

Diversity at Mason

Student Research on Student Identity



EDITED BY
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A GEORGE MASON PUBLICATION ON DIVERSITY
FROM THE DIVERSITY RESEARCH GROUP AND THE OFFICES OF UNIVERSITY LIFE

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August 2009

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ISBN 978-0-9841004-0-8

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FOREWORD

THE DIVERSITY RESEARCH GROUP consists of administrative and instructional faculty who have been meeting once a semester since Spring 2004. It includes participants from Institutional Assessment, Institutional Research, Equity and Diversity Services, Student Academic Affairs and Advising, a variety of offices in University Life, the Writing Center, and faculty from Administration of Justice, Anthropology, Education and Human Development, English, Psychology, Public and International Affairs, Social Work, and Sociology. The group comes together not out of any formal directive but from a shared interest in the topic.

And the topic? Each meeting begins with the same reminder: George Mason is a highly diverse institution, and it is diverse in unusual ways. It is also marked by remarkable levels of collaboration across instructional, student affairs, and institutional support sectors. What better location from which to consider the impact of diversity on higher education? Over the years, members of the group have presented papers, panels, and workshops at professional meetings, published research findings, and shared information with one another.

A year after its establishment, the group began a series of pilot efforts to examine the nature and implications of diversity at Mason. Those efforts produced the first three volumes in the *Diversity at Mason* series: *Student Reflections* (June, 2006), *Valuing Written Accents: Non-native Students Talk about Identity, Academic Writing, and Meeting Teachers' Expectations* (June, 2007), and *The Fulbright Experience* (June, 2008).

The fourth volume in the series highlights the role of students as independent researchers of diversity. This new Diversity Research Group effort – called the Ethnography of Diversity – encourages graduate and undergraduate student research on the nature of diversity in higher education using George Mason as the research site. The hope is to provide both a national model of joint faculty-student research on the topic and a set of recommendations about how institutions might better realize their goals vis-à-vis student diversity.

It was a complete pleasure to work with the students who contributed their papers to this volume. Naliyah Kaya and John Robinson provided steady and thoughtful guidance as co-editors of this volume. As

year-long GRAs for the Ethnography of Diversity Project, they managed the tricky business of being simultaneously cool, very smart, and good hearted; they leave behind a sizeable, interdisciplinary fan club of students, faculty, and administrators. The transformation of manuscript into print layout was accomplished thanks to David Haines's generosity of skill and time. Finally, we are especially grateful to the Offices of University Life for their continued support of *Diversity at Mason*.

Karen Rosenblum

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
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PREFACE

THE ESSAYS IN THIS FOURTH EDITION of *Diversity at Mason* have been authored by George Mason students who describe their research on the nature of student diversity on campus. This research emerged from the confluence of two university projects: the Gender Research Project in the Women and Gender Studies Program and the Ethnography of Diversity Project sponsored by the Diversity Research Group.

The Gender Research Project encourages student research on the place of gender in the lives of Mason students. Taught by Professor Amy Best, it has been structured as a year-long course in which graduate students and advanced undergraduates learn strategies for collecting and analyzing empirical materials, engage with the literature on methods and methodology by feminist scholars across the disciplines, and study gender on campus systematically. Begun in Fall 2007, the Project has enrolled over forty students. Several papers in this volume were written by students in the Project's second cohort.

Other papers in the volume grew out of the Ethnography of Diversity Project, a four-year effort which began in Fall 2008. Here the goal is to provide students the opportunity to pursue research on the nature and meaning of diversity in higher education, again with George Mason as the research site. Over the last year, ten undergraduates pursued this research, some enrolling in the Gender Research Project and others working with faculty in regular course offerings or individualized study. An interdisciplinary umbrella involving about a dozen faculty, the Ethnography of Diversity Project encompasses a broad range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and aims to provide a national model of joint faculty-student research on diversity in higher education. We are delighted to be able to include a paper by Matthew Bruno in this volume – although his research predates the Ethnography Project, it is certainly consistent with those efforts.

Thanks to the offices of Equity and Diversity Services, University Life, and the Provost, the first year of the Ethnography of Diversity Project was able to provide Graduate Research Assistantship support to Naliyah Kaya and John Robinson, who are co-editors of this volume. As they describe in the Afterword, both the gender and ethnography projects provoke a new set of considerations for students – from

managing human subjects requirements and conference presentations, to facing the ethical and emotional ramifications of one's research.

Like all universities, George Mason collects data on its student population, fields coursework on aspects of American diversity, and sponsors student activities on the related topics. Unlike others, George Mason – through the Gender Research and Ethnography projects – has become a place in which students have the opportunity to pursue research about the nature and meaning of the “diversity” now central to the operation of American higher education.

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CHAPTER ONE

HOME COURT ADVANTAGE: STRATEGIES OF SYMBOLIC ATTAINMENT IN PICKUP BASKETBALL

John N. Robinson III

MY INTEREST IN PICKUP BASKETBALL derives both from personal experience and an intellectual curiosity about the social dynamics of the game. Like others who have studied basketball, I was a player long before I came to approach the game as a researcher. Although it is popularly considered a lawless spin-off of “organized” basketball, it was in coming to appreciate pickup as a rule-bound, self-officiated practice that the sport became for me an object of intellectual interest. That people who are often little more than strangers can coordinate playing times, organize participants, and create satisfying games without a governing body or a constitution of any kind seemed to me an example of democracy in action.

Method

For this study I looked at George Mason’s fieldhouse facility, a public site with a very diverse array of frequenters. The playing population includes mostly students but also a number of non-students. Over the course of ten months, I have used both participant observation and interviews, generally using the latter to explore what emerges in the former. My interview sample consisted of two black males, one black female, two Filipino-American males, one Chinese-American male, one Afghan-American male, and two white males. I frequently played in games and, consistent with feminist theory, sought to use my own feelings as a resource to better capture the experience of playing. Less often, I watched from the sidelines so as to observe the meaningful but peripheral actions of spectators and the spatial patterns of play that are hard to grasp while playing.

Divisions of Space and the Spaces of Division

Most of the space in the fieldhouse is found in the gaping central area where the basketball courts lie. There are four courts and a smaller,

auxiliary court in the rear. Seldom are more than two courts open for basketball playing, as the others are used for volleyball, soccer, cheer-leading, and other activities.

Perhaps the most significant observation emerged at the start of this study, which was that the two predominantly basketball-occupied courts shared few players between them although they sit side-by-side. In fact, as I played and spoke with players, I came to realize that these two courts are actually separate but related social spheres bound by differing customs and meanings. Importantly, popular ideas about the middle court work to the disadvantage of those who play there. Not only is the middle court considered an “uncompetitive” and marginal space in the shadows of the “competitive,” predominant far court area; it is also seen as the native place of Asian players, as the far court is understood to be the domain of black players.

This local geography of belonging is closely linked to power relations existing between occupants of the two courts. Players “native” to the far court routinely displace middle-court regulars from both middle and far-court space, suggesting that although the latter are thought to “belong” to the middle court, they nevertheless maintain no claim to “defensible” space in the way that far court regulars are empowered to. I wanted to understand how this racialized and gendered division of space is continually reproduced within the everyday cultural mechanics of pickup basketball, and it is toward this objective that I have sought to explore pickup basketball within three broadly related interpretive frameworks: as a *ritual*, as an *informal social network*, and as a *field of power*. As pickup basketball actually embodies all of these qualities at once, it will be important to remember that these varying aspects have been analytically sequestered for heuristic purposes only, and that, ultimately, it is the symbiosis that exists among them that remains key to understanding the game.

Pickup Basketball as Ritual

At the outset, it becomes important to consider what players seek in coming to play basketball at the fieldhouse. The idea of “ritual” directs us toward the meanings associated with certain practices. Even if most sports sociologists emphasize the centrality of the athletic domination – tending to overplay the “Lombardian ethic” that winning is everything – I’ve found that players tend to care more about what they call “intensity.” Here is how one player describes it:

... up and down ... people know what they're doing ... but then people care about winning ... they actually, they take it to heart. They get hype, they start yelling, like, I love winning those games ... yea, intensity. [Caesar, Filipino American, senior]

Thus Caesar's comment emphasizes not the outcome of an athletic contest but the enactment of a mood shared by participants.

Analyses from the perspective of interaction ritual seek to explain what social actors get from interaction, and why they continually come back together. According to Collins (2004), there are four main ingredients of ritual – bodily co-presence, barriers to outsiders, mutual focus of attention, and shared mood – that together effectuate a heightened state of collective consciousness. As Collins puts it, “Rituals mark boundaries of inclusion and exclusion” (p. 297).

In this way, when players talk about intensity, they are actually describing a successful interaction ritual. This can be seen more clearly in the following response, which rejects the fundamental importance of winning and losing and centers the symbolic profit of pickup firmly on the “chemistry” of athletic interaction:

... playing with people who are competing just as hard as you are ... like-minded people who are competitive and who want to win. ... And even if you lose the game, knowing the fact that y'all had a good chemistry kinda makes things a good experience after playing. [Marvin, African American, graduate student]

Pickup Basketball as Informal Social Network

Inasmuch as the court is a place where acquaintances are made, subsequent sports outings are planned, and even where matters of personal life are discussed, it becomes helpful to also consider pickup as an informal social network. Social networks foster norms of generalized trust and reciprocity (e.g., you will get back what you give out), and these in turn facilitate cooperation. In examining the ways that men, and sometimes women, come together to build networks in pickup, it is important to understand sport as a “social institution ... created by and for men” (Messner, 1992, p. 150) and consequently rooted in the masculine values of competition and performance evaluation.

Trust. This means that in pickup basketball, the trust upon which social networks are founded is forged within the masculine practice of sport itself. When players talked about trust, they often spoke from the standpoint of teammate, referring to the process of establishing athletic rapport with someone with whom they were obliged to work within the limited context of athletic competition. Here is Marvin explaining why he sometimes refuses to pass the ball:

. . . and so I can see that at times when I did trust them and they turned the ball over, or they did something where they made me not trust them, and so I would take matters into my own hands and try to score the basketball, more so than trusting them. [Marvin, African American, graduate student]

As can be seen from this response, if ability is found to be wanting, there is little basis for trust. Yet when unfamiliar players favorably regard the abilities of one another, a lasting association is often consummated, as is described by Caleb:

Every so often, there'll be someone you don't know, but you get to know them by playin. . . . It helps you meet people, it helps you get friends. . . . You see somebody, play with them, then the next time, it's like, "Oh, I'll play with this dude, what up." [Caleb, White American, sophomore]

As Caleb explains, much of what is important about another person on the basketball court can be learned by watching him or her play. The likelihood of a continuing relationship will often follow from this.

Respect. Respect, on the other hand, "that emotionally distant connection with others so important to masculine identity" (Messner, 1992, p. 48), is often described as a relation that transcends the narrow context of game play and signifies membership in the wider network of pickup basketball. Consider the following response:

I mean, some people deserve respect, some people don't . . . you got to realize who does deserve it. . . . When you walk in, if you have earned respect, people going to pick you up and you might not even have to go up and say, "Let me run with you." [Caleb, White American, sophomore]

For Caleb, respect is evidenced when his abilities are known and favorably regarded among even those players with whom he has not played or that he does not know personally. Being "known" often

enables players such as Caleb to forgo the rat race of finding playing time on a crowded court. These alliance-forming and network-building practices allow and refuse the entry of players into the playing coteries of pickup in accordance with the values of prevailing athletic masculinities that dominate the court.

Reciprocity. A norm of reciprocity is the generalized feeling that you will get back what you give out, and it is often a reflection of the strength of social relations. I want to advance the idea that “trash-talking,” often thought of as a form of domination, actually reflects a norm of reciprocity typical of strong relations in pickup. One example is that players overwhelmingly refuse to engage in trash-talk with those who are unfamiliar, fearing that their words would be misunderstood and thus taken “too seriously.” Trash-talking also indicates cooperation rather than domination because it draws upon the masculine value of responding to challenge in order to manipulate the intensity level of games. Here is how Marvin describes his motive for trash-talking:

I think [trash talking] heightens the level of just being competitive . . . and I think it also will challenge . . . players to match that intensity that I’m looking to, that I want everybody to play on. [Marvin, African American, graduate student]

As you can see here, trash-talking presents a challenge to athletic masculinity in order to solicit a reciprocation of effort; it is therefore not an act of subordination so much as an invitation to co-create successful interactional rituals.

Pickup Basketball as Field of Power

In the matter of gaining entry into the social networks or creating “intense” interaction rituals of pickup, all players are not valued equally; or, to put it another way, players do not possess equal supplies of athletic capital. In this sense it is easy to see pickup basketball as an assemblage of atomized individuals each trying to use what they have to get what they can get. It will serve us well in that case to look at pickup basketball as a field of power. “Field of power” (Schwartz, 1997) refers to an arena of struggle over valued resources. Assets possessed by individuals that enable them to attain valued resources are referred to as capital; in this study, such assets can be considered the social, symbolic, and cultural forms of “athletic capital.”

