the feelings of love and concern I have for my father and brother. I am happy to say I think of them fondly, as forgiveness and a hope for change are beneficial traits to carry to get the most joy out of life.

References

Anderson, S. A., Sabatelli, R.M., & Kosutic, I. (2013). Systemic and Ecological Qualities of Families. *Handbook of marriage and the family*, 121-138.

Arias, V., & Punyanunt-Carter, N. (2017, August 22). Family, Culture, and Communication. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Retrieved January 29, 2024, from https://oxfordre.com/communication/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-504

Frankel, K.A., Boetsch, E.A., Harmon, R.J. (2000) Elevated picture completion scores: a possible indicator of hypervigilance in maltreated preschoolers, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24(1), 63-70.

Jabbari, B., Schoo, C., Rouster, A. (2023, September 16). *Family dynamics.* StatPearls Publishing. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK560487/

The U.S. Education System and How It Contributes to Social Stratification

Carter D. Nickell
Class of 2025

The American education system operates in the same way that many other systems operate in the U.S.: each state is given the autonomy to shape and create its own educational framework. The largest chunk of public school funding comes from state and federal taxes paid by citizens (United States Census Bureau, 2021). Because of this, public schools serve most students in the U.S., while private schools serve a much smaller population. A traditional public schooling path will take students through elementary, middle, and high school, with optional higher education. The curriculum is ever-changing but generally covers core subjects of knowledge such as math, science, English, and social studies. Because of factors such as differing policies, as well as funding rates from state to state, any given student can have a wide variety of experiences within the public education system, which is necessary in a country as large and diverse as the U.S. To compare school performance across the country, standardized testing is commonly used to gauge both student and school performance. This system, when examined with the sociological imagination, becomes a tool to organize people into their place in the social hierarchy, a process called social stratification (Conerly et. al., 2021), and my experience shows the numerous ways in which the system favors some groups over others in its goal to achieve that organization.

My experience in the U.S. education system was positive. I would say that I had the opportunity to receive a majority of the benefits this system can offer. I grew up in a family that had the money to live in an area with great schools, which provided many resources and programs for its students. From elementary school, I was put into advanced courses, and I was even tested to enter into the "gifted student program," which I was happy not to be selected for because it would have meant removal from my good friends in the regular class. When I got to high school, I continued to take advanced-level classes, completed some college-level courses, and had opportunities to gain career field experience. I always performed very well and achieved near-perfect grades, graduating as salutatorian. I was also on the school's leadership team, which handled planning school-wide events like assemblies. Along with academics, the education system was my main source of social life. All my friends in those years came from classes or extracurriculars.

To many people, my experience with the U.S. education system looks like a typical encounter of grades K-12, but if one takes on the sociological imagination, a perspective that connects personal experience to broader social ideas (Mills, 2000), it is revealed that social stratification is littered throughout the system. First, consider that I was set apart from my peers starting in

elementary school when it came to my intelligence (gifted program, advanced classes, etc.). By putting me in the "advanced" group, I was being told that I was smarter than everyone else, while they were made to believe that they could not live up to that same standard. The "smart" people were separated from the "not-so-smart" and given ideas of themselves, whether intentionally or not. This is a form of social stratification because the education system is shaping the student's ideas of their roles and place in the social environment. This sort of thing also happens across different schools because of the way that each one receives funding.

Since schools receive funding based on the property taxes of their area, low-income area schools get a significantly smaller budget than their more well-off counterparts (Miller, 2018). I was blessed enough to go to a school that received adequate funding, and therefore an abundance of resources was available to me, like internship programs and career development services, yet the same could not be said for someone who went to school one district over. Their schools received much less funding because low-income areas yield less tax money, therefore challenging the district to be frugal with its budget, which could not allow for extra resources and services. This contributes to social stratification because it clearly sets the people with money apart from those who are financially worse off. This system communicates to each class where they belong in the social hierarchy: the middle class is told they deserve good education and resources to better themselves, while the lower class is told their education is not as important to society and that they are valued less than those above them. These examples highlight how I have seen education contribute to social stratification.

From my personal experience, the education system in the U.S. has done a great job. Yet when I take on the perspective of a sociologist, I can see that my story is simply a small part of the organization of the social hierarchy. Having this perspective makes me feel very blessed to have received the treatment that I did throughout my educational years, but it also strikes me with a sense of injustice. Why should I be told I am made to be smarter or more well-off than any other?

