

# *Field Notes*

A newsletter of the Middlebury College Anthropology Department  
Summer 2020 Number 15  
Editor: Michael Sheridan



## *A Note from the Chair...*

After a year on hiatus, the newsletter is back—and with a new department! As you know, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology split last summer. We created an Anthropology major that was rigorous and flexible, hoping that students would better understand the connections between the various branches of anthropology. We even created an Applied Anthropology minor, in addition to our existing minor, to show students how anthropologists recognize, understand, and address

contemporary problems related to health, education, and the environment (among other things). The result: we had a wonderful fall, with many new majors and minors joining us. Some of our pre-existing SOAN majors chose to join Anthropology as well; others remained in SOAN or on the SOAN-ANTH track. Regardless, we took care of them all, and we will continue to do so.

Because this is the first newsletter in two years, and now from the Department of Anthropology, I should mention that two faculty members have

joined us. The first is **Kristy Bright** (starting Fall 2019), our new medical anthropologist; she is interested in the social and political life of science in South Asia and North America. The second is **Trinh Tran** (starting Fall 2020), a sociologist who has a joint appointment in Anthropology and Education Studies; she works on issues related to global migration, education, and social policy. We are lucky to have them.

Our department began the 2019-2020 academic year not in Munroe (under renovation), but in 75 Shannon. This was a depressing building, filled with cubicles and plagued by privacy issues, but we made it work. Unfortunately, Covid-19 put an end to our time there: campus (mostly) shut down in March and most of us ended up working from home. Things are somewhat different this fall, as the renovations to Munroe are finished. The Department will be moving to the first floor of Munroe, into brand-new, climate-controlled offices with functioning (!) windows. Presumably, Munroe will be neither soporific (read: blazing hot classrooms) nor glacial (read: drafty windows in January), but comfortable.



*The new 2<sup>nd</sup> floor lobby in Munroe*


As you know, this has been a tumultuous and deadly year. Since the Spring of 2020, most of us have had little-to-no respite from Covid-19. Some of us have been involved in political protests, others in social protests (in our department, we do not just talk about ‘social justice’ in the abstract). We have given and taken online classes, learned different ways of interacting with each other, and juggled new work-home obligations. We must prepare to do so again. Let us hope for a safe and productive year, using what we have learned to safeguard our educational mission but above all, each other.

**James Fitzsimmons**, ANTH chair

## *Faculty and Staff Updates*

### **Kristy Bright**

If someone had asked me last September if I was planning on talking about viruses this year, I may have said “maybe a bit?” (I teach medical anthropology and part of my research concerns the ethics of “personalized healthcare” which includes vaccines). Who knew we’d be living these realities as of March, talking avidly about “WFH” and “quarancheating”? **Mikayla Hyman ’20** provided a wonderfully distracting chance to meet every week this spring and discuss what she crafted into a truly inspiring honors thesis, “Zebras Live Here: How LGBTQIA+ Teens in Rural Vermont Create Health, Space, and Identity.” **Emma Bernstein ’21**, **Kayla Lichtman ’21**, and I built on the question “where is health” (as opposed to “what is health”) to design two studies on pre-K educators and farmworkers as arbiters of rural care. **Mollie Smith ’20**, **Mikayla Hyman ’20**, **Brianna Lipp ’20**, **Hannah Casey ’20** all helped me to develop the medical anthropology program including a new course on the history of drugs and vaccines called “The Traveling Tonic” (spring ’21) and a project based learning (PBL) component in Medical Anthropology (spring ’20 and fall ’20) with guest experts in Covid healthcare, refugee health, and other topics who are matched with students. This summer, **Emma Bernstein ’21** and I moved *The Body Online*, my digital ethnography lab, to Middlebury with critical inputs from **Kayla Buchanan ’21**, **Amun Chaudhury ’22**, **Claire Martens ’21**, **Katie van der Merwe ’21**, **Courtney Tillman ’21**, and **Anna Wood ’21** who developed blogs now published on our website ([bodyonline.org](http://bodyonline.org)). Collaboration took on lots of new forms and spirits this year and I’m thrilled for what comes next.



**About Us**

The Body Online is a critical digital studies lab dedicated to student learning and engagement of ethnographic theory, method, and design online.

[Read More](#)

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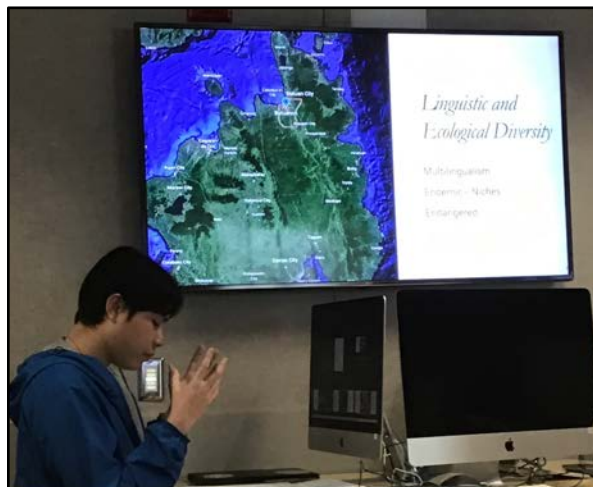
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### James Fitzsimmons

I spent this year finishing my latest manuscript, *The Serpent and the King* (tentative title), under contract with Oxford University Press. This is a book for a popular audience on why the southern Maya lowlands never coalesced into an empire; I am finally submitting it this Fall! I also wrote articles and book reviews, reviewed manuscripts for publications, and tinkered with a second manuscript on mortuary patterns in ancient Mesoamerica (under contract, but with the University of Texas Press). Unfortunately, I spent most of my time (post March) at home and could not go to the field (again!). Like many of the people reading this, I had a difficult personal and professional year. Hopefully, things will turn around in 2021.

### Marybeth Nevins

What a year to be an anthropologist! My biggest news before the Covid-19 pandemic is that we now have a new Linguistics Lab classroom in Sunderland 202. I ran all my smaller classes there, moving to an “earth observatory” model. In the photo students in



my Language and Environmental Communication class present their indigenous language community case studies, navigating between sites using google earth. Once Covid-19 hit and we moved to online class sessions, we were able to stay in that format, investigating how indigenous language ecologies have responded to the pandemic. I can't wait to get back to the lab in the spring!

As for me personally, I have remained in Middlebury social distancing with my family. We've been growing delicious veggies and baking lackluster bread. Thank goodness the bakeries are

back up and running! My doctor tells me I have a case of runner's knee, so I've been walking miles every day, mostly on the TAM / Trail Around Middlebury. I've also been exploring Otter Creek from a kayak. Like everyone else, I spend a good deal of time online, following the news, writing letters, signing petitions and preparing for the fall semester. Like most of my colleagues at Middlebury, I am inspired by protests against white supremacy, racism and brutality in our criminal justice system, and am finding ways to meet the moment in my classes.

My ethnographic and archival research on New England “natures” continues to simmer, slow-cooker fashion. The same is true of a cumulative, reflective paper I am forever writing on linguistic text collections. My finished professional writing this year bears resemblance to my pandemic home practice: a return to the basics. I have been pleased to write reference pieces on the founding figures and founding theory and method of my sub-discipline, linguistic anthropology.

For all its flaws, I am still impressed by the moment in which we find ourselves. Pandemic and protests have become mutually amplifying, epoch-defining events. Ethnography can help us understand popular responses to these events and archeology, physical and linguistic sub-disciplines, with their wide-angle view of humanity, help us see our moment in the context of other moments of commensurate scale.



### Ellen Oxfeld

Like everyone else, my pre-pandemic and post-pandemic school year were certainly different! In the Fall, I taught classes, advised senior projects,



and also attended the American Anthropological Association meetings in Vancouver. There, I presented a paper on the role of commensality and ritual in migrant returns to rural homes in China during the Lunar Year holidays. I focused on the role these play in re-embedding urban migrants into their rural communities. Additionally, a number of articles that I have been working on for some time were published this past year. They covered a range of topics from rural family rituals in China to the role of banqueting as a moral economy in contemporary China. I continue to be interested in the ways non-market-based forms of exchange cement relationships in even the most capitalist of economies and the ways they articulate with capitalist and market based relationships, either undermining or reinforcing them. What are the implications for moral systems when these different forms of economic activity and exchange collide with one another?

I have also begun a stint on the executive committee of the Society for East Asian Anthropology (SEAA), and it has been a wonderful way to connect with colleagues worldwide. As part of my work with this group, I spent part of the summer reading a dozen recent books in our field for a book prize committee, giving me a chance to read some of the most recently published books in East Asian anthropology, many of which are increasingly focused on global dimensions of East Asian culture. Along related lines, I also worked with my colleagues in the SEAA on a statement (<http://seaa.americananthro.org/2020/08/s-e-a-a-statement-against-police-violence-and-anti-black-racism/>) from our group in support of Black Lives Matter. As scholars of East Asia, we attempted to grapple with comparative racisms, Afro-Asian solidarities, and ways in which we as scholars of East Asia can fight against racism through our scholarly work and also organizational practices.

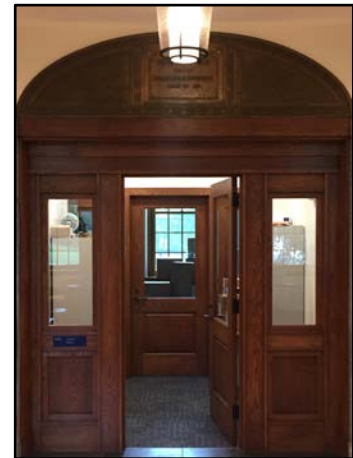


The pandemic changed my focus for a while these past few months and I have spent a good part of the summer learning the technicalities of online education! I hope the results of my work will bear fruit this coming Fall and my remote classes will

still be fruitful learning experiences for my students.