Social athletic capital refers to the associations a player has that allow him access to valued resources, for example, the opportunity to

play. As pickup basketball at the fieldhouse maintains a fundamentally group-oriented structure, affiliation is always more valuable than to be alone. When players “roll up” to the court in cliques of three to five, individual ability becomes less decisive in determining how easily a player finds a place on the court. Social athletic capital means that players who lack experience or ability can gain entry to privileged athletic spaces through their friends. Here is Raul explaining why he rarely plays on the far court:

The only time I’m on the far court, I think the condition that would have to be met is – cuz I don’t find myself over alone there – if I’m with my friends, and if they’re playing on that far court, then I’ll play. . . . And even like if I see familiar people and they want me on, I’ll play too. But if I was just alone, then yea most of times I wouldn’t even try to play, I would just practice because I’m still only one year [inexperienced]. [Raul, Filipino-American, senior]

Symbolic athletic capital encompasses those identity categories that are on the profitable side of symbolic power. An example is the way that Asian players are widely stereotyped as lacking the capacity to understand the game or play it in an orderly fashion. This logic bars most Asians from privileged spaces on the court and justifies their occasional displacement by players from the far court. One strategy utilizing symbolic capital is to assert membership by emphasizing profitable identities while distancing oneself from stigmatized ones. This is demonstrated by two Filipino-American players – among the few Asians to play regularly on the far court – who negotiate far court access by adopting the same air of condescension toward the Asian players of the middle court that many non-Asian far court players adopt toward them:

Caesar: A lot of times we’ll step in and it’s like, “Oh it’s the Asians!” [in a high-pitched voice]. . . . It’s okay, just because, I feel like they know us because a lot of us can play, they wouldn’t say that if we couldn’t play . . . but if we were like those exchange students, they don’t refer to them as the Asians, they won’t say that to them.

Raul: You know what the funny thing is, we refer to *them* as the Asians [laughing].

[Caesar, Filipino American, senior; Raul, Filipino American, senior]

Finally, *cultural* athletic capital refers to those symbols, objects, and practices that signify cultural competence and therefore aid in the pursuit of what is valuable within pickup basketball, especially floorspace and successful interaction rituals. Of this species of capital, there are three types. The first, “institutionalized” cultural capital, refers to the credentials or marks of accomplishment that a player can employ toward the attainment of valued resources. An example would be college basketball experience, which signifies the same sense of promotion within institutional athletics as would an advanced degree in education. A strategy utilizing such capital is exemplified by female players who often wear jerseys from their organized college basketball past when playing pickup games with men.

A second variant of cultural athletic capital are those objects that signify cultural competence. Items of apparel are among the most visible objects employed toward this purpose. A popular strategy is to wear baggy shorts, basketball sneakers, wristbands, or ankle braces so as to don a “ballerly” appearance and more easily gain entry into playing networks. Taking apparel as a cue, players often identify fellow “ballers” from a distance, regarding the arrival of these players as a warrant for exerting the effort necessary to actualize “intense” games.

Finally, cultural athletic capital can be embodied by those practices and discourses coded as “black” or “African American,” – what Prudence Carter (2007) calls “black cultural capital.” Although Carter offers a broad treatment of the performativity of “authentic blackness,” I focus on how the meanings attached to “black” interactional styles commute into positive or negative athletic value within the symbolic economy of pickup.

The identity work surrounding the prospect of “authentic blackness” has divergent consequences. Afghan-American player, Farhad, echoes the sentiment of many others when asked about how he pursues athletic satisfaction on the court:

I like playing with black people, ‘cause . . . they’re better people to play basketball with . . . I mean, ‘cause, they’re more athletic, more skilled than white people. . . . And they’re more competition, I guess. [Farhad, Afghan American, sophomore]

Thus, “blackness” to Farhad offers the promise of “intensity,” that much sought-after prize of the pickup player. And yet “blackness” is just as likely to signify the potential for violence, as can be seen in Marvin’s description of a white player in whom he saw embodied a distinctly “black” interactional style:

Just his attitude, his tone of voice, umm the way that he wore his basketball shorts, his persona, reflected that he was influenced by hip hop culture. . . . It was evident in his personality, in his body language, in his tone of voice, in the words that he used. . . . I was saying black players or white players who are influenced by black culture. . . . African American men come from backgrounds where they are raised in an environment to defend, so they have a defensive-like attitude or perception or state of mind where they feel they have to defend or protect who they are, their image, and also portray that they’re tough . . . and so it’s just a way how it’s shown. [Marvin, African American, graduate student]

When convinced of the authenticity of another player’s “blackness,” players will often temper their own aggression out of caution, as they pursue competitive advantage. One strategy, then, can be observed in the way specifically black players but also non-black players who master “black” mannerisms and speech codes, utilize fear-inspiring stereotypes towards the domination of athletic encounters. Marvin reveals the mental sparring that will often accompany physical play:

. . . but on the individual level, I’m really trying to embarrass the player. . . . I’m trying to put like almost fear into him . . . there are some psychological factors there because I mean some people aren’t as confident as other people, so if you can discern a weakness psychologically, I’m gonna take advantage of that. . . . [Marvin, African American, graduate student]

Conclusion

In many ways, then, pickup basketball, to invoke the familiar analogy, can be seen as a microcosm of the game of life – a shared pursuit, with individuals assigned value on the basis of considerations internal to the practice. The skills acquired, alliances made, and dispositions cultivated from there tend toward the reproduction of existing arrange-

ments of power, but not inevitably. In the details of how pickup basketball takes form and is brought into meaning, reside the building blocks of larger structures of inequality. I would like to suggest that the promise of studying self-regulated practices such as pickup basketball in our own fieldhouse lies in the potential of more exactly locating within the flux of social practices what Adrienne Rich (1971) calls the “only poem” worthy of our admiration: the moment of change.

John N. Robinson III is a George Mason graduate student in sociology, focusing on cultural sociology. He completed his undergraduate degree at Hampton University.

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CHAPTER TWO

ON INCORPORATING THE INTERNATIONALLY MINDED: EXPLORING THE STUDENT RETURNEE EXPERIENCE

Deborah Rose Guterbock
Lucy A. E. Hochstein

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY has been considered one of the most diverse universities in the United States for several years. Yet you will find no demographics on Mason students who have lived abroad for significant time periods. Our research project attempts to shed light on this neglected dimension of diversity at Mason. Through a series of open-ended interviews, the project examines the personal, social, and educational aspects of the return experience of three distinct kinds of student returnees: people who have lived and been educated abroad before coming to college; veterans who have finished at least one tour of duty overseas; and returning exchange students. All those interviewed were current or recently-graduated Mason students.

The interviewees differ greatly in their background and experience abroad. The countries they visited include France, Japan, Germany, Greece, Iraq, Senegal, Malta, and Great Britain. While this research is still in its preliminary stages, some general patterns are beginning to emerge after the first nine interviews. For example, returnees often find out as much about themselves and their own culture as they do about the culture in which they lived abroad. Their time abroad can give them new eyes with which to regard the United States, yet they often find it difficult to incorporate those new views into their lives after their return. Thus while life-changes tend to be great overseas, there is often deactivation and even suppression of these changes upon returning home.

One of the first obstacles that arise when people go abroad has to do with a sense of being out of place and out of time. While people are away, events in the United States continue. But those who are abroad do not experience them directly and thus have stepped out of the flow of events at home. Upon return, friends and family of the traveler

often fail to understand that what affects them in their everyday lives will affect the traveler differently.

In our study, many interviewees indicated that upon return to the States, both the returnee and peers expected life to go on as normal, hoping to slip easily back into their former roles as though no time had passed. This was seldom the case. As one returning exchange student put it: "I am not the same person I was and it was hard coming back and feeling like I somehow didn't fit in anymore." In coming back to his friend group, he said "We had to sort of reintegrate, work back to the level we were before." He understood that his friends had changed as well, resulting in the need for a mutual reintegration process by which he learned to fit back into his culture of origin as much as was possible. Another returnee who had spent a significant amount of her childhood abroad said: "So many things were different than before. It just didn't seem like America was the same place it was when I left. Because I was gone, it went on without me, and I got stuck in the outfield."

Learning how to *reintegrate* into their previous life thus becomes an important process that each returnee must confront. One aid to that reintegration mentioned by many interviewees was what we call *buffering*. A buffer can be considered a group of people who serve as a cushion between travelers and the culture in which they find themselves, whether it is a "new" culture to which they are going or the "old" culture to which they are returning. Even though it could be argued that the buffer is detrimental to full cultural immersion, in the case of the returnee it serves as a permeable membrane that softens "culture shock" and provides a comfort zone within which the person can function and interpret the new culture.

For those in the military, the buffer can serve to curb integration into military culture as well as pad the relationship between the individual and the country in which they serve. For students growing up overseas in the international school system, the buffer can be formed through relationships with other students that create a "family" that shares similar experiences, such as of moving from country to country, or having parents who are diplomats. For college students in exchange programs, the buffer can be other international students from similar programs.

After coming back to the United States, returnees often find that it is these "buffer" friendships, formed abroad, that cushion their rein-

tegration into the States as well. One student explained: "That's the only thing that would define my place is [with] everybody who has studied abroad. I feel like we all have these feelings . . . I just feel really connected to those people because I feel as though they 'get it.' They get it and nobody else does." In essence, it is this sense of camaraderie, initially formed abroad, that provides a buffer making the returnees' reintegration back into the United States smoother. This sense of camaraderie may also be extended to anyone who has lived abroad.

While buffer groups may help, reintegration remains difficult. One of the reasons that reintegration can be so difficult has to do with the lack of *acknowledgment* of the changes that returnees have experienced abroad. Returnees often have the expectation that their newly acquired knowledge will be readily accepted by neighbors, family, and peers. Yet, when our interviewees returned, the ears and minds of peers, families, and institutions were often not open fully to those changes. Returnees are often expected to jump back into normal life as though nothing happened abroad, or as if they had not changed. One returnee commented: "As soon as I returned to the States, it was as if nothing I had done in France mattered. Nobody cared to listen about my experiences. And I felt as though I was torn between these two places, America and France, but I couldn't decide which one I loved more." Similarly, some veterans feel that the time they spent serving the country is not acknowledged by others.

Although returnees want to share what they have done and how they have changed, there is almost no space for them to bring that experience into their everyday lives. It is almost as if they are forced to pretend that they were not changed by being abroad. The result is often a feeling of *isolation*. That could be the reason why returnees form relationships with others who have stepped out of American time and place; they bond with those who share their feelings of isolation. When returnees are abroad, both life in America, as well as the returnees themselves, shift in different ways, and it can be isolating to realize these changes have occurred. These changes also serve to isolate the returnees from the lives they lived before they left the country. While people are abroad, it is as if they have temporarily stepped out of the American space-time continuum.

Whereas returnees had been a part of the American way of life, once they leave the country, they no longer share the same knowledge

of events as local Americans. One veteran spoke of his interaction with younger students at Mason, saying that he “felt an automatic isolation where no one else had the same experiences” as he did. Had he not served abroad, he probably would not have felt that isolation because he would not have “grown up” and would be at the same age and maturity level as most Mason undergraduates. Returnees must often learn to adapt to these changes and assimilate them in order to function within American society. Until they do, and often even after they do, that feeling of disconnection from the way their lives used to be persists. They are isolated from friends and family, as their experiences are no longer mutually shared.

That isolation, however, is directly related to the positive aspects of travel. In particular, students acquire the ability to think internationally, to function within international space and time. They become globally minded and learn to consider things from a global point of view, not purely from the confines of the national perspective. It could be argued that students become *global citizens* as a result of their time abroad, learning to think beyond the norms and perspectives of the United States. As one student put it:

It’s hard growing up and being told by your teachers and your parents and everybody that this is the best country in the entire world and . . . we’re the most free and everything. . . . Going to Europe, I realized we’re not. There are so many improvements we could make, and I think that definitely it made me turn a real critical eye. Germany really turned me on to universal health care. . . .

In this way, many students leave the country thinking one way about these issues and return with an entirely different perspective.

In spending time abroad and having new experiences, returnees are often faced with the emergence of *multiple self-identities* upon their return to the States. They find a reinterpretation and/or addition to their self-identification, one that they attained or became aware of while overseas. However, there is a problem with this. The way that American culture seems to view identity is that each individual has only one identity. This often leads to the suppression of new knowledge and identities by returnees. One interviewee noted that when she came back to the States, “people seemed only to have one identity that they used when defining themselves and I had so many. So I really

only wanted to be with people who had multiple identities and weren't afraid to show it."

This preliminary round of interviews with returnees suggests there are difficulties in *incorporating the internationally minded*. Not only do Americans have a hard time accepting multiple identities, but they also have a hard time acknowledging the value of lessons learned abroad by others. A common thread among many of the interviewees was that they wanted to share the knowledge they had acquired abroad. But they were often deprived of that opportunity. Friends and family may lack interest in their experiences. As such, many returnee students end up suppressing their new found knowledge in order to resume their lives as before, despite the fact that they have changed. Unfortunately, American society does not always seem to have the willingness or capacity to make room for the international knowledge that returnees have to share.

Several of the students we interviewed were aware of university support groups for students of various identities. Yet most also said these organizations failed to meet their expectations; they were not interested in joining organizations like Global Nomads or the Student Veterans Association. Ethnicity-based organizations like Greek Club or the Circle for Japanese Interests, left returnees feeling just as out of place. This suggests that although returnees may seek out buffer groups already provided at Mason, these groups fall short of their needs.