Going forward, I will be more aware of how the structures of society are putting people into places in the social hierarchy and do what I can to combat it when it becomes unfair. Awareness is the first step to preventing inequalities, like the ones seen in today's education system, from happening. By taking on the sociological imagination to look at the U.S. education system, along with my personal experience, it becomes evident that this system is being used as a tool to socially stratify society.

References

Conerly, T. R., Holmes, K., & Tamang, A. L. (2021). Social stratification in the United States. In *Introduction to sociology 3e*. OpenStax. https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/pages/9-1-what-is-social-stratification

Miller, C. L. (2018). The effect of education spending on student achievement. *Proceedings*. *Annual Conference on Taxation and Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the National Tax Association*, 111, 1-121.

Mills, C. W. (2000). *The sociological imagination*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

United States Census Bureau. (2021). 2021 *public elementary-secondary education finance data*. https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/econ/school-finances/secondary-education-finance.html

My Journey from Self-Doubt to Self-Love

Jadyn Runnels
Class of 2025

Self-doubt is a persistent, negative voice in our minds that tells us we are not good enough, smart enough, or worthy of love and respect. It can prevent us from pursuing our dreams and living our best lives. Through self-doubt comes self-esteem, and we want people to accept us and feel good about us. Through my experiences with self-esteem, I overcame feelings of self-doubt and learned how sociology can help people understand themselves.

Charles Horton Cooley's theory of the looking-glass self explains how we develop our self-esteem based on how we think others see us (Claerbaut, 2022). Cooley explains that by believing how others see us, we can create an image in our heads of how we should feel about ourselves. This is especially true in today's world. Individuals take the negative things people say and engrave it in their heads. We need to have an image of who we are and who we believe we are without anyone else's feedback or rumors. It is important for someone to feel heard about who they are and not focus on what other people think of them. Cooley believed we use the perceptions of others as a mirror to reflect on who we are. His theory best explains my experiences with self-esteem. I noticed having a sense of self-awareness can help me identify patterns in my behavior and understand the basic motivations for my actions.

My social experience with self-esteem dates to when I was 15 years old. During this time, my parents got divorced. I had a lot of anxiety after this, and I lost myself. I struggled with my self-esteem and anxiety. As a child put in the middle of their parent's issues, I began to wonder if I was the problem. This happened during my high school years, so I started to have anxiety talking to people because a voice in my head was telling me I wasn't good enough and people would not want to be my friends. Hearing this voice in my head negatively affected my self-esteem.. Being on social media made this even worse for me. I saw all these pretty girls surrounding me and I felt like I was not as pretty or that I didn't fit in. This is the time when individuals are finding out who they are and who they want to be. I had to be self-aware to identify the negative thoughts and beliefs I had about myself. Those feelings of inadequacy, like I had to fit in, harmed my self-esteem.

One thing that helped me through this was finding my passions. Everyone has their own ideas and hobbies, and I found this helpful for me to get through hard times. I had to stay true to myself and find what I liked to do. When I was younger, I couldn't have my own hobbies or things that I enjoyed doing. I chose to hide and stay behind a wall for most of my life.

As I got older, I learned that is not the way to live life, and I met someone very special and dear to my heart. He taught me to be true to myself, and that standing out isn't a bad thing. I learned that I love reading, writing, and

crocheting, and I found things I am passionate about. This helped me get through my time in high school, but learning what I was passionate about helped me fortify my self-esteem and guided me through life.

Since studying sociology, I have learned a lot about other people, but it also taught me about myself., Sociology helped me express who I am, and the study of sociology is something I enjoy. I have learned throughout my year in the major that I love kids and I want to share my love for children with others. In my future career, I would like to work with kids and help them through the field of Social Work. I have changed my major a few times but when I started sociology classes, I instantly learned what I wanted to. Learning something you enjoy gives you a new perspective on life and how you want your future to be like.

If I had to give out my best advice, it would be to turn to God. I always return to one specific Bible verse whenever I need someone to turn to: "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (New King James Version Bible, 1982, 1 Peter 5:7).