### **Mari Price**

Despite being quarantined to avoid Covid-19, I had a delightful and relaxing summer off. I spent a lot of time outside doing outdoor activities, and evenings Zooming with family and friends. My vegetable garden was amazing – the best tomatoes ever! I had hoped to be back on campus this fall in my newly renovated office in Munroe, however, I will continue working remotely for the foreseeable future. Maybe we all will be back on campus for the spring semester. Fingers crossed!



### **Michael Sheridan**

I think that sometime in 2019 I may have asked rhetorically, “well, what could possibly go wrong?” Sorry, y’all. Much of my last two years have been plugging away on my ‘boundary plants’ project. I now have chapters on Kilimanjaro coffee farmers, royalty in the Cameroonian Grassfields, land and social organization in the Papua New Guinea Highlands, and postcolonial French Polynesia. I’m now deep in writing about post-plantation St. Vincent, and the end of the manuscript is in sight. In terms of teaching, I did Anth 103 in both 2018 and 2019, and used the opportunity to test drive some new ethnographies. I think my favorite was Beth Conklin’s *Consuming Grief* (2001) because it gets students to consider cannibalism as an act of mercy and kindness that they would probably do themselves if they had been in Amazonia. When not writing and reading the five (!) different literatures for my book project, I’ve been doing stonework. Remember the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor bathrooms in Munroe that made you think, “gee, they really knew how to make stalls back in the day!” All of that marble got recycled as part of Munroe’s big makeover, and I’ve used it



to gild my favorite lily. This is my pizza oven with marble cladding and brick.

This summer I've also been retooling my classes. I've rebuilt my Africa class to showcase Africanist anthropologists from the continent, and found some great articles that link American struggles to make #BlackLivesMatter to African postcolonial struggles. I'm also doing a new seminar on the anthropology of development (which contributes to our new Applied Anthropology minor). The original plan was to partner up the students with real-world state and local government or NGO projects for participant observation fieldwork, but Covid made that impractical. Plan B is a cohort of alumni will visit class via Zoom to get interviewed about their experiences and perspectives on development (thanks alums!). The students will also be writing policy briefs, project evaluations, and ethnographically rooted project proposals.

#### David Stoll

I continue to potter away at research on migration, both mine and that of others. For an example of the issues on which I ruminate, see my research note elsewhere in this issue, "Latinos in New England – Why Not More?"



production, corporate social responsibility, and financial speculation to debate when limited-liability corporations are the problem and when they are the solution.

I'll also pull together two previous offerings into a new course called the Anthropology of Warfare and Polarization. Starting with animal behavior, then pre-state societies, then contemporary witchcraft and holy war, we'll look at competing explanations for the factionalism that is so common in human affairs.

#### Trinh Tran

I'm ecstatic to join the Anthropology Department and feel inspired by the work of my fellow colleagues to take a more global perspective in my own work and teaching! Current research projects

include a co-edited volume on migration tentatively titled *Migration, Displacement, and Belonging*. On the teaching end, I've been working on a syllabus for a new class called Global Education. Both of these projects have helped me to remain connected to the larger world despite having to shelter in place. The realities of Covid and staying put have made me more curious about my backyard – I mean this literally in terms of endless hours spent in my garden. After my third season of gardening in Vermont, I've finally had some success and have enough produce to can and put away for the winter. Some favorites include strawberry jam, bread-and-butter pickles, and tomato sauce. Another favorite local activity includes finding the perfect picnic spot to have dinner and watch the sun set. It's hard to beat the breathtaking view from the Knoll!

While I'll be teaching online this Fall, I'm looking forward to connecting with students in new and creative ways.



### SOAN Senior Projects 2018-19

#### Meron Benti

##### Albinism Capital: Analyzing Experiences of Youth with Albinism and their Mothers in Kigali, Rwanda through an Empowerment Oriented Approach

Scholarly narratives of Africans with albinism often emphasize the victimhood and dependent state that the genetic mutation of albinism places upon those affected by it. In this project, I challenge this normative portrayal by discussing how the Rwandan people with albinism (PWA) and their relatives exert control over their lives and over the condition. To better reveal the agency-filled role of PWA and their families in the opposition to structuralist and stigmatizing conditions, I develop and employ the analytical tool of 'albinism capital.'



This illustrates the relevance of supportive and empowering institutions in the increasing of access to more opportunities and choices for PWA, and thus in the strengthening of their ability to express self-determination. The analysis of such experiences through the lens of albinism capital reveals how children with albinism, and particularly their mothers, interact and negotiate with institutions such as their kin group, the educational system, and civil service organizations, to manage the medical and social impediments presented by albinism. They have also taken advantage of the networks specifically available to them as families with albinism to accumulate other forms of capital (economic, cultural, educational, organizational, etc.). I conclude the paper by encouraging public and private institutions in Rwanda to develop policies and programs that can further strengthen the full realization of individuals with albinism and their families, who can then be recognized not just as victims objectified by the condition of albinism, but also as fully capable social actors with choices and agency.

**Phil Bernstein**

### **Too Big to Fail: A Story of Scandal, College Athletics, and Minimal Consequences at Penn State University**



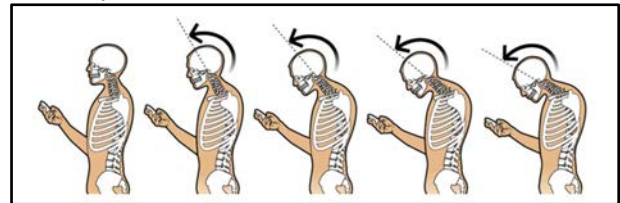
This project examines the effects that commercialized collegiate athletics have had on higher education at "Power 5"

universities in the United States. By using the 2011 Penn State scandal as a case study, I examine the immediate and long-term effects that scandal creates on a university. In 2011 Penn State University was implicated in a sex abuse scandal after one of its former football coaches, Jerry Sandusky, was found guilty for molesting young boys. In the wake of this investigation and trial, Penn State was fined hundreds of millions of dollars and the football program hit with heavy sanctions. Given this public relations nightmare, Penn State was expected to suffer financially as both an institution and a football program. Yet after auditing the financial reports of the university and

the football program I show that Penn State actually received more donations and revenue in the aftermath of the scandal than it ever had previously. Using financial gains as a proxy for support of the university, I show that Penn State's aggressive fundraising techniques and loyal donor base prevented the university from suffering, demonstrating a shift in the goals of what higher education is supposed to accomplish.

**Maddison Brusman**

### **The Alexander Technique: Moving in the 21st Century**



This senior project uses the Alexander Technique to examine how recent changes in society, work, and technology are affecting us. The Alexander Technique is a method for skillfully coordinating the mechanisms of the mind and body, leading to better posture and greater efficiency in movement. Conducting ethnographic research on technology workers in San Francisco's startup district, I analyze the ways in which we are "using" our bodies in new ways in this digital age against the backdrop of evolutionary anthropology. Buttressed with self-experimentation and autoethnography, my analysis demonstrates how the Alexander Technique can be an effective means through which to unlearn the poor psychophysical habits that plague society. My thesis grounds Bourdieu's sociological observations of "habitus" in neurological contexts in order to understand the importance and inner workings of the Alexander Technique. I then use these findings to devise two innovations for future entrepreneurial opportunities.

**Sylvia Choi**

### **What Makes Sushi, Sushi? How Perceptions of Authenticity Negotiate Identity in the Post-Modern World**

What is 'real' sushi? How does one sushi dish qualify as real sushi over another? Or how does anything qualify as real, really? And what becomes of something that isn't real? Through this project, I attempt to dig deeper – or fish further – into the underlying nuances behind authenticity. Perceptions of authenticity are



ambiguous and arbitrary as its construction falls into a push and pull comparison and balancing between reoccurring dichotomies of old and new, familiar and unfamiliar, us and them. It is not what ‘authenticity’ is that is important, but rather what it tells about the relationships among individuals, groups, or nations. Thus, authenticity in its construction is used as a mechanism to distinguish, differentiate and negotiate identity. In this project I investigate how perceptions of authenticity are constructed and reflect through conversation. Taking into consideration the current post-modern age where technology and communication are

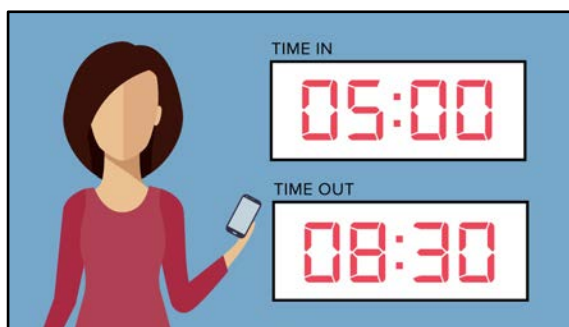


increasingly becoming influential forces, in this project I analyze these conversations not only through semi-structured interviews, but also across various media platforms.