Still, many of the people who participated in this study expressed a desire for a place where returnee students can talk to each other, network, and process their experiences. How can we transition groups and organizations that are already in place into becoming effective buffers for student returnees? What are other ways in which we can acknowledge the internationally minded? The answers to these questions go hand-in-hand with learning how to open our ears to the potentially transformative information that returnees have to share and learning how to help returnees transition their new perspectives into a cohesive sense of self within the American way of life.

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spent ten years of her life growing up in the Japanese school system, and as the daughter of two university scholars, she is constantly asking questions concerning identity and how it comes to be.

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CHAPTER THREE

A DIFFERENT KIND OF MIGRANT

Roberta Angela Hamilton

WHEN ONE OF MY PROFESSORS mentioned to students in his immigration class that he was interested in including veterans as part of a project interviewing people returning to the United States from abroad, I was ecstatic. “Finally,” I thought to myself, “I’ll find a way to express the horrors of war, quoted from combat veterans themselves!” But I was in for a surprise. What I learned in the next few months from interviewing veterans is that their experiences overseas, and the ideas fostered while living abroad, are as diverse as the George Mason student body. Nevertheless, though this project on returnees is still in its initial stages, some pivotal insights are emerging about the experience of veterans as they return home to their country, their families, and civilian lives. In this paper, I attempt to describe what this phenomenon of return is like for these veterans, relying especially on the words of four interviewees as they discussed their reintegration into civilian society after their return.

Each returnee’s story is different. Some have faced trauma abroad or in their return, while others recount simply feeling happy to be back at home. To some degree, their experience reflects that of other kinds of migrants when they decide to return home. Anthropologist Nancy Foner, for example, describes some of the various returnee experiences in her book *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York’s Two Great Waves of Immigration* (2002). She describes how anti-Semitic resentment affected the experiences of Jewish migrants returning to Europe after the Second World War. Foner also writes about how the Italian migrant’s return experience was usually less traumatic, although return could potentially be seen as a sign of the migrant’s failure in America. Thus, migration research suggests that those who return face many social and political challenges, even though it might seem that returning home would be a less jarring process than moving away from home.

Returning home, even after relatively short periods of time away, is thus potentially difficult. One explanation for a difficult return involves the migrant's expectations of what the return will be like. An article published by Mount Holyoke College's study abroad program, for example, emphasizes the phenomenon of "reverse culture shock" that occurs in varying degrees depending on the situation, when returnees try to "establish [themselves] in [their] own culture after a prolonged absence." The article suggests that a returnee should "be aware of the potential psychological and social problems that must be faced on reentering the home culture. Such problems may involve self- or cultural-identity, interpersonal relationships, role changes, professional expectations, and expectations of society-at-large."

The veteran returnees who were interviewed exhibited several of these side effects of reverse culture shock, albeit to varying degrees. One major way veterans are similar is that, as the Mount Holyoke study-abroad experience suggests, negative feelings that result from reverse culture shock can be eased, or sometimes avoided altogether, by having realistic expectations before coming back home.

Two of the veteran interviewees did have such realistic expectations, and therefore ran into few problems upon reacquainting themselves with their home culture. Leo, for instance, went abroad for only two weeks. His time abroad was short lived, and he maintained realistic expectations about what life would be like once he returned. When asked if his actual return experience matched those expectations, Leo responded, "Yeah, it's about what I expected . . . if it was anything more than [two weeks] I'd be expecting a transition. . . ." Leo explained that there was pressure on his team during and before the trip but, by maintaining realistic expectations, the members of his team did not experience any adverse effects upon their return. Though one might expect the team to have felt exhaustion after returning from a stressful environment, Leo explains that there was just a determination to get back to the usual order of things.

Leo was not the only veteran who experienced an easy transition home after his time abroad. Sean also described having similar sentiments after a longer period abroad. Though he admitted to being surprised by an unexpected bout with homesickness, Sean stated that he thought that after being abroad for a year, "[life] would just go back to normal. I mean I'd visit my family and then go to my next assignment, continue doing my job. That was pretty much it. I didn't think there

would be any particular readjustment period.” For Sean and Leo, the transition back home was, according to them, “no big deal.”

Another possible reason that veteran returnees may experience little reverse culture shock is lack of combat experience. Neither Leo nor Sean, for example, faced combat during their time abroad. In an interview with an Iraqi war veteran, however, significant symptoms of reverse culture shock were discussed. This veteran, Kevin, noted feelings of dissonance like those of which the Mount Holyoke article warns. He explained that close friends and family members noticed a change in him after his return: “Nothing really gets me startled. When things happen they expect me to think that it’s . . . a big deal and I should be freaking out and I should be really worried about it but I’m actually . . . like, ‘no, that’s not a big deal’ you know?” Such a change in communication is probably normal for all kinds of returnees, and the ability of veterans to recognize such change is a positive step towards easing their readjustment.

Kevin commented further on the complexities of communicating with his loved ones after his return: “I guess they just think I have no emotions. . . . But I think that’s . . . just how I come off as . . . after I’ve come back. . . . Cuz when you’re overseas . . . you need to have a hard exterior, you know? You can’t let the enemy perceive that you’re weak. . . .” As this excerpt from his interview portrays, even though Kevin had been back for some time, he still lived and expressed himself at home the way he would if he were living in an area surrounded by enemy insurgents.

Most of the veterans interviewed discussed the changes they noticed in themselves after their return. One veteran, however, was especially vivid in describing the reasons why his ideas changed. Michael had been in Iraq for seventeen months and recounted some stories of good will between the military and Iraqi civilians. Yet because of the nature of the current Iraq war, Michael learned that he couldn’t trust anybody outside his unit:

Over time, you start changing. . . . Because A, the first time anybody tries to take your life, and you don’t think, you just react. And B, things build up. And pretty soon, the person you were before isn’t the person you are now. How you think before isn’t how you think now. You couldn’t understand why these people hated you so much when all you’re trying to do is help them. You just couldn’t understand. But you started to

hate them. You really truly started to hate these people, because they were trying to take your life and maybe it's just the easiest way for our psyche to wrap it up in one nice ball so we can understand it.

The nature of this return experience can take time to truly manifest itself. Kevin explained that his initial response to being back home was elation, but over time he realized that he had yet to fully transition: "I thought I was normal after like three months, like back to my old self. But I didn't realize until like a year, a year and a half later, that I was finally starting to fully readjust." Some of the ways that Kevin had yet to readjust included getting used to not having to jump at the sound of loud noises (which reminded him of when his location had been mortared) and understanding that unlike in the Marines, your family will not do what you need or want them to do at the time you need it: "When you want to get something done it should get done right away. But that's how we were. . . . Overseas, your life depended on it. But when you come back here you need to kind of tone down, you know, and you kind of understand how people are."

Kevin's story also demonstrates the importance of having a support network around the returnee during his transition home. Many veterans rely on the support provided by their combat unit. In these two excerpts, Leo and Kevin explain that the members in their teams provided support both overseas and in transitioning back home:

You [the members of the team] were so close when you were together . . . it's almost like that time spent . . . because it was so intense and close, like say if you would average that or compare that to a normal civilian life, it would be almost like it was twelve years long [instead of four] because of how close it was. . . . That was my team, you know? That was who I was with all the time. I'll always look back at that experience with fondness. . . . I would want [my kids] to feel that close cohesion of being part of a team like that and being able to rely on each other and not having to even think about it.

[I]t was like a five member team. And yea typically you get close with most of your peers, cuz you rely on them for every day, you know, just to survive. You rely on them to watch your back because you can't always be vigilant, you know? So you gotta rely on your friends.

When you first come back, you rely mostly on the people who you went overseas with. You kind of rely more on them because you've been with them.

Dangers exist for a veteran who returns and finds himself without a support network available to ease the transition and avoid the problems associated with reverse culture shock. As Kevin explains, "a lot of problems that they have with people who come back is they're used to the adrenaline rush, so they're always kind of looking for it, especially like, I think within a year after you come back. A lot of military guys buy motorcycles and stuff and then they'll go crazy. A lot of marines especially die like that, like in motorcycle accidents and stuff."

Kevin was not alone in admitting that veteran returnees need a support network. Leo, though not himself a combat veteran, expressed his views on the necessity of a community to support integration among returning veterans: "I know people that have served in the ongoing wars that we have right now [in Iraq and Afghanistan] and that are students right now and I know it's harder for them to transition back and they tend to stick around other military people because they don't believe that regular 18 to 22-year-old civilian students can really understand where they come from or understand their mindset." Another returning veteran actually lives with a friend from his military service. He finds he understands that person much better than his closest friend from before military service.

In his book *Achilles in Vietnam* (1995), psychiatrist Jonathon Shay writes about the problems associated with lack of support for Vietnam veteran returnees suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. The veterans Shay writes about had fought in Vietnam almost forty years ago, but the problems those veterans encountered on their return are still often with them years later. One issue that is proving to be challenging to the readjustment of returning veterans today is this same lack of support from the military, civilian institutions, and the general public. Currently, for example, there are few (if any) military or government programs in place for returning veterans that successfully mimic the support that veterans experience among their comrades during their time overseas. Without such support, the problems associated with reverse culture shock can become almost unbearable, even forcing some veteran returnees to premature deaths.

Along with lack of military support, veteran returnees also experience a lack of support from the general public and in institutions such as universities. Leo explained:

There is a Student Veterans Association . . . but . . . if you look at [general support for] the Greek system at Mason, and then you look at [general support] for Student Veterans . . . I mean, what is more important? . . . The Greek system obviously gets . . . much more focus and much more attention than those [who] served their country and guaranteed peace and prosperity for their fellow citizens that didn't serve. And [the veterans'] needs and specific issues don't get addressed. I think that . . . we have a lot more to go to get to where we need to be in order to assist them in that regard because I mean . . . they put their lives on the line for the rest of us.

Kevin echoed Leo's sentiment on the lack of recognition he and his comrades currently receive:

A lot of Americans don't really think about Iraq every day. But once you've been there, once you've walked down the streets of Fallujah, once you've . . . been on patrols, it becomes really personal to you. . . . You're kind of disappointed when you come back, and then you see that people aren't really aware of the war in Iraq. . . . A lot of [veterans] feel ignored after they do their time overseas. When they come back it's kind of like, it just feels like it's not that big of a deal, life just goes on here as normal, but that's how it's supposed to be. But once you've been through such a stressful situation, you kind of feel like you should get more recognition.

Recognition is extremely important in any migrant's return home. In her book, *Yucatecans in Dallas, Texas* (2007), for example, anthropologist Rachel Adler writes that many migrants gain prestige upon returning home. The fact that they were able to survive the journey and succeed across the border makes their family members and loved ones proud. This issue of recognition is especially important for returning American veterans. Several veterans mentioned the happiness their families felt in their respective returns. After talking about a private celebration he had with his team during his trip to the States, Kevin described what awaited him back home: "Our families [were] waiting for us. We had kind of like a little, not a parade, but like flags every-

where, people were cheering, stuff like that.” Such recognition is an important part of a veteran’s return.

Although the veterans’ families greeted them with happiness and recognized the veterans as people of honor, the general public does not seem to share this attitude. This lack of recognition by American civilians is not new. Many Vietnam veterans felt they were greeted with much less respect than what they deserved upon their return to America because of the unpopularity of the war and the political pressures that affected the United States’ role in Vietnam. “I guess most [veterans] expect . . . they don’t act like you owe them anything, but you feel like you kind of did, just cuz you sacrificed so much and you worked so hard, you kind of feel like people . . . should recognize you,” explains Kevin.

The memories of overseas stay with veterans throughout their lives, with or without recognition from their fellow Americans. Leo explained:

People have seen some really bad things, and those are things that are gonna stay with them the rest of their lives. You look at, especially on . . . Veteran’s Day . . . if you watch TV, there’ll be like a Veteran’s Day marathon and they’ll show footage of World War II veterans and these guys, obviously World War II was a pretty bloody war and a lot of people lost their lives. . . . And when they talk about their experiences they’re still breaking down in tears and they can’t even, you know . . . like if you were interviewing them they would break down in tears. They would be crying; it’s still a traumatic experience to them.

Leo concluded by comparing the trauma experienced by veterans of World War II to veterans of today’s wars: “So if [the older veterans] can feel that way after fifty-plus years, what do you think these people that are returning from Afghanistan and Iraq are feeling? You know, like a year ago or two years ago . . . it must still be pretty fresh.”

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CHAPTER FOUR

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF NONTRADITIONAL WOMEN STUDENTS

Hattie Barker

THIRTY YEARS HAD PASSED before I returned to school at the suggestion of my youngest, college-graduated daughter. This time, this former art student was taking education and sociology classes. My fifth semester at George Mason found me in an ethnography class, a recommendation from an inspiring sociology professor. The assignment, to conduct an ethnographic study, was intriguing. What follows is a shortened version of my ethnographic study of nontraditional students.

An ethnographic study, the course syllabus explained, “tells a focused, vivid, analytical and ethically sound story about the culture.” Definitions of “culture” were discussed in class. My notes read, “Traditions of a people. Practices, ways/things that shape a people: food, language, dress, habits, behaviors, lifestyles, beliefs, religious or not (culture of silence).” We were told and frequently reminded that the process was “systematic.” Two of the criteria, I feared, could be problematic: focused and systematic. Putting my concerns on hold, I thought of my status as an older student and when the professor mentioned auto-ethnography, I considered this possibility. However, when she suggested studying other returning older students as well, I knew I had found my research topic. The suggestion that we were a culture seemed intriguing. The idea that I, an adult student, was part of a larger whole had not occurred to me. Not only was I part of a group that may represent a culture, this company even had a name.

