



## ***Contributors & Abstracts***

**Ayan Ahmed**, graduated from UMass Boston in Spring 2004 with B.A. in Sociology and a minor in Psychology. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 2 (Tamdgidi), during the Spring 2004 semester. **Paper Title:** *The Complexity of Naive Acceptance of Socially Manipulated Beliefs*. **Abstract:** This is a paper about self-evaluation and exploration. I struggle to understand myself in relation to my beliefs and how those beliefs were derived from society, parents and teachers as a whole and not through self reflection and education. I strive to recognize the manipulations I suffer through the hands of others in general and through my own self. Most importantly, I try to appreciate through the readings (or commentaries) of such scholars and philosophers as Freire, Ghazali, Durkheim, and Gurdjieff the nature of society and how individuals become oppressed by abiding with what others have prescribed—hence becoming “beings for others” as opposed to “beings for themselves.” Finally, I try to lay bare the complexity associated with trying to break free from manipulation and habituation and the irony in which one, having realized manipulation and habituation at the conscious level, is still driven subconsciously to embrace those very conditions one was seeking to avoid.

**Keilah Billings**, is a junior joint-majoring in Sociology and Psychology at UMass

Boston. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 3 (Tamdgidi), during the Spring 2004 semester. **Paper Title:** *Questioning Motherhood: A Sociological Awakening*. **Abstract:** The idea of having a child is one that seems to go against my nature. Forming families seem to be the reigning desire for most women and men as they grow older and more mature, and the need to procreate seems to grow more and more prevalent. This need for procreation rips through a woman as a freight train through its rails. Having a child is a natural process that many people feel is a major part of their lives' design. To me, the idea of having a child is more of a threat; an end to the independence I have worked so hard to achieve. I am afraid that it would mean the end of who I am today, and I fear that being a mother would turn me into someone I do not want to be. Because of all this, I feel that making the decision to have a child would mean sacrificing my very being. So when I choose not to have children, I am going against the social norms I have been taught my whole life.

**Jorge Capetillo-Ponce**, is Assistant Professor of Sociology at UMass Boston. **Paper Title:** *Defining the Other*. **Abstract:** G. W. F. Hegel said: “*Everything is what is not.*” Throughout human history, we find a continuous struggle to define the other, the foreigner, the unknown, the opposite of we or I. And, as the quote from Hegel indicates, what they are, that we are not, helps define the frontiers of personal and group identity.

**Chris DaPonte**, is a junior joint-majoring in Criminal Justice and Sociology at UMass Boston. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 3 (Tamdgidi), during the Spring 2004 semester. **Paper Title:** *Will I Marry*

*Her?* **Abstract:** Recently, the issue of gay couples' rights to marry has raised much controversy. Over 60% of the population does not believe that gay couples should have the right to marry, but those that agree and disagree with gay marriage are all voicing loud protests against one another. President Bush is currently attempting to pass a Constitutional Amendment defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Most proponents of this amendment hold marriage as a sacred religious ceremony. Ritual, as defined by Randall Collins is a "'stereotyped sequence of gestures and sounds'... that make emotions more intense, and commit them more strongly to views of reality..." (Wallace and Wolf, 148). Those who are against gay marriage hold this view of a sacred ritual with family and friends. It is something that little girls spend years longing for. What they are not seeing, however, is that marriage does not end after the ceremony, and that the ceremony doesn't have to be about a white dress and a church.

**M. D.**, is an undergraduate student at UMass Boston. **Paper Title:** *Body Image: A Clouded Reality*. **Abstract:** I think body image has become a social dilemma in our society. Eating disorders are too common among women, and I put 100% of the blame on society. But how did our society become so clouded that we actually believe that someone who looks as though they haven't eaten in months is beautiful? In the past, women like Marilyn Monroe were considered beautiful, and being full-figured was praised. I would give anything to live in a society where that was the case, as I'm sure many women today do. We know what eating disorders do to the body, so why do we continue to torture our bodies? We as a society

need to take a step back and look at what we have become: A materialistic, image-obsessed society that praises beauty more than it praises knowledge, love, and life. We are made up of individuals all with a false consciousness of what we really want. I think our society has a clouded image of what is beautiful. Women all over the world are killing themselves to conform their bodies to society's standards. Instead of praising women for being healthy, we criticize them and place pressure on them to be like what they see on television, in films, or on the runways. Eating disorders are growing problems which many seem to brush aside, assuming those afflicted by the problem will take care of themselves. The only way to change the growing rate of eating disorders is to change the way our society functions as a whole.