**Taylor Cook**

### **Narratives of Resistance to Electronic Visit Verification: Disability and Labor Responses to Increased State Surveillance**

This work examines narratives of resistance to the implementation of legislation requiring Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) of Medicaid-funded home care workers. EVV expands state power, while limiting disabled people’s ability to access care within their communities and home care workers’ ability to provide it. Disabled people and home care providers are organizing to oppose this policy. Utilizing content analysis of data gathered in the Facebook group “Citizens Against Electronic Visit Verification (EVV)” and interviews with disabled people and home care workers who will be affected



by this legislation, I seek to answer 1) What are the dominant narratives used to support and resist EVV implementation?; 2) How do these narratives construct workers, disabled people, and the state?; and 3) What are the political opportunities and limitations of these narratives? Drawing on

Foucault’s theory of biopower, surveillance studies, and critical disability studies, I found that EVV is a mechanism of the state exercising biopolitical control over workers and disabled people. The narratives of resistance to EVV vary in the degree to which they critique state power and allow for potential for cross-movement solidarity. I found that narratives which critique the expansion of state power create coalitional opportunities.

**Katie Corrigan**

### **Housing Growth: Identity Formation through Dancing and Communal Becoming**



This senior work examines identity transformations through interactions in contemporary dance spaces. My work analyzes the ways in which people narrate contemporary dance experiences thematically constructed around identity, habitus, and queerness. To do this, I explore these questions: 1) How do people narrate their experiences in contemporary dance spaces? Does participating in contemporary dance change someone’s perception of their identity? 2) Is there a tension between imagined or desired radicalness, queerness, and freedom in the dance spaces and the potential new norms, regiments, or ways of being it may produce? Interviews with dancers were conducted and analyzed against queer and sociological critical theories such as Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology*, Bourdieu’s habitus and cultural capital, and theories of identity formation in college. I investigate a further understanding of the dancing

and queer body and how it is connected to, and shaped by, community and collegiate institutions.

**Sawyer Crosby**

### **Urban Parks and Socioeconomic Gradients in Mental and Physical Health**

Researchers have hypothesized that ‘greenspace’ might reduce health inequality across socioeconomic lines by disproportionately benefitting those with fewer resources, a process known as ‘equigenesis.’ Urban parks are a particular form of public greenspace whose social meanings are especially contested. Some argue that parks are egalitarian and equalizing spaces. Others contend that they tend to reproduce conditions of structural inequality. In order to examine whether urban parks are associated with reduced socioeconomic inequalities in health, I analyze data drawn from the CDC, the EPA, the US Census, and the American Community Survey on 5314 census tracts across 21 US cities. Using techniques of multiple, interactive regression, I demonstrate that access to urban parks is associated with increased socioeconomic inequalities in health.



Specifically, I show that park access is correlated with lower rates of self-reported poor mental and physical health only in areas with above-median

levels of income and college completion, with larger health improvements towards the top of the socioeconomic spectrum, and that changes in leisure time physical activity explain this effect. Further results show that access to parks is associated with increased socioeconomic inequalities in leisure time physical activity. Based on these findings, I posit that urban parks increase socioeconomic inequalities in health because they increase socioeconomic inequalities in leisure time physical activity. Therefore, this project provides evidence against the equigenesis hypothesis and suggests that urban parks may strengthen structural inequities.

**Janie DeVito**

### **The Paradoxical Politics of Dutch Tolerance: The Entanglement of Homosexuality, Racism and Islamophobia in The Media**

The Netherlands is framed as a liberal country due to its notably liberal policies and practices; it has legalized and tolerated typically sensitive matters,

including homosexuality, prostitution and soft drugs. Despite the promise tolerance poses as a mechanism for social cohesion and harmony, it is in fact an illusion of progress. While tolerance appears to be a form of acceptance, it is accompanied by forms of intolerance and exclusion as well. This project dissects the paradoxical meaning of tolerance in the Netherlands by



looking at the ways in which the Dutch engage with the gay community, people of color, and Islam, particularly within the platform of the media. Through a deep analysis of contemporary Dutch advertisement campaigns, political propaganda and remote blog posts, I demonstrate the contradictory nature of tolerance. By dissecting a range of media content, I reveal the Dutch commitment to the normalization of homosexuality, as well as their intolerance of the black community and Muslims in the Netherlands. The Dutch model of tolerance is broken down and redefined through my internet ethnography with the goal of unveiling the cooptation of acceptance and exclusion that comes with the practice of tolerance.

**Crystal Farkaschek**

### **#ProtectOurChildren: Contemporary Transformations of the Child**

This senior work examines the contemporary transformation of the construction of the American child through school shootings. The end of the twentieth century saw an increase in the number of school shootings in the United States since 1999. The continual school shootings that have occurred since the Columbine shooting are not rare occurrences. Although school shootings committed by youth seem to have become mundane parts of society, the moral panic that is brought on by these shootings never fails to present itself in the media from the voices of institutions, adults, and now the youth themselves. To understand the current transformations of the construction of the child, I



explore the following questions: 1) How do adults' constructions of the child for social, cultural, or economic purposes influence the ways in which children redefine and reconstruct their meaning of the child?; 2) How does the moral panic from school shootings, and the Parkland shooting specifically, transform the ways institutions mobilize the meanings of "protect our children?"; and 3) In what ways does the Parkland shooting serve as a vehicle for youth to construct the idea of the child through use of media representation? In order to answer these questions, I 1) conduct a case study of the representations and constructions of the child in the media surrounding the Parkland shooting by analyzing the effect of moral panic on the meaning of what it means to be a child, and 2) conduct a content analysis of the Parkland shooting in regards to the youth protesting for control over their construction of the child.

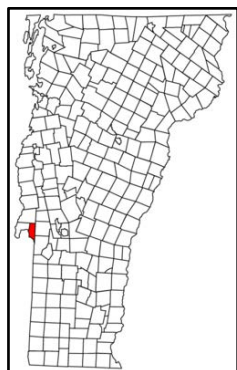
**Catherine Harrison**

### **The Places You Will (or Won't) Go: An Analysis of Space and Identity on a College Campus**

This research explores how social divides at an elite liberal arts college are manifested and reaffirmed through the use of place on campus. Previous literature has analyzed how social order creates a script on how to belong and mere presence is enough to affirm both identity and social capital. Building upon this, this work examines how unwritten rules are created, passed down and are powerful enough to keep the use of space unchanged. Participant observation and interviews of college students reveal the multitude of ways in which social divides on campus are directly tied to the spaces that students do or do not occupy.

**Michael Kravitz**

### **A Close Miss: Examining Attitudes toward Gun Control in a Rural Town After a Thwarted School Shooting**



In the spring of 2018, Fair Haven, a small town in rural west central Vermont, was thrust into the forefront of the national debate around gun control after the local police uncovered a plot to execute a Columbine-style school shooting at the high school. This prompted Vermont to pass the first

legitimate gun control measures in the state's history. Through a mailed survey and a series of semi-structured interviews, this study determines how the residents of Fair Haven, many of whom hunt and own guns themselves, reacted to this new legislation. This paper explores the ways in which people balance multiple identities (i.e., 'proud rural gun owner' yet 'concerned parent') to form opinions towards the newly imposed governmental regulations. While past research has focused on national, large-scale survey data to analyze opinion shifts after mass shootings, few scholars have looked at the opinions of those in the affected communities themselves, particularly in such rural and "safe" communities like Fair Haven, Vermont.

**Grace Levin**

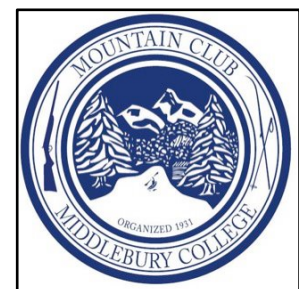
### **Stories from American Cohousing Communities: Creating Modern Communal Utopias**

Within the last twenty years, cohousing communities have become popular as an alternative housing style in the American housing market. Cohousing refers to communities that involve a mixture of individually owned properties and publicly shared facilities. While there is wide variation among styles of cohousing communities, I find that overall American cohousing communities are utopian in that they reject the values of mainstream American housing and seek to create an alternative housing reality that emphasizes the value of community. With the conclusion that cohousing is utopian, I move on to compare cohousing to past American utopian communal projects. I find that cohousing can be distinguished by its ability to balance individual desires with community needs through structural elements.

**Julia Lothrop**

### **The Great Outdoors and the Ideal Middkid**

An appreciation for the outdoors is a vital aspect of full participation in life at Middlebury College. The college promotes this through various programming outlets, and even subsidizes the costs of mountaineering, kayaking, and other types of outdoor student activities. Content analysis of the Middlebury Mountain Club archives, the



Middlebury Outdoor Programs website, and interviews with the Director of Middlebury Outdoor Programs and the president of the Middlebury Mountain Club reveals the construction of the ‘Middkid.’ This ideal Middlebury College student has outdoor pursuits, and therefore also manages the challenges of maintaining the ideal every day. Outdoors programming attracts a certain ‘type’ of Middlebury student, leaving many demographic groups underrepresented on these outdoor trips, despite the fact that they are free and available to all. Outdoor Programs and Mountain Club leaders are working tirelessly to solve this problem, but perhaps are providing band-aid solutions rather than addressing root causes.

