
Other Research by McNair Scholars at the University of Oregon

Abstracts

Propositional Modality and Cognition: An Exploration into the Role of Force Dynamics in Epistemic Reasoning

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Faculty Mentor: Eric Pederson, Linguistics

The idea that force dynamics is cognitively operative in the deontic domain is generally accepted. This paper examines the role of force dynamics and the metaphor of force in linking the deontic and epistemic domains in English. It provides a selective overview of the theoretical claims about propositional modality and force dynamics, and of the diachronic and language acquisition research linking polysemous forms (deontic and epistemic modal auxiliaries). The experiment designed for this paper aims to strengthen the claim that force dynamics is operative in epistemic reasoning as well. Participants were given tasks involving varying degrees of inferential pressure and given a choice of auxiliaries of varying degrees of epistemicity. Generally, high inference tasks correlated with participants choosing an epistemic modal of high certainty, and low inference tasks correlated with the choice of epistemic modal of lower certainty. Limitations of note include the small sample size and the inclusion of negation and some less-used auxiliaries as choices. Participants' varying understanding of the task and varying levels of self-confidence also was brought to bear in their subjective choice of modal auxiliary.

Effect of Literacy on Success in a Court-Sponsored Drug and Alcohol Treatment Diversion Program

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Lack of basic literary and life skills has been implicated in the failure of individuals to complete drug and alcohol treatment programs, increasing the rate of recidivism following completion of the programs. Individuals with low levels of literary and life skills have difficulties holding jobs and maintaining personal relationships. In this project, we will assess basic literary and life skills using the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) and relate performance on this measure to measures of success and recidivism in the Lane County Drug Court treatment programs. If individuals with higher levels of literacy or life skills demonstrate higher success rates and lower recidivism rates, then the study would provide justification for developing interventions designed to increase levels of literacy and life skills in individuals referred to the Drug Court. This project is the result of collaboration between the Lane County Circuit Court, Emergence Treatment Services, Lane Community College, and the University of Oregon.

Coping with Hunger: Experiences of Food Insecure Latinos in Eugene, Oregon

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Faculty Mentor: Lise Nelson, Geography

Eugene, Oregon, hosts a Latino community greatly affected by food insecurity. Almost half of all Latino adults in Oregon lived in food insecure households in 2002; a problem that is generally unrecognized by the local community. Food insecure Latinos living in the Eugene area struggle to cope with such conditions through a number of mechanisms including reliance on food stamps, food boxes, and help from family. When those resources are exhausted, they are left with few alternatives. This project examines the state of food insecurity and coping strategies among Latinos in Eugene while also exploring the role that social service agencies have in providing assistance to this community.

Agent Orange and Reparations for Viet People

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The United States used Agent Orange, a toxic chemical, during the U.S. war in Viet Nam to kill vegetation that protected “enemies.” Thirty years later, over four million Viet nationals continue to encounter the effects of the war as they contract grave illnesses from the deadly toxin. This chemical is banned in the U.S. because the government recognized it as harmful to people. A class action lawsuit forced companies that produced Agent Orange to compensate U.S., Canadian, New Zealand, and Australian veterans exposed to the chemical. Viet nationals are dying from similar health complications, but are unable to benefit from similar compensation. An analysis of the Agent Orange controversy and a comparison of the successful lawsuit by U.S. veterans with the unsuccessful lawsuit filed by Viet nationals reveals the lingering effects of both a racist construction of “enemy” and the Viet Nam syndrome.

Hexabenzocoronene (HBC) Derivatives: Toward Self-assembling Molecular Electronics

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Faculty Mentor: Darren Johnson, Chemistry

Faculty Mentor: Colin Nuckolls, Chemistry, Columbia University

Hexabenzocoronenes (HBC) provide a unique scaffold for building discotic liquid crystals. Their shape is not entirely flat, allowing them to interdigitate and fortify the 1-dimensional columnar structures into which it self-assembles. These structures may afford interesting semi-conducting and photovoltaic properties previously unavailable in organic electronic materials. Recently, members of the Nuckolls group developed a convenient and robust synthesis of HBC from simple, inexpensive starting materials. The synthesis was modified to achieve many derivatives, including a dimer, trimer and the incorporation of crown ethers as ion channels. Through investigating the properties of the oligomers, we have gained further understanding of the stacking dynamics of the liquid crystalline derivatives of HBC, as well as discovered potentially new supramolecular structures.

The Rise of Ethnic Consciousness as an Active Political Force in Ethiopia: The Oromo and Amhara 1960-2006

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Faculty Mentor: Dennis Galvan,
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Since the 1960s, the development of Oromo and Amhara ethnic consciousness has drawn attention to differences between these two groups and created ethnic political movements. Three factors—urbanization, education, and governmental discrimination—help explain the rise of Oromo/Amhara enforced cultural identity differences. Using a social and anthropological understanding of the historic and modern Oromo/Amhara conflicts, this research examines several related issues: the uses of ethnic consciousness as the base of an active political movement; how the rise of cultural identity led to political-ethnic conflicts; the overthrow of Mengistu Haile Mariam as a communist head of state of Ethiopia from 1977 to 1991; and post-1991 ethnic politics in Ethiopia.

Native Women in the Artworks of Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica

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Since the early 20th century, Mesoamerican art has been studied as anthropological and historical artifacts. Certainly much has been learned from these uses, but its value in the art history discipline has not been thoroughly explored. The main focus of this work is to explore the ideologies that have prevented this art from being elevated to the status of high art and being included in scholarly discussions of art history. The heterogeneity of Mesoamerican art holds much information about the pre-Hispanic past. This work will also explore the role of native women of Mesoamerica in order to draw a comparative analysis of contemporary Chicana artists based on the unique traditions of indigenous art.

Buffalo Bill and the White West: A Theoretical Analysis of White Supremacist Ideology in American Popular Culture

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Faculty Mentor: David Vázquez, English

As one of the largest historical contributors to the western myth, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* provides a way to analyze the social formation of a culture of "Whiteness." Few historians or philosophers have sought holistic explanations of how and why the *Wild West* has become such a dominant, influential theme in the American cultural imagination. The main goal of my research is to construct a critical model to analyze the performances of Buffalo Bill as recorded in advertising posters, newspaper stories and historical accounts to form a deeper understanding of the intersecting categories of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in the western myth. In the second phase of research, the critical model will be used to analyze two contemporary western films, *Dances with Wolves* (1990) and *Open Range* (2003). Several descriptive concepts—Marxism, racial and sexual contract social theory, the politics of identity, theatricality and performativity, cultural nationalism, and historical theories of imperialism—are key elements of a more effective ideological critique of the *Wild West*.

Applying the Murphy-Mikesell Framework to Indian and Tribal Peoples in the United States

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Faculty Mentor: Alexander Murphy, Geography

The political aspirations of sub-national groups are influenced by their spatial organization. Murphy and Mikesell have addressed this issue from a political-geographic perspective to create a general framework that explains how spatial organization will influence the political aspirations of groups. Murphy and Mikesell developed a diagnostic formula, represented by rap/SAI, which explains group aspirations based on their particular territorial situations. The framework is designed to be applicable generally to many groups. To what extent, however, is the Murphy-Mikesell framework useful to explain the political-territorial aspirations of Indians and tribes in the United States? This paper suggests limitations to the usefulness of the framework when applied to the situations of tribes and Indian peoples in the United States and explores federal Indian policy, geography, theories of nationalism, and indigenous sovereignty to demonstrate these limitations.