

**THE VERMONT  
CONNECTION**



**THE STUDENT  
AFFAIRS  
JOURNAL OF  
THE UNIVERSITY  
OF VERMONT**

**VOLUME 29 • 2008  
BURLINGTON, VT**

## Editorial Board

The Editorial Board of *The Vermont Connection* consists of graduate students in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) program at The University of Vermont (UVM). The Board has been established to coordinate all editorial functions for the journal and to ensure the continuity of future publications.

### Editorial Board:

**Editor**

**Managing Editor**

**Content Editor**

**Content Editor**

**Alumni/ae and Public Relations Chair**

**Professional/Social Chairs**

Patricia Ngyugen, '08

Audrey B. Place, '08

Rachel de Simone, '08

David Laxamana, '08

Sarah Childs, '08

Travis Annan, '09

### Full Board Members:

Raja Bhattar, '07

Jonathan Bove, '07

Akirah Bradley, '07

Randy Brown, '07

Sarah Childs, '08

Kristen Crepezzi, '07

Rachel deSimone, '08

Dara Forsthoffer, '07

Jian Guan, '07

Sarah Hoffert, '08

Jonathan Hopkins, '07

Chong Kim, '07

David Laxamana, '08

Benjamin Meoz, '08

Stephanie Moreira, '08

Garrett Naiman, '07

Patricia Nguyen, '08

Marnie Owen, '08

Jean Pak, '07

Audrey Place, '08

Christopher Purcell, '07

Sarah Reid, '08

Gabriel Reif, '07

Hannah Mary Roberts, '08

Laura Semenow, '08

Alissa Strong, '07

Ian Stroud, '08

Andrew Wells, '08

Thomas Whitcher, '08

James Willette, '07

### Special Thanks To:

Gerald Buckley

Diana Dubuque

Pamela K. Gardner

Jackie Gribbons

Kim Howard

Deborah E. Hunter

Kathleen Manning

Dorian McCoy

Robert J. Nash

Jennifer Prue

Karen Warren

ALANA Student Center

Alumni Relations and Development

Career Services

Division of Student and Campus Life

Women's Center

**Advisors:** Patty Eldred, '80 & Nicholas Negrete, '06

**Cover Design:** Lester J. Manzano '99

*The Vermont Connection* welcomes manuscripts addressing concerns of common interest among higher education and student affairs professionals. Of particular interest are articles exploring current issues, suggesting creative programming, and presenting original research. The opinions and attitudes expressed within this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board. *The Vermont Connection* acknowledges that scholarship is ever-changing; we include both traditional and non-traditional scholarly works in this volume.

Copyright ©2008 by *The Vermont Connection*

*The Vermont Connection*

The University of Vermont

208 Mann Hall, 208 Colchester Ave.

Burlington, VT 05405 USA

<http://www.uvm.edu/~vtconn>

Higher Education & Student Affairs Administration

The University of Vermont

208 Mann Hall

Burlington, VT 05405 USA

Printed at Queen City Printers, Inc.

TABLE OF  
CONTENTS

- 5 Editor's Note  
*Adam-Jon Aparicio*
- Articles**
- 8 A Call for Feminist Mentors  
*Kristen Crepezzi*
- 15 Supporting d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing College Students:  
Considerations for Student Affairs Practitioners  
*Erin K. Miller*
- 26 Bringing Visibility To An (In)visible Population:  
Understanding the Transgender Student Experience  
*Nicholas E. Negrete*
- 39 Rainbow Rice: A Dialogue between Two Asian American  
Gay Men in Higher Education and Student Affairs  
*Raja Bhattar & Nathaniel Victoria*
- 51 Educating for Power: How Higher Education Contributes to  
the Stratification of Social Class  
*Alissa B. Strong*
- 60 Fat in College: A Social Overview  
*Kristen Crepezzi*
- 69 "Where Do I Fit?"  
*Elizabeth M. Guevara*
- 71 A Time to Intervene: A Historical Overview of Pedagogical  
Responses to an Unjust Society  
*Akirah J. Bradley*
- 81 A+ Does Not Mean All Asians: The Model Minority Myth  
and Implications for Higher Education  
*Nathaniel A. Victoria*

**The Moral Conversation: The Common in Community:  
Engaging Across Difference in Higher Education**

- 91 Higher Education's Missing Link: Examining the Gap  
between Academic and Student Affairs and Implications for  
the Student Experience  
*Gabriel Reif*
- 101 Interdisciplinarity: A Major Issue  
*Jess Belue & David Buckley*
- 113 Bridging Differences: Building Community in Short-Term  
Abroad Programs  
*Jean Pak*
- 123 Creating an Inclusive University Athletic Team Through  
Systematic Alliance Building  
*Delilah Poupore*

**Reflections**

- 134 Points of View
- 135 Student Development Educators: Stewards of Collaboration  
*Robert Kelly*
- 139 Educating the Whole Student in 2007  
*Pat Lampkin*
- 145 *The Student Personnel Point of View: A Foundation for Change*  
*Keith Miser*
- 150 The Kenneth P. Saurman Award: Relationships and Life:  
Some Lessons Learned  
*Nicholas E. Negrete*
- 156 The Final Word  
*Jackie Gribbons*
- 161 New Connections
- 169 Acknowledgements  
*Simon K. Hara*
- 131 Guidelines for Authors

## EDITOR'S NOTE

*There is a need to acknowledge each other's pain, even as we attend to our own.* (Beverly Tatum)



Expression through scholarship is a tool on which the academy prides itself. My experience in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) graduate program at the University of Vermont (UVM) has validated this statement. Within this program, we explore our peers, our students, our pasts, our futures, and ourselves. For the past 27 years, *The Vermont Connection* (TVC) has been the scholarly venue in which we, the HESA community, come together to share such explorations in order to encourage dialogue, provoke new thought, and develop change. In particular, *The Vermont Connection* is HESA's opportunity to share academic excellence within our community. Furthermore, TVC provides higher education practitioners with the knowledge needed to better serve students and develop more inclusive colleges and universities in which we learn, work, and live.

The 28th volume of *The Vermont Connection* is a collection of diverse, compelling, and innovative articles that create powerful connections between higher education and social justice. This year's Moral Conversation theme, *The Common in Community: Engaging Across Difference in Higher Education*, espouses an important message for practitioners within our field. This message is best expressed in the above quote by author, practitioner, and educator Beverly Tatum; in order to create a world of peace, we must start with acknowledging the pain both of ourselves and of others. The articles presented throughout this journal deliver personal and universal experiences that provide opportunities for self-reflection in order to find a collaborative middle-ground of acceptance and change.

This year's publication also allows us to pay homage to two immensely influential people in the HESA community as they retire at the academic year's end: Dr. Keith Miser and Jackie Gribbons. It was 27 years ago when Miser developed *The Vermont Connection* to be the nation's first professional-quality journal to be published by students of a higher education graduate program. The creation of this journal has led to other fine publications in similar graduate programs, such as the *Journal of Student Affairs* by Colorado State University, and Indiana University's *Journal of IUSPA*.

Jackie Gribbons, another major contributor to the field, strived to create a more skill-based experience for HESA students when she imbedded practica into the program's curriculum. Gribbons set the trend among many other higher education

graduate programs as her practica model truly embodied the idea of theory-to-practice. It is with great honor and pride that we in the UVM HESA community acknowledge these two individuals for their passion for this field and the influential change they embodied.

As we continue to create the field in which we so passionately work, it is up to student affairs educators to speak truthfully about the issues that drive us, intimidate us, and allow us to create the change we wish to see occur. *The Vermont Connection* is our opportunity to express academically our voices as we strive to be heard and genuinely listen to voices that have gone unheard for so long. As Editor, I welcome you not only to hear the voices that are expressed throughout this journal but also to reflect on the authentic ways you as an educator can commit to creating a field that is collaborative rather than combative, inclusive rather than exclusive, and proactive rather than reactive. Individually we hold many truths; together we hold the possibility for change.

Adam-Jon Aparicio



ARTICLES

## A Call for Feminist Mentors

Kristen Crepezzi

*The word feminist, contrary to any actual definition one might find in a dictionary, has been, and is, used as a derogatory term to denote such evils as man-haters and hairy-legged dykes. For women in college, this negative public perception can be detrimental to development of a positive feminist identity. The purpose of this paper is to review feminist history and the current divisions within the movement in order to set a stage for current campus attitudes toward feminists as a group. The history of different feminisms is then applied to the identity development of college students, with an emphasis on the importance of visible administrators and student affairs personnel who encourage growth through strong feminist role modeling.*

When this article was being written, the University of Vermont's newspaper, *The Vermont Cynic*, ran an op-ed piece entitled "Feminism is not a Four Letter Word" (Wehry, 2006). In it, undergraduate author Christina Wehry spoke to readers about the importance of feminist work and the consistent negativism that exhausts her as a feminist. Wehry uses her strong public voice to plead with her fellow students for respite from the constant assault on feminism and feminists who are doing good work.

The derogatory use of the word feminist is not a new phenomenon. Individuals and collectives who challenge the status quo are rarely celebrated in their time. Feminists have been demonized as man-haters, femi-nazis, lesbians, and hairy-legged dykes regardless of their personal classification within any of these groups. For women in college, this negative public perception of their group can be detrimental to development of a positive group identity.

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief overview of feminist history and the divisions currently within the movement, contributing to negative public attitudes towards feminists as a group. The importance of this history is then applied to the feminist identity development of college students and the need for administrators and student affairs personnel to encourage young people to cultivate a positive group identity through strong feminist role modeling.

### What is Feminism?

Feminist activism dates back to the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. This first wave of feminism continued through to the 1920s and ended at the time of women's suffrage (Gilley, 2005). The fifty years between the first wave of feminism

---

*Kristen Crepezzi is a fat, feminist graduate of Rutgers College. As a second year HESA student, she works in Campus Programming and looks forward to all that comes after graduation.*

and the second are not a time of fragmentation within the movement, in the way that the second and third wave distinction tends to be, but are simply a passage of time. The second wave of feminism arose in the 1960s during the civil rights era (Gilley) and was characterized by gains in education and employment equity as well as political backlash from the Reagan and first Bush administrations.

From “its earliest inception feminist theory had as its primary goal explaining to women and men how sexist thinking worked and how we could challenge and change it” (hooks, 2001, p. 19). The silence of the voices of women of color and lesbian feminists in the second wave can be interpreted as directly encouraging the outgrowth of third wave feminism. Third wave feminism began as an attempt of younger feminists to distance themselves from their foremothers and emphasize individual difference within the movement. While second and third wave feminism are rooted in the same commitment to gender equity, the third wave has an important emphasis on personal choice and freedom which is rooted in individualism, as opposed to the second wave’s quest for unity and the need to define a core female experience.

The young feminists found on college campuses today fall into the third wave of the movement based on their birth years (Gilley, 2005). The third wave on the whole takes issue with its predecessors’ emphases on solidarity. A major point of the third wave is the stress on the multiplicity of identity. The third wave owes much to the voices of women of color and lesbians for claiming a place in the predominantly White, heterosexual, and middle-class second wave (Gilley). Importantly, the need for a third wave of feminism is influenced by the media’s pronouncement of an early death of feminism. The twin beliefs that the second wave did not make enough progress and was stifling to women of color, working-class women, and lesbian, bisexual, and queer women necessitated the third wave.

### Why Feminism?

Feminism has been a source of strength for many women. Snyder and Hasbrouck (1996) found that women who identify with feminist values as measured through Bargad and Hyde’s (1991) Feminist Identity Development Scale were less likely to express dissatisfaction with their bodies, were less concerned with a drive toward thinness, and showed fewer bulimic tendencies (Snyder & Hasbrouck). This research may show that feminists base their body satisfaction on personal rather than social standards and are thus less likely to experience disturbed or disordered eating habits (Snyder & Hasbrouck). Feminist attitudes also contribute to a higher sense of self-esteem. Because feminist women feel a positive group identity, they are more likely to engage in collective action against sexism and gender violence (Carpenter & Johnson, 2001).

Most importantly for today's feminists, the goals of feminism have not been met. Although the media has joined in an effort to proclaim a post-feminist era, implying that the need for feminism is over and women have attained equity (Taylor, Whittier, & Rupp, 2006), women are still discriminated against in job markets and education, and violence is still perpetrated against women in disturbingly high numbers. In a longitudinal study of women and feminist identity, Aronson (2006) found that though only 14% of women "felt they had experienced blatant instances of gender discrimination, nearly all had experienced what they considered to be minor instances of discrimination or were aware of its possibility in the future" (p. 523). Though there may not be a core experience of womanhood, there is evidence that sexism connects all women.

### Attitudes Toward Feminism

As identified in Wehry's (2006) article, feminists on college campuses and elsewhere are not applauded for their work against gender bias and violence against women but are instead characterized in unflattering ways. Stereotypes about feminists may have significant impact on individuals' decisions to identify as such because when one is bombarded with negative beliefs about a group or subscribes to some of them, one is less likely to want to belong to the stigmatized group (Williams & Wittig, 1997). When women encounter feminism it can significantly alter their previously held beliefs, like bell hooks' experience at Stanford University when feminism "rocked" the campus. hooks (2000) reflects, "feminist thinking helped us unlearn female self-hatred. It enabled us to break free of the hold patriarchal thinking had on our consciousness" (p. 14). Feminism gave women the right to draw from experience rather than training.

Women are programmed to believe they are inferior and can be pressured into fulfilling this prophecy:

Stereotype threat can be thought of as the discomfort targets feel when they are at risk of fulfilling a negative stereotype about their group; the apprehension that they could behave in such a way as to confirm the stereotype—in the eyes of others, in their own eyes, or both at the same time. (Aronson, Quinn, & Spencer, 1998, p. 85)

As evidenced by Aronson et al., stereotypes feed into insecurities of women and minorities when they engage in activities, especially academic, where they are generally believed to show poor performance as compared to their White, male counterparts. Feminism cannot detract importance from instances of gender stereotyping, but it can be a source of strength. When women are exposed to positively identified feminists, their beliefs regarding core truths about feminism are changed (Williams & Wittig, 1997).

Feminists are Made and not Born

Downing and Roush (1985) developed a stage model of feminist development based on Cross' (1991) Black identity development model. The five-stage model begins with a passive acceptance phase in which traditional sex roles are favored and men are accepted as superior; the model progresses through to the end point of active commitment in which a feminist identity is embraced and action to end sexism is valued (Downing & Roush). The third stage in the model, embeddedness-emanation, is integral to development an "characterized by a first phase involving the discovery of sisterhood, and immersion in women's culture, and a preference for socializing with women to the exclusion of men" (Bargad & Hyde, 1991, p. 183). It has been suggested that feminist identification is strongest in this third stage (Liss, O'Connor, Morosky, & Crawford, 2001) and the need for a supportive network of feminist identified role models is integral for students on their way towards developing synthesized feminist identities.

Though general belief in the tenets of feminism is more common now than during the political backlash of the 1980s, the expression of feminist ideals is decreasingly correlated with the feminist label. Moreover, "in academic settings, female students are hard-pressed to find enough female professors 'to go around', due to the disproportionately low number of senior faculty members who are women" (Rader, 2001, p. 80). For women, a same-sex mentor can be a living demonstration that women can be leaders in their fields and have healthy personal and professional lives (Rader). Though it may be easier for women to find opposite-sexed mentors, "male mentors may adopt a 'father' role that discourages autonomy" (Rader, p. 81). The need for feminist direction necessitates more strong female leadership in the academy. This absence of enough female mentors stresses the continued societal need for feminism.

"Older feminist thinkers cannot assume that young females will just acquire knowledge of feminism along the way to adulthood. They require guidance. Overall, women in our society are forgetting the value and power of sisterhood" (hooks, 2000, p.17). The emergence of Women's Studies programs on campuses attests to a growing emphasis on the histories and lives of women. One of the goals of Women's Studies as a discipline is to "encourage an understanding and a practical adoption of a feminist perspective" (Bargad & Hyde, 1991, p. 182), and in this realm, there has been some success. Research shows that women who have encountered feminist theory and thought in an academic setting have felt encouraged in their feminist identity development and empowered toward collective action (Bargad & Hyde). Though a step in the feminist direction, Women's Studies courses cannot reach every student, let alone every woman. A feminist education should not be relegated to its own corner of the academic realm but infused throughout the university.

Implications

There has been some indication that developing academic groups specific to feminist scholars is intensely beneficial to feminists in the academy. Butler (1998) found in developing a feminist research group that connecting with other feminists was seen as a positive and influential piece of supporting feminist identified scholars. Simply the process of being on a feminist listserv without actually attending the majority of meetings was a welcome step for feminists who felt isolated in their experience, but did not classify themselves primarily as feminist researchers (Butler). Groups that meet regularly, like Feminist Majority Leadership Alliances, can reach more people via the Web than those members who have time to attend meetings.

A woman-centric curriculum was also influential to the development of women in the Academy. "When we challenged professors who taught no books by women, it was not because we did not like those professors (we often did); rightly we wanted an end to gender biases in the classroom and the curriculum" (hooks, 2000, p.15). Given the history of feminism, it is important to note that within the movement, women of color, lesbians, and working-class women have been in less supported positions for developing positive feminist group identities (Taylor et al., 2006). It is important for young feminists to see a wide variety of feminist leaders and works within the academy that facilitate a multidimensional understanding of what a feminist is and how one is made.

Though women were hesitant to adopt the label of feminist themselves, even considering their beliefs about gender equity, men had a much more difficult time accepting a feminist label (Williams & Wittig, 1997). There is little research about the process of feminist identity formation in men and possible differences in how men make meaning of feminism or what a feminist identity provides for men. There is certainly room for such scholarship as male allies can provide sources of strength for females who carry the brunt of the feminist movement. The presence of out male feminists on campus as role models would have a significant effect on perceptions of feminists. When men join the movement, feminists cannot be labeled man-haters.