Those of us whose years are beyond the conventional age for being an undergraduate are called “nontraditional students.” We return to school to obtain our bachelor’s after several years of living a life without a degree. For many of us, a degree is a unit of measurement that has played a considerable part in determining what we have or have not done in the intervening years. In this study I focused on female nontraditional students and attempted to discover the circumstances

under which they left school the first time, as well as why they have returned and what they have done in the intervening years. I made inquiries about their goals and expectations and the impact of this experience on their lives. In addition, I included questions about their daily experiences on campus.

To my surprise and delight several women responded to the invitation I put on the university listserv, and in a short time I had seven women willing to participate in the study. I made arrangements to meet each woman on campus at a time that was convenient to them. Prior to meeting each woman, I knew only her name and age. One participant was in her mid-thirties, two were in their forties, three in their fifties, and one in her sixties. All but the youngest woman were in long-term marriages. Two of the women had children not yet in high school; the other women had children nearing the end of high school or in college. The children of one participant were college-graduated adults with children of their own. Neither race nor ethnicity was discussed in our email introductions, and it is a limitation of the study that all of the women were white. The meetings generally lasted forty-five minutes to an hour, and two of the participants and I met for a second time.

Literature Review

The research on the nontraditional student is surprisingly vast. Beyond the numbers contending that adult students over the age of twenty-five are the fastest growing student population in the country (Brazziel, 1989, p. 116), are the compelling reasons why this trend must continue. Research has looked at the barriers between adults and postsecondary education and what can be done to remove those. In 2008, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) published the findings of their state-by-state survey on adult learning. Not only did they look at the numbers and agree that “adults are making up an ever larger share of the total enrollment in postsecondary institutions” – in 2004, adults constituted “approximately 43 percent of total enrollment at community colleges” – they also linked education to the ultimate health and well-being of the nation (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2008).

Socioeconomic status is a strong indicator of cultural capital. A study in the *Journal of Higher Education* found that “low-socioeconomic-status students are over-represented” in the group of those who postpone entering college directly after high school (Rowan-Kenyon,

2007, p. 193). Studies also found family structure and history to be relevant to college education. A study by Kathleen Nybrotten (2003) asserted that family structure influences not only who attends college, but the difficulty of fields of study and whether students attend part-time, or complete a program to earn a degree.

Benshoff and Lewis (1992) described reasons why adult students return, as well as thoughts on why they dropped out in the first place. Financial difficulty, lack of motivation, and lack of focus and maturity are listed as reasons adult students first leave college. As for returning, they refer to Aslanian and Brickell's 1980 theory, "triggers and transitions," that links the adult's reason for return to developmental issues and crises faced during midlife (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992). Things like divorce or death of a spouse could prompt the need to support oneself and family.

Nontraditional adult students leave school at twice the rate as their younger counterparts (Miller Brown, 2002, p.70) therefore, colleges and universities need to study what it is they can do to retain these adult students.

In the state-by-state summary, Baum and Ma (2007) emphasized that "in 2005, 21.4 percent of families with no high school diploma were living below the poverty line, compared to 7.1 percent of those with high school diplomas and 1.8 percent of those with bachelor's degrees." According to a policy analyst at the Education Trust, "the United States is the only country in the world in which today's young people are less likely than their parents to have completed high school" (Germeraad, 2008).

Themes in the Interviews

Lack of Money

Common threads wove in and out of the participants' narratives, some of which were reflected in the research. Financing college tuition was the primary obstacle for four of the women. Three of them in particular, had a real desire to go to school. Two of the women thought joining the military would give them that opportunity. Most of the women spoke about college, as something that they knew was a valuable commodity. Catherine explained it this way: "I always knew that people went to college for a reason . . . my reason for not going to college was because I needed to get a job." Later on she added matter-of-

factly, “You grow up in a certain socioeconomic situation and that’s just the way it is.” Megan reflected on her choice to join the military saying, “Really, that [going to college] was reserved for people who had money and that was why I joined the Marine Corps, because that was the way I could earn the money to go to school, because my parents didn’t have the money to send me.” Cory recalled that, “When I talked about going to college, my dad just said, ‘How you gonna pay for that? I’m not paying for it.’” The financial barrier only grew for her as time went on. “I had my first child at twenty-one and my second child at twenty-three, so it just didn’t seem like the right time . . . because we needed my income.”

Lack of Mentors

Something that I would consider part of “cultural capital” was a factor for at least four of the women: that there was no one they trusted who gave them words of encouragement. Kate recounted:

I could have gone to college because when I grew up in England it was all paid for, assuming that you qualified; it was part of the welfare state. And so I could have if I’d been motivated or if somebody said, “You know, you really could do well if you stayed in school and you studied something you enjoyed . . . if you don’t, this is what’s gonna happen but if you do, this is more likely to happen.” Nobody ever said that to me and I think that’s really the piece that was missing.

Catherine’s experience was quite similar, “Nobody ever said to me, ‘Well, you know Catherine, you’re smart, you could go to college.’” Cory recalled soberly, “Unfortunately, I did not have a good mentor at the time, so I left school and in turn got married and followed my husband’s career in the military.” Marianne said that her parents were “from the Depression” and college was not a priority, and thus not talked about.

In Laurie and Joni’s case, each found a job that they loved – something they thought would just be a sidetrack before school, but which turned into longer hauls than they had expected. Interestingly, Laurie and Joni, whose families could afford tuition, were the only ones with the cultural capital of college-educated parents.

Time and Place

Four of the seven women said that for their time and place, it was not unusual for women, and even young men, not to go to college. For instance, in Megan's words, "It was very common that people left school and went to go help on the farm or . . . do mechanics or something rather than go off to college." Catherine remembered her father's sentiments on the matter, "There was no sense, one, in a girl getting an education, what a waste of time, and two, even if she got the education what good would it do [her father], because another man would just get the benefit of his money."

In the Workplace

All but one of the women who worked outside of the home thought they had been passed over in promotions or were paid less than their coworkers with college degrees, in spite of being as knowledgeable as their counterparts. Laurie, who is particularly talented in her field, did very well and was promoted yearly. In spite of her success, when I asked her if she had ever felt that she was missing something, she said, "Yes" emphatically. "All the people around me had Ph.D.'s." She told me definitively that they would have had to pay her more had she had a degree. Cory, who "always felt held back by not having a degree," replied that sometimes a new person is hired to do a job of which she is perfectly capable, but she is not given the opportunity because she isn't "qualified." Often the new person does not have the knowledge that she has and will pass the workload onto her. Megan said plainly, "I felt I had no authority. I had no degree to back me up." Catherine conveyed her feelings on career and education in the following way: "I've always felt intimidated. The jobs that I've had – they've been mostly what degreed people would have – and I've always felt intimidated by that. I've often thought, you know, I really had to fight for these things, and if I'd just had the damned degree right to begin with, it would have been a moot point." Marianne felt that she had been overlooked for promotions. She still remembers when someone who had multiple Master's degrees was hired, but did not understand the job. Only Joni, who is a self-employed artist, did not feel hindered in this way.

Embarrassment

As previously mentioned, all the women married and had children. Seven out of eight continued to work outside of the home, three earned Associate's degrees, and two had finished nursing programs. None of them seemed to consider these noteworthy achievements. Catherine referred to her two-year degree as a "piddley Associate degree." In spite of what these women have accomplished, most had a sense that something was missing and therefore some felt embarrassed and somewhat second-rate to their peers and/or co-workers. Joni said, when asked about college, she always "dances around the question." Cory told me that the friends she made after she was divorced all had Bachelor's degrees and many had their Master's. "I was embarrassed," she said, "to tell people I hadn't finished school." This is even after she completed a nursing program, military training, and an Associate's degree.

Megan recalls the feeling she had. "It was just understood that, of course, everyone went to college . . . I always felt embarrassed that I never could say that I had my Master's." Kate said that for her, it was a feeling of being different: "I actually lied on my resume and said I had been to college in England and had a degree in English. I was young. Isn't that awful? Everyone was a similar age and everyone talked incessantly about college. That was the beginning of when I really felt left out about this experience."

Catherine remembered that during the days when she taught nursing, "there were a lot of times when I had to be at teacher meetings when I wasn't quite sure . . . I thought, maybe my terminology wasn't right or my reasoning wasn't quite up to par. . . ."

Conclusion

During this study, it became more evident to me that one's cultural capital, including socioeconomic status and level of family education, are interrelated and deeply affect society from one generation to the next. Research suggests that there will be an increasing number of older undergraduates, thus colleges and universities should do all they can to attract and retain these students. George Mason developed the Bachelor of Individualized Studies, a program intended for the non-traditional student, with this in mind. A study of this program's students and former students would be useful to measure its strengths and weaknesses. Statistics appear impersonal, but an ethnographic study

can show more acutely how they relate and are representative of individual triumphs and tribulations and how change can be effected.

Hattie Barker returned to school in 2005 after a thirty-year hiatus. Her concentration is Society's Influences on Education.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DIVERSITY AT A DISTANCE

Joanna Bosik

IT IS COMMON FOR STUDENTS to answer questions about this diverse campus in a positive way. For instance, when I asked students if George Mason is a safe place for those who wish to participate in friendships or relationships with people of other races or ethnicities, they usually responded with a strong affirmative. When asked their opinion about diversity on the George Mason campus, responses included statements like these: “We’re a very diverse school. I like that. I don’t think most people have a problem with that,” or “I think GMU is very diverse. Coming from a high school with a very diverse background I can appreciate the variety of cultural influences here.”

However, when I asked questions such as “Do most of your friends come from the same cultural background as you?”, the responses indicated that students were not engaging with people from other races and ethnicities as much as it may seem. For example, students have said, “I don’t hang with all people of the same ethnicity, but a lot of my friends are [the same ethnicity as me],” or “most of my friends do come from the same cultural background.” Perhaps these responses mean that students appreciate the diversity on campus, but only at a distance.

Drawn from group and individual interviews, this study examined the disconnect between how students talk about diversity on campus and the lack of diversity that seems to exist within their social circles and social experiences. A study of diversity can help understand the quality of experience that we, as a university, are attempting to provide for our students. As a young institution, extensive research on our diversity has not yet been done. It should be a responsibility of the university to have a thorough understanding of what diversity means to students, how they are accessing diversity on campus, and whether the university can facilitate diversity’s academic and social benefits. Without fully understanding what it means to the student body, should

we continue to market diversity as a selling feature to prospective students?

Between 2007 and 2009, I conducted four field observations, three focus group discussions, and eighteen interviews with a diverse group of people. Using the terms that each used to describe themselves, I interviewed twelve “white or Caucasian” students, two “black-and-white” students, one “interracial black and Asian” student, one “black and Middle Eastern” student, one “white and Middle Eastern” student, one “white and East Asian” student, one “Middle Eastern and West Asian” student, one “East Asian” student, one “Persian” student, one “African” student, three “Hispanic” students, two “African American” students, and one “black African-American” student. Four of the 28 participants self-identified as male; 24 self-identified as female. For purposes of confidentiality, all participants are identified by pseudonyms.

Self-image and racial self-concept became apparent when participants were asked to place themselves on a social mapping of campus. I asked about stereotypes, dating, and racial maps on campus, wanting to know where participants placed themselves. As students described where they fit-in socially, it became possible to see the campus racial and ethnic divides.

Looking first at descriptions of self-image and body, students’ remarks were very gender-specific. For instance, when asked to explain the significance of someone staring at them for a long period of time, every female responded along the lines of “you’re doing something to annoy them,” or “you have something on your face or your clothes.” The males answered very differently, saying “they are most likely interested in me,” or “they are attracted to me.” When asked what made them attractive, all the females referred to their personality or intelligence; all the males cited physical attributes.

No matter their race or ethnicity, however, female participants expressed discomfort talking about their physical features. They seemed unable to say nice things about their appearance, displaying that discomfort physically by becoming restless and looking around. They also adjusted their clothing and hair and took long pauses before answering questions. Two of the female students even volunteered negative comments about their looks. None spoke well of their bodies or physical features.

Self-perception for the black women I interviewed was particularly complicated. For example, Shoshanna described negotiating between loyalty to her black culture and relevance to white culture. “Because I am darker, I made it a point to be more conservative when it comes to certain things, because I felt like I had to – so I could prove a point. So I could say, I’m a black female and capable of portraying myself in a meaningful way to whites.” Shoshanna also mentioned her internal struggle with white conformity, how she had altered her physical appearance to appeal to the white men she has dated.

I shaved parts of me I didn’t agree with and it felt really compromising. . . . I also restricted my eating for a little bit. I had naturally dropped a lot of weight at one point and I purposely kept it off by not eating because I thought the guy I was seeing should be dating a tiny girl, not a curvy girl.

Students-of-color experienced the conflict of negotiating race and self-identity. For example, Ronald, a self-identified black-and-Asian male, separated himself from other Asian American students. He eagerly mentioned that he was black and that he fit with the stereotypes about black men – at one point commenting that “I like girls with nice butts; I am half black.” When asked if he was a member of the Bboys, a predominantly Asian American dance group, Ronald replied, “Hell no, I’m black – the Bboys are Asian.” This is consistent with assertions that black men have “masculine capital” in America that others lack. When participants were asked about noticeable features in people of others races, black men were described as “manly” and “in shape,” Asian men as “small,” and white men as “popular” and “athletic.”