**Alejandra Mendoza**

### **First-Generation Students’ Development of a ‘Sense of Belonging’ in Elite Educational Institutions**



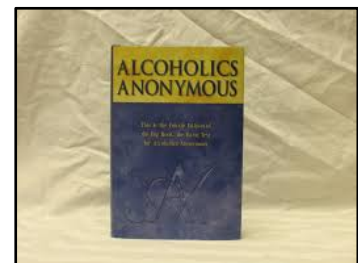
This senior work examines the factors which impact first-generation students’ process of creating a sense of belonging in elite educational institutions. Studies show that the transition to college significantly impacts first-generation students’ ability to adjust and complete college. I examine education as a rite of passage, factors like social mobility that can influence the expectations of college, and the impact of pre-orientation programs like [First@Midd](#). To identify which factors most impact first-generation students’ adjustment to elite colleges, I asked the following questions: 1) How does the idea of social mobility impact first-generation students’ expectations and understanding of college?, and 2) How does the [First@Midd](#) program impact the development of the first-generation students’ sense of academic and social belonging in an elite educational institution? In order to answer these questions, I conducted a case study of 10 first-generation

Middlebury College students to understand how they are transitioning to this elite liberal arts college. The students participated in a focus group and answered a series of questions to delineate their strategies for creating their sense of belonging on campus. I found that the impact of social mobility changed with time and those who participated in [First@Midd](#) were immersed in a supportive environment where they could gain confidence in themselves, learn the skills to seek help, and ultimately have a smoother process when creating their sense of belonging.

**Andrew Michelson**

### **Into the Fire with a Handful of Ice Cubes: Individualism and Solidarity in Alcoholics Anonymous**

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) helps a self-selecting group of alcoholics transition to a sober lifestyle. Discussion-based meetings and foundational literature (e.g., “The Big Book” and the “Twelve Steps and Traditions”) focus on facilitating an identity switch from “drinking” to “non-drinking” while stressing a combination of individualistic and group-based ideologies. Using a combination of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis, this research analyzes the social paradox of individualism and solidarity found in AA’s religious underpinnings and commitment to anonymity. Anonymity isolates members from their social contexts and enforces individualism; in reality, AA meetings in a small community can be more confidential than anonymous and facilitate mechanical solidarity. Mechanical solidarity doesn’t exist alone, and the organic solidarity derived from status symbols is essential to the recovery process. Members find empowerment through surrender to a ‘Higher Power,’ and the language they use to describe “giving up” creates both a speech community and a “core-narrative community.” The Big Book, while introspective, carries with it a sacred narrative authority that



makes readers forget that it was made not by a god but by two men. The Big Book reorients members away from social structures like race and class, and

members have to improvise unspoken rules to navigate the communitarian/individualistic paradox.

**Audrey Pan**

### **The Complicated Relationship between State and Society: The State, the Census, and the Making of Racial Categories**

Dwelling House, numbered in the order of visitation.	Family numbered in the order of visitation.	The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1900, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, each per over 15 yr
			Age.	Sex.	Color, (White, Black, or other)	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
1						
2						
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This senior work examines the social, historical and political process of the making of race in the United States. It looks specifically at the US Census as a site where conversation between state and society happens in negotiating racial categories. My work analyzes this complex relationship by focusing on two differing perspectives of the census: a state-centered view and a society-centered view. I use Asian-Americans as a case study to look at both approaches of understanding the census. The census is tool the state deploys to produce races and ethnicities through the white-dominated framework of the U.S. legal system. Whiteness studies has focused primarily on the emergence of liminal European groups such as the Irish and the Italians as ‘white’ without paying enough attention to other minority groups, thereby entrenching the black-white paradigm as the defining binary of race relations in the U.S. By inserting Asian-Americans into the conversation, I reveal the status of whiteness as an unmarked marker and to expose its historical contingency as a racial category. I also capture the complex relationship Asian-Americans have with whiteness and their associations with the forms and claims of whiteness. I want to stress that these affiliations were produced by a dominant group with the power to frame life conditions and chances in terms of racial choices. The questions that ground my research are: 1) What is the relationship between the law and the census in codifying and reifying racial categories?; and 2) What does the U.S. Census reveal about the

relationship between state and society and its project of whiteness?

**Nia Robinson**

### **Public Opinion on Public Assistance: How Wording Can Expose Cultural Contentions**

When talking about public assistance, politicians and scholars have historically placed emphasis on race, class, and gender. What this emphasis does is maintain a cultural contention created by the racial and gendered coding of public assistance programs. Citizens’ understanding of welfare has more to do with understandings of who receives welfare than the realities of policy, allocation, and implementation. One consequence of this is two different conversations depending on whether the focus is public assistance or welfare. For the purpose of this project, public assistance is defined as government policies and programs. Welfare is comprised of these same policies and programs but includes the social assumptions of who receives welfare and how they use it. Most Americans understand the political and economic climate they are in, but it is time to look at how this understanding translates into their beliefs. How do opinions about public assistance vary based on identity factors such as political affiliation and personal experiences with receiving assistance? This thesis synthesizes and expands existing studies of public opinion and public assistance and fill the gaps between them. This project explores the wording and responses of six survey questions to reveal differences in beliefs about government involvement. For example, does the same person support government involvement when asked about poor people, but believe people should help themselves when asked about welfare? Overall, people tend to disapprove when ideas such as special treatment and welfare are introduced and tailor their beliefs to what is happening in the current political moment.

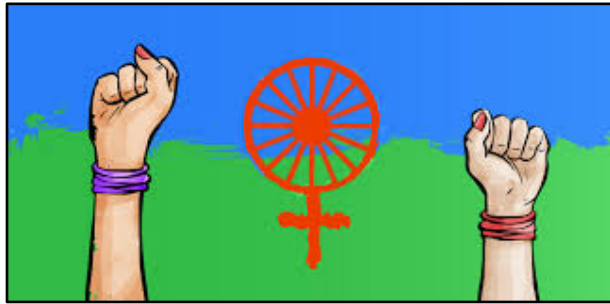




**Joana Salievska**

**All Children are a Blessing: Attitudes and Access to Contraceptives Among Romani Women in Shutka, North Macedonia, a Cross-Generational Case Study**

This project examines contraceptive use among Romani women in Shutka, North Macedonia. This cross-generational case study attempts to highlight



the shift in attitudes about contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health between generations and examines how institutions and systems of power affect women's health. The study was based upon four semi-structured interviews which were conducted with four women from three generations and from two distinct socioeconomic tiers. An interviewee also provided an oral history of her mother's life and experience with contraceptives. The goal of the study was to determine how these Romani women think about, have access to, and use contraceptives given the historical, political, and social marginalization they have faced in North Macedonia. I analyze my data within the framework of feminist standpoint theory as well as the interpretative and social suffering approaches within medical anthropology. I argue that understanding how women use contraceptives in this community helps illuminate how the medical institutions, labor markets, and educational systems of North Macedonia affect the most marginalized members of the country: Romani women.

**Carmen Sanchez Cumming**

**Economic Insecurity and Pawnshop Reality TV: Financial Exclusion and Narratives of Personal Responsibility in Post-Recession Television**

Shortly after the financial crisis of 2007-8, the History Channel aired *Pawn Stars* and trueTV aired *Hardcore Pawn*, two reality television shows that follow the day-to-day operations of family-run pawnshops. Both programs were massive hits, and a wave of spinoffs followed. Pawnshop reality TV,

however, was only one subgenre of what some scholars call "post-recession television," an upsurge of television productions that share a thematic concern with economic opportunities born out of escalating unemployment, precarity, poverty and indebtedness. The popularity of pawnshop reality TV was mirrored by a boom in the actual pawnbroking industry. While the number of pawnshops has been rising steadily since the 1980s, the industry received an additional boost after the Great Recession. In this project I examine the proliferation of pawnshops as both an outcome of growing material insecurity and a reflection of the normalization of fringe banking, financial exclusion, and economic hardship. Using Ulrich Beck's "risk society" theory to discuss the role of uncertainty in the aftermath of the financial crisis, I argue that a context of economic insecurity allowed pawnshop reality TV to reproduce and entrench narratives of personal responsibility. Hardship, therefore, emerges as a consequence of financial mismanagement, ignorance, and passivity rather than as a result of structural inequities in the distribution of financial risk. Through content analysis of *Pawn Stars* and *Hardcore Pawn* I also find that post-recession television celebrates an entrepreneurial ethos. In the aftermath of the financial crisis, the successful individuals are those who are disciplined and prudent in one hand, and adaptable and able to navigate uncertainty on the other. Lack of access to credit markets, therefore, do not only represent a source of material hardship but also carry social meanings and moral judgements.



**Caroline Wolfe**

**"The Mantra of the Moment": What is the Future of Resilience? A Case Study of Mumbai, India**

This senior project traces and critiques the discourse of resilience from its historical roots to its contemporary applications, and in response, offers

a framework to “rethink” resilience. The rise of resilience rhetoric can be regarded, in part, as a reaction to growing uncertainty in everyday life, especially in the face of severe and escalating effects related to climate change. Despite the term’s novelty and increasing popularity across myriad contexts, especially for the analysis of urban environments which are the focus of this paper, I argue that the present incarnation of resilience remains susceptible to familiar critiques emphasizing the depoliticized and ahistorical logics that have long been used to frame development interventions. Using Mumbai, India as a case study, this thesis shows some of the specific ways in which the abstracted rhetoric of “resilience” falls short of apprehending the irreducible and intractable urbanization of Mumbai and the colonial histories that constitute it. I argue that the meaning and practice of resilience are shaped by competing and unequally powerful actors within Mumbai and beyond. Mumbai demonstrates the importance of integrating elements of a new framework of resilience that might address the current discourse’s shortfalls both in theory and in practice.