Though research points to benefits for women who adopt feminist identities, there is a consistent lack of feminist role models on campuses. Due to negative assumptions and classifications of feminists, it is essential that women encounter feminists of all stripes in order to further their understanding of feminism as a group composed of individuals. When there are enough feminist role models in public view, women can feel more comfortable and supported in developing their own identity as feminists. Students like Christina Wehry (2006) will not need to stand alone.

## References

- Aronson, P. (2006). Feminists or “post-feminists”? Young women’s attitudes toward feminism and gender relations. In V. Taylor, N. Whittier, & L. Rupp (Eds.), *Feminist frontiers* (7th Ed.) (pp. 519-531). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Aronson, J., Quinn, D. M., & Spencer, S. J. (1998). Stereotype threat and the academic underperformance of minorities and women. In J. K. Swim & C. Stangor (Eds.), *Prejudice: The target’s perspective* (pp. 85-100). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Bargad, A. & Hyde, J. S. (1991). Women’s studies: A study of feminist identity development in women [Electronic version]. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 15, 181-201.
- Butler, A. (1998). Creating space: The development of a feminist research group. In D. Malina & S. Maslin-Prothero (Eds.), *Surviving the academy: Feminist perspectives* (pp. 102-111). Philadelphia: Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis, Inc.
- Carpenter, S. & Johnson, L. E. (2001). Women derive collective self-esteem from their feminist identity [Electronic version]. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 25, 254-257.
- Cross, W. E., Jr. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Downing, N. E. & Roush, K. L. (1985). From passive acceptance to active commitment: A model of feminist identity development for women. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 13, 695-709.
- Gilley, J. (2005). Writings of the third wave: Young feminists in conversation. *Reference and User Services Quarterly*, 44(3), 187-198.
- hooks, b. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Liss, M., O’Connor, C., Morosky, E., & Crawford, M. (2001). What makes a feminist? Predictors and correlates of feminist social identity in college women [Electronic version]. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 25, 124-133.
- Rader, J. (2001). The mentoring process for feminist therapists: One trainee’s perspective [Electronic version]. *Women & Therapy*, 23(2), 79-90.
- Snyder, R. & Hasbrouck, L. (1996). Feminist identity, gender traits, and symptoms of disturbed eating among college women [Electronic version]. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20, 593-598.
- Swim, J. K. & Stangor, C. (1998). *Prejudice: The target’s perspective*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Taylor, V., Whittier, N., & Rupp, L. J. (2006). *Feminist frontiers* (7th ed). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.
- Wehry, C. (2006, April 11). Feminism is not a four letter word. *The Vermont Cynic*. Retrieved 2006 from <http://media.www.vermontcynic.com/media/storage/paper308/news/2006/04/11/Opinion/Feminism.Is.Not.A.Four.Letter.Word-1844547.shtml?sourcedomain=www.vermontcynic.com>

com&MIIHost=media.collegepublisher.com

Williams, Rachel and Wittig, Michele Andrisin. (1997). "I'm not a feminist, but . . .": Factors contributing to the discrepancy between pro-feminist orientation and feminist social identity. *Sex Roles*, 37, 885-904.

## Supporting d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing College Students: Considerations for Student Affairs Practitioners

Erin K. Miller

*As the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have continued to open doors to mainstreamed educational settings for d/Deaf and hard of hearing students, a growing number of such individuals make their way to American colleges and universities. College and university professionals at predominately hearing institutions are frequently un- or under-prepared to meet the needs of this diverse group of students. This paper serves as a primer for student affairs practitioners seeking to better understand the history, culture, and individual needs of d/Deaf and hard of hearing students, and highlights best practices within student affairs in regard to working with this population.*

### d/Deaf/Hard of Hearing Education 101: History and Terminology

According to the National Health Interview Survey, approximately two to four of every 1,000 people in the United States are considered functionally deaf (Mitchell, 2005). Only one out of every 1,000 babies is born deaf, and out of this small number, only one of ten is born to d/Deaf parents. Only about 200,000 people in the United States and Canada use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary means of communication. Today, an estimated 2,309,000 people between the ages of 18 and 34 are considered hearing impaired, more than 25,000 of which are enrolled in higher education programs in the United States (Demographic Aspects of Hearing Impairment, 1994; National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). With an increased understanding of the history, culture, and individual needs of d/Deaf and hard of hearing students, college and university faculty and staff have the ability to enhance dramatically the college experience for these students.

As this paper serves to address the needs of those students who identify culturally with the hearing world, as well as those who identify as culturally Deaf, the terms *hard of hearing*, *deaf*, and *Deaf*, will be used throughout as applicable to each population. When research or implications apply to all three groups, *d/Deaf/HH*

---

*A 2005 graduate of Macalester College, Erin is a second-year student in the HESA program. She currently serves as the Operations Graduate Assistant for the Dudley H. Davis Center, UVM's new 186,000 sq. ft. student center, slated to open in September of 2007. After graduation from HESA, Erin is looking forward to her return to the Midwest, where everyone pronounces vowels the way she does.*

will be used. In this case, the terms *hard of hearing* and *deaf* refer to individuals with a range of hearing loss, from low to severe. While most hard of hearing individuals have hearing losses that are less significant than those students who identify as deaf, these are not imposed categories and are instead the decision of each hearing-impaired individual. The term *Deaf* refers to those who identify as culturally Deaf, a phenomenon that will be explored in greater detail later in the paper, but which commonly is associated with the utilization of American Sign Language as one's primary method of communication.

The history of d/Deaf/HH education in the United States begins with Mason Cogswell, a philanthropist from Hartford, Connecticut. Cogswell's daughter lost her hearing at the age of two from scarlet fever, and although Cogswell employed a tutor in the years following her recovery, he found her educational progress to be slow. Cogswell's acquaintance Thomas Gallaudet made the trip to Europe in search of deaf pedagogical practices; after failing to gain access to Thomas Braidwood's school in Great Britain, he traveled to Paris where he observed the national school for the deaf under the direction of Abbé Sicard. Sicard, as well as former student Laurent Clerc, promoted the use of manual signs in education, and upon his return to the United States, Gallaudet introduced this method of communication to the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut which opened in 1817.

The success of the Hartford school paved the way for the opening of other schools for the deaf in the East, including New York, Pennsylvania, Maine, and Maryland. Eventually, nearly every state in the nation celebrated the opening of its own deaf institute. This phenomenon was due both to the increasing visibility of deaf/HH persons and to the nineteenth century obsession with categorizing and separating the afflicted from society at large (Padden & Humphries, 2005). While this separatism began with the creation of institutions—prisons, asylums, institutes for the blind and deaf—it later could be found within the institutions themselves as students were segregated by gender and race and in the second half of the 19th century, by method of instruction.

In the 1870s and 1880s, the oral movement of instruction in deaf schools gained both visibility and influence with the support of advocate Alexander Graham Bell. Bell, who had both a deaf mother and a deaf wife, argued that the manual approach was “backwards” and “primitive” (Padden & Humphries, 2005), only when deaf students could communicate via speech would they truly be free to move among a world of hearing people. In 1881, the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf began separating students according to method of instruction, and by the end of the century, the oral method dominated deaf education in the United States. Even today, the debate over preferred communication is at times accompanied by segregated educational systems, as children with cochlear implants maybe en-

couraged to avoid manual environments in the hopes that they will more quickly develop oral skills.

### Deaf Community and Deaf Culture: Definitions

Basing her work off of sociologist George Hillery's research on communities, Carol Padden (1989) composed the following definition of Deaf community:

A deaf community is a group of people who live in a particular location, share the common goals of its members, and in various ways, work toward achieving these goals. A deaf community may include persons who are not themselves Deaf, but who actively support the goals of the community and work with Deaf people to achieve them. (p. 5)

Utilizing this definition, then, the U.S. Deaf community has three central components: a shared location, common goals, and a responsibility to work with others toward achieving these goals. Smaller sub-units of the Deaf community can be found across the United States (and the world), with larger cities such as New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles comprising larger and more active sub-communities. The goals of the Deaf community are intertwined with Deaf culture and include achieving public acceptance of deaf people as equals and promoting the use of signing as a means of communication. The use of Deaf with a capital D has been adopted by the deaf community to symbolize the equality of Deaf people with the hearing world. *Deafness* is something to be celebrated, while *deafness* most commonly is associated with a loss of hearing.

Deaf culture has developed over the years through the collective goals, actions, and values of Deaf community members; these goals and actions are also frequently referred to as the values of Deaf culture. Perhaps the most prominent of these values is a commitment to American Sign Language. While not all Deaf individuals have native competence in ASL (such as those who were raised by hearing parents), most respect and accept the language. As a minority group in the United States, Deaf community members also embrace opportunities to share social relations with other Deaf individuals. Not only are they able to be better understood when communicating with others who speak ASL (Kannapell, 1989), but they also benefit from the support of individuals who share their values and who take notice of their many talents and abilities and not their *disability*.

### A Deaf Identity Development Model

An individual's cultural identity is a product of his or her socialization: via interactions at school, with social agencies, with one's peer group, with the mass media, and primarily with one's family (Sheetz, 2004). Deaf culture is transmitted primarily through interactions with one's Deaf family, and as 90% of d/Deaf/HH individuals are born to hearing parents, it is common for many d/Deaf/HH individuals

to live within the hearing world for a significant portion of their lives. In 1997, Robin Gordon utilized the Deaf Cultural Identity Scale (DCIS, as cited in Sheetz, 2004, p. 31) to survey male and female d/Deaf/HH adolescent students ranging in age from 14 to 21. The DCIS consisted of 40 items, and scores were used to assign participants to a progression of cultural identity types, *Hearing*, *Marginal*, *Immersion*, and finally, *Bicultural*.

Though most adolescents do not progress beyond living in a Hearing society, Gordon found that those who develop a Bicultural identity exhibit the following behaviors:

1. Evaluate themselves more positively and feel better about themselves than those Deaf adolescents whose scores reflect membership in the other cultural identity categories.
2. Rate their present lives more positively than other cultural identity groups.
3. View their activity in life as an integrated being of self that is inter-fused with external factors. (as cited in Sheetz, 2004, p. 32)

Student affairs practitioners may place Gordon's research within the context of other socio-cultural identity models. According to this view of identity development, students must come to recognize themselves as both individuals and members of a subordinate group, and find a way to balance their external and internal worlds.

#### Mainstreamed Versus Special Education: The d/Deaf/HH Education Debate

Those who identify with the term *bicultural*, and therefore live in both the Deaf and hearing worlds, know too well the tension that can result when the values of these cultures are in conflict. One area in which this tension can be seen is in the conversation over mainstreamed versus separate education for d/Deaf/HH students. Prior to 1950, residential schools were the predominant agents of Deaf socialization for students who were not born to d/Deaf/HH parents (Mowry, 1994). With the passage of the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), guaranteeing equal opportunities in education to d/Deaf/HH students, the majority of such students today attend public school where they are mainstreamed into predominately hearing classrooms. Oliva (2004) refers to such students as *solitaires*, reporting that in the 2001-2002 academic year there were 6,379 sole d/Deaf/HH students in hearing schools, with 10,965 d/Deaf/HH students in schools with five or fewer d/Deaf/HH children.

Oliva (2004), who describes her own childhood experiences in her memoir, *Alone in the Mainstream: A Deaf Woman Remembers Public School*, expresses the concern held by many Deaf individuals: by separating d/Deaf/HH children from Deaf

schools, hearing parents are often separating them from Deaf culture and from other individuals in whom they can see themselves. As Padden and Humphries (2005) explain, at a segregated school, d/Deaf/HH students can sign with everyone around them. Within a mainstreamed environment, such individuals may have only one or two companion(s) with whom they can sign: the interpreter(s). Crowe (2003) found that self-esteem scores among deaf college students were significantly higher among students who had at least one deaf parent who signed than among those who had hearing parents who could or could not sign. For offspring of Deaf parents, Deaf social and cultural support may be established early. But for deaf children of hearing adults, it may be more critical to find such support in a school or other social environment.

At the same time, access to mainstreamed educational environments may be perceived as a new opportunity for d/Deaf/HH students. According to Marschark, Sapere, Convertino, and Seewagen (2005), “previously, deaf individuals only infrequently attended a college program outside of those designed to serve deaf students, primarily the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), Gallaudet University, and California State University – Northridge,” (p. 38). Today, however, enhanced technology and innovative legislature combine to ensure that students can choose the institution that is right for them. During the decade from 1984 to 1994, the percentage of d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing pre-college students reported to the Annual Survey of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children and Youth who attended special schools decreased from 38% to 28% (Allen, 1994). With nearly 75% of the d/Deaf/HH population currently receiving a K-12 education within mainstreamed environments, the expectation that colleges and universities will provide access continues to increase. Recognizing that institutions of higher education continue to be in need of technical and personnel assistance in supporting their d/Deaf /HH students, the Department of Education established the Postsecondary Education Programs Network (PEPNet) in 1996, a national collaboration of four regional centers providing technical assistance and personal development activities for d/Deaf/HH students and their supporters in the workplace and in education. Currently, less than 3,000 of the 28,000-30,000 d/Deaf/HH students within higher education attend the two federally funded programs at Gallaudet and NTID.

#### Technology and d/Deafness: The Role of Cochlear Implants

Another topic that continues to divide the Deaf and hearing worlds relates to technological advances and the increasing ability to “treat” deafness. Recent developments such as cochlear implants and genetic testing are often cause for both fear and anger for members of the Deaf community. The documentary *Sound and Fury*, which aired on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in 2001, shared the story of Peter and Nina Artinian and daughter Heather, a Deaf family living on

Long Island. Heather, as one of the only Deaf children in her neighborhood, asks her parents for a cochlear implant so that she can communicate better with her hearing friends. Her parents spend much of the documentary weighing the decision. Ultimately, Peter and Nina move their family to the Baltimore, Maryland, area, and enroll Heather in an all-Deaf school. During the course of the documentary, Peter's brother and sister-in-law give birth to twins, one of whom is deaf. Chris and Mari Artinian are hearing, and cannot imagine any other option than to give their son that ability. They pursue a cochlear implant for their toddler, Peter. By its end, *Sound and Fury* reveals both sides of the cochlear implant debate, portraying both Heather and Peter as thriving academically and socially in their respective worlds—for Heather, in a school for the Deaf, and for Peter, at home, speaking his first words to Mom.

On October 6, 2000, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) issued a position statement on the role of cochlear implants within the d/Deaf/HH community:

The NAD recognizes all technological advancements with the potential to foster, enhance, and improve the quality of life of all deaf and hard of hearing persons . . . Cochlear implantation is a technology that represents a tool to be used in some forms of communication, and not a cure for deafness . . . The NAD recognizes the rights of parents to make informed choices for their deaf and hard of hearing children, respects their choice to use cochlear implants and all other assistive devices, and strongly supports the development of the whole child and of language and literacy. (Cochlear Implants NAD Position Statement, 2000, para. 5-6)

The NAD's statement reflects a common belief amongst d/Deaf individuals: cochlear implants are merely one of many assistive devices available to the d/Deaf. However, some culturally Deaf individuals continue to fear that further technological developments may result in a decline in ASL use and a subsequent decay of Deaf culture. This debate is discussed in more depth in the following section.

#### Lost in Translation: Language as a Cultural Value

*They treated me differently, as a disabled person,  
when in truth their behavior was "disabling" me.* (Adams & Rohring, 2004, p. 31)

The debates over educational method and cochlear implants have been commonly split along Deaf and hearing lines, as the social and cultural norms and values of each group defined for years their standpoint on these controversial topics. One area in which these values are clearly revealed is in regard to language acquisition. Hearing individuals may support methods such as mainstreaming or cochlear implants, believing that English is superior to ASL and that d/Deaf or hard of hearing individuals will be most successful if they are able to acquire written and spoken English skills. While Humphries, Martin, and Coye (1989) remind us that

ASL “has the capacity to transmit a culture, a way of life, and happiness” for some Deaf people, Padden and Humphries (2005) assert that the standards of what constitutes language have always been determined by those with the power to hear and speak (2005, p. 149). Therefore Deaf people, in stride with other oppressed groups in the United States, continue to battle against the dominance and control imposed upon them by those in the oppressor role. Hearing individuals may not be able to fathom the intense joy that some members of the Deaf community may feel when a child is born deaf, as many cannot look beyond their view of deafness as a disability. As Padden and Humphries write, “She realized that their view of her as handicapped could not be overcome; it was too deeply rooted in their culture” (p. 154).

### Moving from Education to Action: Suggested Practices for Student Affairs

With a basic awareness of the history of Deaf culture and an understanding of the current issues facing the Deaf community, student affairs practitioners can begin to question their beliefs and assumptions regarding the needs of d/Deaf/HH students. In addition, there is much to be learned from current research on d/Deaf/HH student development, as well as from institutions that are engaging in exemplary student affairs practice.

At a Rochester Institute of Technology in-service training for faculty and staff, the differing needs of d/Deaf and hard of hearing students are discussed according to four categories: language, accommodations, support, and identity (ACCESS, 1999, p.10). It is important that all faculty and staff on college campuses have a clear understanding that those individuals who identify as culturally Deaf and those who identify as hard of hearing may have drastically different perceptions of the support needed from college administrators. A Deaf student uses ASL to communicate, while a deaf or hard of hearing student typically will communicate in English. A Deaf student commonly will require an interpreter in mainstreamed settings, while a deaf or hard of hearing student may ask for technological support, such as Computer-Assisted Realtime Transcription (CART), or an assistive listening device. No matter what services are provided, it is important for both faculty and staff members to be aware of the identity and individual needs of the person seeking support. Student affairs practitioners – particularly those in health centers and accommodation offices—can take the lead in spreading this message across campus by putting together presentations and educational materials for faculty and staff alike.