While many participants focused on the intelligence of Asian males, Asian females were described as having the ideal body type – petite. It seemed that Asian American females had an easier time than Asian American men in being accepted by those of other races and ethnicities.

While students recognized the university’s diverse student population, they often concluded that diversity has not produced a blending of cultures. Shoshanna offered her criticism of the “clear divides” on campus:

Everyone is separate, by class, race, or lifestyle. Clear divides. On the campus people are forced to co-exist, but that doesn’t

mean they acknowledge one another. I haven't found a cohesive existence yet. People don't intermingle really, I mean we don't really coexist in a way that we can talk about how people are really embracing their race or ethnicity.

During field observations, I watched groups of students walking on campus and recorded each group of two-or-more people, noting their clothing style, race or ethnicity, and what they were doing as they walked by. Out of 62 groups of students, 50 groups appeared to be composed of people of the same ethnic and racial composition. Students sitting in the Johnson Center displayed a similar pattern. Saj says that people of the same culture usually gather in their own little "cliques" around the school; below Khai takes it a bit further, saying that the groups are so segregated it is intimidating.

You can't talk to the Korean people because it seems like the Korean people only want to talk to people that are like them. You can't talk to the Persians because, or whatever, you're not Persian. So it's kinda like, it's kinda hard, uh, you know, like, I know I am being very stereotypical but I have met people in each of those groups who are or who will accept you, but it's like, if you walk through the Johnson Center, you see it. It's . . . North America here, you have Mexico here, you know. It's like, it's like a map.

Returning to the question that interested me when I began this research – whether George Mason is a safe place for those who wish to participate in friendships or relationships with people of other races or ethnic groups – with responses like, "I will always feel that the campus is safe for those who want to form [such] relationships" and "diversity is one of the things that attracted me to this school," the university has already cleared a large hurdle. Students from all over the world feel comfortable being on this campus and representing their culture on this campus. Still, we aren't really reaping the benefits of a diverse population when students are only socially interacting with others of the same race and ethnicity.

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CHAPTER SIX

BUT YOU DON'T LOOK SICK

Amber Logan

FOR MY PROJECT, I decided to study people who had invisible disabilities. They don't look sick, but in reality they struggle with chronic and/or terminal conditions. I wanted to know how they lived with such illnesses on Mason's campus, about their struggles, what challenged them, and how they coped with the obstacle of having a painful and/or challenging condition of which most people are unaware.

I started this project by asking the Office of Disability Services to send a letter to the students registered there explaining the research and asking if any would like to be interviewed. I received twelve responses. I first noticed they were all girls. Whether women are more open to talking about their disease or are more prone to certain diseases remains unclear. It could be that autoimmune diseases, which tend to be invisible, are more common among women. Either way, the gendered disparity in response to the recruitment letter is itself a research question.

I explained in my letter that I too live with a chronic illness. I was looking for others with diseases such as autoimmune disorder, sickle cell anemia, cancer, diabetes, or even psychological conditions such as bipolar disorder. My letter stated clearly that anyone who participated in my study would remain anonymous; should they become uncomfortable during the interviewing process or decide not to participate, they could withdraw. For the sake of confidentiality, throughout this paper I provide aliases rather than real names. During the fall semester I interviewed six people; because I could not tell all their stories, I've decided to select a few.

The first person I interviewed was a thirty-one year old woman coming back to school. She had earned a Bachelor's degree in math and was continuing her studies after having held many jobs in the science field. Unfortunately, Dina is no longer at the university, because she was not able to take more classes. Dina has fibromyalgia.

Fibromyalgia is a condition where your body literally aches from head to toe. Someone who barely touches you can create a wave of pain in your body so intense it takes minutes or longer to go away, and you may have to sit down. Those suffering from fibromyalgia are unable to get even a hug from someone when they're having a bad day, unless the hug is gentle enough. When fibromyalgia patients have "flare ups" it is even worse, and they wish to not be touched by anyone or anything. The extreme pain and fatigue caused by fibromyalgia have no real treatment. It is a mysterious disease, the treatments for which may work on one patient but not the next. It is associated with something called a "fibro fog," causing memory problems – it's like a haze in front of your eyes that makes everything unclear. Sometimes it is uncertain to the sufferer of fibromyalgia if he or she is awake or dreaming. You can forget an appointment with your doctor, or be unsure of the route you use to get home and how long that takes. To other people you often look "out of it."

During our interview, I found out that Dina managed this disease by taking school slowly and working less-demanding jobs. She avoided many activities out of fear they might cause her pain, or because others looked at her funny when she couldn't do something, like run to chase a soccer ball. When she was a student at Mason, she would sometimes drive as far as the school's parking lot, only to turn around and go home because it would take too much energy for her to walk from the parking lot to the class. She tried to make life easier for herself by not taking two classes in a row. This is but a small example of how much energy can be sucked out of chronically ill people. Dina mentioned to me that many people don't understand her exhaustion, so she's often afraid of looking like a slacker in class or like someone who doesn't want to be there.

Marie was another girl I interviewed with fibromyalgia. Now in her twenties and soon to graduate with a double major, she has been on the Dean's list each semester, is in honor societies, has run an accounting organization, and never admits to the pain she suffers. She shared with me her ways of coping. She takes some medication, but refuses to allow anyone to ask her how she's feeling, not even her parents. She does not speak of her illness. Her illness is almost not a part of her. It is something she deals with, but she regards it as an "old people's disease," and she doesn't want to be viewed as old and sick, so she pushes through it. Many people hide diseases because they are

ashamed, or afraid of people not viewing them as normal or, worst of all, being called a fraud because “you don’t look sick.” Many people fail to realize all the things that people who have a certain diseases may have to give up like running or being in the cold for too long (the cold is very hard on people with joint problems).

Also in her early twenties and finishing up college, Shannon hopes to go to law school. She is happy in her relationship with her fiancé and eager to move in with him. She has systemic scleroderma which affects internal organs, skin, and joints. She has arthritis and her skin hardens. Her organs could also harden to the point where they failed. Luckily, she was going through treatment and doing well. Even with treatment, her body still produced extra calcium. As she told me this, she showed me her fingers. You could see the white deposits on her knuckles. She showed me how she could no longer fully straighten her arms and hands and has lost flexibility. She also had poor circulation, so that the cold was difficult for her. When we were talking, she put on gloves, saying they helped to keep her joints warm. Once she told me about her disease, I asked how she dealt with it and how she manages college.

Shannon explained that she got accommodations when necessary. For instance, she cannot write when it is cold because her hands become numb. She is registered with the Office of Disability Services and got extensions on papers. If she became too stressed, just like anyone with a chronic illness, she got sicker and risked a flare-up. As far as getting to class and surviving through it, she spaced classes out so that she didn’t have to rush. She could become out of breath from walking too fast or climbing a flight of stairs instead of taking the elevator. She drove to school and had family who helped take care of her at home. At times, she still missed class or arrived late. Fortunately, teachers usually understood; on the other hand, the university police and other classmates sometimes didn’t. For example, Shannon told me about a time when she parked in the disability lot using her Maryland handicapped sign. Because she appears young and healthy, the Mason police – assuming that she had taken someone else’s handicapped sign – stopped her and asked why she was parking there. Seeing no name on her pass, they asked if it were truly hers. (It was; Maryland does not put names on handicap passes.)

The last person I’d like to mention is myself. I have been diagnosed with an undifferentiated mixed connective tissue disease. I

also have fibromyalgia, asthma, gastroparesis and my pancreas does not produce the enzymes needed to be able to absorb nutrients from food. My joints constantly ache and become very stiff. Gastroparesis means basically that my stomach doesn't contract without medication. (Sort of like a bogged down blender, without medication food just sits there.) Once food gets past my stomach, the vitamins and nutrients in it will not be absorbed until I take my enzymes. So I usually take six to eight pills just to eat a small meal. Because of this, I don't like to eat with people who don't know me or be around people who are eating. Strangers often accuse me of being anorexic or a picky eater. This disease has led to many nutrition problems and I am considered malnourished even though I fight to maintain a "normal" weight. I can relate to each of my interviewees. The cold is painful; sometimes I get the fibro-fog and it can be hard to concentrate; I need a lot of sleep; I need a parking spot close to the school; and I can't take too many classes because getting to school and participating in the class wipes my energy to the point where I need a nap. Stairs are not only painful from the joint issues, but I have to stop just to breathe. I get looks from people who think I'm perfectly healthy when I walk to class in sweats from a parking spot reserved for disabled people that some think I don't deserve.

As for surviving school, I have a set of things I have learned to do to make it easier. I sit near the door just in case my stomach gets upset so that I can run to the bathroom. If the room is hot, sometimes I have to step outside to cool off; otherwise I get nauseous and throw up. Yet, if the room is cold, my joints ache. I also take my classes later in the day because mornings are normally hardest. In the mornings, I have to stretch my joints out because they are stiff, and I often wake up nauseous and need to lie back down for a few hours. Since my disease has worsened, I tell my teachers at the beginning of the semester that I am sick and offer whatever documentation they would like. Most look rather shocked and confused. They don't understand what I mean when I say that I'm *really* sick. I offer to e-mail them.

One teacher made me think, though. I told her I was very ill and could e-mail her about what was wrong, but that this illness is chronic and causes me to occasionally miss class or need extensions on work. She then asked me, "Do they think you should still be going to school?" It was my turn to look shocked. All of my doctors encourage "normalcy." They like to hear that I go to school or that I participate in

activities. I automatically answered the teacher with a “yes,” but later I thought about the things that constantly fill your mind when you are really sick. How sick am I? Will I ever get any better or be more “normal”? How much of a burden am I to my family, or to my teachers who accept late papers and put up with me not being “normal”?

Overall, it seems that for those with chronic conditions, the university is only a place for schooling and not one for friends or activities. In fact, all but one person I interviewed lived with family or close friends and not on campus. It’s like we don’t really fit at the university. There is no safe place for us; we have no group.

If society truly understood diseases to the extent that there were no more looks of disgust at someone who is parked in a handicapped space but not limping, or so that you could tell someone how sick you were without them being oblivious or asking if you are contagious, or so that those with illnesses didn’t have to limit their activities and lives so they could feel accepted, would I finally be able to stop asking myself all these questions and be accepted for who I am? It is lonely living with an invisible condition. Some people find solace in internet chat rooms, while others ignore the pain and pretend to be “normal.” Still others simply try to survive day-to-day, in the hope that there will be if not a cure, at least something that will make them feel more able to join the rest of the world.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

HISPANIC STUDENTS AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY: THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LIFE

Sarah Sierralta

A NUMBER OF STUDIES have focused on the barriers Hispanic students face in attempting to acquire a college education. Although I do not ignore those factors, here I focus on ways that students draw on the legacy of historical disadvantage as motivation to excel for the sake of their families, their communities, and themselves. I am more interested in how students respond to family and community expectations, than how they struggle to “fit in” with the dominant population. My study focuses on the effects of the traditional family and community on George Mason’s Hispanic students as they strive to find their identity on campus. As a rapid increase in the number of Hispanic students transforms the school’s demographics, an understanding of the background and experience of these students encourages greater awareness of Hispanic culture and an appreciation for diversity.

Seeking out the family’s effect on Hispanic college students, I came to appreciate the significance of parental influence, even though parents often lacked educational attainment. Most of these parents arrived in the United States seeking economic stability or political refuge when they were twenty or younger. They focused mainly on obtaining jobs to support their families, which often included two or more children.

Many of those jobs did not require that immigrant parents learn English. As a result, they depended on their U.S.-born children to serve as translators or interpreters. Moreover, parents were often required to work extended hours, preventing them from becoming involved with their children’s education. As most did not attend school in the United States, they were unlikely to know about processes related to college applications, scholarships, and financial aid. Nevertheless, despite lacking some kinds of knowledge, these parents often found ways to help get their kids into college. For example, they encouraged their children to seek information regarding the processes of college admis-

sion. Asked about his parent's awareness of the college process, Jose elaborated on their involvement:

Oh no, what they pretty much told me was like "go talk to your counselor" type of thing, "go talk to the principal or somebody so they can help you out." They didn't know the process, you know? So I had to learn things the hard way . . . I didn't know like, about deadlines and things like that.

Similarly, Lenny commented on the advantage of having a father to motivate him to seek information about college:

But like, as far as my parents playing a role . . . my dad said, "Hey I didn't have this opportunity growing up. . . . Like, you need to go, like there is no way I'm not gonna let you go to college, like, you need to go and . . . 'cause I want you to make money and I want you not to have to worry about finding a job, and I want you to be secure." That's what he said a lot of times. "I want you to have a fall back plan, I don't want you to be like me" . . . and like, "you are going to go to college." And he was like, "Now, I don't know what that means . . . or how you're gonna get there but you find out how to get there." Like [another student] was saying, "I'll pay, but you do the work and that's how this is gonna work. And I won't stop paying if you don't stop doing the work," you know what I mean?

Although denied an opportunity to attend college themselves, these parents continued to encourage their children to take advantage of opportunity. Importantly, they also seemed able to fund the college experiences of their children, asking only that the kids "do the work." Rivera and Gallimore (2006) state that "Latino parents who hold semi-skilled or unskilled jobs and who view education as a means to social mobility might not have access to information about the proper steps and requirements . . . yet, they may use teachers and other adults as institutional brokers to promote careers that require higher education" (p.110).