**Emily Wu**

### **Resilience Lost: Globalization of Lake Victoria Fishery**



This senior project looks at the social-ecological system of Lake Victoria on the Kenya side. I place the issue of imported Chinese tilapia – a hot topic in Kenyan social media but not yet discussed in the academic field – into the long history of Lake Victoria fishery. I first trace the whole system from the pre-colonial time of the relatively closed and sustainable system to the commercialization of fish during the colonial period, to the boom of Nile perch after the independence of Kenya and to the current

debates on the importation of Chinese tilapia. I delve into the reasons behind historical choices and their respective consequences. I then make connections among factors on different temporal, spatial, and organizational scales. My next objective is to analyze the different factors and players within and outside in the system. How are they connected through trade and how are they segregated? My fourth objective is to assess the system as a whole: how does this socio-ecological system succeed or fail to face its challenges? To answer these questions, I incorporate political ecology, the theory of globalization, and resilience theory in my study. My findings show how factors on different scales in the system are intricately related, combining to create the current and future situations of Lake Victoria fishery.

**Isabel Wyer**

### **The Battle of the Hats: Competing Models of Female Empowerment**

This senior project takes a closer look at contrasting models of female empowerment. Women comprise the oldest oppressed group and their demand for freedom from the chains of the patriarchy have not wavered. In fact, the determination behind women’s call for equality is increasing; their rage illustrated by the countless social movements, large and small, appearing all over the world. Unfortunately, most of these screams of protest go unheard, failing to change the minds of the oppressors. I am interested in the models of female empowerment that *are* being heard; who is involved, what are they doing, what are they wearing. To understand the productivity of a social movement, I explore the following questions: 1) What was it about the Pink Pussyhat movement in 2017 that induced controversy?; 2) What does the recent usage of the witch say about the contemporary feminist movement?; and 3) Does the reclamation of the witch as a model of empowerment live up to the expectations of contemporary feminists/potential

feminists? In order to answer these questions, I look at



various responses to the Pink Pussyhat





movement; analyzing its successes and failures. Next, I look at witches on Instagram to better understand the foundations of the Witch community. Through the comparison of both models of female empowerment, I make an educated decision on whether the Witch movement has the potential to be an alternative to the Pink Pussyhat, offering solutions to the various critiques.

**Weiru Ye**

### **Uncovering House Churches in China's Christian Heartland: An Ethnographic Study of Shifting Trends in Chinese Protestantism**

This paper explores the shifting trends in Protestant Christian communities in contemporary China. In particular, I focus on three house churches in Wenzhou, each representing a generation of Christians whose modes of religious engagement and religious outlooks differ. I argue that each of the churches produces and negotiates different modes of sociability, which are then constructed and spatialized in different ways. While the elderly and mid-aged Christians primarily situate their religious engagement in neighborhood-based communities, the younger Christians actively cultivate a set of religious internal dispositions that allow them to imagine and relate to a religious community that is not fixed to a particular locality.

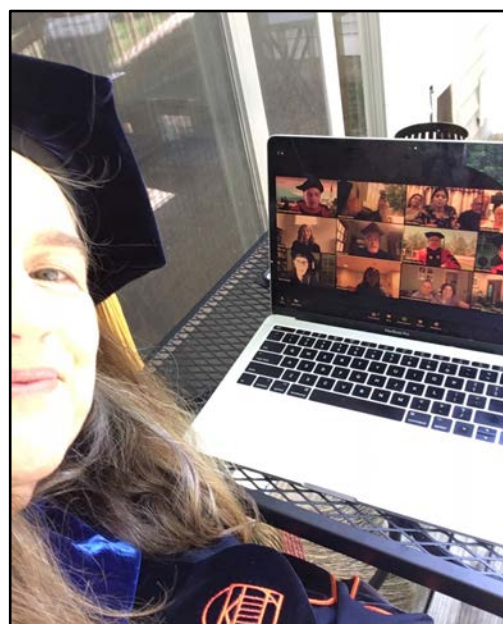
**Lulu Zhou**

### **Go Hard and/or Go Home? Migrant Children's Negotiation of Educational Choices, Aspirations, and Attainment in Beijing, China**



This thesis examines how migrant children navigate educational trajectories in contemporary urban China. Current scholarship on the sociology of migration and education – which tends to analyze educational stratification through the lens of assimilation and integration, race, gender, and class

– has not paid adequate attention to the role that legal status plays in affecting educational differentiations. My project explores the following questions: 1) How do legal barriers like *hukou* act as a dimension of stratification that limits migrant children's educational choices?; 2) In what ways have migrant schools and families influenced those migrant children's educational aspirations and resources?; and 3) How have migrant children perceived and negotiated their educational trajectories after middle school? Drawing on in-depth interviews with 21 adults who attended six migrant schools in Beijing, my study focuses on the processes through which individuals made their educational decisions and how those decisions were influenced by legal status, families, and schools. I find that legal status structures migrant students' educational aspirations and resources over time, although the degree of its impact on students' educational attainment varies based on their schools' and families' capital. In particular, migrant schools saliently shape migrant children's educational aspirations and orientations, which influence these individuals' negotiation of their pathways after middle school. While legal status is widely seen as a binary with documented and undocumented categories, my thesis finds diverse migrant educational experiences that demonstrate the ways in which migrants navigate different educational spaces that highlight their in-between status within China's divided urban-rural educational systems.





## ***Anthropology senior projects 2019-2020***

**Oshin Bista**

### **Speaking the Serbian Language: Identity Formation and Negotiation among Serbian Youth**

Serbian youth construction and negotiation of regional identities and language attitudes are the objects of this qualitative study. Using 20+ interviews with English-speaking Serbian youth in three biggest cities of Serbia: Belgrade, Niš and Novi Sad, I investigate the roles of language ideologies and language attitudes in understanding the power dynamics present in the north-south regional divide. My analysis is motivated by theoretical concepts and analytical frameworks of symbolism, intersectionality and hegemony. In addition, I investigate the role of the Standard Serbian in forming stereotypes and caricatures which further complicate the interactions between youth groups in contemporary Serbia. Finally, I attempt to explain the nuances and complexities that globalization brings into Serbian youth's processes of identity formation and interpretation.

**Eva Bod**

### **Behind the Screens: Involuntary Celibates and Stochastic Terror**



Involuntary celibates (incels) are part of a digital community self-defined by their inability to find a sexual or romantic partner despite their efforts. They are a sub-community in the 'manosphere,' a territory in the digital world populated by various brands of extremists and supremacists. Incels occupy the portion of cyberspace where male supremacists express opinions about masculinity and heterosexuality. Confirmation bias, Darwinist groupthink, and learned helplessness are the sociopsychological cornerstones of this particular internet phenomenon. The fundamentalist view that

sexual relations are a human right – a right for which violent actions of seizure are justified, by proxy – renders itself to compatible extremist ideologies. This mixed-methods study examines the ways in which the ideological and digital structure of incelism may nurture the growth of stochastic terror in America.

**Kate Hilscher**

### **Navigating the Double Bind: Female Students' Strategies for Persuasive Public Speaking**

Speaking persuasively in public is directly tied to professional success. Yet, women are often burdened with navigating a double bind which challenges them to claim authority and portray themselves as normatively feminine, two characteristics which are often considered at odds. In this project, I explore the strategies that female students at Middlebury College use to navigate this double bind, combining a social constructionist approach to gender identity with rhetorical theories of persuasion to propose "rhetorical identity": an identity that speakers deliberately construct with the intention of persuading their audiences. Through interviews, observation and audience evaluations, I create in-depth profiles on the persuasive strategies used by ten students participating in a speech competition, detailing the ways in which they think about, and actually navigate their double bind. Three major authority-building, and three major feminizing strategies emerged from these speakers: they used personal experiences, academic sources and socially conscious humor to build their authority, and emotional vulnerability, feminine values and hedging to construct their femininity. While audience evaluations did not show any clear hierarchy among these authority-building and feminizing strategies, they did show that the female speakers were generally considered more persuasive than their male counterparts, suggesting that women can and do successfully navigate the contradiction between claiming authority and portraying normative femininity, and that academia may be a particularly conducive environment to female rhetorical persuasion.



**Mikayla Hyman**

**Zebras Live Here: How LGBTQIA+ Teens in Rural Vermont Create Health, Space, and Identity**

Nationally, LGBTQIA+ youth have worse health outcomes than their peers with a greater incidence of depression, suicidal ideations, cancer, obesity and sexually transmitted disease. Hegemonic biomedical institutions have historically stigmatized queer youth and continue to do so today. Consequently, queer youth create counter-hegemonic discourses of health based upon friendship, therapeutic landscapes, and identity. This study consisted of 14 interviews with LGBTQIA+ teens and workers at a teen center in rural Vermont to better understand the conceptualization and expression of these counter-hegemonic discourses. The formation of counter-hegemonic discourses around friendship and therapeutic landscapes is examined using Victor Turner's lens of liminality and Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of the social life of space. Friendships are defined by acceptance, flexibility, continuity and stability, and can occur in the biomedical sphere, as well as with peers and teen center workers. The teen center acts as a therapeutic landscape, a locale where teens can receive and create health, making it an essential part of counter-hegemonic discourses of health. These counter-hegemonic discourses of health arise from the teens' values, relations and sense of self, all of which constitute a unique social identity. By understanding the social identity of teens, researchers can better understand novel forms of health-making and make recommendations to improve LGBTQIA+ rural youth health.

**Ian Knapp**

**The Construction of Place: Meaning and Life of the Household Garden**



This research pertains to the household gardeners of the southern Champlain Valley of Vermont, primarily regarding the relationship among nonmaterial values, the material composition of gardens, and the lived experiences of gardeners. All data collection consisted of remote semi-structured interviews and self-administered questionnaires in March and April of 2020. Previous literature defines the household garden in terms of its material outcome yet recognizes numerous nonmaterial layers of connection interrelated within the garden and gardening experience. Through the analysis of collected data, this paper demonstrates that the garden is a personalized place constructed through the dynamic relationship of the gardener's nonmaterial values with the physical space of the garden, ultimately producing three specific spheres of meaning. These spheres relate to the spatial conceptualization of the garden, the view of the garden as intertwined with surrounding ecological processes, and the garden as a basis of sociability. This research concludes with an understanding of how the meaning of the garden is produced, a process which is influenced by the coronavirus pandemic.