**Nancy O'Keefe Dyer**, is a senior majoring in Social Psychology and minoring in the Study of Religion at UMass Boston. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, (section taught by Professor Jorge Capetillo-Ponce) during the Fall 2003 semester. **Paper Title:** *Durkheim, Mead, and Heroin Addiction*. **Abstract:** Much has been written and much research done in an effort to understand the phenomenon of drug addiction. The treatment modalities available—medical, behavioral, pharmaceutical, "Twelve-Step"—speak to the many theories that have arisen as a result of research done to date. Yet statistics on heroin use and abuse indicate remarkably low "cure" rates and an ever-increasing number of addicts and "casual" users. Perhaps the field has been waiting for my investigation of the ways in which Emile Durkheim and George Herbert Mead would view the phenomenon of addiction.

**Savvas Fetfatsidis**, is an undergraduate student majoring in Sociology at UMass Boston. He enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, (section taught by Professor Jorge Capetillo-Ponce) during the Fall 2003 semester. **Paper Title:** *Just Live: The Trick Is, You Have A Choice.* **Abstract:** Originally this paper was going to only analyze the effect of music on the individual and society, but as I was writing I began thinking more and more about the last few years of my life, and how much I've grown and changed. Finally putting this journey into perspective became very important for me. I have learned that being aware of a problem is the first step in solving it, but we should not make the problems our life. I believe that in society people of similar statuses and backgrounds are most likely to experience certain similar struggles. Each person deals with those struggles in their own personal ways and at their own pace. For me, family, friends, work, music and love are the core influences of my character. It was important for my character to go through this mental and spiritual suffering. It helped me to become a better and stronger person. In each society there are powerful forces influencing us, so the more we know about society the more we can deal with it. The old proverb that says that "seek, and you shall find," is the truth. In any given situation you can find positive and negative aspects. The trick is to know you can choose between the two. Sometimes I still need to remind myself to just relax and enjoy the ride of life because one day it will come to an end.

**Michelle B. Jacobs**, graduated in Spring 2004 from UMass Boston with a B.A. in Criminal Justice and a minor in Sociology. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 3 (Tamdgidi), during the Spring 2004 semester.

**Paper Title:** *Obsessed with Impression Management: A Critical Sociology of Body Image in Capitalist Society.* **Abstract:** The issues with impression management that we have in society today are perpetuated through the media and how it portrays body image. Just as my family affected me, society and media are influenced by the capitalist/consumer society. It is made so that we all have a certain role to play and a certain way to look and if we do not fit into that then we do not get as far in the social world as one who may be ideal in the looks department. They reap the social rewards that society has to offer. Big corporations feed on this and make the public even more needy of the ideal body image by throwing it in their faces everyday on the television and the magazines. Writer Allen Ginsberg once said; "Whoever controls the media—the images—controls the culture" (Macleans 1). This is a very true statement. Society is based on looks and the capitalist society that we live in does not promote realistic beauty ideals or cater to the average woman. We all have issues with our bodies whether it comes from being bombarded with these wafer thin images portrayed in magazines or from the family we were raised in. At both micro and macro social levels, obsession with body image is a social dilemma we will all face in our lifetime.

**Jennifer M. Kosmas**, is a junior majoring in Social Psychology and minoring in Women's Studies at UMass Boston. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 3 (Tamdgidi), during the Spring 2004 semester. **Paper Title:** *The Roots of Procrastination: A Sociological Inquiry into Why I Wait Until Tomorrow.* **Abstract:** Whenever I have an assignment due, even my friends become nervous for me because they

know what it entails. I tell even the closest of all my friends that I complete my papers on time, because I am all too familiar with the disappointment and disbelief reinforced when they find out I have done this late yet another time. Procrastination seems to generally be associated with things such as laziness, bad habits, lack of responsibility, etc. College students are famous for it. While some do it more often than others, there is no one who is not guilty of it every now and then. And why not? Who would really rather write a research paper over some other immediately enjoyable activity? But when looked at more deeply, procrastination can become a problem for some, and even begin to interfere with one's normal functioning. It is even connected with other things such as depression and anxiety. Exploring my issues concerning procrastination with the help of various sociological theories, I come to realize where they may have stemmed from and why I might behave in such ways. With this knowledge, I hope to be able to change this ever-present factor in my life.