From the age of 15 until now, being 19 years old, I have struggled with self-esteem. But once I became aware of my negative self-talk, I began to challenge it. I would ask myself if my thoughts were realistic or helpful, replacing my negative thoughts with more positive ones. Understanding the social and environmental factors that influenced my self-esteem, developing self-awareness, and learning coping mechanisms for dealing with negative experiences, helped me improve my sense of self-worth and live a happier and more fulfilling life.

References

Claerbaut, D. (2022). The social self and social reality. In Larkin, T.M. (Eds.), *Our social world: An introduction to sociology* (Chp 4). Grand Canyon University

Bible Gateway. 1st Peter 5:7. (n.d.). Retrieved from Bible Gateway: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+5%3A7&version=NKJV

University, G. C. (2022). *Our social world: An introduction to sociology.*

The Selfish Nature of Helping Others

Kobe Lage
Class of 2025

The act of helping others is rarely conceptualized as an action that directly benefits the one who chooses to commit time and energy to the welfare of others. We reserve words such as altruistic, compassionate, or considerate, to describe those who engage in volunteer work, social sciences, and the helping professions. One noticeable feature about these words is they rarely relate the individual to oneself but rather a description of the individual concerning others. Helping others, at least from an external lens, appears to be a behavior based in the desire to provide care for those outside of oneself. We tend to categorize people who commit several hours per week or more toward social work as selfless. However, is helping others truly a reprioritization of the individual's well-being and desires in exchange for the betterment of these same qualities in others? In my experience, the answer is a resounding "no."

As a psychology major with dreams of being a counselor or life coach, I love to help others. I frequently volunteer, do my best to be a light to those around me, and often find myself in deep conversations involving the well-being of those close to me. And yet, when I step onto a basketball court, I desire everyone on the other team to experience a blowout defeat. When I apply for a position at a job or university, I desire my resume to be picked over others. When I approach an intersection, I pray for a green light to come quickly at the expense of a red light for those going in a different direction. At the same time, many in my position are considered highly altruistic. If this is true, why do I do things that so often bring others down? According to the ethical egoism theory, we base every action we make as humans on a personal desire to benefit ourselves (Shaver, 2023). This theory includes actions that are considered altruistic. Studies have also shown that life satisfaction based on helping behaviors is greater in cultures with more social approval for such behaviors (Orga et al., 2015). Internal satisfaction created by providing for others varies based on how the actions affect external perceptions of said behaviors. Additionally, a study involving peer help groups found helping others allowed individuals to "disengage from prior patterns of self-reference, and thereby facilitated an openness to changing internal standards" which increased life satisfaction (Schwartz & Sendor, 1999, p. 1570). Both studies suggest a correlation between "selfless" actions and a strong sense of well-being for those performing them. In other words, the act of helping others is not solely designated to enhance the well-being of those being helped. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for self-benefit are inherently involved in social work.

Many may claim this perspective is dehumanizing or even anti-theistic. These claims could not be further from the truth. Volunteering, helping others, and exchanging personal time for time spent helping others are core parts of who I am. These things make me happy. They provide me with contentment. I have

yet to find an activity that brings me more fulfillment than seeing the fruit of my words and actions bringing joy to another human being. It is the beautiful relationship between self-fulfillment and supporting others through which one can find the epitome of an all-powerful and loving creator. If "love comes from God" and "everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (New International Version, 2011, 1 John 4:7), does it not make sense that the fulfillment of this God-given love would bring about personal benefit? Would a spiritually integral aspect of God's calling for us not produce genuine spiritual and emotional fruits? When God desires that "above all, [we] love each other deeply" (New International Version, 2011, 1 Peter 4:8), it is clear that providing for others out of love must be an act which is positively reinforced. In the same way that a healthy meal gives us energy and physical support. A heart that longs for love will, in turn, produce a desire to uplift others, which gives us spiritual energy and emotional support.

Refusal or an inability to acknowledge the full spectrum of net benefits to both the giver and receiver of love creates a helping environment which holds only a fraction of its potential for good. Loving others is key to our survival. Loving others brings genuine fulfillment. Loving others opens the gateway to personal growth. Without reinforcement of some kind, human behavior will not be repeated. This is science. This is God. Embracing the "selfish" idea that one's desire to help others is purposefully placed by God to advance personal and spiritual gain minimizes the god-complex that one is so above others, they are willing to help with zero net benefit in return. We are not God, and because we are only human, we ought to embrace that selfish part of ourselves, which God gave us, that urges us to hold the door, to give a compliment, to donate a portion of a paycheck. Helping others does not need to be a "selfless" act. Such a thing does not exist.