**Brianna Lipp**

**Speaking Life into Landscapes: Mythology, Identity, and the Environment in New Zealand and Iceland**

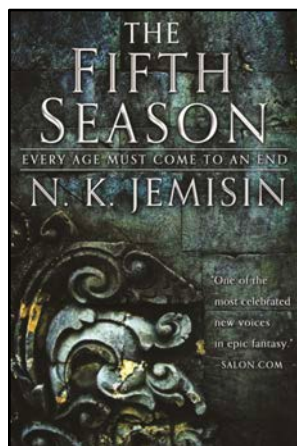


This senior thesis is a dual case study exploration of the ways in which the Māori and Icelandic peoples produce and perform their identities in the contexts of their local natural environments, focusing specifically on mythology and storytelling as place-making tools. I follow the course of rivers of water and ice, centering my analysis on the Whanganui River of New Zealand and the glaciers of Iceland as

they flow through the history, memory, and myth that were built into and around them. Seeking to investigate the material and metaphysical responses of Māori and Icelandic populations to environmental change, the study performs an ecopsychological analysis and incorporates discussion of indigenous personhood and activism, variations of cultural and environmental conservation strategies, and place identity; these foci increasingly rise to the forefront in social sciences as the threat of climate disaster looms, which makes this thesis a part of the young body of literature that constitutes anthropologies of the climate and Anthropocene. Building upon the rich foundations of the anthropology of myth, I define a mythic landscape as a place rendered both symbolic and lived. It is imbued with the natural and supernatural as archives of memory, ancestry, communal knowledge, and meaning, and produced as a stage upon which identity is formed and performed – a sort of mythopraxis, to borrow from Marshall Sahlins. I locate mythic landscapes within the Whanganui River of New Zealand and the glaciers of Iceland and describe where and how story and identity come to matter in how people materialize their relationships with the nonhuman – their pasts, presents, and futures, as well as the other species, earth, sky, waters, and ice which constitute their world.

**Miyo McGinn**

### **Reading the End of The World: An Anthropology of Climate Imaginaries**



As the human consequences of climate change have become increasingly present in Western society's collective imaginations in recent decades, stories imagining how the forecasted ecological shifts will reshape humanity have proliferated in popular culture. The way we imagine the future is at least partially the product of our existing reality, and so these future stories of climate change, what I call "climate imaginaries," are texts rich with insight into Western culture and

ways of interpreting the present moment. Understanding these narratives is a crucial first step to imagining our own. This project combines personal narrative with literary and anthropological analysis to explore existing climate imaginaries, asking what a better world might look like. Produced during a semester disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, this thesis is the section of a longer-term project that focuses on the anxiety and psychological strain of searching for meaning and coming to terms with an unstable world. I don't reach any definite conclusions, instead laying the framework to ask and seek out answers to questions such as; what would it mean to imagine the non-human world as having agency? How does the individual psyche experience climate change? What would a better world look like? How can we tell stories that will make that world?

**Tara Santi**

### **Lemonfair and Purple Haze: Farmers, Landscape Perception, and Vermont**



Vermont, as a rural agricultural state and tourist destination, is the subject of multiple farmer and tourist perspectives of what the landscape means and what types of activity should occur in it. By focusing on the process of social construction through narratives, memory, and feeling, this thesis takes an actor-oriented approach to risk perception and place-making. I interviewed five vegetable and fruit growers in Addison County, Vermont about their experience growing here and the problems they face, changes they've seen over the course of their time here, and their perspective on what Vermont means to them and to others. From these interviews, I created a fictional case study of an orchard (Lemonfair Orchard) and a farm (Purple Haze Farm) following the owners through two



complete growing seasons, five years apart. These two fictional places and stories attempt to represent how farmers in Vermont construct the place of Vermont through narratives. In this thesis, I identify two prominent viewpoints or narratives of the Vermont landscape: the farmer narrative values the working landscape and the struggles farmers face from the land; the tourist narrative prioritizes the aesthetic and recreational aspects of Vermont. Farms and farmers are at the intersection of these narratives because farms both form and are formed by the narratives farmers tell. Farmers work out conflicts between the two narratives through their decisions about risk management, decisions informed by place-based values, emotions, memory, and reasoning. For that reason, Vermont farmers occupy a privileged place in the social construction of the landscape.



## ***The Body Online* comes to Middlebury College**

Coronavirus, be damned! This summer, Middlebury students participated in *The Body Online*, a digital ethnography lab dedicated to student research and application in studies of health, medicine, community, activism, media, technology, and the body.

**Emma Bernstein '21, Kayla Buchanan '22, Amun Chaudhury '22, Claire Martens '21, Courtney Tillman '21, Katie van der Merwe '22, and Anna Wood '22** have teamed up with anthropology graduate students and alumni at the University of Toronto Jessica Bytautis, Shiaoshiao Chen, Tyentyen Chen, Natasha Cuneo, Modelle Kuforiji, Anneliese Mills, Jaya Singh, and Nick

Smith to ask about diverse representations, artifacts, histories, and politics of the body online.

Led by Middlebury professor **Kristin Bright**, *The Body Online* aims to support student-directed learning, collaboration, and cross-sector networking (grad, undergrad, alumni, tech and media). Founded in 2017 by Bright at the University of Toronto through an ATLAS grant for learning innovation, the lab has had a total of 29 members who have presented their work (virtually and IRL, see <https://displacements.jhu.edu/the-body-online-lab-digital-displacements/>).

This summer, TBO members are looking at a range of digital situations including: GenZ humor and TikTok; digital feminism and Pakistani models who become Instagram influencers; BLM and cultural particularities of protest in Afro-Latino communities; implications of COVID for medical education online; psychiatric advocacy online; rootwork and BIPOC activism; anti-racist mental health; cancel culture and digital biopolitics; and the politics of recognition of work online, from sex work to hospice care to early childhood education.

As of September 1, TBO can be found at their new digital home, [bodyonline.org](http://bodyonline.org)

The Summer Collective wrapped on August 21 with the publication of member blogs. This fall, continuing members and additional students and alumni are welcome to apply, with options for participating in TBO studies, blogging, media, and conferences.

To keep up on TBO news, please follow the Anthropology Department on Instagram (below) or reach out to Professor Bright at [kbright@middlebury.edu](mailto:kbright@middlebury.edu)



Stories are updated regularly by **Emma Bernstein '21** and anthropology professor **Kristin Bright**. We feature photos, news, and resources that will connect you with

<https://www.instagram.com/middanthro/>

**We need content from alumni especially!** Please tell us what you're up to. Have you been to any protests? What's the scene (photos)? Are you doing summer internships? Where, and what are you learning? How is your neighborhood or city or country during these pandemic times?

## *Kristin Bright selected for 2020-21 RCGA Spotlight*

*By Robert Keren, Office of Communications*

That was just some of the sage advice offered to undergraduates at the sociology/anthropology “field guide” panel discussion sponsored by the Center for Careers and Internships on September 14, 2018 at Atwater Dining Hall. It was the first of several such discussions in a variety of majors that will take place this academic year.

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**Koby Altman '04**, general manager of the Cleveland Cavaliers, speaks to students as part of a Sociology/Anthropology “Field Guide” panel in Atwater Dining Hall on September 14, 2018. Fellow panelists included (from left) landscape architect **Chris Murton '03**, higher ed. administrator **Katie Flanagan Mobley '97**, affordable housing director **Elise Shanbacker '07**, and urban planner **Julie Tschirhart '11**. Professor **Michael Sheridan** (right) moderated the discussion.

“Your extracurricular activities are formative experiences and they can teach you leadership skills,” panelist **Julie Tschirhart '11**, a city planner in Grand Rapids, Mich., told students. “I was a tri-chair of my Commons during my sophomore year and, while that was challenging and stressful, it also was the first time I ever facilitated a meeting, and that is a skill that I use in my current job.”

Patience and determination have paid off for **Katie Flanagan Mobley '97**. “My first job was not a glamorous job,” said Mobley, who is now executive director of the Winooski, St. Albans, and Middlebury academic centers of the Community College of Vermont. “But in the sense of becoming a team player, pitching in, doing what’s needed, asking questions, and showing initiative—it’s taken all of us [on the panel] a while to get to this place. Being willing to do whatever was expected of me in my first job made a really big difference, and that opened up more and more opportunities for me.”

**Michael Sheridan**, associate professor of anthropology and chair of the Department of Sociology/Anthropology, moderated the alumni panel and asked the panelists to “tell us what you do” and “how your sociology and anthropology skill set advanced your career.”

**Koby Altman '04**, general manager of the NBA’s Cleveland Cavaliers and a former Posse Scholar, said he learned at Middlebury how to frame

an argument and support it with data. For example, he said, the Cavaliers just extended the contract of star forward Kevin Love for four years and \$120 million. “If I did not have the ability to make an argument and back it up with real analytics,” he said, then the owner of the team might not have agreed to the terms of Love’s contract. “This department teaches you how to be a thinker, be original, think outside the box, and then back it up with real data.