In 2004, Foster and MacLeod explored the role of mentoring in the career development of d/Deaf/HH alumni/ae of the NTID. Through their interviews with nine female and six male graduates of the institute, they determined that mentorship was a crucial component in the self-advocacy and self-esteem development

of these individuals. Mentors not only offered emotional support to students in their youth, teenage, and early adult years, but they also worked with students to set high educational goals in college and high career goals as new professionals. All participants in the study also mentioned that their mentors were individuals with whom they could communicate. Interestingly enough, this did not always mean that their mentors were skilled signers, but rather, the attempt to communicate and to truly listen to the needs of the student were highlighted as crucial to student development. As d/Deaf/HH students continue to struggle with a 25% graduation rate (Lang, 2002), the role of mentoring relationships must continue to be explored.

In 2005, Marschark, Sapere, Convertino, and Seewagen found that d/Deaf/HH students were not provided full access to classroom information, stating that interpreted information likely does not have the same educational impact as direct, face-to-face instruction. Lang (2002) encouraged further research on the effectiveness of interpreting, stating that interpreters on college campuses may struggle with conveying the specialized vocabulary and proper names associated with specific academic disciplines. Students who enter the university in need of academic assistance might therefore be further disadvantaged upon entering a mainstreamed college classroom. As more d/Deaf/HH students choose to attend predominately hearing institutions, colleges and universities can tend to this issue by expanding their academic support services, such as individual and group tutoring, to provide additional one-on-one and interactive educational opportunities for deaf students. Additionally, staff and faculty at institutions of higher education can build upon their current resource and knowledge base through the utilization of resources, such as PEPNet, which are continually updated with current information regarding the needs of d/Deaf/HH students. Through a commitment to self-education, faculty and staff will be better prepared to meet the varying needs of their students and more sensitive to issues such as technology, interpreters in the classroom, and common transition concerns experienced by d/Deaf/HH students entering college.

Although providing equal access to d/Deaf/HH students on college campuses is required by law, it is crucial that all student affairs practitioners look with a critical eye at the attitudes and behaviors of themselves and their colleagues when providing accommodation for these students. There is a large and visible gap between compliance with the law and a commitment to d/Deaf/HH issues (Porter, Camerlengo, DePuy, & Somer, 1999). A willingness to move the campus community closer to the commitment end of the spectrum can drastically alter the experiences of d/Deaf/HH students on campus. With this in mind, Porter et al. (1999) authored a list of recommended practices for eight areas within student affairs, including College Union facilities, Residence Life, Health services, and Judicial and Campus Safety. Suggestions included installing visual electronic boards for facility paging

systems, posting well-designed and easy-to-read signage, offering a d/Deaf and hard of hearing special interest floor, providing clearly written materials regarding receiving accommodations or making a health appointment, and providing a written version of student rights and responsibilities (pp. 12-14).

Finally, the recent upheaval at Gallaudet over the presidency of Jane Fernandes, resulting in a student takeover of the campus, is evidence of the great diversity and vast cultural differences within the d/Deaf/HH community (Kinzie & Ruane, 2006). As the board of trustees withdrew their support from Fernandes in October of 2006, the complexity of this case surrounding issues of race, gender, and cultural values within the community was far from resolved. In the years to come, colleges and universities across the nation will continue to have their eyes on Gallaudet, as it works to support its ever-changing and ever more diverse student population.

Student affairs professionals have historically been leaders on college and university campuses in reaching out to underserved and under-represented populations. As d/Deaf/HH students become more frequent members of predominately hearing campus populations, our role should be no different. Practitioners must recognize the uniqueness of each d/Deaf/HH student, both psycho-social support and appropriate accommodation. By educating our colleagues and ourselves and by posing solutions to the challenges students face, we can continue to act as leaders on the path toward academic growth and excellence for all students. As we move forward, we must continue to ask, what is the impact of the services we provide on student learning, for d/Deaf/HH students, and for the hearing population? How can we support d/Deaf/HH identity development? What characteristics of the university environment would not only make it more welcoming for d/Deaf/HH students, but would also enhance learning? When we have the answers to these questions, and have made the necessary changes on our campuses, we will truly be making a difference for d/Deaf and hard of hearing students.

## References

- ACCESS: How best to serve postsecondary students who are hard of hearing.* (1999). Rochester, NY: Rochester Institute of Technology.
- Adams, J. W. & Rohring, P. S. (2004). *Handbook to service the deaf and hard of hearing: A bridge to accessibility.* San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Allen, T. E. (1994). *Who are the deaf and hard-of-hearing students leaving high school and entering post-secondary education?* Gallaudet Research Institute. Retrieved January 21, 2007 from <http://gri.gallaudet.edu/AnnualSurvey/whodeaf.html>
- Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C.A. § 12101 *et seq.* (West, 1993). Archived at <http://www.ada.gov/pubs.ada.htm>
- Crowe, T. V. (2003). Self-esteem scores among deaf college students: An examination of gender and parents' hearing status and signing ability. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 8(2), 199-206.
- Foster, S. & MacLeod, J. (2004). The role of mentoring relationships in the career development of successful deaf persons. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 9(4), 442-458.
- Humphries, T., Martin, B., & Coye, T. (1989). A bilingual, bicultural approach to teaching English. In S. Wilcox (Ed.), *American Deaf culture: An anthology* (pp. 121-144). Burtonsville, MD: Linstok Press.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Guide to Frequently Asked Questions* (2005). Washington: U.S. Congress. Archived at [http://www.house.ed\\_workforce/issues/109th/education/idea/ideafaq.pdf](http://www.house.ed_workforce/issues/109th/education/idea/ideafaq.pdf)
- Kannapell, B. (1989). Inside the Deaf community. In S. Wilcox (Ed.), *American Deaf culture: An anthology* (pp. 21-28). Burtonsville, MD: Linstok Press.
- Kinzie, S. & Ruane, M. E. (2006, May 5). Gallaudet's president won't bow out. [Electronic Version]. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved January 21, 2007, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>
- Lang, H. G. (2002). Higher education for deaf students: Research priorities in the new millennium. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 7(4), 267-280.
- Marschark, M., Sapere, P., Convertino, C., & Seewagen, R. (2005). Access to postsecondary education through sign language interpreting. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 10(1), 38-50.
- Mitchell, R. E. (2005). *Can you tell me how many deaf people there are in the United States?* Retrieved April 16, 2006, from <http://gri.gallaudet.edu/Demographics/deaf-US.php>
- Mowry, R. L. (1994). What Deaf high school seniors tell us about their social networks. In C. J. Ertling, R. C. Johnson, D. L. Smith, & B. D. Snider (Eds.), *The Deaf way* (pp. 642-649). Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.
- National Association of the Deaf. *Cochlear Implants NAD Position Statement*. Retrieved January 21, 2007, from <http://www.nad.org/site/pp.asp?c=foINKQMBF&b=138140>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). *Integrated postsecondary education*

- data system, Fall Enrollment Data File, Fall 1997* [Data file]. Available from The National Center for Education Statistics Website, <http://mces/ed.gov/Iped/ef9798/>
- Oliva, G. (2004). *Alone in the mainstream: A Deaf woman remembers public school*. Washington, D. C.: Gallaudet University Press.
- Padden, C. (1989). The Deaf community and the culture of Deaf people. In S. Wilcox (Ed.), *American Deaf culture* (pp. 1-16). Burtonsville, MD: Linstok Press.
- Padden, C. A. & Humphries, T. L. (2005). *Inside Deaf culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Porter, J., Camerlengo, R., DePuye, M., & Sommer, M. (1999). *Campus life and the development of postsecondary deaf and hard of hearing students: Principles and practices*. A report of the National Task Force on Quality of Services in the Postsecondary Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. Rochester, NY: Northeast Technical Assistance Center, Rochester Institution of Technology.
- PEPNet Mission. *Postsecondary Education Programs Network*. Retrieved January 21, 2007, from <http://www.pepnet.org/mission.as>
- Sheetz, N. A. (2004). *Psychosocial aspects of Deafness*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Weisberg, R. (Producer), & Aronson, J. (Director). (2001). *Sound and Fury* [Motion picture]. United States: Next Wave Films

## Bringing Visibility To An (In)visible Population: Understanding the Transgender Student Experience

Nicholas E. Negrete

*This study explores the experiences of several transgender students at the University of Vermont. Utilizing ethnographic interviews, this research highlights and examines the social and academic experiences of transgender students. Additionally, this study provides best practices for student affairs administrators in order to better support transgender students on our college campuses.*

*Certainly, our society's binary gender construct is bad news for millions of people—a prison for some, house arrest for others, poverty of self-esteem for many, invisibility for still others, and blindness for those of us who cannot see one another's constriction and suffering. (Mollenkott, 2001, p. 13)*

Today's colleges and universities are experiencing an increasingly high number of students who identify as transgender, gender variant, or genderqueer. In fact, "transgender youth have become more visible in the last decade but remain one of the most underserved populations on college campuses and have largely been ignored in the higher education literature" (Beemyn, 2003, p. 33). Unfortunately, little research has been dedicated to this topic. Selected research highlights the needs of transgender students and suggests ways colleges and universities can better support their transgender communities.

The increased visibility of this population on our college campuses has prompted many colleges and universities to raise awareness regarding gender identity and expression. The ultimate goal is to develop an inclusive campus environment for transgender students. Unfortunately, as with all oppressed populations, it often takes a crisis for the visibility of transgender students to emerge. The crisis or conflict may be a transitioning woman using the women's restroom or a transitioning man seeking safe and inclusive residential housing on a college campus (Beemyn, 2003). Raising awareness among student affairs educators around transgender students' experiences will allow educators to be more inclusive in their practices so that it does not take a crisis in order for a change in services, programs, and support to occur for transgender students on college campuses.

---

*Nicholas E. Negrete received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Chicana/o Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He graduated from the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration program in 2006 and currently serves as the Student Services Advisor for the African, Latino, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) Student Center.*

### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to develop in-depth knowledge of the transgender experience of two students at a small, public research university in the Northwest. In-depth interviewing of the participants enables their transgender (trans) voices to be heard in the realm of academia. The research questions specifically explored in this study are

1. Do the experiences of transgender students at The University of Vermont (UVM) differ significantly from those of non-transgender students?
2. Do transgender students feel safe on campus?
3. What services would increase the campus support for transgender students?
4. What is the academic and social experience of our trans students?

### Rationale for the Study

Studies such as this are crucial at this point in the history of U.S. higher education because, as Conway (2004) notes, transgender people often choose college as a location in which to transition (i.e., move from one gender to another). Although it may seem that college provides a less threatening space for students to question their gender identity, most college and university administrators are unaware that transgender students are actually choosing to wait until college to fully transition. With this lack of awareness from college administrators, there is a high risk of the development of a hostile and unsupportive campus climate.

Unfortunately, even well-meaning student affairs professionals and multiculturally-minded instructors often lack basic knowledge about transgender issues, resulting in policies and practices that continue the marginalization of gender variant individuals. (Beemyn, 2003, p. 41)

Instead, one will often find colleges and universities looking toward their lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) support services, consulting educators who specialize in trans concerns, or calling on the trans students themselves to educate their communities. The latter approach, however, also increases the burden that is already felt by trans students on our college campuses.

Qualitative accounts of transgender college students, assessment of services available to this population, and delineations of best practices concerning this population are conspicuously absent from the literature. This study represents two efforts to fill that gap: 1.) an overview of the literature about the community's struggles and needs and 2.) the findings of a qualitative analysis focused on personal testimonies of two students who identify as transgender at UVM.

## Literature Review

*Re-defining Gender*

Language has the capacity to label a plethora of characteristics, elements, and ideas. In the same way, the power of language can exclude those characteristics, elements, and ideas that many ignorantly label as “the other.” Not only can language exclude and constrict, but it can also unfortunately make one’s identity invisible. “They seem to believe that all these named things really exist and that anything that isn’t named somehow doesn’t” (Wilchins, 2004, p. 2).

The performance of gender can be associated with the way someone presents him/her/ *zirsself*, (a gender neutral pronoun) through one’s attire, physical appearance, stance, walk, and gestures, to name a few. This is known as *gender expression* and is best described by Wilchins (2004) as “the manifestation of an individual’s fundamental sense of being masculine or feminine through clothing, behavior, grooming, etc.” (p. 8).

Gender expression should never be confused with *gender identity*, which can be described as the inner feelings that guide a person in identifying as a man or woman. Wilchins (2004) articulates the definition of gender identity eloquently as she states, “gender identity refers to the inner sense most of us have of being either male or female” (p. 8). A person could express *zir* gender as a man, but have an inner sense that *zir* gender identity is that of a woman. However, this might cause feelings of dissonance because what *zie* is expressing outwardly does not align with *zir* innermost feelings. In order to address these feelings of dissonance, an individual can begin a transition to match the inner being with the outward expression in an attempt to feel whole, thus experiencing what it means to be transgender.

The term transgender deconstructs the gender binary (i. e., male and female), encompassing those who identify as gender variant or gender queer. Such individuals transgress those lines society has established, which force individuals to identify with male or female, one or the other, never in between (Wilchins, 2004). Transgender is an umbrella term for those who identify as drag kings and queens, crossdressers, gender non-conforming, and transsexuals. Wilchins associates gender with symbols and meanings, understanding that gender is something we perform and is fluid in character. In essence, everyone is affected by gender, and everyone “does” gender differently—some perform gender that conforms to society’s notions of “masculine” and “feminine.” Others perform gender in ways that provoke, evoke, and rub against the grain. Nonetheless, “this notion of how each of us must look, act, and dress because of our sex is deeply embedded in our society” (Wilchins, p. 8).

In much research, transgender is used as an all-inclusive term, providing a space

for anyone who wishes to identify as such, with the understanding that “description becomes an act of replacement and erasure” (Wilchins, 2004, p. 39). This is particularly important because Western society often defines “unknown” or marginalized concepts by their juxtaposition to the non-marginalized. In other words, someone is defined by what they are not rather than by what they actually are (e.g., non-White, non-heterosexual, disabled). In a genderized society, no one is ever exempt from performing gender in some way, shape, or form.

College campuses are not exempt from being genderized (and gender politicized) environments. Colleges and universities must first develop awareness around the concepts of gender identity, gender expression, and transgender. This awareness can take many forms, including institutionalizing policies to protect and validate those people who identify as trans. Colleges should not only create institutional policies to protect their transgender communities but also educate entire campus communities about gender identity and expression, working to eliminate the fear that is typically associated with the trans community. Gender identity is not just a “trans issue,” but rather, everyone’s issue, as gender is constructed by society as a whole. Moreover, it is our own society’s gender norms that constrict and imprison many of us, not just those who identify as transgender.

#### *Who are our Transgender Students?*

According to Conway (2001), approximately one in 500 people attempt to transition at some point in his/her/zir life. Additionally, approximately a quarter of this population is attempting to transition during high school and college years (Conway, 2004). Based on this assumption, one might envision that, statistically, a large state university of approximately 20,000 students will have a handful of transitioning or transitioned students at any one time. An institution of this size will also likely have many times that number of students who are seriously questioning their gender (0.3% or more, i.e., about 60 students), and/or students who are gender variant in appearance (perhaps 1% or more, i.e., about 200 students) sometimes as part of signaling their sexual orientation (noting the intersection of gender and sexuality). The institution will also likely have students who engage in occasional cross dressing (perhaps 2% or more, i.e., 400 students) (Conway, 2004). It is important to account not only for those who are in the process of transitioning or who have transitioned but also for those who are gender non-conforming, gender variant, or genderqueer. Every one of these specific identities is affected by *transphobia*, an aversion toward transgender people, and can be heavily affected by trans-exclusive practices that are so prevalent among colleges and universities within the United States.

According to Beemyn (2003), “direct observation and anecdotal evidence suggest that youth who do not fit stereotypical notions of ‘female’ and ‘male’ are becoming much more visible on North American campuses and a growing number

of students are identifying as gender variant or, as many describe themselves, 'genderqueer'" (p. 34). Although limited statistical knowledge exists of who transgender students are (whether or not they identify as trans), one should argue that even if an institution had one self-identified trans student, validating zir student experience would be important. Qualitative accounts highlight the ways some trans students at UVM are being validated through policies and practices and offers suggestions on how to provide an even more inclusive environment for this marginalized population.

### Methodology

Ethnographic interviews were the chosen methodology for several reasons. There is little, if any, qualitative research that provides an in-depth exploration of the transgender student experience. An ethnographic interview, if done under the proper circumstances, will provide the researcher with rich data concerning this topic, usually data that is "impossible to obtain through surveys, document analysis, or observation" (Ortiz, 2003, p. 35).

This particular methodology was selected because of the small number of available respondents who self-identified as transgender. A focus group setting would have provided equally rich data, but the small respondent population precluded this data collection option. Kvale (1996) suggests "knowledge produced during the interview is in fact a product of the interaction between both research participants" (as cited in Ortiz, 2003, p. 37). Prior to the interviews, relationships were established with the prospective respondents through numerous informal interactions, therefore gaining their trust and assistance. The ethnographic interviews served to meet the goals of the study and answer the research questions in-depth.

### *Sampling*

Participants were selected from a purposive homogenous sampling of self-identified transgender students at UVM. Several gatekeepers were identified on campus, enabling interested transgender students to inquire about the study and contact the primary researcher. Group emails were utilized through Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Ally (LGBTQA) Services at UVM, which aided in the recruitment of potential respondents for this study. Snowball sampling was also utilized once contact had been made with several transgender students who expressed interest in participating in this study. As a result of these various sampling procedures, two self-identified female-to-male (FTM) transgender students were selected and invited to participate in an ethnographic interview. The students who were the only two who expressed an interest and willingness to follow through with participation in the study.