References

New International Version. (2011). BibleGateway.com. http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/ New-International-Version-NIV-Bible/#booklist (Original Work Published 1978)

Oarga, C., Stavrova, O., & Fetchenhauer, D. (2015). *When and why is helping others good for well being? The role of belief in reciprocity and conformity to society's expectations.* European Journal of Social Psychology, 45(2), 242–254. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2092

Schwartz, C. E., & Sendor, R. M. (1999). Helping others helps oneself: *Response shift effects in peer support.* Social Science & Medicine, 48(11), 1563-1575. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0277-9536(99)00049-0

Shaver, R. (2023). Egoism. In E.N. Zalta (Ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2023 ed.). Stanford University Metaphysics Research Lab. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/egoism/

A Place Where Peace Overpowers Poverty

Jocelyn Gildart
Class of 2026

The Place

On December 26, 2022, I took a 19-hour flight, which landed in a different country, immersing me into what seemed like a whole new world. When the plane touched down in the Dominican Republic and after a four-hour bus ride from Santo Domingo to Barahona; the beauty of the country and the reality of poverty impacted me. The city was filled with billboards, bumper-to bumper-traffic, and families shopping at curbside vendors. In Barahona, houses were bandaged with branches and leaves, people seemed to walk everywhere and children seemed unaccompanied. After one day, I discovered that in this village was an established community in spite of poverty. A shared struggle was transmuted into a reason to remain sensitive to each other's needs, through the development of a collective society. Something or someone gave this community and people peace and resilience. I needed to know what gave them this peace, a peace that makes no sense in relation to the individualized culture of the U.S.

Context

More than 40.4% of the Dominican Republic residents suffer from poverty, with more than a third of the total population surviving on less than $1.25 per day (Dominican Republic - World Food Program USA, 2023). 52.5 percent of Dominicans have faith through their Christian or Catholic religions (Dominican Republic - United States Department of State, 2023). Collectively, these statistics and my personal experiences reveal the synergistic relationship between religion and poverty in cultures within the hamlets of the Dominican Republic. From Bible to modern times, there has been a long tradition of self-sacrifice and loving one's neighbor as well as a motivation to relieve and aid the impoverished as a "religious duty" (Schweiger, 2019). This can be summed up as giving of yourself. However, I found the most astounding facet of the relationship between religion and poverty in the Dominican Republic is that it influenced the people to prioritize their individualized moral motivations over social, governmental, or systematic obligations. This prioritizing and faith provided them with a sense of community and peace.

The People

"Tranquilo." One word that describes the peaceful and easy-going nature of the Dominican people. In English we use this locution daily. But for the Dominicans, "calm down" isn't just a saying; it's a way of life. A peace catalyzed by poverty seems like a paradox, but somehow it gives the villagers a common denominator, which creates a focus on the people of the place, rather than its possessions. On my fifth day in the Dominican Republic, I witnessed this concept in practice. While aiding in the construction of a library for a

children's school, I saw a precious face on little legs walking down the long road. Five-year-old Juandel had only one pair of shoes but had already mastered the two mile walk to the school. While he may have made the trek to learn, he somehow taught me a lesson of a lifetime. Naturally, I was curious about this little boy who arrived at the work site and he wouldn't leave my thoughts. So, I asked one of the Dominican girls, "Whose son is he?" She responded, "Nobody's.", I asked, "Well then, who takes care of him?" She smiled and sincerely responded, "Everybody." Once again, faith and community were demonstrated for me.

The Thought Behind the Action

In today's world, political or governmental expectations for the provision of public welfare are generally grounded in moral terms, as a "matter of answerability to a community of obligation (Kaplan, 1982)." Within this ideology, the government politics give substance to moral responsibility, but from what I have experienced, systems of government can just as easily take it away, presenting superficiality in its place (Beardsworth, 2015). It was then clear to me that this Dominican village did not take care for little Juandel because there was a government putting pressure on them to do so or through a program by which the supervisors are financially benefited. For the Dominicans, kindness and community are not enforced through obligation, but naturally exuded from solely a place of moral motivation based on their faith and community. When finances and resources are lacking, the Dominicans know and have accepted that the one thing they cannot be denied or cannot lose is their community approach, which stands on a love for their Lord, land, and people.