“When you are going in to interview for a job,” Altman advised, “do as much research as you possibly can on the other person and their business. Find some coin or something about them that’s going to light them up. Like when somebody I am interviewing mentions Middlebury College, you want to be able to find [those areas of mutual interest] with the other person, and even if you have no connection, you should figure out something interesting about the other person and bring it up in the interview or in the email.”

A student research project at Middlebury set **Elise Shanbacker '07** on her career path. “For my senior thesis, I did an ethnography of a mobile home park here in Middlebury that has 67 units, and I applied a social capital lens to that,” said Shanbacker, who worked in state government and went to graduate school, then returned to the area in 2015 as executive director of Addison County Community Trust. “Researching the thesis connected me with the owner of the mobile home park, Addison County Community Trust, and that led to my first job out of Middlebury.”

**Chris Murton '03**, a senior designer at Reed Hildebrand LLC, said. “What I do now is 100 percent applicable to what I studied at Middlebury because landscape architecture is ultimately about how people interact in their environment, whether it’s a city or a more natural environment, and it’s about how people experience the world around them... Anybody you speak with who was an anthropology or sociology major will say the breadth to which you can apply the skills you learned here are limitless.”

The Center for Careers and Internships conducts frequent field guide conversations with alumni throughout the academic year to help students think broadly about where their academic work might lead in a professional context.

“One of the greatest joys of being a professor at Middlebury is seeing people come back years later,”



said Sheridan. “A lot of teaching involves planting seeds, but you don’t know what they are going to grow into. Seeing how our graduates on this panel have found their way professionally is just so satisfying.”

## ***Latinos in New England: Why Not More?***

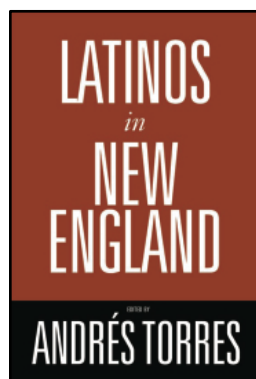
*By David Stoll*

The entire state of Vermont has a population of 628,061. That is fewer people than live in 106 statistical metropolitan areas, 48 states and 28 cities including the District of Columbia. However fond we are of Vermont, it is not an easy place to earn a living – jobs that pay a living wage are scarce and often require a long commute. Transportation, winter heating, and property taxes are expensive for low-income families. This is one reason why so many young Vermonters leave the state, why our population of parents and children is dwindling, and why our schools in smaller towns such as Weybridge and Salisbury are losing enrollment and coming under pressure to shut down.

Where I interview migrant households in Guatemala, youth who are likely to produce three or more children are so desperate to reach the U.S. that they risk their lives. In March 2020, human smugglers hoisted a Guatemalan teenager who was eight months pregnant to the top of a 22-foot border wall in Texas, only for her to fall off, with the tragic result that she and her baby died. Many other Latin Americans also want to come to the U.S. Their fertility rates have dropped considerably in recent decades, but these are still above replacement level, which means they are higher than the current U.S. rate of 1.7.

If Latino immigrants have more babies than

Anglos, could they rejuvenate the demography of aging Anglo towns? In 2006 a group of sociologists published an informative book called *Latinos in New England*. They did not focus on this issue, but it was on the horizon because, in southern New England jurisdictions such as Rhode Island, Latino inflows were



already making up a deficit between births and deaths and preventing populations from declining.

In 2018, after Hurricanes Maria and Irma wrecked Puerto Rico, Vermont officials were hoping to recruit Puerto Ricans to fill jobs in the dairy, healthcare, hospitality and trucking industries. As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans do not face the legal hurdles that so many Latin Americans do. Something about this proposal apparently did not fly – I am unable to google up anything more about it.

The most obvious barrier to rejuvenating Vermont through immigration – from Latin America or anywhere else – is the lack of jobs that pay a living wage. That is why so many young Vermonters leave, and why not enough youth from elsewhere arrive to replace them. Manufacturing jobs have continued to depart, with too much of the remaining employment depending on seasonal weather and visitors.

For more than a decade, Middlebury students have been actively involved with Mexican workers on nearby dairy farms. This migration stream includes a certain number of women, so there are now children in local schools, but the Vermont dairy industry faces so many economic challenges that jobs in dairy barns seem to be diminishing, not growing.

Another sector that could bring new kinds of young flatlanders to Vermont are our struggling liberal arts colleges – if they can turn over a new leaf. No less than six have closed since 2016: Burlington College in Burlington, Southern Vermont College in Bennington, Green Mountain College in Poultney, the College of St. Joseph in Rutland, the School for International Training Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, and Marlboro College, also near Brattleboro.

Interestingly, Marlboro is selling its bucolic low-rise campus to a charter-school network that wants to turn it into “an early-



college, late-high school program that offers students in grades 11-14 a fully-funded, flexible, and career-targeted degree.” This sounds like a place for youth who wish to get out of tough schools and neighborhoods in big cities. If Vermont could

be as welcoming as we want it to be, maybe some of them will want to stick around.

The problem remains – what will increase the number of jobs in Vermont that pay a living wage? If climate change continues to lengthen our growing season, this could bring more non-dairy agriculture. If global supply chains are disrupted by trade wars and protectionism beyond the Trump years, this could bring back certain kinds of manufacturing. Last but not least, if plague-avoidance becomes the new normal, more telecommuters will arrive in search of a low-density life.



Any of these developments would attract workers, some of whom would produce children for our schools. What can anthropologists do in the meantime? One contribution is research on “working hard and making do,” to borrow the title of emeritus SOAN professor **Peggy Nelson’s** 1999 book about economic survival in small towns.

Not all immigrants are low-income, but the majority are, and low-income people of all descriptions lead eventful lives because they do not have the money to buffer themselves against risks large and small. Meanwhile, the majority of anthropologists come from protected backgrounds, in the middle and upper class, which means we face social barriers and conceptual blinders when we try to do research with low-income people.

How to get past social barriers? One path is to work with non-profits like the Open Door Clinic, which provides medical support for Addison County farmworkers and other under-insured adults. Another path is local sourcing, that is, establishing mutually beneficial economic exchanges with local producers.

How to get past conceptual blinders? One way is by using the anthropology of exchange to understand how value is generated by sociability, in ways that economists and business planners often underestimate. Anyone fascinated by community life appreciates this intuitively – what attracts us to busy streets? Why am I so attracted by all the social life I experience in Guatemala? Why do well-off

people who retire to Vermont want to be accepted by local people who earn so much less than they do?

Vermont’s demographic future is troubled, yet it continues to be extremely attractive to outsiders, for reasons that are not easy to quantify. One term for these advantages is what anthropologists call “wealth in people.” When a natural disaster shuts down our normal circuits of consumption, coming to the fore is wealth in people – the kind of people who will go out of their way to make sure we are okay. When parents sacrifice for their children, they build their wealth in people. When we make friends, we build wealth in people. Such examples show how the production and exchange of value operates on deeper levels than the production and exchange of the commodities that we consume.

Another way of getting at this level of exchange is what James Ferguson, in his theorizing about southern Africa, calls distributive economies. If Vermont needs people, then anthropologists should be looking at our distributive economies, how they do (or do not) make life easier, especially for low-income Vermonters, and how they can be improved. What can make life easier for parents with children? What can be done to help the growing number of children who are being raised by single parents, or parents struggling with addiction? Returning to the topic of immigrants, anthropologists should look at how 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>-generation immigrants contribute to economies and affect social services in what are already migration hubs, for example, cities such as Burlington in Vermont, and also Holyoke and Lawrence in Massachusetts.

If a former mill-town like Lawrence has become a poverty trap for Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, could jobs in smaller Vermont cities such as Rutland, Bennington and St. Johnsbury attract them north and add to school-age children?

The question to which we should keep returning is: how can we strengthen Vermont’s distributive economies to attract new Vermonters?



## ***Faculty Publications, 2018-2020***

**Fitzsimmons, James L.,** Natalie Figueroa, and Prasanna Vankina

2018 “Transformations at Cuello: Results from the 2017 Season of the Classic Cuello Archaeological Project,” in *Archaeology in the Eastern Maya Lowlands: Papers of the 2017 Belize Archaeology Symposium*, John Morris, Melissa Badillo and George Thompson, eds., pp. 121-130. Belmopan, Belize: Institute of Archaeology.

**Nevins, M. E.**

2020 “Hymes, Dell Hathaway,” in *SAGE Research Methods Foundations*, P. Atkinson, S. Delamont, A. Cernat, J. W. Sakshaug, and R. A. Williams. London: SAGE Publications. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036865520>.

**Ellen Oxfeld**

2020 “The Moral Registers of Banqueting in Contemporary China,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, open access <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1868102620904251>

2020 “Life-cycle Rituals in Rural and Urban China: Birth, Marriage and Death,” in *Handbook on Religion in China*, Stephan Feuchtwang, ed., pp. 110-132. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

2020 “Bitter Greens and Sweet Potatoes: Food Practice and Memories of Hunger in Rural China” in *Food Insecurity: A Matter of Justice, Sovereignty, and Survival*, Tamar Mayer and Molly Anderson, eds., pp. 166-179. New York: Routledge.

2020 “Rural Chinese Families: The Continuing Relevance of Moral Obligation,” in *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Culture and Society*, Kevin Latham, ed., pp. 174-194. New York: Routledge.