*Data Collection*

Data was collected by tape recording all interviews as well as taking field notes during the interviews. Participant names were changed in all of the field notes to ensure confidentiality throughout the study. The researcher transcribed all tape recordings and delivered each transcription to the appropriate participant to ensure the validity of the interviews. Written field notes were taken during and after the interview to capture anything not captured on the tape recording, such as body language, facial expressions, and other nonverbal cues.

*Data Analysis*

The data in this study were consolidated into meaningful constructs that meet the goals of the study and address the research question. Constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used such that interview transcripts were unitized to capture a specific idea later categorized under a specific theme. The majority of the data collected (at least 90%) was categorized into specific thematic categories and reexamined for any overlaps that might have occurred among themes. The emergent themes within the data collected provide the necessary information to address the research question in an organized way.

## Findings

*Trans on Campus: The Transgender Student Experience at UVM*

What is the campus climate at UVM like for trans students? What are trans students' perceptions of UVM policies and procedures? How can student affairs educators work to create a safe and inclusive environment for these students? These questions could not be answered without background knowledge of the transgender student experience on college campuses. Addressing the content in policies and procedures should include assessing the effects of such policies and procedures and addressing those students directly affected by these institutional practices.

“You don't have to be gay to understand that experience (or be capable of doing so), nor need you to be female to be attuned to the limitations of a woman's life under patriarchy. To believe otherwise is to let our enemies slip off the hook of accountability” (Califia, 2003, p. xiv). In the same way, student affairs educators do not need to be trans themselves in order to work toward an equitable campus environment for transgender students. Instead, student affairs educators must look toward qualitative and quantitative research on the experiences of transgender students, or better, assess their own campuses in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of their campus climate and of the issues facing their trans community members.

*Safety*

*In most places I feel safe, but the one place I feel less safe than anywhere else is the gym and any sporting events. For example, during my first year I went to several hockey games and realized how much the atmosphere at sporting events is driven by homophobia, making it “excessively uncomfortable” for me to be. Locker rooms, bathrooms, and the gyms are really “anxiety provoking” for me because there is a strict gender binary that is enforced in all of these places. (Alex)*

Campus safety is one of the most important factors to consider for any college student. Safe campuses enable students to have an empowering experience with minimal fear that their safety will be compromised. Sanlo (2000) found that many directors of LGBT resource centers found a strong connection between the support provided to students who identify as LGBT and their academic success. There are many different ways to support students, including providing safe havens for students on campus. Sanlo’s research found that “nearly all [directors] said that they have heard from students that those students’ educational careers and sometimes even their lives were saved because they had a safe place to go” (p. 493). This is important to note as student affairs educators must work to develop a campus climate that will enhance the student life experience, an experience that is surely affected by safety initiatives on campus.

Transgender students often assess their safety in any given location, taking note as to which places are safe for them to go and which places to avoid for fear that they will be vulnerable to a physical or verbal attack. Alex paints a picture of fear and vulnerability he experienced at UVM:

One instance where I felt unsafe was on my way to the Common concert at Patrick Gym, and on my way in, there were people outside harassing me, wanting to know if I was a guy or girl. They were obviously responding to my gender expression, forcing me to identify myself to them. It was very uncomfortable for me, and I did not stay at the concert long, I mean, who wants to go into a huge dark room full of people when you are getting yelled at outside?

Students who do not feel safe on campus often use the term *uncomfortable* to describe their experiences. These feelings of discomfort force trans students to avoid certain situations, in this case, a concert. A student’s experience is built around a feeling of general safety, an issue that can most definitely be addressed and improved.

The issue of safety also transcends students’ social lives as some students, especially women, assess their safety when going to parties or drinking among friends. Not surprisingly, trans students take similar precautions, as they become potential victims of violence and harassment due to their transgression of the gender binary. In fact, Alex discusses the anxiety experienced with making decisions to go to a college party:

Off campus, I party a lot, and I know a lot of trans people who don't go out and party at all, and it has a lot to do with anxiety. Sometimes I do feel anxious in social settings, especially when you're either not passing or just paranoid about not passing, which happens more often than anything. I think that is just why a lot of trans people don't party. They don't want to put themselves in an unsafe situation.

In this personal account, “passing” refers to how well the trans student passes as a man, as he is transitioning from FTM. Trans students must take additional steps to insure their safety, causing their college experience to be filled with anxiety and mistrust. This is unacceptable for any student to experience, and it is student affairs educators' responsibility to do their part in creating a safe, inclusive, and educated community around transgender concerns.

### *Classroom Climate*

*Constantly throughout the semester, students along with the encouragement of the professor made numerous comments about our classroom being a “women only” space and feeling safe in a women only space, and how it is great to be in a women only space. I had to say over and over that it is not a women only space. I felt completely ostracized. At the end of the course, someone sent an email to the entire class, and started it off by writing “Hey Ladies.” It was so painful, to sit in this class all semester and have my identity nullified. It was just torture. (Alex)*

The classroom setting influences a large part of the college student experience, as it is in the classroom that students have the opportunity to explore their intellectual capacities and take part in dialogue and debate. Experiencing a stifling classroom environment would be a detriment to a student's college academic experience. Something as common as speaking in class is of concern to some trans students, causing them anxiety and uneasiness.

Last year I was in a psychology class where I was required to speak, and I was really self-conscious about “passing” and my voice, because more than anything your voice will give it away. At least that was what I perceived. Being required to speak in a class with 250 students is unnecessary and stress provoking. I was self-conscious about being mistaken for a girl and just speaking in a huge setting like that. (Zaidyn)

It is important for professors to understand how this can cause anxiety and heighten a student's stress level, undoubtedly affecting the student's academic performance in the course.

If a trans student is aggressive in developing a classroom experience conducive to his/her/zir learning experience, it is often the trans student creating awareness, restructuring the class climate, and taking responsibility for creating a conscious, inclusive space.

I was a TA [teaching assistant] for a speech class for the College of

Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs), and the professor was nice, but uneducated about basic gender stuff, and the students had to give speeches throughout the semester, and he had specific dress codes for the speeches. His dress code was totally gender stereotypical. Girls had to come in a blouse, skirt, and heels and guys had to wear a shirt and tie. So, I questioned him about it right away, and he didn't really fully understand, but he was receptive to my concern. I let him know that I was going to rewrite his syllabus for him and hand it back to him the next day. Throughout the rest of the year, I had to constantly bring it to his attention, but in a playful way. He did eventually get that what he was doing was associating certain dress attire for specific gender identities. (Zaidyn)

Although it is refreshing that this student was empowered enough to address his concern to the professor, it is problematic for a student to carry the burden of educating the professor. This is further evident in another classroom experience Alex describes:

In one of my psychology courses, my TA had said she had done some of her graduate research around trans issues, but when I received our evaluation form for the course there was a place where it read "gender: male or female." In essence, they were asking the incorrect question. If they want to know my sex, then ask the question, but don't confuse sex with gender. I ended up writing all over the form, educating them about how they should have asked the question. It was just so surprising that the TA stated that she worked with trans people, but passed out a form, confusing sex with gender.

A concern is that the student will soon become tired of having to educate his professor to avoid feeling invisible inside the classroom. Student affairs educators and university faculty must work to deconstruct this implied invisibility factor and address transgender concerns in order to develop and maintain an inclusive classroom environment that alleviates the unjust burdens and stresses of trans students.

### *Campus Housing*

*I think residential life needs to realize that some trans students feel like they're just a typical student at UVM, and they don't have to elect queer housing or be out to the whole world, having to live in a room by him or herself, so there are important decisions the university needs to make to create more inclusive housing that will not socially ostracize trans students. (Zaidyn)*

Wanting to feel safe and accepted in campus housing is a primary issue that concerns most transgender students. Most colleges and universities require first-year students to live on campus, but with such a requirement, there is a student expectation about personal safety, acceptance, and inclusion. Some universities provide

alternative housing options for transgender students; however, some of the options available to trans students isolate them socially from their peers. These forms of alternative housing make it difficult for the student to have a traditional residential life experience. Alex describes the difficulties faced with campus housing:

With the exception of Living and Learning suites, there really isn't an option for trans students to have roommates. It's just really ostracizing. Last year my roommate left to study abroad and I ended up with a double as a single, and did not want to move into L/L because I was comfortable on my current floor. In res life at UVM, your options are either to live in a single room with a private bathroom on a floor or in one of the L/L suites.

For this student, feelings of isolation within residential life result in a negative overall student experience. Alex argues that there is little housing in which trans students can be comfortable. Although they can freely elect to live on a traditional floor, this option depends on how far along a trans student is in their transition, making each housing request very individual from student to student. It is important to create and develop housing options that actively include all students, thus increasing the factors that contribute to the entire student experience. Although there are several housing options that offer student interaction and engagement at UVM, these options are few.

It is clear that these transgender students are hyper-aware of the isolation that is constructed when offered single rooms with a private bathroom. The best housing practice is not just to offer a safe and inclusive community but to build a community in which the trans student can actively participate and engage. Student affairs educators must be cognizant of these issues and develop housing options that are inclusive of trans students. The goal is to provide a holistic and nurturing student living experience.

#### Recommendations for Best Practices

Excellent college administrators and student affairs educators find themselves asking the question, "What can we do to make our campus as inclusive and safe as possible for every student?" The answers to this question can be infinite, and student affairs educators must understand the power they have in communicating the values of diversity and inclusion to their campus community. Below are proposed recommendations that a college or university can consider implementing in order to address the needs of its transgender community. Although these recommendations do not cover every aspect of college student life, they provide a starting point from which student affairs educators can begin to expand their commitment to inclusion and equity for every trans student on their campus.

### *Updating Student Records*

- Consider implementing a name change policy that allows students to change their name on their university identification cards and some of their university records.
- Develop or designate an office to handle the multi-layered process of changing personal records; this would ultimately serve all students, avoiding the potential for a trans student to be “outed.”

Updating student records to be consistent with the identity with which a trans student adopts, such as their preferred name and identified gender, is a process that can potentially be complicated. But if the policy is developed sensitively, it can be used as a larger effort to make the university more accessible to its trans community.

### *Campus Housing*

Obtaining safe housing is a major concern for today’s transgender students. Colleges and universities must institutionalize policies and procedures that protect the privacy and needs of their trans students.

- Train housing staff around transgender concerns to develop a more culturally competent staff serving residential students.
- Implement alternative processes, which would allow all students, including prospective trans students, the opportunity to choose housing that is inclusive to their needs.
- Consider creating and developing “gender-free” housing, where students of different genders can live together without the restrictions the traditional gender binary imposes, providing a sense of openness to a living situation.

There are many possibilities in creating safe and inclusive campus housing that would validate a trans student’s identity on a college campus. It is important to recognize that transgender students may have additional needs and those needs should be accommodated naturally without making these students feel additionally marginalized.

### *Classroom Climate*

In the classroom, trans students become hyper-aware of the trans-exclusive language that is used and that ultimately establishes a feeling of invisibility and vulnerability.

- Encourage academic departments to address the issues of heterosexism and transphobia that are undeniably present within classroom settings.
- Consider establishing a “train the trainers” program where university faculty and staff have the opportunity to be trained on trans issues. These individuals can then facilitate an educational workshop on the pressing needs of transgender students throughout the campus.

- Infuse queer theory into courses, addressing theories that pertain to and include the transgender community.

### Final Thoughts

College and university personnel must consider the ways they are currently serving and not serving the transgender population. They must establish partnerships among campus departments that affect the experience of a transgender student. There are many offices and organizations that could be included in these partnerships, such as affirmative action, police services, and the counseling center. If these offices would be more inclusive in the ways they serve their transgender community, it is hopeful that the campus climate will change and will be perceived as a safe and welcoming campus for trans students.

In addition, student affairs educators must develop training on transgender issues for campus administrators, additional staff members, and faculty who regularly interact with students. Furthermore, college administrators must take steps to develop policies and procedures that address transphobic violence and harassment. In support of transgender student development, student affairs practitioners can spearhead the creation of support groups for transgender and gender questioning students. Lastly, one very small but powerful step that colleges or universities can take to create a more inclusive environment for their trans students is to use inclusive language on school forms, printed materials, and websites. This action would not only establish a comforting environment for trans students but also create awareness about trans people throughout the college community.

The investment of student affairs practitioners in every student's social, academic, and personal development is at the heart of the student affairs profession. This investment must occur regardless of the race, gender identity or expression, religion, or sexual orientation of each student. An inclusive, accepting, and fulfilling environment is paramount for student success. The transgender population has been overlooked for many years, and it is time for student affairs educators to examine and address ways to better support transgender students, creating a place where they will be successful personally, socially, and academically.

References

- Beemyn, B. (2003). Serving the needs of transgender students. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues In Education*, 1(1), 33-50.
- Califia, P. (2003). *Sex changes: The politics of transgenderism* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Cleiss Press.
- Conway, L. (2001). *How frequently does transsexualism occur?* Retrieved April 11, 2005, from <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/TSprevalence.html>
- Conway, L. (2004). *How colleges and universities can improve their environments for transgender and transsexual students.* Retrieved April 11, 2005, from <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/College.html>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, G. E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Mollenkott, V. R. (2001). *Omnigender*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press.
- Ortiz, A. M. (2003). The ethnographic interview. In F. K. Stage & K. Manning (Eds.), *Research in the college context: Approaches and methods* (pp. 35-48). New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Sanlo, R. L. (2000). The LGBT campus resource center director: The new profession in student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, 37(3), 485-495.
- Wilchins, R. (2004). *Queer theory, gender theory*. Los Angeles: Alyson Books.

## Rainbow Rice: A Dialogue between Two Asian American Gay Men in Higher Education and Student Affairs

Raja G. Bhattar & Nathaniel A. Victoria

*We, the authors (an Indian American Hindu and a Filipino American Catholic), share our experiences as gay Asian American graduate students in a higher education and student affairs administration program. We first focus on the ongoing struggles of being gay in conservative Asian American cultures and religious traditions. Next we describe our experiences as Asian Americans in a gay culture that is predominantly White. The hybridization of our ethnic/religious and sexual identities during our graduate school experience concludes the piece. This Scholarly Personal Narrative provides our reflections on identity development and factors that have influenced the process. We provide suggestions for the field on how to increase the presence of underrepresented groups.*

Though we are both Asian American and gay, our surroundings rarely allow these identities to coexist. This narrative presents a dialogue between two Asian American gay men and chronicles our identity development. As we explore the contradictions related to being both gay in Asian American society and Asian American in the predominantly White, gay society, we describe the aspects of our educational experiences that promote successful integration of our identities. We provide information to the higher education and student affairs administration community in the hopes of creating a healthier environment for Asian American gay men.

First, we comment on the taboo status of homosexuality in most Asian cultures and its perception that homosexuality is a component of White, not Asian, culture. Specifically, we comment on how the religious roots of our cultures have hindered our coming out processes. Next, we explore the discrimination we experience due to the predominantly White representation of gay culture in the United States, focusing on the difficulties created by a lack of visible role models and the absence of an environment celebrating our identities. Finally, we reflect upon our graduate

---

*Raja G. Bhattar received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Boston University where he majored in Psychology with a minor in Spanish. He was born in India and has lived in several parts of the U.S., though he considers himself a New Englander. Raja is a second-year HESA student and holds an assistantship in the Office of Development and Alumni Relations. His research interests include access issues in higher programs for underrepresented alumni groups, sexual and ethnic identity development, and service-learning.*

*Nathaniel A. Victoria received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wesleyan University, where he majored in both Dance and Psychology. He is originally from Media, Pennsylvania and holds an assistantship as the Academic Support Specialist for the College of Education and Social Services. As he approaches the end of his second-year in HESA, he is looking forwards to his future adventures in Washington, D.C.*

experiences in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) program at the University of Vermont (UVM). It has provided a framework for integrating these disparate identities, resulting in this narrative.

Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller (2004) state that “every person has many social identities that are influenced by race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion, to name a few identities. If we see individuals in terms of only one identity, we minimize the complexity of who they are” (p. 23). We concur and recognize that people cannot be confined to singular identities.

*Gay? Hijra? Bakla? Defining the Struggles of East versus West*

*The Paradox of Being Hindu and Gay (Raja)*

The term *gay*, a recent addition to the Indian cultural dictionary, carries a lot of resistance. Even today, the Indian Penal Code #377, implemented during British rule of India, states,

Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine. (India Law Info, n.d.)

The phrase, “against the order of nature,” refers to any non-heterosexual relationship. Though organizations are working on this issue, Indian tradition and pop culture still define gay as abnormal and “evil,” just like my older sister calls it.

From my experience, the stereotypical portrayal of homosexuality in Indian society is in the form of a very feminine male or a *hijra*. *Hijra* is a term used to define transgender, intersex, and “third gender” people who live in communities outside of society (“Hijra (South Asia),” n.d.). Consequently, there is a fear among Indians that if someone identifies as gay, he will soon start dressing and acting as a woman. The idea of being a gay male in the Western sense is only slowly gaining acceptance among the more progressive crowds, let alone among my orthodox family of hereditary priests. Especially in the United States, Indian communities have a hard time accepting sexual differences because sexuality is a taboo topic in India. Through my conversations with family and friends, I have been told many times that “people who say they are gay are sick, period” (R. Nandhan, personal communication, August 13, 1999).

Some of my family members also share this view. “You can’t be gay! You’re a Hindu!” were the first words to come out my cousin’s mouth when I came out to him my sophomore year of college (P. Bhattacharya, personal communication, October 23, 2002). For a few years prior to this occasion, my sexual and religio-ethnic identities were at battle, something from which I am still recovering.

