

SOAR Summer Proposal, 2015

Collective Memory of Bethlehem

Dr. Daniel Jasper, Associate Professor, Sociology

Students: Dylan Grubb, GPA: X.XX

Timeline: May 26th through August 7th (10 weeks)

Faculty Proposal

Dylan Grubb, a rising senior, successfully completed a SOAR project in Summer 2014 under the joint guidance of Dr. Denton-Borhaug and myself. That project was focused on utilizing memoirs in order to uncover an ‘unofficial’ History of Bethlehem. Dylan excelled at this work. His paper, “The Unauthorized Biography of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania” was accepted for presentation at Annual Meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society. Undergraduates accepted for inclusion in the program are typically assigned to poster sessions. Dylan, however, was one of select number of undergraduates, who after submitting their final paper drafts, were selected to present their papers. Dylan was the only undergraduate assigned to the Round Table Session where he presented. My experiences with Dylan during this work, as well as my experiences with him in classes, makes it clear that he is capable of performing at a very high level of academic achievement. His GPA, however, indicates that he does not always perform at the level of which he is capable. Personal issues have gotten in the way of his focus, and he has made mistakes in not always prioritizing his academic work in the ways that he should. Although his GPA is lower than it should be, I am confident that he is the right student to work with me on my research this summer.

As a cultural sociologist, much of my research interests center around ‘collective memory’. The framework of collective memory has been central to my research on regional identity in western India.¹ This work has been primarily concerned with individuals and time periods. More recently, I have also incorporated a focus on how ‘place’ is celebrated.² My ongoing research on regional and religious identification is focused on how places, especially places associated with periodical historic time periods, are imbued with meaning and help to shape contemporary attitudes, motivations, and senses of self.

This summer, I will continue this research by:

¹ For example, see my “Celebrating a Region through Historical Commemoration” in Feldhaus and Vora, eds. *Region, Culture, and Politics in India* (Manohar, 2006), and “Commemorating the ‘Golden Age’ of Shivaji in Maharashtra, India and the Development of Maharashtrian Public Politics,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 31: 2 (Winter 2003), 215-230.

² For example, see my “Of Relics and Living Traditions: Creating Heritage in Maharashtra” in Deak and Jasper, eds. *Rethinking Western India: The Changing Contexts of Culture, Society, and Religion* (Orient BlackSwan, 2014)

- 1.) Reviewing the interdisciplinary literature on ‘Place Attachment’, which is understood as the emotional bonds formed between individual and physical places. Scholars of ‘Heritage’ have utilized this concept extensively. In India, and other parts of the developing world, scholars who study ‘Natural Resource Management’ also utilize this concept.
- 2.) I am particularly interested in reviewing the different measures of ‘Place Attachment’ that scholars have developed in order to determine whether a measure might exist that would prove useful in survey and/or ethnographic research.
- 3.) I have begun to assemble a number of resources on ‘Pride’. I hope to work through these resources because it strikes me that ‘pride’ is central to how people relate to the past.
- 4.) The focus on ‘pride’ is related to the ways in which ‘heroic’ and ‘tragic’ events are commemorated.

Though collective memory is central to my own research, departmental teaching needs have made it difficult for me to offer a course specifically on this topic. The InFocus topic of War, Peacebuilding, and the Just Society has provided me with an opportunity to develop ‘Collective Memory and War’ as a special topics course. Student response to this course indicates that ‘Collective Memory’ and ‘Commemoration’ are topics of interest to students. This leads to an additional research goal:

- 5.) To build up materials, accessible to undergraduate students, which will form the basis of more regular offering of courses on collective memory.

Dylan was introduced to issues of collective memory during the current semester in a course I am teaching on ‘Collective Memory and War’. Through this course, Dylan realized that collective memory would be one way to dig deeper into the understanding of Bethlehem’s past, adding another dimension to his understanding of how the city has developed. This SOAR project will provide an opportunity for Dylan and I to work closely on the topic of how social memories of ‘Time’ and ‘Place’ affect the understanding of being ‘in’ that same place during more recent times, including the present. Through reading memoirs and oral histories along with ethnographic observations and interviews, Dylan will be able to learn assess the effect to which collective memories of the settlement and steel eras of Bethlehem’s past inform people’s understandings of Bethlehem today.

Our joint research will proceed through a number of overlapping steps:

- 1.) Literature Review. We will begin by reviewing a number of relevant literatures. This would include the literature on ‘Collective Memory’ with particular attention to ‘Heroic’ and ‘Tragic’ events; the literature on ‘Place Attachment’; the literature on ‘Pride’. (Weeks 1-3)
- 2.) Sorting of Literature. I will work closely with Dylan to quickly assess and sort the literature into those materials that we must look into closely, those that are potentially useful and should be skimmed, and those that are tangential. This will be particularly important with works that develop and utilize measures of ‘Place

- Attachment'. Dylan will also need to prioritize works on how to observe and interview at memorials. (Weeks 2-5)
- 3.) Identifying memoirs and other 'personal' accounts that shed light on how individuals relate to particular places and times. Dylan will identify materials focused on Bethlehem, whereas I will focus on materials from western India. (Weeks 1-3)
 - 4.) Reviewing memoirs and other personal accounts in order to determine who people from different time periods have expressed their attachment to Bethlehem and its past. (Weeks 2-7)
 - 5.) Developing protocols for observations and interviews. This work will require that Dylan and I look closely at the various methodologies adopted by scholars to identify and measure the ways people are emotionally connected to places. (Weeks 3-5)
 - 6.) Mapping the 'Sites of Memory' in Bethlehem. During this period of our work, I will work closely with Dylan to teach the skills of ethnographic mapping. (Weeks 3-6)
 - 7.) Further observations and Interviews. This period of work will allow Dylan to fill in any gaps, and more importantly, to pursue any interesting leads that arise. (Weeks 6-8)
 - 8.) Writing and Editing the Results. (Weeks 8-9).
 - 9.) Final Revisions and tying up any loose ends (Weeks 9-10).

Through this work, we envision the final end products:

- 1.) Dylan will have a polished research presentation that he will deliver at Scholars Day, 2016.
- 2.) I expect Dylan to submit his work for presentation at the 2016 Meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society to be held in Boston. He will also submit his work for inclusion at other relevant conferences.
- 3.) A survey tool for measuring 'Place Attachment'.
- 4.) Annotated Bibliographies on 'Collective Memory', especially in terms of 'Heroic' and 'Tragic' events; 'Place Attachment'; and 'Pride'.
- 5.) Drawing upon the annotated bibliographies, a resource list that can serve as the basis for further offerings of classes focused on Collective Memory.