Conclusion

Before this missions trip, I confined poverty's power to only producing animosity between groups of people. I never imagined a response to its presence would be one of unity between individuals, as their faith through religion creates hope through community. While the materials of the world are fleeting, the village people of Barahona Dominican Republic remember that "love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:7, NIV). I will always be grateful to this place and these people for teaching me to live life "tranquilo."

References

Beardsworth, R. (2015). From moral to political responsibility in a globalized age. *Ethics & International Affairs, 29*(1), 71–92. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0892679414000781

Dominican Republic. (2020). OECD/G20 *Base Erosion and Profit Shifting Project*. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483375519.n200

Dominican Republic. (2023, May 4). United States Department of State. https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/dominican-republic/

Kaplan, A. (1982). Moral responsibilities and political realities. *Policy Sciences*, 14(3), 205–223. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00136397

Schweiger, G. (2019). Religion and poverty. *Palgrave Communications, 5*(1), 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0272-3

Phoenix Homelessness vs. Phoenix Bus Stops

Monserrat Hernandez Rosales
Class of 2023

In the spring of 2023, I commuted from Unions Hills to Camelback on a bus for one semester. Every day, I noticed how each bus stop was not in the same condition as others. Some of them had excellent shade, a high standard of cleanliness, and artistic influence from landscapers fixing the surrounding environment. Through research, I discovered that the City of Phoenix's new renovations were created to prevent homeless people from sleeping in the bus stops. Cities look at Martin v City of Boise, a case that states it is illegal to punish an individual for being outside on public property when there is no option to stay inside (Justia, 2023). The Phoenix City Council District 1 stated they will renovate their bus shelters to ensure they are being used for their intended purposes by all passengers (Phoenix, 2023). However, through my journey of understanding the new bus stop renovations, I learned that this situation had to do with Phoenix homelessness. In this paper, I will discuss my observations of how the homeless population use the Phoenix bus shelters, explain how they are affected by the renovations, use theoretical perspectives to understand the problem, and give a solution that can be used to help the homeless population that live in Phoenix, Arizona.

When using the public transportation, I noticed how different bus renovations affected the homeless. First were the city ordinances that were posted at some bus stops, particularly in lower socio-economic areas. Specifically, code section 36-401 states that a person cannot be at the stop for more than an hour in an eight-hour period (City Code, 2023). I once had to wait for an hour and know other passengers that have waited longer. Another renovation is when the bus shelter is completely removed and forces people to stand in the sun with just a bus stop sign. This does not present a feasible solution to prevent loitering, as the shaded structure is no longer there for other passengers to be protected from the sun and high temperatures that go up to the hundreds. Yet, this affects owners of nearby establishments because it results in lost business from the overcrowding at the bus shelters. The homeless population uses the bus stops to have a safe place to sleep or share resources with other homeless people. They are not being given the help they need. What is being created is a short-term solution disguised as renovations by the City of Phoenix to push the homeless population elsewhere.

In this experience, I used conflict and symbolic interactionism theories to understand why bus shelters are being removed from the public and how it affects the homeless population. Conflict theory states that there are power dynamics between the dominant and majority group that control or limit resources (Kretchmar, 2023). The removal of bus shelters and the enforcement

of the city ordinance comes from the dominant group in power. In this way, bus shelters become a symbol of status for the group. The dominant group demonstrates that they have the resources to beautify bus stops, but only in certain areas. The amount of effort and money it takes for landscapers to be available consistently to ensure the area is clean and visually pleasing is not given to every bus stop.

The second theory that I used was symbolic interaction, which proposes that people create and attach meaning to items, social interactions, and other people (Vejar, 2023). Urban landscape resources are distributed in a divided and controlled manner because people learned how they should be used through social interactions (Parker, 2021). Public areas are often used as a place for homeless people to gather with other homeless individuals and provide a safe place for them to eat and rest (Parker, 2021). The meaning that is attached to bus stops is safety, security, and community. When it is taken away, it is a form of spatial inequality because the homeless population does not get the same resources as everyone else. Spatial inequality is the unequal distribution of resources people face based on the location they live in (Fischer & Li, 2019). Most of the time homeless people try to find shelter that is out of the public eye and only use public resources as a last resort (Parker, 2021). Due to the limited capacity in shelters, the only safe places are public spaces (Ding et al., 2022). The public and the homeless can engage in the same activities in a public park, but public perception differs when "private" and "public" behaviors clash, such as sleeping on a bus shelter (Parker, 2021). This action creates a cognitive dissonance in the public when a person experiencing homelessness is using bus shelters for a longer period and for a different purpose. This, as a result, causes the removal of the homeless population in public spaces.