I have been aware of my attraction to other men since the seventh grade; however, I cannot think of a time when I did not know I was Hindu. From the day I was born, I have been socialized as a Hindu from celebrating special holidays to performing daily rituals. My extremely orthodox family and the Indian community incorporated religion into every aspect of my life. My use of the terms *Hindu* and *Indian* as being one and the same in this work is intentional. They are interchangeable in my mind because of the highly integrated presence that Hinduism and Indian culture have had in my life. I really cannot distinguish one from the other.

I was never known just by my first name like the other kids; I was always Raja, “the priest’s son.” This title was appropriate in some respects because I was heavily involved in our temple. As a family friend once wrote, my parents had groomed me to be the “perfect Indian boy, a role model for all Hindu youth growing up in the United States” (S. Thangada, personal communication, August 5, 2000). They worked hard to make sure that I knew my prayers and daily rituals by heart, taught me how to write and read in several Indian languages, and instilled in me a deep appreciation for Indian culture. Because I was so deeply rooted in this culture, it is apparent why I consider my ethnicity to be my primary identity.

My life in high school was considerably different. In addition to serving as our school mascot for two years, I was involved in several extracurricular student groups. My parents always had a hard time understanding why I spent so much time at school in meetings instead of studying. As I became older, my parents’ anxiety increased because I was starting to act like “those crazy American kids,” which is what my mom liked to call my friends. When I would mention that my friends were dating, she was quick to reprimand me for associating with those “spoiled kids” and made sure that I did not consider dating. Because everyone knew that my culture did not allow me to date, I did not have to worry about having a girlfriend or coming out, which would have been disastrous in light of the negative perceptions of homosexuality in Indian culture. Though I did come out to a few close friends who also happened to confide in me about their sexuality, for the most part I ignored any conversation about relationships or dating. There were only a handful of Indians at school, and I did not want them to know my secret. If I came out to them, in essence I would be coming out to my parents and the whole Indian community. That information had the power to travel more quickly than the speed of sound.

Oddly enough, though I have felt little support from the Hindu community, my religious and spiritual beliefs have been a great source of comfort and courage for me throughout my sexual identity development. I consider myself a Hindu not only because I was raised in this tradition but also because I truly believe in its core philosophy (though it is not always apparent to others in practice). A basic tenet of Hinduism is that every being has a soul; every soul is equal in the eyes

of God; and, therefore, every being is equal in the eyes of God. Regardless of creed, gender, sexual identity, religion or any other difference, all souls are formed from one substance that Hindus call God. To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing in Hindu scriptures that looks down upon homosexuality.

When I was struggling with accepting my sexuality in college, I emailed the editor of a Hindu magazine to which my family subscribes about this dilemma: “Can I be Hindu and gay?” I was not sure if anyone would even write back to me, but I was surprised to see an e-mail in my inbox the next day. It said something to the extent of homosexuality not being an “abnormality” or against my faith because we are all created by God and however we are created is who we are meant to be.

With this e-mail response boosting my confidence, I decided to come out to my cousin. While I paced back and forth in the bathroom of my residence hall, my cousin questioned whether I was playing a joke or going through a phase. As I had expected this relative to be the one person in my family who would understand my situation, this was an especially difficult conversation. He said, “I can’t believe you. Why are you telling me? Do you think I’m gay or something? Dude, the family is going to be pissed when they find out about this!” (P. Bhattacharya, personal communication, October 13, 2002). I really did not know what to say. I responded with, “Please promise me that you won’t tell anyone. I’m only telling you because I had to tell someone. All my friends know at college and I wanted you to know because I trust you to keep this secret.” I could tell he was in shock, trying to process the information. Overall he was understanding and remained on the phone with me throughout a two-hour long conversation.

My cousin is one of only two family members to whom I have come out, and I have a feeling things will remain this way for a while. During my college years and now in graduate school, I am out to most people. Though I have lost several friends in my life by coming out, I have accepted that people will constantly transition in and out of my life. However, it is much harder to lose family members, as they are the ones I hope will be always there, even when my so-called “friends” are not. I have close relationships with most of my family, especially my parents, and cannot imagine losing those bonds. I have a feeling that I will have to come out to them soon, especially when the wedding question arises. Indian culture believes strongly in arranged marriages, and my mother has already chosen a bride. This poor woman is now waiting for me to marry her and be her Prince Charming. The problem is, I want my own Prince Charming, too. I know this will be a difficult conversation to have but until that day comes, I will be who I am while trying to balance a parallel identity where my two worlds are kept separate (Dilley, 2005): one where I try to pass as a heterosexual man among other Indians and one in a non-Indian community where I try to fuse my ethnic and sexual identities.

*Struggling to Find a Voice (Nathan)*

*Nathan, why did you hang up on me? You look so ugly with your breasts showing off . . . You're a boy, Nathan. You are not a girl. You are only 23 . . . things can still change.* (family member, personal communication, October 14, 2006)

The Filipino portrayal of gay culture is similar to the Hindu version described by Raja. In Tagalog, the word similar to *hijra* is *bakla*, which “means dressing up, and making a living in the woman’s role, while his partner is usually straight” (Silverio, 2003, para. 4). Although I do not prescribe to this mentality, both friends and family members have perceived me in this fashion, as depicted in the quote above. In that example, after beginning a new workout routine, I had developed pectoral muscles. Apparently they looked like breasts.

Around age 12, I remember remarking to classmates that doing traditionally female things, like playing hopscotch, did not make me gay. I professed that “It’s not really that I’m a girl. I’m just a lesbian inside a guy’s body.” I knew I fell out of what the majority said a man should be; but I also recognized that I needed to like women. So instead of questioning the cultural expectations placed upon me by my religion and society, I questioned myself.

I believed that no one around me could empathize with my situation. My Catholic religion and my Filipino American cultural identity did not provide the channels I need to express myself. And so, I found refuge in what I believe is negatively facilitating the identity development of many closeted gay men today through its ability for fragmenting different selves—the Internet.

The World Wide Web allowed me to express my identity without coming out of the closet as a gay male. I was simultaneously able to connect with gay and bisexual men and maintain a certain level of discretion. The Internet allowed me to engage in what I thought my religion said homosexuality was all about: sex in all its forms. In the movie *God and Gays: Bridging the Gap*, one character said “[Heterosexual people] have a life. We have a lifestyle” (Clark, 2006). As Raja described, I led a double life: engaging in gay culture, while living a Catholic, Filipino American life.

My pre-collegiate education, 13 years of Catholic education, was very homogeneous. In the environment of grade school, White married parents left the hospital or office early to pick up their child in a Lexus or a BMW. Although I was fiscally similar to my classmates, I was visibly different due to my ethnic identity. It was not until high school where I fully realized I was also different due to my sexual identity. My high school was a private, preparatory, Catholic day school in Delaware. I was one of the few people of color in my graduating class of a little over 125, and I did not know anyone who was out. However, I am now dating someone who

graduated only a year above me from the same school and was out of the closet. My lack of awareness of other gay men in high school could have been caused by the sheltered environment in which people pretended to be welcoming of all different types of people, provided they were not gay or pro-choice.

I believe Catholicism's main inspiration is the Bible, a book that operates within a binary context. I recently heard that "the Bible is a wonderful story about oneness taught through the use of duality" (Clark, 2006). The binaries abound: man and woman, good and evil, right and wrong. Living within my contradictions, struggling when wrong doesn't "feel" wrong or evil feels "good," this mentality limited my life choices. My struggle around binaries was exacerbated by my dilemma around free will—a core tenant of Catholicism. Some Catholics believe that acting on homosexuality is a choice: homosexuality is a sin; a sin is a choice; therefore, living as a homosexual is a choice. Never mind that Catholics are taught to believe "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than [this]" (Mk 12:29-31 New American Bible). But I never fully felt the love.

Even without the support of those close to me, I got through most of high school by keeping my religious and gay lives separate. But as I came to realize that both my gay and Catholic Filipino identities were important to my identity, I did not know what to do. When I was forced to bridge these two identities, calamity ensued.

My coming out process to my family happened right before I went to college. Though when I look back, it was not really a process; it was an episode. It was late winter of my senior year. The Spring Musical was opening the next day, but a freak snowstorm canceled rehearsal and classes after 11 a.m. I decided to visit my boyfriend at the time, who lived in Philadelphia, roughly 30 minutes away, instead of going directly home from school. My short visit and nap turned into a six hour snooze-fest, leaving me to drive home in a foot of snow.

Upon entering my house, I was accosted by family. I struggled to come up with viable excuses to explain my absence, but my mother saw through each and every lie. She finally pried his number out of me, calling to verify that I had been with him. She asked him "Are you gay?" He answered, "Yes, and thus implicated me as well. At the time, he was 24, and I was 17. My parents threatened to throw him in jail, and the rest of the story is a painful blur.

This bridging of my gay and Filipino identities has strained my familial relationship. I almost did not go to the college of my choice due to the political liberalness of that environment. During preview weekend, the queer community chalked offensive material on the ground to challenge potential conservative matriculants. Though I found this action welcoming, my parents saw it as offensive. To my parents, sending me to that school was like "putting an alcoholic in a liquor store."

A pamphlet that I received from my parents right before I started college explains their mentality. It stated “similar to the recovering alcoholic, the homosexual must take one day at a time, and make it a day of activity combined with trust in the grace of God” (Harvey, 1979, p. 12).

### All-American Boy Next Door...Is That Me?

#### *Finding my Voice Through Building Meaningful Relationships (Nathan)*

As a gay Filipino youth, I rarely saw images of Asian or Asian American role models. Everywhere that I turned, I found images of blue-eyed, blonde haired men with perfectly chiseled faces, tanned skin, and defined muscles evident through their striped, fitted shirts. These images became my sexual ideal. Next to them was a feminine version of that model. In front of them were the children, one male and one female, and the dog, usually a golden retriever. These images became what I sought out. They became my norm. Little did I know that in my mind they were establishing the dominant discourse around Whiteness and heterosexuality.

In the 1950s, Bob Mizer, the founder of the Athletic Model Guild, supported this ideal. He had a specific aesthetic he wanted for his models, “which included chiseled muscles, a cleft chin, and, by and large, white skin” (Morgan as cited in Watt, 2002, p. 60). This aesthetic still exists today. These are the aesthetics necessary to fit into the gay world, the subcultural capital one must have to be valued. It is hard for many Asian Americans to achieve these looks, and at the beginning of my development, I was told by the gay environment I was not the norm. Growing up, it was not uncommon to hear, “You don’t sound like I thought you would. Your voice doesn’t have an accent.” Or, “You don’t look Asian. I’m not saying I’m racist, but you don’t have those eyes.”

Jill Nagle (2004) discusses the plight for queer men of color when stating “Any representations of men of color most often appear as fetishes for ‘white’ men’s interest” (p. 444). David Henry Hwang (1989) discusses this phenomenon specifically for Asian Americans in the afterword to *M. Butterfly*. He states, “in [interracial] relationships, the Asian virtually always plays the role of the ‘woman’; the Rice Queen [gay White men who only pursue gay Asian men], culturally and sexually, is the ‘man.’” (as cited in Chang, 2001, para. 11). I did not see myself or other gay people of color as full members of the queer community, and thus I fell prey to the racist environment of the gay culture within which I operated. As I internalized the belief that queer people of color (QPOCs) are inferior to gay White men, I unconsciously believed I needed to date a White man to become “full.” I avoided other QPOCs and only interacted with White men until my junior year of college.

During the fall of my junior year, I enrolled in a course called “Diaspora and Asian

American Experiences.” I experienced a phenomenon that Maira (2002) describes in her book *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City* as a “self-conscious, intellectual exploration of ethnic identity among college-age youth which leads to what some call an ‘ethnic revival’ in the second generation” (p. 4). Ang Lee’s (1993) *The Wedding Banquet*, a commentary on inter-racial relationships, was the first piece we analyzed in this course. This experience was the first time I was given some of the tools I needed to analyze the society in which I lived. I began to see that the reason I only had met gay White men was possibly due to internalized racism, and my avoidance of more effeminate men was due to my internalized homophobia. I started going to the QPOC meetings at my alma mater and dating QPOCs. Not until my graduate school search, however, would I break through all of my internalized racism and homophobia.

I first met Solomon during an interview weekend for a graduate program that I attended during my senior year of college. During the winter break of my first semester as a graduate student, Solomon and I reconnected. Meeting for coffee at a small café where he went to school, I found out that Solomon was gay. Our similarities were striking: we both had struggled with bridging our sexuality and religion. Neither of us had had “relations” with another Filipino. We both had dated only White men, and we both had felt feminized by our partners in our past relationships. Solomon is still a close colleague, and I value the discussions we have shared since that day.

Now that I am an out gay man, within a field that is much more welcoming to gay men compared to others, I have found a supportive community, including QPOC. This does not mean, however, that I do not continue to feel inferior in the gay community. I still go to gay establishments and get asked, “Where are you from? No, where are you *really* from?” implying that I cannot be gay, Asian American, and from the United States. But this community, including my non-Asian boyfriend who tries to understand what I am going through, loves and support me, and that is enough to keep me going.

#### *Finding Myself in a Distant World (Raja)*

As silly as it sounds, I grew up believing that I was the only gay Asian American in the world. Until my third year of college, I had never met an Asian American person who could relate to my experience. I see U.S. gay culture as predominantly White, upper-middle class, and urban. Some of the television series and films that portray gay men are *Queer as Folk*, *Will & Grace*, and *Brokeback Mountain*; it is not a coincidence that all the major characters are White. I have yet to see a positive representation of Asian American queer men in the media.

When it came time to choose colleges, I decided to attend a large, urban institution hoping that without the pressures of family and the Indian community, I could

openly explore my gay and ethnic identities at my own pace. A step in this process was exploring the gay scene in Boston. Within this exploration, I attended my first gay club, which was an awkward experience. Craig, the “All American” boy with stereotypical golden blonde hair and baby blue eyes, invited me to go clubbing with him and told me to meet him there. At this point, I was pretty sure I was gay but still had not ventured out to the gay scene. So I mustered up all my energy to go gay clubbing. Could I really walk into a gay club by myself? What if Craig was not there when I arrived? In the spirit of taking a chance and exploring new territory, I decided that it was time for me to check out the gay scene.

With my feet shaking and my heart pounding, I walked into the club, seeing a few scattered pockets of people as the music blared. I did a quick scan of the place, and I could not see anyone that I recognized. I was scared, and as I was about to turn around and walk away, I was relieved to find Craig. As more people came in, the music got louder and we started dancing. Within minutes, Craig was a man-magnet with a circle of admirers around him. I, on the other hand, was left dancing by myself. At this moment I took another look at the club to find that I was the only person of color in the whole room besides the Black drag queen dancing on the stage. I was feeling overwhelmed, and certainly did not know what to do when a guy in his mid-twenties came up to me and asked if I was Latino. When I told him I was Asian, he responded with, “Stop playing around, you’re not Asian!” I felt extremely out of place, and I began to doubt whether I was indeed gay. “Can Asians be gay?” I thought to myself as I quickly exited the club.

As I walked home with tears in my eyes, I realized that I was the only queer South Asian I knew. I had met other gay men in my residence hall, but they were mostly White and from upper-middle class backgrounds. I even met a few Asian queer people but never any that identified as South Asian. They never seemed interested in talking about these conflicting identities. That was the first and last time I went to a gay club until I found a community willing to engage in such conversations in the most unexpected of places: London, England.

D’Augelli’s (1994) model for lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) identity development can shed some light on many of the experiences I had throughout this time. When I landed in London, I was in the beginning stages of developing my own queer identity. In one of the first few weeks, I met Suborna (Subby), a British-born Indian who identified as a lesbian. She would be my gateway to the South Asian gay scene in London. Subby was amazing. She and I had many conversations about being Indian, Hindu, queer, and our experiences growing up in England and the United States, respectively. It was an unforgettable semester abroad.

She also introduced me to Club Kali, a club in the north end of London that transformed into a South Asian gay club every other Friday. The first time I went

there, I was blown away by the sheer number of Asian gay people in the room and the incredible mix of Eastern and Western music. For the first time in my life, I knew I was not alone. I remember thinking to myself, “Wow, I’m finally among a group of people who can identify with me. They don’t just know what it’s like to be a person of color or a queer person; they understand the whole experience!”

In this environment, my queer social identity prospered. I met many friends, and we went out to the local cafes and clubs three or four times each week. My time in London was crucial for my appreciation of being queer and Asian. After meeting these South Asian gay people there, I realized that a person could infuse both gay and Asian in an identity that was stable and not “abnormal.” I was always taught my sexuality was at odds with my religious beliefs and upbringing; therefore, I had always kept my identities in separate contexts. This epiphany of identity fusion helped to end my internal struggle of many years.

#### Identity (Con)Fusion

Graduate school has facilitated the fusion of our previously conflicting selves. When examining our graduate experience through the lens of Sanford’s (1967) theory of challenge and support, it is apparent that our friends, mentors, and colleagues have furthered our identity development. People from the campus community, especially those identifying as QPOCs, have been the first role models that we can fully relate to on professional and personal levels.

Our relationships in the cohort experience have established a forum to engage each other in conversations about our varied identities. To our program’s credit, the faculty make an effort to enroll a diverse (in all senses of the word) cohort, including other QPOCs. Although these colleagues may not identify with our nuanced experiences, they nevertheless provide support as active listeners as we explore similarities among our journeys. Questions of identity are topics of discussion during meals, walks to class, and social events. An environment where these topics can be approached at any time has allowed the furthering of our development.