Despite parents' lack of some kinds of knowledge regarding higher education, they still motivated students to obtain their degrees and seek good jobs. Successful Hispanic students used their family's life narrative as encouragement to persist in higher education. Although parents could not provide information, the emotional support they provided

seemed significant. As one interviewee confided, "I think that's something encompassing all my life, and I think of my mom as being like a very strong backbone to me being here . . . so I have a lot to thank her for. . . ." When time allowed, parents checked that their children were on the right track as students. A female interviewee described how her mother worried about her procrastinating tendencies:

My mom would be like, "Are you writing your paper?" [and I would say] "No." . . . [and later, she would ask] "Are you writing your paper?" "No." . . . "You have three days!" And I would be like, "I know." "Are you writing your paper?" "No." "You have two days!" "I know." "Ok, sit down, write your paper, you have a day." I'm like, "I know." "Did you write your paper?" "I'm finishing it! I'm finishing it!" It's like, "You have class in three hours!" [We both laugh.]

Unquestionably, parents perceived school and academics as important. Even if unaware of college processes, or of little help in the matter of homework, parents were a foremost source of support and encouragement – providing the invaluable services of nagging, monitoring, counseling, banking, matchmaking, and screening of potential dates and friends. Having the emotional support of parents was crucial to encouraging the academic success that allowed students to break stereotypes and set a reputation for themselves. Romina shared that ". . . any time I accomplish something I kind of look around and tend to be the only Hispanic girl. . . . So it makes me feel like at least I'm representing a little bit, maybe like breaking stereotypes a bit."

Students believed that academics were the gateway to future opportunities; consequently they tended not to take them for granted. Carter (2005) confirms that "survey evidence suggests that [Latinos] view education as the vehicle for upward mobility" (p. 113). Roger, a participant in one of the focus groups, described the importance of academics:

As far as academics, you know . . . obviously that's something important, you know without my education, where am I gonna go? This is it! You know, I'm gonna have to find a job, start working. And with my education, there's other opportunities, all the doors are open, so I think that's one of the most important things.

Academic success allowed students to serve as examples for future generations, demonstrating that doing well is possible. Beyond discrediting stereotypes, success gave students credibility in their efforts to influence others and reflected the emphasis that Hispanic students place on the communality of education, whereby the educated have the responsibility to share with others. Mari explained the importance of education:

I think that . . . when a person has the opportunity to study, it's not just something individual. I mean, it's not something that merely interests you. Rather, it gives you the opportunity to teach others. The knowledge you have can help other people. You can be a mentor to another person.

Students endeavored to break not only racial stereotypes but those based on gender as well. Gender plays a role in stereotypes about minority students, especially within the household. Gallegos-Castillo (2006) declares that "family also defines what constitutes acceptable gender scripts, the way female and males should behave, and the role they should take on as gendered individuals" (p.45). Latino males are often thought of as being more likely to drop out of school and engage in gang activities or street life. Latinas, on the other hand, are stereotyped as being likely to become pregnant during high school or before finishing college. As Carter (2005) explains, minority males are expected to be "street smart," which refers to knowing how to handle dangerous situations; girls are expected to be "book smart," which refers to being a responsible student and fulfilling school demands (p. 79). Because Latino males are expected to be "street smart," parents seldom invest their time in supervising them. Yet parents often restrict daughters from even going out with friends. One female interviewee, Alma, shared her frustration with gendered restrictions:

Yeah, that's their excuse, why can't I do anything I want? . . . "Why can't I stay out later?" "No, Alma, because he's a boy, he can protect himself. You can get pregnant. So many things can happen to you, and nothing will happen to your brother." I'm like, "Are you kidding me? My brother could get shot just as I can, you know? He's not bullet proof!" "No, your brother . . . he can't get pregnant, but you can."

Carter (2005) confirms this difference between males and females in Latino households: "Families maintain and reproduce the patri-

archal control of girls' and women's places in society by diligently monitoring their daughters' whereabouts. . . . [On the other hand] adolescent boys spend more time outside of the home . . ." (p. 130).

Gender differences in Latino families were also present through the distribution of household obligations and chores. Cindy described her father telling her to clean the house while her brothers watched TV:

At my house that would never happen. If the house is messy, my dad would be like [with a bossy voice], "Cindy! Blah blah blah. . . . What are you doing? What is Cindy doing? *Ponela a limpiar* [make her clean]." Like, there's Edwin and there's Carlos but no . . . Cindy has to clean. . . .

When it came to chores, traditional gender roles prevailed in Latino households, constraining daughters on the basis of gender. Still, Latinas were optimistic about the opportunities their college education would grant them. They regarded college as allowing them a way out of stereotypical gender constraints, as they could prepare – unlike their mothers before them – to become professionals. Yesenia, a first-generation college student, recalled:

My mom had me at a young age, and she wasn't able to pursue her education and, you know, sometimes she has coworkers that sometimes say stuff to her, like, you know, "If your daughter gets pregnant you can't be mad because you did the same thing" . . . [and] my mom would share that stuff with me, and that was like "Oh no, this is not gonna happen. Like, I'm gonna prove everybody wrong, and I'm gonna make the best out of myself."

Latinas were motivated by the struggles of their mothers to make the best of themselves through their studies, as well as to free themselves from domestic obligations.

Involvement on campus allowed Hispanic students to continue their efforts in breaking stereotypes. For instance, the Latino students involved with Latino fraternities said that they developed skills such as professionalism, networking, and organizational management that allowed them to obtain better jobs after graduation. These skills also helped them become role models for other young Latino males in the community. One student especially emphasized this:

You know, for everything that I'm involved with, I think my sole basis is to give back to the community, and not just the Mason community but the community um, you know, outside of Mason, like the children, you know? 'Cuz I think it's important to provide role models, especially to minorities, because . . . a lot of Latinos don't have a good role model.

As work often keeps parents away from the home, this student claimed that role models can fill the gap between children and parents, providing them with the foundations they need to excel.

Latina leaders, on the other hand, regarded campus involvement as an avenue to potential leadership within their families and the community. Adriana, for instance, was involved with campus organizations that allowed her to establish her identity as a Latina young woman and leader.

A Latina woman must, first and foremost you know, identify herself . . . like be able to identify herself as a person, as a woman, you know, whether it's her roots or you know, wherever she comes from. I feel like that's the most important thing because . . . once you get yourself, like get to know yourself, like everything just kind of plays out. You know? Whatever you wanna' do, you're gonna' do . . . you know, whoever you wanna' be with, what you wanna' accomplish, it's gonna' be there, it's gonna' happen on its own.

Apart from being role models to their families and community, Hispanic students can also serve as "multicultural navigators."

Individuals harvest the cultural resources both from their ethnic or racial heritages and from the opportunities provided outside of their communities. Multicultural navigators possess the insight and an understanding of the functions and values of both dominant and non-dominant ethno-racial cultures. They provide critical social ties for co-ethnic members who are less fluent or less successful in navigating mainstream expectations. As a social capital, they provide, for example, advice about how to write a college essay or how to interview for a job or even recommend a student for a summer internship that can assist her social mobility (Carter, 2005, p. 17-18).

Multicultural navigators have usually had an adult role model who has struggled in attaining upward mobility but eventually found success.

Hispanic students carry with them a rich history. From witnessing their parents' struggle to earn a living in a foreign country, to their own struggles to break racial and gender stereotypes, these Latino students – with parents as their backbone – remained strong in their goal of attaining a college education.

I still question whether these factors apply solely to Hispanic/Latino students. Students from non-Hispanic backgrounds often seem to relate to my findings. I would like to propose a cross-cultural ethnographic study where researchers can observe and analyze cultural practices pertaining to college students and their families. A longitudinal study may be appropriate to observe these families over time. My hope is that this study will serve as the basis for further research on Hispanic students.

Sarah Sierralta is a first-generation college student interested in education, immigration, youth, and Latin American studies. In May 2009, she graduated magna cum laude from George Mason with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE IMPACT OF GMU'S SAFE ZONE PROGRAM

Matthew Bruno

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) students, staff, and faculty in university settings are often described as feeling invisible (George Mason University's LGBTQ Student Services Office, 2007; Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002). In addition, they enter campus communities that can be intolerant and places of harassment (Abersson, Swan, & Emerson, 1999; D'Augelli, 1992; Evans & D'Augelli, 1996; Lucozzi, 1998; Rankin, 2003). Programs and services are needed to assist members of this community to experience greater visibility and less isolation. One such program is George Mason's Safe Zone Program.

Due to the prevalence of harassment of LGBTQ students on college campuses and the varied perceptions of campus climate for LGBTQ students by different groups – including LGBTQ students, the general student population, faculty, and student affairs staff within the campus community (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004) – programs and training are needed to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues and create allies for this community (Evans & Broido, 2005; Evans, Broido, & Wall, 2004). Additionally, it is important to understand if these programs are successful.

Within the past two decades, institutions have started to create programs to provide support for the LGBTQ campus community. One such program is the Safe Zone Program, which aims to increase visibility, create a safer and more inclusive campus environment, and promote awareness around LGBTQ concerns and issues. The concept behind safe zones is that “the college community identifies, educates, and supports campus members who are concerned about the well-being of LGBTQ students” (Hothem & Keene, 1998, p. 364). Programs have found different ways of identifying safe zone allies including stickers or other markers.

The limited available evidence suggests that campus Safe Zone programs (which may also be called Safe Space, Safe Harbor, and Safe

on Campus) can be successful. Evans (2002) found that the Safe Zone Project at Iowa State University increased the visibility of LGBTQ people and issues. This increase in visibility helped the LGBTQ community on that campus feel safer, more welcome, and more valued. Rhoads (1997), in an ethnographic study identifying ways to improve the campus climate for gay and bisexual males, reported that visibility allowed heterosexual people a glimpse into the lives of LGBTQ people. Moreover, he found that students believed that visibility could lead to greater tolerance and acceptance. Hence, not only can visibility affect the LGBTQ community, it can affect the heterosexual community as well.

In addition to increased visibility for the LGBTQ population, Evans (2002) found that the Safe Zone Project had a positive effect on allies, who mentioned “increased personal awareness, desire to further educate themselves, and [their] struggle to combat personal biases related to sexual orientation in order to be effective allies” (p. 537).

Similarly, Poynter and Lewis (2003) found that, “The SAFE program [another name for Safe Zone] is helping to improve the environment for LGBT people at Duke. Conversations around LGBT issues have increased and the comfort level of SAFE members having these conversations has also increased” (p. 1). While not all SAFE members increased their interactions with people on campus, the conversations that did take place still yielded greater awareness of LGBTQ issues. As Poynter and Tubbs (2007) conclude, “At worst, members reported that the program had not increased conversations or comfort due to already high comfort levels that existed prior to the program” (p. 16). They also found that a majority of those who were not SAFE members were nonetheless aware of the program and could correctly identify the SAFE symbol (Poynter & Lewis, 2003).

Safe zone programs provide a visible resource for a potentially invisible population and clearly identify safe spaces on campus for this community. Poynter and Tubbs (2007) note that “as a result of the current status of LGBT people in a society that sanctions homophobia and heterosexism, many LGBT people or those questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity will assume a space is not safe until shown otherwise. A posted LGBT Safe Space Ally sign or sticker overcomes this problem by clearly identifying safe spaces” (p. 26). They conclude that through visible signs, allies can provide a route to resources and support that are not always obvious.

This study, conducted in the Fall of 2007 on George Mason's Safe Zone Program, also found that it had an impact (Bruno, 2008). Two different populations were surveyed, using two different surveys: 79 LGBTQ staff, faculty, and students took the LGBTQ Campus Community Survey, and 106 staff, faculty, and students who had completed the Safe Zone Program took the Safe Zone Ally Survey. To ensure that there was no overlap between the two survey samples, the LGBTQ Campus Community Survey was only for community members who had not gone through the Safe Zone training workshop to become a Safe Zone ally. These two surveys showed that the Safe Zone Program affected both populations at Mason in numerous ways.

First, the surveys showed that the program is visible on campus to LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents said that they were aware of the Safe Zone Program by seeing the Safe Zone markers around campus. This is an important finding because "visibility is central to the disruption of homophobia and heteronormativity on the university campus" (Burgess, 2005, p. 30). Finding a supportive and visible social network on campus can also lead LGBTQ students to consider "coming out" (Rhoads, 1997). Additionally, approximately one-half of the LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students aware of the university's Safe Zone Program had interacted with the program by talking to someone who has posted a Safe Zone marker.

Next, the LGBTQ faculty, staff, and student respondents who were aware of the Safe Zone Program reported that seeing the Safe Zone markers on campus made them feel better about campus climate and safer on campus. In the words of one respondent, "Just by being around campus and showing those badges makes me feel better about myself and my community." This finding is consistent with other evidence that these programs help the campus LGBTQ community to feel safer and more welcome (Evans, 2002); the markers also contribute to the goal of encouraging an open-minded, safe, and welcoming campus environment in which students of all sexual orientations and gender identities can live and learn fully. Indeed, students themselves have talked about the importance that visible social networks play in the development of a positive identity (Rhoads, 1997).