A solution is to help individuals obtain shelter because bus shelters are the main resource that attracts the homeless population. As mentioned previously, they seek safety and security because they are in the public eye (Parker, 2021). Bus shelters are in front of the streets and are seen by drivers that pass by. This provides security from dangerous individuals that attempt to harm them. The solution is to provide shelter, which gives them security. However, it is a costly solution to build these buildings due to the high amount of homelessness. Other solutions like lowering the cost of living and making housing affordable is a difficult debate, which currently cannot be compromised by our local government. Thus, this solution may be supported by public and private organizations providing support for this population.

Based on my observations of how the homeless population use Phoenix's bus shelters, the renovations done to remove them from the bus stops reveal that the City of Phoenix's current solutions are not changing the problem for the homeless population and Phoenix residents. The homeless community uses public spaces as their shelter -- if they believe it is safe -- but are pushed away by law enforcement and policies. The current solution has been to renovate bus shelters, but this also negatively affects the public and the local establishments.

A temporary solution is to help individuals obtain protection by building homeless shelters. It will not solve the entire problem, but it will help alleviate the first few needs for the homeless rather than relocating them elsewhere.

References

City Code (2023). *Article XVI. Regulation of conduct on Transit Vehicles, Property and Facilities*. Sec. 36-401.

Ding, H., Loukaitou-Sideris, A., & Wasserman, J. L. (2022). Homelessness on public transit: A review of problems and responses. *Transport Reviews*, 42(2), 134–156. https://doi-org.lopes.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/01441647.2021.1923583

Fischer, M., & Li, A. (2019). Spatial inequality. In A. M. Orum (Ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of urban and regional studies*. Wiley. Credo Reference

Justia. (2023). *Martin v. City of Boise, No. 15-35845 (9th Cir. 2018)*. https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/ca9/15-35845/15-35845-2018-09-04.html

Kretchmar, J. (2023). Conflict theory. *Salem Press Encyclopedia*.

Parker, C. (2021). Homelessness in the public landscape: A typology of informal infrastructure. *Landscape Journal, 40*(1), 49–66. https://doi-org.lopes.idm.oclc.org/10.3368/wplj.40.1.49

Phoenix. (2023). *Councilwoman Ann O'Brien Phoenix District 1. Booklet update 3*. https://www.phoenix.gov/district1site/Documents/Proposed%20Homeless%20Solutions%20Plan.pdf

Vejar, C. (2023). Symbolic Interactionism. *Salem Press Encyclopedia*.

Our Call to Unravel the Negative Stereotypes Surrounding Drug-Dependency

Summer Bowen
Class of 2026

I was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, which has always been a city on the grittier side. The downtown streets are filled with dirt bike engines revving, the noise bouncing off old, red brick buildings. In the past ten years there has been a dramatic increase of crime in Baltimore, specifically murders and robberies, and a serious surge of fatal drug overdoses. The Baltimore City Police Department reported 18.76 violent crimes per 1,000 people in 2018, versus 24.83 violent crimes per 1,000 residents in 2019 (BCPD, 2023). Many people in Baltimore have experienced drug addiction or know someone who has, yet there seems to be little change in the perception concerning drug addicts. My dad was a drug addict for most of my life, until he passed away when I was twelve. Consequently, I learned the importance of viewing those who experience drug addiction as people struggling with a disease, rather than criminals. With increased support of rehab programs and sober homes, he, and plenty of other recovering addicts, would have had the tools they needed to fully live their lives. However, recovering drug addicts encounter many barriers to their sobriety, contributing to the number of relapses — for example, 40 to 60% of addicts will relapse after initial treatment (NIDH, 2020). Perpetual stereotypes of drug addicts hinder their successful rehabilitation and lead to further deviant behavior and negative societal attitude towards drug addicted individuals.