**Kuong C. Ly**, is an undergraduate student at UMass Boston majoring in Sociology. He enrolled in Soc. 321, Racial & Ethnic Relations, (section taught by Anna Beckwith), during the Spring 2004 semester. **Paper Title:** *"Asian": Just a simple Word.* **Abstract:** Throughout my life, I'm face with several questions of "What does it mean to be Asian?" and "How do you define being Asian?" "It's only a word" is what I tell myself. But, I know that it is so much more than that. The racial side of my mind tells me I should break the Asian American mold of model minority myth and challenge the general public's opinion of Asian Americans by becoming a blue-collar college dropout, or by car-

rying out the struggle for social justice by voicing the need to bring down the false stereotypes of "model minority" that society has built. But by doing so, I'm only validating the stereotypes that the Asian American community has placed on my Cambodian American ethnic identity. So, the ethnic part of my mind tells me that I should break the mold placed on Cambodian Americans by getting a college education and pursuing the model minority myth. Does that mean that by doing so the racial side of my mind has won, or does that mean that the ethnic side of my mind has triumphed? The battle between which of the two molds I should be breaking remains, and I'm still torn as to what it means to be "Asian"—after all *it's just a simple word.* Or is it?

**Lynne K. Marlette**, graduated in Spring 2004 from UMass Boston with a B.A. in Sociology and a minor in Asian American Studies. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 1 (Tamdgidi), during the Fall 2003 semester. **Paper Title:** *Honesty, Trust, and Love—In That Order: A Reflective Sociological of My Emotional Kaleidoscope As An Adoptee.* **Abstract:** This is a self exploratory paper sparked by a question that has loomed in my head for some months now; "Should I take antidepressants?" Through analyzing my thoughts and emotions leading to the depressing state, I explore my early childhood experiences as an adopted child from Korea and explore a more recent, emotionally charged break-up in that context. I use the knowledge gained in order to draw conclusions regarding how to change and lead my life.

**Marie Neuner**, is a junior at UMass Boston, majoring in English and minoring in Sociology. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Ele-

ments of Sociological Theory, section 2 (Tamdgidi), during the Spring 2004 semester. **Paper Title:** *Who Are "I"? A Sociology of My Traditional, Modern, and Postmodern Selves.* **Abstract:** This paper investigates my multiple selves, in particular the conflict between my traditional and modern self-identities. Through phenomenology, my inability to strictly adhere to one set of beliefs is treated as problematic in order to understand how society influences the development and nourishment of each self. By uncovering the oppressive nature of universal truths in our postmodern society, the pressure to choose among metanarratives is deemed unnecessary. Postmodernity is discussed as a hybrid mode combining both tradition and modernity and not as a complete departure from them. Ultimately, the postmodern era in which we live, if fostered, can allow greater personal freedom from society's oppressive frameworks and a personal reclamation of power.

**Buddi Osco** (pen name), is an undergraduate student at UMass Boston. He enrolled in a course taught by Professor Jorge Capetillo-Ponce at UMass Boston. **Paper Title:** *Anomie or Alienation?: A Self-Exploration of the Roots of Substance Abuse.* **Abstract:** Substance abuse is a serious problem for millions of citizens in the United States, and throughout the world. Everyday, across the globe, individuals of different races, ethnicities, religions, cultures, and social classes struggle with the disease of drug addiction. Many people lay the blame for these problems on the individuals themselves, labeling them as criminals, deviants, or persons of weak moral character. Perhaps they even cite bad parenting, or other such factors. But what if the true source of the problem was greater?

What if the problem lies not in the individual or their family at all, but in society as a whole? Or, rather, what if the problem lies in the individual's lack of a connection to the rest of society? In this paper, I will attempt to apply Emile Durkheim's theory of anomie and Karl Marx's theory of alienation to the problem of substance abuse, using my own life experiences to illuminate the subject.

**Guadalupe Paz**, graduated in Spring 2004 from UMass Boston with a B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Sociology. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 1 (Tamdgidi), during the Fall 2003 semester. **Paper Title:** *The Effects of Immigrant Experiences on the Bifurcation of Women's Consciousness.* **Abstract:** As human beings, we are fascinating evolving creatures capable of influencing our surroundings and being influenced by it as well. The central issue that has emerged in my life is the constant pull between two cultural standards. My Hispanic culture pulls me towards being a housewife and the influence of the American culture pulls me towards being a working mom. Ultimately my goal is to explore how both have influenced the way I perceive myself as an immigrant woman in this country.