Those who interacted with the Mason program by approaching Safe Zone allies were satisfied with their conversations, reporting that the allies were helpful and the information beneficial: "Being around

open minded people is reassuring and makes me feel more comfortable to be myself.” “If I was uninformed about something, they sometimes knew something about, say, Pride Alliance or Coming Out Week that I didn’t.” “I am very happy to see that there are resources available. The ones I have used offer very high quality services and have been very useful to me.” These findings support the program’s goal of increasing visible support and resources and promoting awareness around LGBTQ issues and concerns.

In addition, respondents reported that when they needed to learn about resources, they found the Safe Zone allies overwhelmingly helpful – indeed none of the allies was described as lacking such knowledge. These interactions are key, because social networks are especially important to the positive identity development of this population (Rhoads, 1997). Thus, the interactions that LGBTQ people have with the Safe Zone Program (a possible social network) should be considered and assessed. Moreover, interactions with Safe Zone allies could lead to contact with other social networks for LGBTQ people including the Pride Alliance and the LGBTQ Student Services Office.

Lastly, the training appeared to have had an impact on the Safe Zone allies by helping them respond more effectively to LGBTQ people, providing resources for them to adequately work with the LGBTQ population, and increasing their awareness of the special issues and concerns on Mason’s campus. As one respondent put it, “[Because of Safe Zone training] I am better equipped to act as an ally – I understand my language and assumptions, and how to respond to the assumptions and language of others.” For the Safe Zone allies who were aware of LGBTQ issues and concerns even before participating in the training, the training still had a positive function: “I don’t feel that before the training I was unaware of the LGBTQ issues and concerns at Mason. So the program didn’t help me become aware, but it reiterated what I knew or thought I knew.”

This research also showed other unexpected, positive effects of the Program. For one gay-identified Safe Zone ally, the training meant being better able to identify with heterosexual allies: “I have learned very much what it must be like to view the community from an ally’s position, and this has really helped bridge the gap emotionally between me and allies.” Another queer-identified Safe Zone ally stated, “It gave me the courage to start coming out and also gave me

answers to things I wasn't sure about the LGBTQ community and identity. It validated my experience." And for other Safe Zone allies, participation in the program has been a spur to education and action. For example, one respondent commented that

As a result of my Safe Zone training I have tried to educate myself as much as possible. I attended a nursing conference on transgender healthcare and subsequently presented it to our whole staff. It was received in a very positive manner. As a result, since we were in the process of switching to an electronic charting system, it was a good opportunity to address placing transgender as a choice on the registration form in Student Health Services.

These findings are consistent with other research about the impact of a safe zone program on allies. Overall, it has been found that such programs increase personal awareness, knowledge, and skills related to LGBTQ issues and concerns; encourage further education; and provide a venue from which to look at personal biases (Evans, 2002; Evans et al., 2004).

Indeed, approximately half of the allies reported that they changed their behaviors because of the information provided through the Safe Zone training program; a little more than half reported that they had changed their language as well. For example, some allies reported that they were making a greater effort to support the LGBTQ community by avoiding generalizations and stereotypes, challenging homophobic statements, and using inclusive language in everyday conversation with friends.

A majority of the Safe Zone allies posted their Safe Zone marker in a visible place such as their office door, department door, or on their backpack. This finding supports the goal of making resources and support visible for the LGBTQ community. Many of the allies who had posted their marker noted that they had not been approached by faculty, staff, or students regarding the marker, which Evans (2002) also found to be the case. Still, those who had been approached described the experience as positive and expressed confidence about their abilities.

This finding from the Safe Zone allies parallels the responses from the LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students who reported that their experiences with the Safe Zone allies were positive and beneficial. Even though only about half of the LGBTQ community interacted

with Safe Zone allies, the visibility of the program itself has been shown to improve students' sense of being welcome, safe, and valued on campus (Evans, 2002) and to disrupt heteronormativity by making it clear that there are LGBTQ people on campus (Burgess, 2005).

In all, this research indicated that the Safe Zone Program at George Mason is having a two-fold impact – on LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students and on the Safe Zone allies – as well as meeting its desired goals. The program is achieving its goal of visibility, with the LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students reporting that Safe Zone markers made them feel better about the campus climate. The Safe Zone Program is also affecting those who have trained to be LGBTQ allies by increasing their knowledge of resources and their awareness of LGBTQ concerns. Overall, this research demonstrated the need for safe zone programs. Such programs create visible spaces on campus where LGBTQ people can feel safe and connected to those who can serve as resources. Additionally, these programs have the potential to create an increased awareness of issues and resources for allies.

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CHAPTER NINE

VIOLATIONS OF SPACE: CONSTRUCTIONS OF VIOLENCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS' DAILY BEHAVIOR

Shannon Jacobsen

VIOLENCE IS A SUBJECT THAT TOUCHES everyone whether they overhear a verbal disagreement between two strangers on the street, know someone who has survived some form of violence, or are survivors themselves. In general, I am interested in determining the causes of violence in order to focus on how we can stop the endless cycle that it often seems to take. For this project, I wanted to learn about students' gendered perceptions of violence and safety on campus and how their ideas affect the kinds of activities they engage in or avoid while studying at George Mason University. In particular, I chose to examine how students define scary and creepy situations, how they know when their sense of self and identity have been violated, how they anticipate potential conflict and danger to avoid violations of space, and the kinds of strategies students use to stay safe on campus.

I did not begin this study with one clear research question in mind, but instead entered the field with a general interest in students' perceptions of safety on campus based on my own feelings about it as a student at Mason. I collected data for this project using multiple methods, including field observations, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Over a period of about six months, I contacted and spoke with a total of eighteen students and administrators from the University Police, the student Police Cadet Program, the Sexual Assault Services Peer Program, Student Government, and the general student body.

If you try to think of the many characteristics that are conducive to a learning environment that promotes student success to its full extent, you might think of an institution where students feel safe at all times. They should feel safe when they attend classes that end after it has already gotten dark; they should feel safe walking to their cars at night; they should feel safe enough that they don't have to question the motives of each person they pass on their way to one of the park-

ing lots after the majority of other students have gone home for the night.

When I asked students how they felt about safety on campus, they mentioned some specific settings as making them feel uneasy at Mason. While there seems to be a general consensus that our campus is safe, meaning that most of the time, students feel comfortable that they are not walking into harm's way, poorly lit and wooded spaces were consistently brought up as characteristics of unsafe and potentially dangerous areas on campus.

The wooded pathway by Mason Pond, which is primarily used by students who commute to campus and park in Lots J or K, is just one example of a space that makes students nervous on campus, particularly at night. Some students are able to find comfort in the fact that there is an emergency call box conveniently located about midway along the path, while others find themselves greatly and understandably annoyed that the call boxes do not even work. One student I spoke with revealed that she is asked to use the call boxes on campus as a selling point for the university and to tell people that if they need help they can press the button on the call box for assistance. She explained the following, "That's not true because the company, the vendor that made the call boxes, went out of business and so when a call box breaks down, you can't fix 'em. . . . So they don't ever know how many call boxes they actually have, and they don't even know if they actually work."

This is a horrifying issue that this student raises as many students likely rely on the idea that the call boxes are there to assist them, should they ever need to use one. The *Annual Security Report* that is prepared each year by the University Police even highlights that call boxes "which are easily located in daylight by their orange color and at night by their blue lights, provide instant communication with the University Police or the Escort Service" (George Mason University, 2008, p. 5). It is interesting to think about why disconnected or broken call boxes would not be completely removed from campus grounds. As the student I interviewed puts it, the call boxes are "security placebos." They may serve a symbolic function in that many members of the Mason community trust that they can simply push a button and be helped by the police. It is also possible that the call boxes operate as a way of preventing possible violations of space.

Violations of space can take place under a variety of circumstances, but generally occur when an individual or group imposes on another's sense of personal space. These violations can include an instance in which a person feels that their physical space has been imposed upon or that their sense of self, identity, or character has been questioned by another individual or group through the use of talk. Violations of physical space are the types of violations that students most often spoke of when talking about safety on campus. A University Police officer described the following scenario to demonstrate the feeling of security that the university's escort service can provide to students who are walking alone to their cars at night.

You're in class. You worked until 10 o'clock. You stopped in to talk to the teacher for a few minutes 'cause you want to get clarification on an assignment, and you spend 15 minutes, and you walk out the door and you're walking out and you've never been here past, you know, 8 o'clock before. And you walk outside and you go "Holy shit, it's dark outside" . . . and it looks creepy. K? . . . When you walk out of that classroom, what is it that instills the fear that when we walk outside, "Whoa, this is creepy, this is abandoned"? Well, our mind gets rolling. It's "Oh my god, someone's going to attack me."

Of those I interviewed, there seems to be agreement that we have a campus that is generally safe, yet we still get a creepy feeling when we walk into darkness because our minds begin creating scenarios about all of the things that could happen. It is also worth noting that what students tend to fear is some sort of attack perpetrated by a man. It is compelling that no one ever mentioned being afraid of the prospect that a woman could be lurking in the dark waiting for them to walk by. This is also fascinating to think about in terms of whether female and male students have equal access to learning while enrolled as students at the university. Feminist Adrienne Rich (2003) discusses the implications that the fear of danger can have for female students when she asks,

If it is dangerous for me to walk home late of an evening from the library, because I am a woman and can be raped, how self-possessed, how exuberant can I feel as I sit working in that library? How much of my working energy is drained by

the subliminal knowledge that, as a woman, I test my physical right to exist each time I go out alone? (p. 401)

It is quite possible that the students who choose not to stay after class to speak with the professor about an assignment are missing out on learning because of their fears about potential violations of space that could occur as they are walking alone to their cars.

In students' discussions of potential danger on campus, the scenarios they described tended to reveal that they have a fear of interlopers – individuals who are not direct members of the Mason community. Fiona, a student in the Police Cadet Program, explained how it can be scary to work the early morning shifts. She said,

Between 4 and 6 a.m. it's kinda scary . . . all the cleaning people are either coming in or leaving for the day and you can like hear them and see them outside but you're not really sure who they are. That's happened to me a few times walking across campus and like through the trees, like I'll see a silhouette of someone or I'll hear like leaves rustling or rattles dragging and . . . then I just see somebody like pushing a garbage can or like raking leaves or something like that and I'm like "oh" . . .

Here you can see the kind of emotional rollercoaster that Fiona is briefly taken on as she imagines who is behind the noises in the darkness. You can almost sense the amount of relief she feels when she realizes that it is just a member of the cleaning staff and not an interloper creeping around on campus. The experience that Fiona describes is very similar to those that were recounted by others I interviewed.

The fear of interlopers on campus is a concept that can be tied back to Adrienne Rich's discussion of the impact that the anticipation of potential danger can have on female students' access to learning. Women on campus take this possibility seriously and exercise a variety of precautions to ensure that their space is not violated by, for example, walking with friends or questioning whether they should engage in certain activities at all. It is important to note, however, that in terms of sexual assault (which was the violation that was implicit in female students' discussions of danger on campus), the perpetrator is generally not a stranger waiting in the darkness, but is instead someone the victim knows (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2008). The students I spoke with who had been educated about violence aware-

ness and prevention tended to raise the concept of acquaintance rape in their discussions about campus safety and danger.

Violations of space can also occur through the use of talk. These violations most often take the form of personal attacks or accusations against another individual or group. They can question another person's motives or integrity, and they can leave an individual feeling personally hurt, debased, and sometimes even enraged. These types of attacks can cause conflict to escalate as individuals struggle for power and fight to defend their identities and subsequent claims to space.

This is a concept that can be more clearly illustrated by an experience I had during a field observation that was conducted last fall when a guy preaching from the Bible kept appearing on campus by the statue of George Mason. The man was making what most would identify as offensive remarks about groups who occupy less privileged positions in society, such as women and gay men. It was compelling to observe the power dynamics that were taking place between the preacher and the crowd as both fought to defend their identities and beliefs. The following is an excerpt from my field notes.

A crowd has gathered and, by the way people are screaming, the man does not seem to be well received. He is waving a Bible with gilded edges in the air and is shouting something having to do with obedience and Jesus. A girl walking by screams, "Fuck you!" and he shouts back, "You should watch your mouth, there's ladies around here!" Another girl in the crowd screams out, "We can talk however we want." The man with the Bible shouts back, "No! That's the devil! It's evil! You should follow Jesus. . . ."

Power seemed to have a performative aspect here as the preacher violated space through his use of talk; he used talk as a way to exercise power over the people who would stop to join his continuously growing crowd. I noticed that the performance of power happened through the use of talk after a violation had already taken place. Power seemed to transfer back and forth as people made accusations against each other and as members of the crowd banded together trying to stop the violations of space. In *The Fine Line*, sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel (1991) asserts that, "in order for any group to be perceived as a separate entity, it must have some nonmembers who are excluded from it . . . like selfhood, group identity presupposes a clear differentiation of the group from its surroundings" (p. 41). For the Mason community

members who witnessed the preacher on campus, breaking the divisions and demarcations in the physical space between individuals in the crowd seemed to be acceptable and even expected, as they fought to claim their space and define who was welcome to use it.

To protect themselves against possible violations of space, students revealed that they tend to change their behaviors at night. They don't listen to their iPods, and they try to stay on lit paths and avoid those that are surrounded by trees or isolated from the rest of campus. The students I spoke with who had been educated about violence awareness and prevention articulated the importance of not being on your cell phone when you are walking alone at night. Nicole, a student in the Peer program, explained the following:

I don't think that people should be on their cell phones when they're walking at night. . . . I think that if you're going to your car, you should have your keys out, you should be off your cell phone . . . and you should be aware of your surroundings. . . . If people see that you're a confident individual, that you know what's going on, that they can't trick you, they're less likely to do anything to you.