**David Stoll**

2018 “David Stoll: A Rush to Judgment?” (critique of the Jerry Sandusky trial), vtdigger.org, April 6. <https://vtdigger.org/2018/04/06/david-stoll-rush-judgement/>

2019 “Desperate Refugees or Desperate Debtors? Why the Latest Border Surge Is Bad News for Democrats,” *The American Interest*, April 10. <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/08/02/the-debate-over-underage-migration/>

## ***Alumni News***

### ***Gertrude Evelyn Dole ('37) -Midd's first grad to earn an anthropology Ph.D was a well-known Amazonist***

*By David Stoll*

In the 2008 *Fieldnotes* we published a greeting from the first Middlebury graduate to earn a Ph.D in anthropology, Dr. Peter Allen '62. An archival bloodhound, Peter has just informed us that, from now on, he will have to bask in the reflected glory of an earlier Midd grad who earned a Ph.D in anthropology, **Dr. Gertrude Evelyn Dole '37**.

Trudie, as she was known to friends, was the first woman to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in the heart of the Amazon rainforest. She was born in 1915 on a hilltop farm in Proctorsville, Vermont. Her schoolteacher mother and dairyman father were descended from the first wave of Yankee settlement in the state. They were not prosperous; energy on the farm was provided by draft horses, not electricity or gasoline. When she was seven, the family moved to greener pastures in Peterborough,





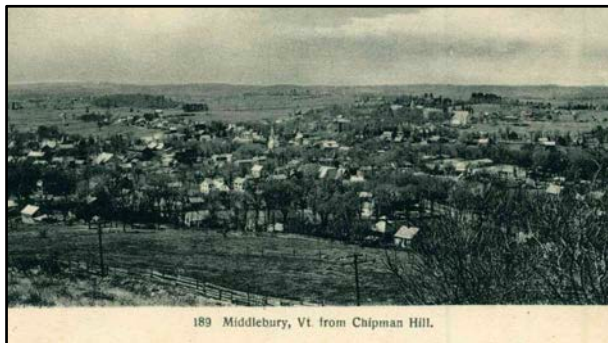
New Hampshire where they went to work for the town's gentlemen farmers and artist colony.

Obstacles had prevented Trudie's parents from going to college. By way of compensation, three of their four daughters became valedictorians or salutatorians at Peterborough High School. These included Trudie, whose English teacher suggested that she try Middlebury. Sixty years later, in a life story for the Society of Woman Geographers, Trudie recalled a very different institution from the one we know today.

Slowed down by an admissions requirement for four years of Latin (she had only three), Trudie showed up at the last minute. The only lodging she could find was in the upstairs hallway of a "freshman house" – the home of Edna Howard, a psychology professor's wife who kept an eye on six female first-years. Trudie was the unexpected seventh lodger. She finally got her own single room after two of the housemates flouted college regulations and dropped out. In Trudie's words:

*They goofed off a lot and consorted with village young men not in the college, spent most of their time at the local diner, and when exam time came, the one that turned out to be my roommate would always have a fainting spell. So she dropped out, too.*

As a farm girl who was now a first-generation college student, Trudie seems to have been high in discipline and low in self-confidence. In her life story, she repeatedly faults herself for failing to chart her own course. Thus, because Middlebury was known for its French program, she fell in with the expectation that girls could become French teachers. This brought her to live in the Chateau where she majored in French with her professor and



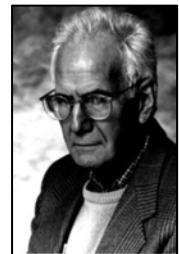
housemother Mademoiselle Lea Binaud. Then she took a biology course, which was so fascinating that she majored in that as well.

As for anthropology, the closest that Trudie came was a C in a sociology course. Anthropology did not exist at Midd in the 1930s, or at most colleges for that matter. Trudie's winding road to anthropology led through an unhappy stint as a high school science teacher, cartography at the University of Iowa, comparative Indo-European languages at the University of North Carolina (where she met her first anthropologist), and too many secretarial jobs. It was only at the University of Michigan in the 1950s that Trudie became a cultural evolutionist, formulated a theory of how kinship has evolved around the world, and earned her Ph.D. Among other things, she was among the first anthropologists to identify cross-cousin marriage as a critical institution in lineage societies around the world.

Arguably the most serious obstacles that Trudie faced were men. It wasn't that they didn't recognize her brains and encourage her to go to graduate school – they did. The more serious problem was, they fell in love with her because, aside from being capable, smart and athletic, she was also beautiful. There were at least three offers of marriage, two of which Trudie accepted.

The first was with a local boy in New Hampshire whose romantic impulses withered after they tied the knot. Nowadays we would call this a starter marriage, but divorce was highly stigmatized in the 1940s, especially for a young lady from New England, and so Trudie kept trying to make the marriage work even after it was dead, until she finally made her escape.

The second marriage, with a fellow graduate student in Ann Arbor, lasted much longer, gave her an intellectual partner, and did a lot for anthropology. Robert Carneiro was from a Cuban family in New York City and was twelve years her junior. Getting married was his idea, not hers, but they became a well-known research team in anthropology, and a highly productive one as well.



Their first big project, in 1953-54, was fieldwork with the Kuikuru of the Upper Xingú in Brazil. The Kuikuru were far upriver and very difficult to reach. The rain and humidity made Trudie and her husband sick, and the Kuikuru seem to have found them burdensome. Yet they acquired a grasp of the Kuikuru language, and their research

contributed to the creation of the Xingu Indigenous Park, the first of its kind anywhere in the world, which protected the Kuikuru and other groups from the most destructive forms of colonization.

Back at the University of Michigan, when Carneiro filed his dissertation first, on Kuikuru ecology, the all-male dissertation committee decided that Trudie would have to do her dissertation on a topic other than Kuikuru social organization – so that they could be sure that it was her own work, not that of her husband. To receive her own Ph.D, Trudie was obliged to drum up a new project on comparative kinship.

Trudie's second major undertaking with Carneiro was with the Amahuaca in the Upper Ucayali of Peru, in 1960-61. This was another remote and challenging location, with people who had even less experience with the outside world than the Kuikuru and so represented "primitive society." That is, they were fierce egalitarians, with little hierarchy of their own and their own vision of the world pretty much intact. Trudie's research on Amahuaca beliefs and practices made her name in Amazonian ethnography. What she and her husband learned about the Amahuaca was popularized by the epidemiologist Matthew Huxley and the photographer Cornell Capa in their memorable book *Farewell to Eden* (1964).



After her research in the Amazon, Trudie was in demand with offers of teaching posts. This was no small accomplishment for a woman in the 1960s. She taught courses at the New School for Social Research, Columbia University, New York University, Vassar College and SUNY-Purchase. She produced two ethnographic films on the Kuikuru and the Amahuaca, became a research associate at the American Museum of Natural History, and became a well-known member of the New York anthropological community. But she

never obtained the permanent teaching job that her accomplishments deserved. Full-time positions for women in anthropology barely existed at this time. Gender equity in faculty hiring did not arrive until the 1980s, when she was in her seventies.

In Trudie's life story for the Society of Woman Geographers, this highly astute woman says that, until she was around fifty, she never attributed the problems she faced to discrimination against females. Instead, she usually blamed herself. The blind spot she attributed to the 'Puritan background' instilled by her parents, from which she ultimately liberated herself by becoming an atheist. In the 1960s, the feminist movement finally helped Trudie name what she had experienced, and she became an active organizer of women's caucuses including the Ruth Benedict Collective, the first feminist organization in anthropology. She also led an effort to collect life stories from women scholars of her own and preceding generations. Younger women looked up to her as an elder and she contributed to some of the first scholarship focusing on women.

In keeping with the anthropology of her time, Trudie defined herself as a scientist. She expected rigor, evidence and clarity from her students. She could also do cartwheels and, at the age of 56, did three of them on a Vassar lawn to honor a student who was graduating. When a stroke ended her working life in 1998, she was in the middle of a project that she called "Life and Death of High Hill Farming in Vermont." Decades earlier, she had interviewed her father about New England life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. She wanted to use oral history and archaeological evidence to document how hilltop farms operated. She was never able to finish. But if anyone wishes to pick up this particular torch, her interview tapes with her father are still housed at the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury. In anthropology we honor our dead.

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Gertrude Evelyn Dole

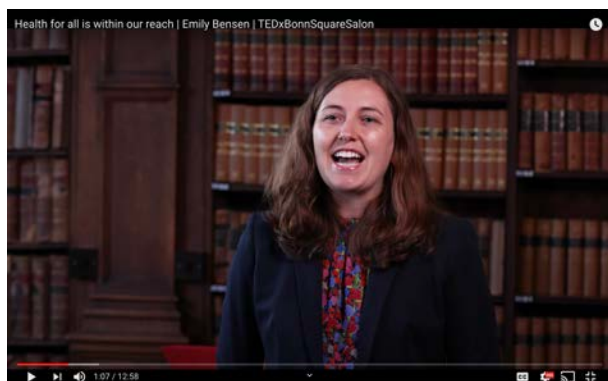
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*David Stoll wishes to thank **Peter Allen '62**, Monica Barnes, Janet Chernela, Laila Williamson and the late Robert Carneiro (1927-2020) for their help in composing this tribute.*

**Emily Bensen '14** finished her MBA at Oxford and is getting back to work on public health in Togo. See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwSuOXD5vU0&ab\\_channel=TEDxTalks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwSuOXD5vU0&ab_channel=TEDxTalks)



This just in – **Meron Benti '19** has been awarded a scholarship to pursue MPhil degree at Cambridge University in Development Studies. Congratulations Meron!

### ***Future Issues***

As always, please send us more newsletter material at [msherida@middlebury.edu](mailto:msherida@middlebury.edu)! We love to hear from you. And as you may have noticed over the years, we really like photos of rites of passage. Send us stuff!

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