Imagine putting in the fight of your life, refusing your body the one thing it cannot stop craving. Imagine doing this while facing the dirty criminal stereotype you are trying to beat, being used against you. There are lots of stereotypes that negatively affect drug addicts and their successful rehabilitation. I have experienced individuals indicating that drug addicts are lazy, reckless, or stupid, when forty to sixty percent of drug addicts relapse (NIDH, 2020), thus reinforcing negative stereotypes and resulting in a decrease in social support. Social support can make the difference between sobriety and death. Additionally, when societal attitudes towards drug addicts are this detrimental, some drug addicts cannot and do not want to get clean. This leads to further judgement and stereotyping from observers about how drug addicts are doing it to themselves.

Drug addiction brings further problems, such as homelessness, thus strengthening hurtful stereotypes. John's Hopkins researcher Dr. Sanaullah Khan interviewed several recovering drug addicts in Baltimore City. The person she most regularly interviewed is referred to as "J". She explains,

Like J, many others shared their turn to drugs in moments of uncontrollable grief. And people like J continued to experience suspicion from the state with symptoms of tiredness and sleep deprivation treated as signs of drug use rather than the difficulties of street life. J shared that the biggest challenge during his period of homelessness was that people would often accuse him of being high. He said that he would think to himself that, "I need to start carrying my urinalysis so that I can tell these a**holes to keep their mouths shut." (Khan, 2023).

Khan concludes that for recovering drug addicts, the mistreatment they experience at the hands of society can make it feel as though sobriety is not possible and not worth the pain (Khan, 2023).

Drug addiction is seen as deviant behavior rather than a disease which completely changes the functionality of the brain. Studies on how drug abuse affects the prefrontal cortex found, "abnormalities of the brain activity in the prefrontal cortex area for the drugs abuser is highly related with the drug abuse in long history and continuous and automatically reflect the indication of abnormal brain activity in drug dependence" (Turnip et al., 2017). This means that it can sometimes feel physically impossible for addicts to function without drugs. Those in lower-social classes who experience drug addiction must do unfavorable things for money to feed their addiction, that they normally would not do. This adds to further societal judgment and facilitates the criminal stereotype.

Baltimore is a working-class city full of families who get their joy from their lawns looking nice and their children winning lacrosse games. Since Baltimore and its suburbs are not necessarily big on the map, and are full of lower and middle-class folks, people tend not to care as much about the rampant drug addiction taking life after life. There were 1,303 deaths from fentanyl in the Baltimore County area in 2021. (Maryland Department of Health, 2022). Substance abuse disproportionally affects those in lower income areas compared to higher income areas. In a 2019 study, researchers found that in 17 states from 2002-2014, drug overdoses were densely packed in zip codes associated with lower income rates (Pear et al., 2019). Drug users in lower-income areas seeking treatment often cannot get help due to the average price of rehabilitation per person being $13,475 (NCDAS, n.d.). It seems celebrities have access to the nicest rehabilitation centers money can buy and receive support that is missing for addicts on "skid row". Until we change our perception of cleanliness versus dirtiness in the higher versus lower classes and funding for treatment centers, drug addicts will not be able to get the help they need. For the drug addict without financial resources, there seems to be a daily struggle to access help along with fighting society's perception of them as dirty and unworthy of care.

Drug dependency is so commonplace and rampant that the social attitude towards drug addicts takes a shift from a desire to help the cause, to frustration and giving up. Solving the problem seems so daunting and impossible

considering the sheer number of people experiencing drug addiction. I submit that drug addicts, who are able to get clean and stay clean, will start with compassion and fairness throughout our society. Through a change in perspective, we can arrive at new solutions that focus on treating the drug addict as a dignified person.

References

Baltimore City Police Department. (2023). Violent Crime Rate per 1,000 Residents - City. https://data.baltimorecity.gov/datasets/bniajfi::violent-crime-rate-per-1000-residents-1/about?layer=1

Khan, S. (2023). Complimentary addictions: Pharmaceutical experimentalism and the problem of recovery in Baltimore. *Medical Anthropology*, 42(7), 637–649. https://doi-org.lopes.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/01459740.2023.2249203

Maryland Department of Health. (2022). Unintentional Drug- and Alcohol-Related Intoxication Deaths in Maryland, 2022. https://health.maryland.gov/vsa/Pages/overdose.aspx

National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics. (n.d.). Average Cost of Drug Rehab. https://drugabusestatistics.org/cost-of-rehab/

National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction— Treatment and Recovery*. https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/treatment-recovery

