Three Minute Thesis Competition Abstracts

Caitlin Baker (Mentor: Jori Sechrist) 3MT-1

America's Collective Conscience

In an era defined by heightened divisions and escalating rhetoric, social scientists grapple to dissect the influence of political polarization on the American psyche. Guided by Durkheim's theory of collective conscience, this thesis examines the evolution of America's shared values. While this paper does hypothesize a bifurcated collective conscience, by reorienting the typical framework utilized by social scientists from one of division toward focusing on the ideals and beliefs shared among the people, it illuminates the intricate web of connection that unifies our society. From the seismic shocks of the Trump era to the disruptive waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study uncovers the fault lines of American unity while highlighting institutional inertia and policy divergence's role in exacerbating societal fragmentation. As the nation grapples with its fractured soul, this research provides a clarion call for unity, resilience, and re-imagining a collective American narrative.

Aubrey Batten (Mentor: David Wahl) 3MT-2

The Stigma Surrounding Stigma: Examining Social Disapproval and its Consequences

Stigma is a word used frequently in our society to describe negative social attitudes and consequences towards certain behaviors, sexualities, religions, people groups and more. In academic context it is essential to raise awareness around topics where stigma is harmful, whether towards people, or towards research regarding said people.
This presentation will argue that stigma is a necessary tool in society to discourage anti-social or morally unacceptable behaviors. In addition to this, the line between stigma that is harmful to society and stigma that is helpful to society is unclear. This presentation will explore some of the factors that potentially determine the difference between these two things. In this process examples will be explored where stigma was removed or alleviated from a topic, and the consequences for f this removal.

Melissa Stevenson (Mentor: Mark Waters) 3MT-3

Constructive Criticism: How Not to Cry

Constructive Criticism or Feedback is defined as the artform of providing feedback to someone in order to better their performance. But when we receive feedback, for example on a paper we wrote, or a performance of a musical piece, or how we might have lost the big game, how does it feel? Constructive feedback should be about the immediate project, it should be ways to

improve, not just ways things are wrong. It should not be personal or involve past or future projects that do not have a bearing on the immediate project. But even when criticisms follow all these expectations or rules, they can still be devasting to our emotional wellbeing, our confidence, and our overall happiness. This presentation will demonstrate healthy and helpful ways to combat those feelings to use Constructive Criticisms in a positive way. In an article for the American Psychological Association, Dr. Naomi Winstone noted that "people were far more likely to recall evaluative feedback—feedback about something they have already completed—than feedback on how they could improve on a future task, also known as directive feedback". For example, I was given Constructive Criticism for this event last year, but unfortunately do not remember any of it for the event this year. But if we were given feedback after our presentations today and then allowed to redo them, the feedback would be much more effective. This shows the value of Constructive Criticism, so eliminating it from society is not the answer. That begs the question, how can I use what someone else is telling me I did wrong without getting emotionally hurt? We will discuss how getting past the initial hurt to being able to ask questions can help us make a better project or product making it a win for everyone.