Advisors and mentors throughout campus, especially those that identify as QPOCs, have served as the first role models that we have been able to emulate. While one of us benefited from knowledge of a QPOC student forum at his undergraduate institution, it is more effective here, as it provides a place where students, as well as administrators and faculty, can come together. In one of our graduate courses, Cultural Pluralism, we worked with a lesbian woman of color who provided us a positive role model and friend. Having her as one of our instructors assured us that we did not always have to be the “token” QPOC to address intersecting identities. Finally, in this woman we saw a QPOC who possessed characteristics that we have been told we could not have by our families and society: a long-term

relationship, children, and professional success. She has transformed a homogenous department into a diverse organization that now serves as a model for the rest of the institution.

In addition to these campus connections, professional associations have enhanced our support network. National and regional conferences with the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators offer communities supportive of our multiple identities. While presenting on QPOC student development at a regional conference this year, one of us found the response and attendance at the session empowering. Truly this topic interests the field, and we are now forming networks with others to continue these conversations.

Through reading this article, we hope that higher education and student affairs administrators will understand the difficulties that QPOCs face throughout their development, particularly in college. We specifically encourage practitioners to foster an environment conducive to QPOC development through the following:

1. Providing avenues for discussion of intersecting identities inside and outside the classroom.
2. Actively enhancing demographic diversity on campus through recruitment efforts and exploring the idea of intersecting identities.
3. Creating a safe space where QPOC students, faculty, and staff can engage in dialogues about their experiences.
4. Enhancing an understanding of the QPOC experience on campus.
5. Ensuring that QPOC students receive appropriate resources.
6. Offering mentorship programs for underrepresented communities.

This list is not exhaustive but serves as a springboard for measures that can be taken at institutional, departmental, and individual levels.

We entered this profession to become the visible mentors that we did not have in our undergraduate careers. To encourage administrators to be more aware of how their intersecting identities influence their professional philosophies, we offer the following quote as a final reflection:

My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves, without the restrictions of externally imposed definition.

(Audre Lorde, 2004, p. 69)

The concentration of energy that Lorde discusses has become a crucial part of our lives. Our profession must embrace a holistic conception of identity development. This mentality has created a more developed self-awareness and has allowed the previously unacknowledged aspects of our identities to shine.

## References

- Chang, J. (December 2001). *The Truth About GAM. Gay Asian Pacific Support Network*. [ONLINE]. New York: Penguin Group. Retrieved November 2005, from <http://www.gapsn.org/project2/discussion/changj.asp>
- Clark, K. (Producer), & Beck, L. (Director). (2006). *God and gays: Bridging the Gap* [Motion picture]. USA: Zernus.
- D'Augelli, A. R. (1994). Identity development and sexual orientation: Toward a model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development. In E. J. Trickett, R. J. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), *Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context* (pp. 312-333). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dilley, P. (2005). Which way out? A typology of non-heterosexual male collegiate identities. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76, 56-88.
- Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1998). *The development of college students: Theory, research, and application*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Harvey, J. F., O.S.F.S, S.T.D. (1979). *A spiritual plan to redirect one's life* [Pamphlet]. Boston: Daughters of St. Paul.
- Hijra (South Asia). (n.d.). *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 2006 from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hijra\\_\(South\\_Asia\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hijra_(South_Asia))
- India Law Info. *The Indian penal code*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 9, 2006 from <http://www.indialawinfo.com/bareacts/ipc.html>
- Lee, Ang. (Producer). (1993). *The Wedding Banquet* [Motion picture]. United States: MGM.
- Lorde, A. (2004). Age, race, class, and sex: Women redefining difference. In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (pp. 64-71). Belmont, CA: Thomson and Wardsworth.
- Maira, S. M. (2002). *Desis in the house: Indian American youth culture in New York City*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Martinez, E., (2004). Seeing more than Black and White. In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, Class, and Gender* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Nagle, J. (1996). Skinny, "White" chicks and hung, buff boys: Queer sex spaces and their discontents. In D. Atkins (Ed.), *Looking queer, body image and identity in lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgendered communities*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.
- Pope, R. L., Reynolds, A. L., & Mueller, J. A. (2004). *Multicultural competence in student affairs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sanford, N. (1967). *Where colleges fail*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Silverio, I. A. R. (2003, March 9). Oscar Atadero: Leading the gay life. *Bulatlat*, 3(6). Retrieved November 7, 2006, from <http://www.bulatlat.com/news/3-6/3-6-gaylife.html>
- Watt, E. (2002). *The making of a gay Asian community: An oral history of pre-AIDS Los Angeles*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

## Educating for Power: How Higher Education Contributes to the Stratification of Social Class

Alissa B. Strong

*Educational attainment in the United States has become increasingly linked to socioeconomic mobility. In particular, systems of higher education provide resources that give power and legitimacy to a limited group of U.S. citizens: the middle and upper classes. This power translates into political influence, financial control, and cultural supremacy that further divide social classes. By breeding graduates with economic privilege and marketable skills, systems of higher education contribute to the widening gap among people in different socioeconomic statuses. Acknowledging and examining the oppressive structure in which college students are engaged may help to extend educational opportunities to more Americans and challenge our perceptions of scholarship.*

An exploration of the history of education can reveal the ways in which dualistic notions have influenced societal standards. As formal education grew institutionally in the United States, social class structures also became more distinctive. The dualistic ideals that educational systems standardize often determine what truths we find legitimate and credible within U.S. culture. Teresa Córdova (1997) explains that this “legitimate knowledge” has gained enough merit to garner power for whoever has possession of it. In this way, higher education as a system allocates power and money to those who are considered the most “fit” and credible according to socially established standards (p. 209). This power imbalance contributes to the widening of social class differences and the narrowing of prospective opportunities.

The individuals who are members of the middle and upper classes gain the most societal power as higher education provides them such proficiencies as political skills and bargaining tools. Thus, higher education breeds middle and upper class citizens who gain greater benefits than those in the lower class. This inequity can be traced back to the structuring of the educational system, which has historically been revered as objective and elite (Gatto, 2003). In having the power to determine the credible truths of society, higher education has granted degrees that translate into political tools, economic mobility, and ultimately power for those who are able to gain access to a college or university. In doing so, higher education as a system

---

*Alissa B. Strong is a member of the HESA class of 2007. After receiving her degree from Rutgers University, she spent a year doing community service as a member of AmeriCorps\*NCCC. In her graduate work, she has become especially interested in aspects of health and wellness, service-learning, and international student engagement.*

oppresses those from the lower class. The intent of this article is to examine higher education as an oppressive force that perpetuates social class disparities through economic and cultural means.

### Higher Education as a Market

Higher education has become a type of market for career advancement that is drifting out of the reach of those in lower socioeconomic classes. Scott L. Thomas (2004) writes about the effects of a globalized economy in the United States and its consequences for higher education. He explains that obtaining a degree in higher education is not only an advantage but also a necessity for gaining access into “quality jobs and economic opportunities” (p. 105). U.S. education, he claims, has become a primary vehicle to advance one’s social class. This is apparent in the vast differences between job descriptions, benefits, and compensation among those who do and do not attend college. In short, the U.S. economy has enabled the college degree to act as a mechanism that maintains or advances one’s social class and therefore one’s power.

Although the “American Dream” suggests that the harder people work, the more they will flourish economically, there are alarming quantifiable data that suggest this may not be true. David Brooks (2005) explains how economic circumstances affect one’s educational opportunities in the United States, stating that almost 75% of students in the top quarter of the population have a chance at obtaining a college degree. However, students in the lowest class brackets are least likely to obtain a degree, at 8.6% (para. 10). This drastic difference suggests that those in lower classes have a severe disadvantage in gaining access to higher education. If those in the majority of the upper and middle classes have the best chances at obtaining these degrees, they will also have the best career placement opportunities. In fact, in 2010, 42% of jobs in the United States will require a college degree (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006, p. 126).

Having these educational credentials and career experiences will help individuals advance economically and professionally. Those with a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2000 made twice the median income of high school graduates (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006, p. 126). They will have the ability to move into larger salary brackets, assimilate into higher class cultures, and increase their cultural capital or political influence. Meanwhile, those who are unable to obtain access to higher education will experience a disadvantage in each of these realms.

In relation to these statistics, students’ motivations for attending college have also shifted over the last few decades. Thomas (2004) refers to an annual study by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, which shows that in 1966, 84% of entering first-year students were pri-

marily seeking to “develop a meaningful philosophy of life” while in college. As of 1990, approximately the same percent of students were more concerned with being “very well off financially” at the conclusion of their college education (p. 109). Since 1990, financial success is still considered a primary goal of education for the majority of students. Students’ shift in perspective is reflective of how higher education’s role in stratifying social class.

### The Original Intentions of Education

The focus on lucrative career goals, higher social status, and economic values has grown as systems of education have evolved. John Taylor Gatto (2003) explores the original intentions of public education by noting the perspective of Alexander Inglis, author of *Principles of Secondary Education*. By studying Inglis’ interpretation of the purposes of education, we can begin to examine how students are moving through the educational system as pawns of social class construction. Inglis describes the purpose of school as demonstrating six basic functions. The first includes teaching students how to submit to authority, which stunts the development of critical thinking and questioning. He claims that schools also function to integrate students into conforming behaviors that are predictable and assimilated. In doing so, school teachers and administrators designate a specific social role for students according to their academic records. The students’ education then trains them to perform this role. In addition, Inglis posits that schools use academic merits to filter out those who are considered unfit to excel according to societal standards. Lastly, these steps will ultimately determine which groups of students will be recruited into an elite status and which will be relegated into power structures that define those who do not excel in the same way.

These functions stifle the development of critical examining skills as well as students’ abilities to make autonomous choices. Inglis’s description of assimilating knowledge or determining one’s fitness for social roles can be perceived as the placement of students within social class structures. Neglecting the development of these critical skills in an educational experience enables the dominant values of those in power to unknowingly persist. With an inability to challenge dominating values, students find themselves entrenched in this system even as they progress into higher levels of education. Without the skills to critically consider the implications of academia, students become cogs within an oppressive structure at a young age. Higher education offers the opportunity to transform and challenge these structures; yet, those who are gaining the most access to higher education are the ones who have excelled most according to these standards.

### The Dualistic Nature of Education

Historically, those who obtained an education would be considered “better” than

others by society's standards. Saying that a particular type of knowledge or way of learning is better than another, however, enhances the societal expectation that all people should find such revered things as education desirable (Downie, Loudfoot, & Telfer, 1974). Using these labels places more value on an education or a degree compared to goals that have less credibility or clout. This point reinforces a binary of what is right and wrong and the elitist culture of higher education.

Anne Bishop (2005), author of *Beyond Token Change*, suggests that there is an expectation that those with an education are considered "good" or "better" (p. 121). She explains that the use of such words prematurely places a dualistic lens on the value of education. If one is seen as "good" by pursuing an education, can another who does not pursue an education be perceived as "bad?" Furthermore, is there an accepted notion that our personal best can only be assessed and realized through the formal standards of an "education?"

Bishop (2005) also explains that U.S. culture relies on this type of dualistic meaning-making: "We tend to think in mutually exclusive categories: bad or good, subjective or objective" (p. 121). Assigning values to education is just one example of how higher education as a system is able to convert knowledge into bargaining tools for power.

This is one way society has been able to delegate credibility and power to those who know their rights and wrongs (as determined by the elite) within a dualistic framework of U.S. culture. Institutions of higher education easily measure such merit in "a unique hodgepodge of standardized test scores, grades, and extracurricular activities" (Thomas, 2004, p. 114). Those who excel within these areas will be considered the best students and most fit individuals for society. This kind of merit serves as a type of currency within U.S. society. By determining who is best by the academic standards of an institution, education begins to stratify those who succeed within the structures of a university and those who do not or never make it there.

This merit is based on middle- and upper-class standards of excellence that give benefits to certain people over others. Such examples include excelling on particular types of examinations, demonstrating skills in certain subject areas, and valuing narrowed ideals of intellectualism. Donna Langston (2004) examines one example of how education is structured as a classist system that divides students according to these standards:

The classist system is perpetuated in schools with the tracking system, whereby the "dumbs" are tracked into homemaking, shop courses, and vocational school futures, while the "smarts" end up in advanced math, science, literature, and college-prep courses. If we examine these groups carefully, the coincidence of poor and working-class backgrounds with

“dumbs” is rather alarming. . . . To do well in society presupposes middle-class background, experiences and learning for everyone. (p. 145)

Many educational experiences are created and evaluated in ways that give advantages to one type of student over another. Examples of this culture can be seen in academic expectations of using appropriate language and formal writing. Both of these presuppose, as Langston argues, knowledge of middle-class culture. As individuals gain academic merit through these expectations, they also gain credibility in society. Since American society places value on these attainable merits, it also determines who is fit to have the most power over decision making and culture creating. Therefore, educational tactics that separate the “dumbs” from the “smarts” contribute to the growing divide of social class and societal power.

### Merit and Legitimate Knowledge

Córdova (1997) explains the power of higher education in determining legitimate knowledge and its function as a source of credibility in society. She writes, “The University is a central location for establishing knowledge as a discourse of power, where the power to decide what is considered truth or not, is tied to the power to legitimate that truth (or non-truth)” (p. 209). In other words, the university acts as an authority of scholarship and knowledge, thus influencing the truths of society. If U.S. society values the truths associated with legitimate knowledge, then those who have access to education will also have access to influence and power, thus becoming part of the dominant class. Institutions of higher education serve as a major source of legitimate knowledge that can later translate into power for the middle and upper classes.

For each of these reasons, higher education acts as a resource from which individuals can access merit, social mobility, and ultimately power. Higher education continues to heighten class mobility for some and stunt it for others; therefore, it oppresses individuals in lower socioeconomic statuses. Bishop (2005) explains that such institutional structures as higher education set “strong norms about who is valuable and who is not, and what actions are out of bounds and who can punish those that cross the lines or do not have the right to be where they are” (p. 77). By identifying who is valuable and limiting what actions are acceptable, systems of higher education further perpetuate class inequities. Bishop’s explanation reinforces the oppressive consequences of how higher education functions within U.S. society.

### The Hope in Higher Education

As higher education has the ability to contribute to this culture of elitism, it also carries the potential to play a crucial role in the development of its students. Although theorists like Inglis argue that students are taught from a young age not to

think critically (Gatto, 2003), others like Paulo Freire (2004) offer some hope to be realized within structures of higher education. In a dialogue at the University of Mexico, Freire explains his perspective on the dialectical relationship between the oppressive dominant culture that higher education promotes and the students that are actively resisting its oppression. Although Freire agrees that systematic education serves to reproduce “the ideology of the dominant class,” he describes the contradiction of the educational system as providing tools to fight against itself (as cited in Escobar, Fernandez, Fuera-Niebla, & Freire, 1994, p. 32). In his discussion, Freire offers a viewpoint that shines some glimpse of hope on oppressive educational systems.

As class interests are embedded in the historical and structural foundations of education, Freire (2004) believes that the main purpose of education is to reproduce the values and expectations of the dominant culture in order to maintain its power. From Freire’s theoretical perspective, education would qualify as a type of structure that oppresses others:

Indeed, the interests of the oppressors lie in ‘changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them’; for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated. (Freire, p. 74)

At the same time, he claims that opportunities, such as attending institutions of higher education, offer the chance to work against this reproduction of dominant values if the institution encourages action and critical thinking. He thinks of education as “our” possession, which we can use to our advantage in counteracting the dominant culture. Yet, there remains uncertainty in challenging the dominant power if all students are embedded in it. Further, can those in lower classes find ways to gain access to higher education and then the tools to confront these oppressive systems?

If education persists in oppressing populations by promoting classism, students need to counteract its dominant forces continuously. Students must be aware of the privilege they gain as part of “one of the great inequality producing machines this country has known” (Brooks, 2005, para. 1). Higher education professionals must acknowledge the systemic reproduction of middle- and upper-class cultures in order to expand the truths that control society. Most importantly, higher education professionals must reconsider how higher education can include other populations in the pursuit of knowledge. These suggestions are in no way finite solutions to the inequitable consequences of higher education but rather a responsibility of the academy and the students.

Freire (2004) states, “In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform”

(p. 49). Heeding Freire's advice, administrators and faculty alike must transform the ways an institution standardizes and limits access to knowledge. In addition, they must encourage students to think critically and question their inherent domination. Students must engage in open dialogues that bring to light the endless facets of knowledge that have not been traditionally valued. Such transformations may enable students to feel less like a tiered population of learners and more like equitable peers. Also, dialoguing in this way can encourage more collaborative efforts and open-mindedness in pursuing change. This in turn will aid the development of educational achievements, political representation, and financial resources of oppressed classes of people over time.

Attempting to undermine the oppressive constructs within higher education can be both daunting and intimidating. It is appropriate after exploring this topic for the reader to gain some tangible ideas that can be implemented to stimulate change. The most obvious suggestion (and also the task that would cause the most upheaval) would be to restructure a university to model values and beliefs that are not exclusively based on the interests of historically White upper and middle class culture. This restructuring could include redefining curricula in ways that encourage exploration, interaction with communities different from one's own, and openness to subjective truths. Enhancing curricula and campus life in ways that acknowledge the cultures and values of various social classes and backgrounds would help students become aware of the privileges their knowledge affords them. Pedagogies like service-learning or experiential education could involve students in ways that would heighten their awareness as individuals and as members of society. As universities continue to graduate students with legitimate knowledge and marketable skills, they should simultaneously acknowledge how higher education acts as an oppressive structure within U.S. society. In addition to this recognition, students should be encouraged to challenge and critically examine which dominant structures are oppressive, how they are dominating, and whom they are oppressing. Universities and students could foster opportunities for collaboration and dialogue. Finally, by reconsidering the ways knowledge is measured and labeled within educational systems, universities can implement equitable ways to afford working-class students access to higher education.