Pear, V. A., Ponicki, W. R., Gaidus, A., Keyes, K. M., Martins, S. S., Fink, D. S., Rivera-Aguirre, A., Gruenewald, P. J., & Cerdá, M. (2019). Urban-rural variation in the socioeconomic determinants of opioid overdose. Drug and alcohol dependence, 195, 66–73. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2018.11.024

Turnip, A., Esti, K. D., Simbolon, A. I., Hidayat, T., & Wirakusumah, F. F. (2017). Effects of drug abuse on brain activity in frontal cortex area. *2017 2nd International Conferences on Information Technology, Information Systems and Electrical Engineering (ICITISEE)*, 244–248. https://doi-org.lopes.idm.oclc.org/10.1109/ICITISEE.2017.8285504

Embracing Christian Values in Social Work: A Personal Journey

Gia Boi Huynh
MSW – Candidate - GCU

As a rehabilitation health behavioral technician, sociology and social work are essential. The diverse mix of people seeking treatment and recovery at the rehabilitation center provides a fascinating backdrop for comprehending my Christian faith and social work. The strong yet fragile rehabilitation facility contributes to my professional and personal growth. People in the social environment come from a variety of backgrounds and have a variety of difficulties and aspirations in life.

My Experience

Working as a health behavioral technician at a rehabilitation institution has helped me to help people on their road to recovery. I was affected by the story of a young man who found sanctuary and strength at the center. His tenacity and the life-changing power of human interactions indelibly affected my understanding of empathy and compassion. His story has increased my determination to assist others by demonstrating the power of genuine care and encouragement to better people's lives. This tragedy has highlighted the need of empathy and community support in rehabilitation, which has altered my professional perspective and expanded my knowledge of human experience.

Sociology/Social Work and My Experiences

From my sociology and social work degrees, the concept of "person in environment" has impacted my perspective on rehabilitation clinic patients (Smith, 2021). This basic concept emphasizes the need of understanding and addressing the many factors that influence well-being and the connectivity of individuals and their social settings. Every time I visit a rehabilitation center patient, I am impressed by how deeply their individual experiences are connected with their cultural background. A comprehensive solution to a person's difficulties is required, and the "person in environment" approach has assisted me in understanding how these problems emerge from wider social components (Smith, 2021). This method taught me more about the interrelated elements that impact people's health and emphasized the necessity of social context in health care.

My Experience with a Sociology/Social Work Concept

My perspective of patients in rehabilitation institutions is influenced by the concept of "person in environment" as taught in sociology and social work (Smith, 2021). Understanding and resolving the different variables that influence well-being is critical, and this basic concept emphasizes people's connectivity with their social settings. Every time I visit a rehabilitation center patient, I am impressed by how deeply their individual experiences are connected with their

cultural background. I now grasp the interconnection of people's issues and the need to give them a comprehensive solution due to learning about the "person in environment" concept (Smith, 2021). This method taught me more about the interrelated elements that impact people's health and emphasized the necessity of social context in health care.

Incorporating Christian Values

In my Christian work, I am guided by love, compassion, and service. Compassion for the downtrodden and sorrowful is emphasized in Jesus' teachings. Social justice and the emancipation of the downtrodden are core principles of social work, thus this makes sense. In line with Matthew 22:39, the major objective of social workers, as stated by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, n.d.), is to assist the downtrodden and to solve social issues. Christian qualities in social work include compassion, fairness, and helping and elevating the downtrodden. By modeling the selflessness and compassion of Jesus and singing praises to the Lord, social workers assist people in regaining their footing, developing their potential, and serving others with love and care.

Conclusion

My journey as a recovery center Health Behavioral Technician showed me how my Christian religion, sociology, and social work beliefs coexist. I wholeheartedly embrace the offer to show everyone love, hope, and respect. I adhere to Christian concepts of love, compassion, and service, which fit social work's emphasis on social justice and underserved populations. Social workers help individuals find their feet, grow, and spread love and care in the service of others by emulating Jesus' selflessness and compassion and praising the Lord.

References

NASW. *Code of Ethics*. (n.d.). https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English

Smith, M. A. (2021). Social learning and addiction. *Behavioural Brain Research, 398*, 112954. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbr.2020.112954

A College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Student Publication

GRAND CANYON
UNIVERSITY®

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

GCU.EDU