**D. M. Rafferty**, is a junior joint-majoring in Sociology and Psychology at UMass Boston. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 3 (Tamdgidi), during the Fall 2003 semester. **Paper Title:** *My Life's Tapestry: Casting Theoretical Lights on the Social Threads That Tie Me Down.* **Abstract:** I view my life as a large and ever changing tapestry. I am cut from a bolt of very strong, durable, and coarse working class material. Being born female certainly factored into the pattern of this



design. However, woven deeply in my foundation are also threads of limitation resulting from the classist and sexist attitudes that still persist in today's society. Socio-economic class and gender roles constitute the two most influencing social stratifications that have shaped the outlines of my life. Reviewing personal experiences in light of the classical, contemporary, and postmodernist theories in sociology will hopefully reveal new hues and textures in the ever changing tapestry that is my life.

**Annie Roper**, is a junior joint-majoring in Sociology and Psychology at UMass Boston. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 1 (Tamdgidi), during the Fall 2003 semester. **Paper Title:** *From Alienation to Exploration: Breaking Free From the Iron Cages of My Life*. **Abstract:** The social experience of alienation has affected most of my life. I grew alienated from my core self when I attended Catholic schools and I've been working on changing that ever since. Those rules were hard to live by and they took their toll on my life, leaving me with social scars. I went from living what amounted to a child's utopian life to one like prison, where I attended school and met bureaucracy, discipline and repression. My imagination was stifled, my creativity crushed, and my expectations became nil. Alienated and demoralized, I became a factory worker. I smoked pot, worked and drank. I abandoned free thinking for years, repressing memories and drinking and drugging to keep away pain and fear. My social worldview narrowed to tunnel vision—with only a bottle in sight before me. It is only now that I am facing my demons in this paper. I'm allowing my sociological imagination a free rein: I'm finally putting my person-

al troubles into broader perspective in reference to family, society and my place in the world.

**Elizabeth J Schumacher**, graduated in Spring 2004 from UMass Boston with a B.A. in Social Psychology. She enrolled in Soc. 341, Elements of Sociological Theory, section 2 (Tamdgidi), during the Spring 2004 semester. **Paper Title:** *Alice in the Gendered Sports Fan Wonderland: A Sociological Inquiry*. **Abstract:** C. Wright Mills encouraged people to develop a sociological imagination in order to “place themselves in social context and identify how public issues affect them at the personal level, arguing that people need to know the source of their difficulties in order to make sense of their lives (Disch 2).” I believe that gender, in many cases, may be the source of such difficulties. Disch goes on to stress the importance of empowerment through the challenging of the patriarchal system. She states that, “without seeing the complexity of human experience and the complexity of human oppression, we cannot begin to address the real needs of human beings caught in systematically oppressive social structures (Disch 14).” Though the feminist movement has vastly improved the situation of women, many challenges and obstacles still endure. Over the past century, substantial progress has been made in the opportunities afforded to women in voting rights, education, and job possibilities, but many social issues still need to be improved. In this paper I will discuss the obstacles women continue to face in their efforts to be seen as equals in the sports world as fans.

**M.H. (Behrooz) Tamdgidi**, is Assistant Professor of Sociology at UMass Boston. **Paper Title:** *De/Reconstructing Utopianism: Towards a World-Historical Typolo-*

*gy* **Abstract:** Marxism represented a new, “scientific,” type of utopian movement in contrast, on one hand, to the philosophical and religious varieties preceding it, and on the other hand the briefly revived humanist type (as somewhat represented by utopian socialists) which was soon frozen in embryo by Marxism’s own ideological-political rhetoric and ascendance in the world-wide opposition to capitalism. What I intend to point out is a need to go beyond the polemics and the rhetoric of these movements in order to develop a typological framework of utopianism which accounts for the historical failures of Marxism due in part to the shortcomings emanating from its specific utopian type and partly due to its gradual departure from the utopian typology altogether. The point is to redeem the value of utopianism as a specific strategy for social change in contrast to the antisystemic mode characterizing the dominant form of opposition movements to capitalism during at least the past two centuries.