Escobar (1994) states, "it is not possible to think of education without thinking about power" (p. 32). Higher education in the United States is currently breeding the next generation of powerful leaders. They will gain abilities and skills that will be converted into benefits and power within a country that values educational meritocracy. Those who have no financial access to higher education will be at a dramatic disadvantage in seeking representation and support. Because of the differences in culture between social classes, a lack of understanding between individuals as well as stratified groups will continue. This will widen the growing cultural gap between classes, which exacerbates financial and political circumstances.

Bearing in mind Freire's thoughtful words, "World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction" (as cited in Escobar et al., 1994, p. 50), we can begin to understand how these differences can be acknowledged and appreciated. Recognizing each other as humans in constant interaction can help us to focus our energy on distributing resources and educational opportunities equitably. Only by transforming the way students gain access to and engage in scholarship can we begin to broaden our cultural, class, and educational values.

## References

- Bishop, A. (2005). *Beyond token change: Breaking the cycle of oppression in institutions*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.
- Brooks, D. (2005, September 25). The education gap. *New York Times*. Retrieved October 1, 2005 from <http://www.nytimes.com>
- Córdova, T. (1997). Power and knowledge: Colonialism in the academy. *Taboo: The journal of culture and education*, 2, 209-234.
- Downie, R. S., Loudfoot, E. M., & Telfer, E. (1974). *Education and personal relationships*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd.
- Escobar, M., Fernandez, A. L., Fuevara-Niebla, G., & Freire, P. (1994). *Paulo Freire on higher education: A dialogue at the National University of Mexico*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Freire, P. (2004). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (30th Anniversary Edition). New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.
- Gatto, J. T. (2003, September). Against school: How public education cripples our kids, and why. *Harper's Magazine*, 307(184), 31-38.
- Haveman, R., & Smeeding, T. (2006). The role of higher education in social mobility. *The future of children*, 16(2), 125-143.
- Langston, D. (2004). Tired of playing monopoly? In M. L. Anderson & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class and gender* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Thomas, S. L. (2004). Globalization, college participation, and socioeconomic mobility. In J. K. Odin & P. T. Manicas (Eds.), *Globalization and higher education* (pp. 104-130). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

## Fat in College: A Social Overview

Kristen Crepezzi

*Fat college students struggle with many social barriers both at the academy and in the greater context of society. Individuals who are classified as overweight or obese are stigmatized as lazy or out of control and are less likely than non-fat people to make it to college (Crandall 1994). Much of the prejudice directed at fat individuals is based on incorrect and ill-researched assumptions about individual responsibility for weight and the impact of weight on health. The social acceptability of anti-fat attitudes makes it less likely for fat individuals to claim group identity even though this may be their best chance for social fit.*

When I decided to begin to outline the struggles of overweight women in higher education, I knew the task would be daunting. I was aware of a growing body of fat-positive fiction and non-fiction through activity online and was prepared to spend time deciphering its application to fat women in college. I spoke to some students before my initial library excursion and was astounded by the length and depth of our conversations. I was unintentionally opening a discussion that many college students never have: one about what it means, socially, to be a fat person. They told me stories to which I could instantly relate about broken chairs and dining rituals, about clothes shopping and spring break.

As a fat woman who has spent the past five years on college campuses, I have a special affinity for this topic. To preface, I call myself a fat woman, because I find the word *fat* to be least offensive and most descriptive of the possibilities. As Marilyn Wann (1998) writes in her book *Fat!So?*, “It’s time to put *fat* into the hands of people who will use its power for good, not evil!” (p. 18). I believe that euphemisms are tools to disguise what we find distasteful, “but there is nothing wrong with being fat, so there’s nothing wrong with using the word” (p. 20). I am not big-boned, or curvy, or Rubenesque, or over-weight, or chubby. I am fat, and this is my word of choice. The use of this word is strategic, political, radical, and accurate.

When I began researching this topic, I left for the library with many questions and a list of resources to locate. I was self-conscious. I was afraid that somehow people in the library would know that I was researching being fat and its social implications while carrying around my own markers of what society tells me is an obesity epidemic. As I approached the circulations desk with titles like *Big Fat Lies* (Gaesser, 2002) and *Fat: The Anthropology of an Obsession* (Kulick & Meneley,

---

*Kristen Crepezzi is a fat, feminist graduate of Rutgers College. As a second year HESA student, she works in Campus Programming and looks forward to all that comes after graduation.*

2005), I realized that although my search for books on being fat could be done in stealth, the person behind the counter would know what I was doing. He was my access to the literature I needed, but he would also have the power to pass judgment on me. I put my books on the desk and mentioned I had a book on recall. The thin young man behind the counter avoided eye contact when he came back to me holding a book that proclaimed the title *Fat Politics* (Oliver, 2006) in large bold letters. He looked at the book and then at me and asked, “This one?” I have never been more embarrassed in a library before. As I gathered my books to scuttle out the door, the student worker looked at me and burped, loudly and obnoxiously. I left with greater resolve, though a little less pride.

My experience represents that of a growing number of college students. Although Christian Crandall (1995) has shown that heavy daughters are less likely to have a parent-financed education and that fat people, in general, are less likely to attend college (1994), the majority of people living in the United States are considered overweight. The implications of occupying a stigmatized position can lead overweight women to low self-esteem by internalizing society’s messages about their bodies without analyzing the beliefs that underpin anti-fat attitudes. Without a positive group identity, fat women may be their own worst critics.

#### The Fat Epidemic: Are You What You Eat?

To be thin is to be in a coveted position in the United States (Levitt 2004). With 60% of Americans deemed overweight (Ryan, 2005) and with nearly twice as many children overweight today since 1980 (Oliver, 2006), it may seem obvious to many that the nation is facing a fat epidemic, but this language describing fatness is problematic. Instead of an acknowledgement of statistical differences among people’s body sizes or a symptom of a greater underlying health risk, obesity is categorized as a disease in its own right (Jutel, 2005). Though a high Body Mass Index (BMI) may be a warning sign of inadequate physical activity, it is often interpreted as the ultimate cause of many health ailments. The origin of the BMI, which is now used to classify individuals as overweight or obese, stems from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company’s attempt to track deaths of its policy holders to determine risk (Oliver). The statistics generated by the insurance company and the BMI index blame many more deaths on obesity than is actually warranted. The correlation between obesity and what are considered “obesity related ailments” is clinically unproven (p. 50). Instead of working out to be fit and healthy, Americans are working out to lose weight because it is assumed that height to weight ratio reflects health (Oliver).

A belief that fat is unhealthy is not necessarily enough to translate into a dislike of fat people. Another social implication of classifying obesity as an epidemic is the belief that the fat person is at fault for their situation (Crandall & Martinez,

1996). In a cross-cultural comparison, Crandall and Martinez (1996) surveyed 406 undergraduates in the United States and Mexico on anti-fat attitudes and found that “dislike was higher in the United States, indicating that fat people were more denigrated on campus in the United States than in Mexico” (p. 1169). In the United States, weight is not only used as a measure of a person’s health, but it is also common for weight to be considered a measure of character. “If people are fat, it is only because they are too lazy or irresponsible to ‘take care’ of themselves” (Oliver, 2006, p. 6).

“As members of Western society, we presume we know the histories of all fat bodies, particularly those of fat women; we believe we know their desires (which must be out of control) and their will (which must be weak)” (Murray, 2005, p. 154). This idea that an outside observer can tell people’s character and health by their physical presence denies much scientific evidence. Not only has it been shown that one can be fat and fit (Oliver, 2006; Ryan, 2005), but the role of genetics has been drastically underplayed (Oliver) in an attempt to uphold the obesity epidemic misnomer. Moreover, studies relating body weight to food intake indicate “obese people ate the same amount or less than people of average weight” (Crandall & Martinez, 1996, p. 1174). If the overeating hypothesis is false and dieting fails 90% of the time (Oliver), fat people are being held socially accountable for forces beyond their control.

#### Fat Phobia

A number of studies have surfaced detailing the social stigmatization of overweight individuals. Not only are fat people less likely to make friends, get hired, or connect with others in romantic relationships, but also they are assumed to be gluttonous and slothful. Assumptions about how fat people became fat and why they remain so temper attitudes toward overweight individuals.

Robinson, Bacon and O’Reilly (1993) found that obese people are stereotyped as “undisciplined, inactive, and unappealing” and as having “emotional and psychological problems” (p. 476). These anti-fat attitudes increased when respondents had more than a high school education (Robinson, Bacon & O’Reilly), suggesting that fat students on college campuses may face more anti-fat attitudes than those in high schools. “More than a quarter of college students believe that becoming fat is the worst thing that could happen to a person” (Oliver, 2006, p. 60). This fear of fat and superiority of thinness is not only a statement about what body type is valued in the United States, but also the basis of a socially acceptable form of discrimination. There are only a small number of places where differential treatment based on weight is against the law; everywhere else in the United States a fat person has no means for legal recourse against this type of discrimination (Ryan, 2005). Weight is not protected by most non-discrimination policies, and negative

speech surrounding body size is not officially considered hate-speech (though it may be rooted in similar sentiments).

In research examining the proximity effect surrounding obese individuals, Hebl and Mannix (2003) found that “obesity appears to affect people beyond those who bear the obesity stigma” (p. 31). Specifically, average-sized men sitting next to obese women in social situations, regardless of any relationship, were judged more negatively than those who were seated next to average-sized women. This research may have some relevance to the friendships fat people make. If a friendship with a stigmatized individual will translate into negative stereotypes on the non-stigmatized individual then those friendships will be avoided (Hebl & Mannix, 2003). Furthermore, the 196 undergraduate students in the study who were asked to rate the men’s hire-ability based on similar qualifications plus photographs from the social aspect of an interview confirm a “stigma-by-association” effect (Hebl & Mannix, 2003). Such stigma effects may be at work socially at our institutions of higher education. If sitting next to an overweight woman can undermine a candidate’s qualifications for a job, it might be of interest to examine the social phenomena surrounding friends of heavy women in college.

In a study of college women, Quinn and Crocker (1998) found that women who perceived themselves as overweight were more likely to have low self-esteem and higher levels of anxiety and depression than average-weight women. The social prejudice against those who are overweight may become internalized, with the individual feeling disconnected from her body. In general, fatness is seen as a period where “one is waiting to become ‘thin’, to become ‘sexual’, waiting to become” (Murray, 2005, p. 155). “Fat people, aware of negative social stereotypes of corpulent bodies, often blame themselves and live with guilt about their body shape and about taking up too much space” (Longhurst, 2005, p. 252). Instead of acknowledging their own character and importance, fat people are encouraged to believe that their size reflects inner flaws in the composition of their personality. The negative responses that fat people encounter affect the way they respond to themselves (Quinn & Crocker).

The negative expectations of fat people can have a significant influence on how they develop and use their social skills. In a study conducted by Miller, Rothblum, Barbour, Brand, and Felicio (1990), it was suggested that social expectations can prove self-fulfilling for obese women. In ratings by college student judges with whom obese and non-obese women had telephone conversations, the obese women were considered less likable, lacked social skills, and were expected to be less physically attractive than their non-obese counterparts (Miller et al.). It seems as though there are non-physical markers, which distinguish the social interaction of the obese from the average sized. Moreover, the heavier the women were, the less interested they felt their partners would be in them. Even in non-physi-

cal environments, fat people rate themselves as more anxious and less likable. According to Miller et al., the stigmas attached to obesity and a person's lived experience of negative treatment have a limiting effect on the development of a fully functional social skill set.

"Thinness and attractiveness are highly valued in college culture" (Levitt, 2004, p. 111). The importance of an attractive body in appraising others is not limited to those with socially beautiful bodies. Crandall (1994) found that there is no relationship between one's own body size and reactions to other people's weight. Fat people are nearly just as likely to express anti-fat sentiments as thin people (Crandall). This denial of a group identity may be one of the most important and interesting pieces of weight-based judgments. Without a sense of group membership, fat people deny themselves a positive group identity, which can result in a more complete sense of self and healthier self-esteem. Since fatness is not considered to be a permanent state of identity, individuals are not often willing to classify themselves with obese others due in part to the social stigma attached to other fat people.

#### Fat Oppression

In her article *It's a Big Fat Revolution*, Nomy Lamm (2001) declares, "All forms of oppression work together, and so they have to be fought together" (1995, p. (138)). In a 1994 study by Christian Crandall of anti-fat attitudes of undergraduates, it was found that some kinds of oppression might not only work together but also may look similar. When rating individuals who had made a racist comment against those who made an anti-fat comment it was shown that the anti-fat comment had a much less significant effect on the rater's perception of the individual (Crandall). This type of research may suggest, given that anti-fat comments did have mild affects on ratings, "social suppression of antifat sentiment is not as strong or well-developed as the pressure to suppress racist attitudes" (p. 889).

Like other forms of oppression, discrimination based on body size rests neither on fact nor science. Beliefs that fat people are fat through their own poor choices and that weight is individually controllable have not been proven accurate but still form a basis for discrimination. This discrimination against fat people is accepted in our society, and its premises are widely shared. Changes in social acceptance of overt prejudice against women and racial minorities suggests that the anti-fat attitudes of today may be displaced over the years through movements and organizations similar to those that formed against sexism and racism (Robinson, Bacon & O'Reilly, 1993). This interpretation rests on the assumption of a group identity among stigmatized people, but,

The stigma of the overweight is a somewhat unique stigma in that many of those in the stigmatized group consider their status temporary. There

is no reason for them to develop group consciousness or attempt to change the way society views their weight because most members believe that they will be able to leave the group through weight loss. Therefore, a person may profess great dislike and disgust toward overweight others even though he or she may be overweight. (Quinn & Crocker, 1998, p. 126)

In addition, prejudice against fat people has very little social sanctioning attached to it (Robinson, Bacon & O'Reilly).

Anti-fat prejudice does not work alone. Crandall and Martinez (1996) found that anti-fat attitudes are “associated with just world beliefs, political conservatism, and a tendency to blame the poor for their poverty” (p. 1170). Fat people use compensation techniques to socially overcome the negative impact of their weight. Fat individuals are more likely to occupy lower socioeconomic statuses due in part to unchecked discrimination at every stage of the employment process (Crandall, 1994). “Fat people are often forced to squeeze into places such as seats, changing rooms and toilet cubicles that do not fit” (Longhurst, 2005). The importance of fit should not be ignored, though research on its application to higher education settings is missing. When individuals cannot physically fit comfortably in the environment, there is an important message that the needs of heavier people are not valid and that they do not belong in the seats that do not contain them adequately.

### Talking Fat

Leoneda Inge-Barry articulates, “Even though I had two sisters, dozens of neighborhood girlfriends and tons of cousins, I never ‘talked fat’ with them. My fat was between me and the bathroom mirror” (as cited in Edut, 2003, p. 146). Because to be fat is to be in a severely socially stigmatized group and because fat people do not generally feel cohesion within a fat group identity, discussions about fatness are hard to find. “Debates sometimes surface about fat people taking up too many resources (such as health and medical resources), but the discrimination, marginalization, fear, loathing and ridicule that fat people often experience on a daily basis tends to remain invisible” (Longhurst, 2005, p. 252). The importance of safe spaces to talk about weight cannot be overemphasized. Some individuals have never spoken about weight publicly in a positive way. When students get to a position of comfort with their larger body, acknowledging that fat can also be fit, it is significant for them to have a place to express their new sense of self-worth.

Just talking about fat may not be enough for some; movement toward a positive group identity needs to be encouraged. There are national organizations working to allow fat people to connect with others like them in order to further their development into a fat identity. Through political action, “NAAFA [National

Association to Advance Fat Acceptance] works to stop the daily discrimination against fat people” (Murray, 2004, p. 243). It is important for average-sized administrators and fat allies to take into account the special needs of fat students who may be embarrassed or ashamed to vocalize their own needs. Because fatness is an openly stigmatized position, it is all the more important to form campus advocates for size acceptance. When groups order t-shirts it may be necessary for good advisors to step in and advocate for larger sized options in order to be inclusive of all people.

Fat role models are also an important aspect of the development of a positive fat identity. Since fat people are underrepresented in colleges and in the professional workforce it can be difficult for individuals to find themselves identifying with many of the individuals with whom they work, live, and study. Because of the detrimental effects of identifying with anti-fat attitudes while being heavy, it is important for fat individuals to see places where they can fit in the academy without being ridiculed or expected to fit size norms.

#### References

- Crandall, C. S. (1994). Prejudice against fat people: Ideology and self-interest. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66, 882-894.
- Crandall, C. S. (1995). Do parents discriminate against their heavyweight daughters? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, 724-735.
- Crandall, C. S., & Martinez, R. (1996). Culture, ideology, and antifat attitudes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 1165-1176.