The students I interviewed who were most aware of the safety issues affecting female students in particular, mentioned how being on the cell phone can serve as a barrier and distract you from your surroundings. Students appear to take a variety of measures to avoid any possible violations of their personal space as they are going about their daily lives on campus after the sun has gone down.

The possibility of experiencing these different kinds of violations of space has many implications for how Mason students go about their daily lives on campus. Students have figured out ways to change their behavior during different times of the day in order to ensure their safety on campus from violations of physical and personal space. Gender seems to play a large role in students' use of these tactics, along with how they identify potential danger and whether they choose to engage or remove themselves from a possible conflict.

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CHAPTER TEN

VALUING WRITTEN ACCENTS: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE UNITED STATES ACADEMY ON INTERNATIONAL VOICES

Shamama Moosvi

AS A GEORGE MASON STUDENT SUGGESTED: “It all comes down to vocabulary; it’s not your thought, because every person who does even a bit of schooling is blessed with some thought or another in his or her chosen fields, but it’s the expression . . . it’s never lack of original thoughts, it is expression and that comes when you have a solid vocabulary base. You have to know which word to use to express your thought” (Zawacki, Hajabbasi, Habib, Antram & Das, 2007, p. 45). These thought-provoking words said by Sri, a multi-lingual writer at George Mason University, show us the challenge that multi-lingual writers in the United States Academy face in the academic classroom. The ability to convey strong ideas and thoughts is difficult when those thoughts must translate onto paper. Sri’s concern about vocabulary and grammar show that although she has many ideas regarding the content taught in her classes, she cannot express these ideas when writing for a class with the same confident voice she uses in her native languages of Telugu and Hindi.

In 2007, in *Valuing Written Accents*, Terry Zawacki et al. interviewed multi-lingual writers about their experiences with academic writing and meeting teachers’ expectations. My own research, a follow-up of this study, asks how George Mason faculty approach the writing of multi-lingual students. My hope is that the incorporation of these voices promotes a dialogue between faculty and students in this internationalized university community.

Since my research served as an addition to the original study, a similar methodology was used when interviewing faculty. The interview questions focused on faculty experiences with and approaches to multi-lingual writers. Faculty informants were asked about the type of advice they offered multi-lingual writers when they start writing a paper, their characterizations of “strong” and “weak” writing within

the discipline they teach, and how they responded to the writing needs of multi-lingual writers. These interviews ultimately led me to explore my hypothesis: that multi-lingual writers succeed in expressing their voices when writing in alternative spaces as opposed to when they write in the standard physical space of the academic classroom.

Before exploring this, however, I must first clearly define “multi-lingual writers,” “United States Academy,” “academic writing,” and “alternative spaces.” In *Valuing Written Accents*, the twenty six student informants were referred to as “non-native speakers of English.” Because of the contentious nature of the terms “native speaker” and “non-native speaker” (Trimbur, 2008), I have chosen to refer to these students as multi-lingual writers instead. This recognizes the students’ fluency in multiple languages, dialects, and discourses, while preventing the demotion of these writers’ languages as secondary or subordinate to English.

“United States Academy” refers to the United States educational system, but is not meant to imply “an inclusive academy across the Americas” (Zawacki et al., p.9). It also indirectly refers to the expectations of strong academic writing in the United States, which leads me to define academic writing.

In *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines* (2006), authors Christopher Thaiss and Terry Zawacki discuss three primary characteristics of strong academic writing, two of which directly pertain to my discussion of voice in academic writing. The writer must, first, show that they have been “persistent, open-minded, and disciplined” in their writing. For the student to accomplish this objective requires an in-depth reading and critical thinking of the content since “academics are invariably harsh towards any student or scholar who hasn’t done the background reading . . . and whose writing doesn’t show careful attention to the objects of study and reflective thought about them” (p. 5). The second characteristic of writing pertains to the dominance of reason over emotion or sensual perception. These two characteristics define “academic writing” in the United States, since papers in the United States focus on presenting and providing evidence for an argument. My interviews with faculty regarding what they considered “strong” writing reinforced the aforementioned standards. Sociology Professor Victoria Rader summarized it best when she stated that writing in her discipline is “pretty linear and full of evidence to back up the points [in the argument].”

The emphasis in the United States Academy on writing a thesis with a debatable claim and further supporting and analyzing the claim based on evidence traces back to Aristotle. In “Structuring Rhetoric,” Aristotle states that there are three means to persuade effectively. These include the character of the speaker, the emotional state of the audience, and the text of the argument. The speaker must be perceived as credible by the audience based on “practical intelligence, virtuous character, and good will” so that the audience does not doubt the ethics of the speaker. The second means of persuasion requires the speaker to “understand the beliefs and psychology of his audience” (Rorty, 1996, p. 2). The final means, the text itself, persuades by making a statement that something is or is not so through inductive and deductive approaches. Each of these three depends on the other to achieve successful persuasion. If the state of one of the means of persuasion changes then the entire rhetorical situation does as well.

Alternative spaces, then, are those spaces in which the multi-lingual writer perceives a change in the above standards. Multi-lingual writers consider writing standards in alternative spaces as dynamic and fluid rather than structured and formulaic. Aristotle’s rhetorical situation aids us in forming a complete understanding of how the different expectations of the writing process, in the academic space and alternative spaces, contributes to the inclusion of voice in the writing of multi-lingual students.

My interviews with faculty demonstrated that the standards of the United States Academy create challenges for multi-lingual writers which contrast to the success of these writers in alternative spaces. I hypothesize that this difference centers on the different expectations of the two primary spaces: the academic space and the alternative space. When I refer to the academic space I am referring to the standards of writing as they pertain to a particular academia. Hence, the standards of writing in the United States Academy are relevant in the United States and not outside of that physical arena. That does not mean, however, that these standards apply only to the United States Academy, but rather that it cannot be assumed that they apply outside of it.

To meet these standards, students must mimic the voice of one “whose authority is rooted in scholarship, analysis, or research”; they must learn “to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of

our community” (Bartholomae, 1995, p. 408). The community of the University then contains an acceptable language that students must learn to appropriate. The challenges, then, of the multi-lingual writer extend beyond learning the grammar and vocabulary of the English language. They must learn to convey their ideas using the “scholarly voice,” which, in turn, can lead to a lack of voice in one’s writing, commonly referred to as “author evacuated prose.” Art and Visual Technology Professor Lynne Constantine commented that multi-lingual writers write:

... this kind of empty speak that might be read on the news, or it lacks a sense of direction because it lacks a sense of place that it originated from. [But] in their visual work when [students] walk into the studio, they know they are supposed to bring themselves, even if the outcome doesn’t look like them or have an “I” in it. They know that the guts of the work is from their self-interrogation. In their writing they get this idea that good writing lacks self and that authority in writing is gained by having no “I.” Not the pronoun “I,” but no “I” at all. When they learn that it’s not a particular style that I’m asking for but really a self-interrogation, then that’s what it’s really about.

Note that the alternative space of the studio diminishes the use of the “scholarly voice.”

Another alternative space in which multi-lingual writers succeed in expression of voice is the virtual space, which involves the use of technology. English Professor Jessica Matthews did podcasting in her classroom and “had a non-native speaker whose English pronunciation was really very poor, but he picked up on the whole genre of a radio broadcast and the kind of slang, imitation, and voice [of that genre]. He actually did a great job.” After utilizing podcasts for three semesters, she decided to have her students write in blogs and said that “it went well, and [her] non-native speakers did a good job.”

The virtual space is a universal space with universal expectations in which every part of the world is connected. Its expectations are not confined to the expectations of a particular academia. In relation to Aristotle’s rhetorical situation, the character of the speaker and text of the argument remain consistent in this space. However, the audience differs drastically. When writing in the academic space the multi-lingual

gual writer's awareness that the audience is the professor poses an obstacle. The professor's characterizations of "strong" and "weak" writing, then, play a significant role in determining whether or not the multi-lingual writer can express the content meaningfully and in the "voice of the scholar." Though the professor still has the responsibility for grading the assignment, in alternative space the professor's role as the audience diminishes nonetheless.

One important factor that I will consider as I continue to interview faculty is the possible gap in perception between faculty and students. Though faculty do state that multi-lingual writers are doing well in alternative spaces, the possibility exists that multi-lingual writers themselves may not consider writing in alternative spaces equivalent to learning to write successfully because this particular type of writing does not follow the traditional, academic model.

The application of alternative spaces by faculty demonstrates that the academic classroom is in a time of transition. The individuality and diversity of multi-lingual writers, the experimentation with different methods in the classroom, and the increasing use of technology in the workforce all present challenges for faculty and students alike. These same challenges, however, offer faculty and students the opportunity to discuss, reexamine, and question the conventions of academic writing in order to help the multi-lingual writer and appreciate the richness of diversity in the academic classroom.

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AFTERWORD

AFTER A FEW YEARS of graduate school, it's easy to become somewhat jaded about research – a practice that comes to waver between the mystery and adventure of a Sherlock Holmes story and the mundane world of work. It is not so much a matter of disenchantment, as of the inevitable sobriety that comes along with fuller knowledge of a subject.

That said, the presence of undergraduate student researchers was, in hindsight, perhaps the defining feature of both the Ethnography of Diversity and Gender Research projects. As the essays here may reveal, most, if not all, of the topics were of personal significance to the students. Their research questions seemed to emerge from the calculi of their own unique life experiences. These investigations captivated far more than students' intellectual curiosity; the result – as evidenced by the present volume – is an advancement of the spirit of impassioned scholarship.

The difficult parts in this for students included the initial feeling of being overwhelmed by the task of carrying out an entire research project themselves. Engaging directly with the Mason community through interviews, field observations, focus groups, and surveys prompted periods of deep introspection about their beliefs and assumptions, as well as the realization that those assumptions might be challenged by their research findings. Having chosen topics that were extremely personal to them, the students faced ethical concerns about whether they should “expose” particular conclusions about the individuals, groups, and categories of students they had studied (and were often a part of), especially if these were unfavorable or might have negative effects. Another challenging aspect of the research was the sheer amount of time it required of the students, some of whom had taken it on in addition to full course loads.

Still, the consensus was that they did not regret their choice to participate. While exhausting, students described their involvement as also extremely rewarding, allowing them to gain first-hand experience in ethnographic methods, questionnaire design, transcription, and conference presentations. The experience seemed to provide an increased confidence in their own capabilities.

As graduate research assistants, we had a great sense of fulfillment in being able to give back to undergraduates through mentorship, simply being able to answer questions, and in sharing our own experiences. While we would like to believe we have inspired these students to continue the good work they have started, we can only be sure of the abiding ways that they have inspired us. Brainstorming with the students about research questions, aiding them as they maneuvered through human subjects requirements, accompanying them as they presented their papers at conferences, we were reminded of the empowering qualities of research. These students' innovative ideas, insights, and passion gave us renewed fervor for our own work.

We must also mention the many faculty and administrators who presided over these research projects and taught students the tools that enabled them to become "agents" in this most inspiring of ways. Our secret is that working with dedicated and talented students and professionals made our jobs as graduate assistants much easier. To be involved in a project like this, venturing as we did into the uncharted territory of an ethnographic study of campus diversity, did not feel much at all like work.

To say that we are proud of this volume of essays would be an understatement. As a team we accomplished something many have viewed as an enormous challenge: we merged the passion, knowledge, and experience of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff into a collaborative research project.

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Previous publications in the *Diversity at Mason* series include:

Diversity at Mason: Student Reflections. Edited by David W. Haines, Samuel Brase, Alejandra Gonzalez-Arias, Celine Kemp, Tiffany Newsome, and Razia Tajuddin. June, 2006.

Valuing Written Accents: Non-native Students Talk about Identity, Academic Writing, and Meeting Teachers' Expectations. Authored by Terry Myers Zawacki, Eiman Hajabbasi, Anna Habib, Alex Antram, and Alokparna Das. June, 2007.

Diversity at Mason: The Fulbright Experience. Edited by Sandarshi Gunawardena and Karen E. Rosenblum. June, 2008.

For additional information on the Diversity Research Group, see the DRG website at:

<http://drg.gmu.edu/>

In 2005, George Mason University's Diversity Research Group began a series of pilot efforts to examine the nature and implications of diversity at what is often described as one of the most diverse universities in the country. These efforts produced the first three volumes in this series—*Student Reflections* (2006), *Valuing Written Accents: Non-native Students Talk about Identity, Academic Writing, and Meeting Teachers' Expectations* (2007), and *The Fulbright Experience* (2008).

The essays in this fourth volume are by Mason students, who describe their research on the nature and meaning of student diversity on campus. That research was fostered by two university projects: the Gender Research Project in the Women and Gender Studies Program and the Ethnography of Diversity Project sponsored by the Diversity Research Group. These efforts—both ongoing—provide graduate and advanced undergraduate students the opportunity to broaden our collective understanding of the diversity now central to the operation of American higher education.

The essays in this volume represent only a portion of the research conducted by the students in these two projects, but their overarching theme—the multiplicity and complexity of experience encompassed by the term “diversity”—speaks to the potential such research holds for the students who do it and for the university that is both object and context of that research.

ISBN: 978-0-9841004-0-8



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