identity

identify

Our first foray into research will be to explore identity at/in/of the middlebury community (however you choose to define it (or it chooses to define itself)).

Some questions you might ask:

* What does identity mean? What is the mean identity?
* What does identity make (im)possible? (or, what makes some identities (im)possible?)
* How do people form/maintain/perform identity and how do others interpret it?
* How do people (ab)use their identity?
* etc etc etc etc.

things/thinks to keep in mind about identities:

1. identity can play out in many different ways
   1. it can be a major social category (race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.)
   2. it can be materialized/objectified/commodified (artifacts, consumption patterns, etc)
   3. it can be place based (J.O.B., local, non-American, etc.)
   4. it can be space based (dining halls, dorm rooms, class rooms, quads, etc.)
   5. it can be performative (how people act, dress, party, etc)
2. identities are complicated
   1. we often tend to think in “either/or” terms, but “both/and” is often (albeit not always) more appropriate (obviously, intersectionality fits here, but also walt whitman containing the mutlitudes, collective and individual, etc.)
   2. they can be contested and contesting
   3. we are generally pretty good at discerning identities (it’s an important social skill!), but we may not be as good as we think. Don’t assume too much.

things/thinks to keep in mind while doing research:

1. ask good questions!
   1. speak to broader issues/concerns that sociologists/people care about. “the literature” can help here; ask “who am I in conversation with?”
   2. don’t (just) ask questions that you already know the answers to – this not only yields dull findings but also leads one to treat their data too simplistically (seeing only what you already saw, etc.)
2. look for tensions!
   1. managing identities is a lot of work (more for some than others, depending) and even the most coherent seeming ones are laden with contradictions and tensions (both within and between). this need not be the only focus, but it is often a good place to start/explore/end with.
   2. look within and between the images/evidence. life (and data) rarely fits neatly.
3. find a method that works for you!
   1. we’ve seen a lot of different ways to use images to do research, so explore your options. You can try something else next time (or not)
   2. do what comes easiest. or do what comes hardest. either can be informative.
   3. ethics ethics ethics ethics. i.e, do the right thing.

the deets: your final product will be the sum of 2 parts:

* PHOTO ESSAY: basic structure: intro, 6-8 (approx.) captioned images non-randomly ordered which build on/in an argument/analysis that relies on both data and theory, conclusion. (*we will discuss additional specifics in class*)
* SELF-EVALUATION/REFLECTION: how did you do? what did you do and would you do it differently next time? (pssst: there will be a next time!) Surprises? Challenges? Life-changing experiences that you will never, ever forget? It should be approximately a page, separate from essay.

even more stuff you might want to know.

* Due Monday, 3/18 at 11.57pm. we will discuss details for submission in class.
* If you choose, you may collaborate on this project with up to one (1) fellow student. The reason for collaboration should materialize in the final product. (i.e., 2 is not always better than 1 – so why is it in this case?). each will submit their own reflection/evaluation, including discussion of the collaboration process.