- Edut, O. (2003). *Body outlaws: Rewriting the rules of beauty and body image* (2nd ed.). Emeryville, CA: Seal Press. Gaesser, G. A. (2002). *Big fat lies: The truth about your weight and your health*. Carlsbad, CA: Gürze Books.
- Hebl, M. R., & Mannix, L. M. (2003). The weight of obesity in evaluating others: A mere proximity effect. [Electronic version]. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29, 28-38.
- Inge-Barry, L. (2003). Mirror, mirror on the wall. In O. Edut (Ed.), *Body outlaws: Rewriting the rules of beauty and body image* (pp. 144-151). Emeryville, CA: Seal Press.
- Jutel, A. (2005). Weighing health: The moral burden of obesity. [Electronic version]. *Social Semiotics*, 15(2), 113-125.
- Kulick, D. & Meneley, A. (2005). *Fat: The anthropology of an obsession*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Lamm, N. (1995). It's a bit fat revolution. In B. Findlen (Ed.), *Listen up: Voices from the next feminist generation* (pp. 85-94). Seattle, WA: Seal Press.
- Levitt, D. H. (2004). Drive for thinness and fear of fat among college women: Implications for practice and assessment. [Electronic version]. *Journal of College Counseling*, 7, 109-117.
- Longhurst, R. (2005). Fat bodies: Developing geographical research agendas. [Electronic version]. *Progress in Human Geography*, 29(3), 247-259.
- Miller, C. T., Rothblum, E. D., Barbour, L., Brand, P. A., & Felicio, D. (1990). Social interactions of obese and nonobese women. *Journal of Personality*, 58(2), 365-380.
- Murray, S. (2004). Locating aesthetics: Sexing the fat woman. [Electronic version]. *Social Semiotics*, 14(3), 237-247.
- Murray, S. (2005). (Un/be)coming out? Rethinking fat politics. [Electronic version]. *Social Semiotics*, 15(2), 153-163.
- Oliver, J. E. (2006). *Fat politics: The real story behind America's obesity epidemic*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Quinn, D. M. & Crocker, J. (1998). Vulnerability to the affective consequences of the stigma of overweight. In J. K. Swim & C. Stangor (Eds.), *Prejudice: The target's perspective*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Robinson, B. E., Bacon, J. C., & O'Reilly, J. (1993). Fat phobia: Measuring, understanding, and changing anti-fat attitudes. [Electronic version]. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 14, 467-480.
- Ryan, N. (2005). Absolutely fabulous: Three interviews with size-acceptance activists. *Iris Magazine* [Electronic version], 50, 34-49.
- Wann, M. (1998). *Fat!So?: Because you don't have to apologize for your size!* Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

## “Where do I Fit?”

Elizabeth M. Guevara

Ontario, California is the place that I call home,  
a place where the “exotic” language of Spanish is the common language  
where the *elote* man is around every corner.

Ontario is a community where I found my people everywhere I turned.  
But this all changed.

I moved seven hours north to Santa Cruz, California to follow a *sueño*.

I was no longer a part of the 909 but now the 831.

Changing area codes was the easiest step for me in the journey to follow my  
dreams.

I was now faced with being labeled a *Student of Color*.

*A Student of What? ¿Qué?*

I did not blend in with my new community--I was now different.

I soon found out there are not that many Portuguese and Peruvian mixes out  
there.

Being multi-racial puts me in a different category;

Torn between two sides of my identity.

Not feeling complete.

Outsider.

I was the conqueror and the conquered all in one.

I did not just know three languages; I also knew two cultures and traditions.

I had to find a way to keep true to my identities but adapt to my new  
surroundings and find a space where

I could be authentic!

A space where I could speak my mind, not be seen different, and

be open to understand how society perceives me as a White woman or a Latina  
or an Other.

I was able to find Latino and multicultural student groups,

but I was still not able to fully connect with them.

I was finally exposed to a multi-racial student group--I found my place.

---

*Elizabeth M. Guevara, originally from Southern California, received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Elizabeth is currently a first-year graduate student in the HESA program and serves as the Assistant Residence Director for the Living Learning Center at UVM.*

I was not expected to pick one side of me or the other,  
I was able to embrace my background and was finally seen as Me!

But the Guevara in me wants to fight and stand for what I believe in.  
So I am here at UVM starting a different chapter in my life,  
a chapter that continues my struggle of understanding myself and where I fit *en este mundo*.

A world that makes me conscious of both my privileges and obstacles,  
a world that can hurt me with just one word,  
a world that does not see the true me!

The true me that is ready to change this world,  
to fight for people like me and believes that we deserve better.

I am here to challenge myself and my surroundings.  
To make people think.  
To prove to everyone who has doubted me,  
that this first generation, multi-racial, fair-skinned woman of color with a  
learning difference  
can succeed in this world  
and be a role model for others to follow.

*¡Si puedo hacerlo entonces puedes hacerlo también!*  
*Se eu posso fazê-lo então você pode fazê-lo também!*  
*If I can do it then you can do it as well!*

## A Time to Intervene: A Historical Overview of Pedagogical Responses to an Unjust Society

Akirah Bradley

*This historical retrospective chronicles the evolution of cultural and ethnic difference in education from the 1920s to the present day. It presents one educator's perspective on the history of constructing programs and curricula that incorporate cultural diversity. Specifically, this article focuses on the history of racial climate in the United States, where pedagogical interventions have been used to respond to racial unrest in society. Highlighting five specific historical education movements, the author seeks to unearth the roots of incorporating and infusing cultural pluralism in the higher education curriculum and encourages the field of higher education to adopt current pedagogical practices that emphasize intercultural relations and intergroup dialogue.*

For over 70 years, institutions of higher education have implemented a variety of pedagogical interventions and approaches in response to increasing cultural diversity in the United States (Banks, 2005). As the number of people of color continues to increase throughout the nation, universities can anticipate an increase in racial diversity on college campuses (Banks). In the year 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that people of color made up 28% of the nation's population. They also predicted that in 2025, the percentage of people of color would jump to 38%. In March 2004, the Census Bureau released a new estimate which calculated that by 2050, people of color would actually make up 50% of the nation's population (Banks). Past and present statistics of the increasing racial diversity in the United States underscores the fact that there has been, and continues to be, a critical need to promote and encourage all students' understanding of cultural and racial diversity.

The United States has a perennial history of race-based exclusion, which permeates the nation and perpetuates the distortion of people's understandings of all cultures and races. Cordier (1946) asserts that a person's understanding of his or her culture and the cultures of others "is prejudicial and emotionalized and, as such, breeds social conflict. Some of it is objective, thus contributing to social understanding and cooperation" (p. 360). People have unintentionally internalized

---

*Akirah J. Bradley was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA. She surrounds herself with a loving and supportive community of family and friends. Akirah earned a B.S. degree at Mansfield University in Pennsylvania and anticipates graduating this May 2007 with a M.Ed. degree in the HESA program at the University of Vermont. She will continue to explore life and looks forward to pursuing her academic and professional interest in the field of higher education.*

biases and prejudices about others who are racially and culturally different from them. The lack of multicultural education in society contributes to the perpetuation of these biases.

This article brings perspective to the development of programs and curricula that focus specifically on cultural diversity. Within the racial climate of the United States, various pedagogical interventions have been used to respond to racial unrest throughout history. Education in the classroom about cultural difference has evolved from the following movements:

1. Intercultural Education Movement 1924-1941
2. Intergroup Education Movement 1940s-1950s
3. Legislating “Change” Movement 1950s-1960s
4. Ethnic Studies Movement 1960s-1970s
5. Multiculturalism Movement 1980s-1990s

The article will conclude with current pedagogical practices that are beginning to shape a new movement initiated through programs, such as Intercultural Relations, that promote intergroup dialogue.

#### Intercultural Education Movement: 1924-1941

##### *The Influence of Immigration*

Between 1924 and 1941, schools became increasingly diverse, as a variety of European ethnic immigrants arrived, hailing primarily from the Southern and Eastern regions of Europe. The passing of the Johnson Reed Act of 1924 drastically reduced the number of immigrants allowed to enter into the United States (Montalto, 1982). During this time, educators failed to recognize the cultural plurality that immigrant students brought with them to the classroom. Societal forces, such as racism and cultural assimilation, precluded them from altering their teaching styles to satisfy the needs of these new students. By forcing all students to adopt the White, Christian, middle-class behavioral norms and values held by those in the nation’s dominant groups, educators were in fact stripping students of their ethnic identity. This process of assimilation is also known as *Americanizing* (Banks, 2005).

There were American citizens that both supported and opposed this notion of *Americanization*. Some made arguments that immigrants must assimilate into the American culture as soon as possible, while cultural pluralists argued that the presence of diverse cultures could only enrich America. Despite these disagreements, the nation looked to its instructors for assistance in educating the immigrant students (Banks, 2005).

##### *Rachel DuBois, The Heart of the Movement*

While many educators brought focus to these concerns, Rachel DuBois took

special interest in multicultural education, devoting decades of her life to tackling prejudice and discrimination. DuBois, known as a pacifist radical teacher in the 1920s and 1930s, took on the challenge of educating students against Americanization, helping them to build an appreciation for diversity (Shafali, 2004). This marked the beginning of the Intercultural Education Movement (ICEM) that later segued into the Intergroup Education Movement (IGEM).

DuBois became the founder and first Executive Director of the Service Bureau for Intercultural Education. She was the pioneer of teaching and incorporating intercultural education in the college curriculum. In 1933, DuBois taught at Boston University in what many believe to be the first international education course in the country (Kelly, 2005; Montalto, 1982; Shafali, 2004). This was a true start in infusing the curriculum with cultural diversity. “With tremendous energy and optimism, Rachel DuBois offered a vision for tackling the social changes engendered by the waves of Irish, Italian, and Jewish migration to the eastern coast of the United States and African-American migration to the north” (Shafali, p. 5). As a result of all of her work, Rachel DuBois became well known for her leadership in initiating the ICEM.

According to Montalto (1982), the growth of this movement was fostered by the high death rate of World War I. He stated:

People had been taught to worship state, to nurse old wounds, to identify with national destiny, and to hate their neighbors. Nationalism had become ‘the religion of the schools,’ as pernicious an association of dogma and education as that developed by the old theistic schools. War had been the direct result of such a twisted education. (p. 98)

World War I, in combination with the divisive national issue of European ethnic migration, produced a desperate need for intercultural education. As society became increasingly heterogeneous it also became increasingly racially stratified (Vickery, 1953). During this time society created and perpetuated stereotypes and biases between different ethnic groups. The by-product was an increase in privilege of the nation’s dominant group, European Americans (Whites), and the continued oppression of all others. The ICEM was one of the most pivotal post-war pedagogical interventions combating the inequities toward new immigrants entering the United States.

Intercultural educators designed programs and curricula for schools and universities to assist in developing knowledge that challenged the status quo of Western European education. These educators began to highlight achievements and cultural celebrations of various ethnic groups (J. Banks, 1996; Montalto, 1982; Zimmerman, 2004). Intercultural education sought to explain the different ways in which various cultures could understand and respect the unique traditions of one another. With this in mind, the ICEM hoped to educate and develop a new outlook for

society that would make it possible for all cultural groups to peacefully exist, live, and build community together (Cordier, 1946).

In the late 1930s, DuBois and other intercultural educators soon focused on affirming identities of students of color, particularly African American students. Around this time, the movement began to fade, as the Commission on Intercultural Education was demoted to the mere status of a committee in 1938. By 1941, the ICEM was over; however, educators' drive towards a just society continued. This gave way to the (IGEM) (Kelly 2005; Montalto 1982).

#### Intergroup Education Movement: Early 1940s-1950s

##### *Societal Contingencies that Stimulated the Movement*

The IGEM was spurred by many events that occurred in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. The year 1942 marked a turning point for the country; the United States entered World War II, and racial prejudice intensified across the nation. In turn, racial unity for the oppressed became all the more imperative (Vickery, 1953). In addition to World War II, the migration of roughly two million African Americans from the South to the North in the 1940s exacerbated the racial tension and prejudice that already existed in U.S. society due to racial stratification. After World War II, European ethnics began to assimilate into mainstream U.S. society as they flocked to suburban neighborhoods far away from the urban areas where people of color lived. White ethnics were able to receive financial assistance through the Veterans Administration and Federal Housing Authority. This assistance allowed them to have access to well-paying jobs, better education, and homeownership. People of color were left behind in schools that were stripped of finances; they became less equal and self-segregated as White ethnics eased into the mainstream of U.S. society (Banks, 2005).

The combined effects of World War II, the integration of European ethnics into the mainstream, and the migration of African Americans spurred the shift towards the pedagogy of the IGEM (Banks, 2005; Zimmerman, 2004). Vickery (1953) stated, "The times called for action, for making moral values and ethical principals more vital forces in human affairs, and for applying the knowledge painstakingly accumulated by scholars to the solution of intergroup problems" (p. 292). The IGEM responded to this situation using pedagogical interventions in the classroom, as instructors attempted to alleviate the strife between racial groups, ameliorate human relations, diminish racial prejudice, gain multicultural understandings, and cultivate an umbrella of American culture (J. Banks, 1996). This movement shifted away from the ICEM focus on acceptance of immigrants and instead centered on the equality of African Americans and other people of color.

*Curriculum and Programs*

Intergroup educators such as Hilda Taba, John T. Robinson, Elizabeth Hall Brady, and William Vickery believed that it was their responsibility as educators to assist students in reducing prejudice, unlearning biases, and improving intergroup relations by infusing perspectives from different cultures into the curriculum (C. Banks, 1996). By 1946, with the work of these educators, intergroup education was introduced in 22 states and inspired the creation of over 4,000 programs across the nation (Zimmerman, 2004). This statistic may give the impression that educators across the nation were jumping on the bandwagon to implement these programs. However, this brand of education did not in any way permeate the majority of U.S. schools. The movement was concentrated on the East Coast and in the Midwest. Many of the programs were located in schools in the vicinity of New York and Chicago and were sponsored by professional and civil rights organizations throughout the country (C. Banks, 1996; Zimmerman, 2004).

*The Demise of the Intergroup Education Movement*

As funding from organizations depleted, racial crisis faded as well, and some key leaders of the movement moved onto other academic pursuits. Thus, the IGEM slowly faded away in the late 1950s (C. Banks, 1996). Scholars believe the movement perished because of the realization that assimilation into the dominant culture was viewed as the only way to be fully accepted into mainstream U.S. society. “The myth of the melting pot required that ‘good’ Americans not cling to their ethnic or racial past” (C. Banks, p. 269). In the years to come, however, many individuals challenged that concept, and the movement, which I term the *Legislating “Change” Movement*, gained momentum as the IGEM came to a close.

Legislating “Change” Movement: 1950s-1960s

Although literature does not name a particular movement for this time frame, it is important to include the significant markers in society between the IGEM and the Multicultural Education Movement (MEM). For the purpose of this article, I refer to the 1950s and 1960s as the Legislating “Change” Movement. During these years, there was a visible increase in the attention that the U.S. government gave to issues surrounding inequitable democracy.

*Migration of African Americans and Immigrants to the North*

The increasing number of African Americans moving from the South to the North during these decades resulted in a boost in the number of African American students enrolling in institutions of higher education. This was due to intense discrimination and degradation of the African American culture in the South. Concerns were raised when African American students entered the universities in the North because professors did not know how to adequately teach students from different cultures. Additionally, many immigrants from the Caribbean, East

Asia, and Latin America migrated to the Northeast region of the United States during the 1950s. The immigration of these groups, in addition to the migration of African Americans, raised concerns and fears of White Americans similar to those raised during periods of earlier mass immigration.

*The McCarran Act, 1952*

In 1952, the U.S. Senate responded to the large percentage of people immigrating from the Caribbean, East Asia, and Latin America with the McCarran Act, which was a strict reinforcement of the 1924 Johnson Reed Immigration Act. The McCarran Act supported the notion that the growing number of people of color in the United States was an issue; according to government officials, the optimal solution to this issue was to limit immigration. This new legislation joined a long history of prejudicial and discriminatory law, which clearly indicated that people of color who were not fully assimilated into White America were not welcome in the United States (Banks, 2005). This act, however, did not stop people of color and the educational leaders that supported them from fighting for an equitable democracy.

*Brown v Board of Education, 1954*

There have been several court cases worth noting that led up to the 1954 court decision that ended school segregation throughout the United States. One such case was the 1947 *Mendez v. Westminster School District*, considered a historical milestone for the Mexican American and Latino communities in California. The decision was made on April 14, 1947, that school districts could not segregate school children in California due to their Mexican descent or nationality of origin. After this ruling, Governor Earl Warren (CA) began fighting against laws that segregated Asian American and Native American school children (Arriola, 1997).

In 1954, victory rang from Topeka, Kansas, and throughout the country with the decision from the U.S. Supreme Court to desegregate public schools in the historic case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This decision empowered the African American community and all other racial groups to move forward with force in pursuit of full inclusion in U.S. society. The results of the case renewed the energy and hope of many fighting for equality at this time, fueling the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Banks, 2005).

Ethnic Studies Movement: 1960s-1970s

In the 1960s, as non-European students began to protest against their cultures' inaccurate portrayal in history books, the Ethnic Studies Movement arose. Non-European ethnicities, such as African Americans, Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans were the heart of this movement. Students demanded to see their cultures and races reflected in a positive way (Kelly, 2005). Soon courses specific

to non-European ethnic groups were created. Kelly explains that the Ethnic Studies Movement faded in part due to the decrease in funding and the attacks by society that the movement was too political and had a narrow approach. The Multicultural Education Movement (MEM) soon flourished, acknowledging the importance of all cultures including European Americans.

#### Multicultural Education Movement: 1980s-1990s

According to J. Banks (1999), a leading scholar in the Multicultural Education Movement:

Multicultural Education, as defined and conceptualized by its major architects during the last decade, is not an ethnic- or gender-specific movement, but is a movement designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically-polarized nation and world. (p. 5)

This movement invites White students and students of color to personally learn the truth about people of various cultures and their contributions to U.S. History. Students are introduced to the concept of multiculturalism as an inclusive movement of all identities including but not limited to race, class, gender, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation.

Banks (1999) explains the movement through a curriculum transformational lens rather than a curriculum infusion lens. The transformation lens occurs when every subject concentration is infused with diverse racial and ethnic perspectives rather than channeling all multicultural education into a single course or program designed to highlight accomplishments of non-European Americans. Transformation occurs when even general education courses, such as math, science, history, english, and art, are interlaced with multicultural viewpoints. Furthermore, these courses should be saturated with a collection of voices and literature that represents a variety of cultures.

Educators in the MEM believe that all of the previous movements failed to directly recognize structural and institutional racism, privilege, and injustices. The main focus of the intercultural and intergroup education movements was combating racism, prejudice, and discrimination on an individual level. Throughout the MEM, educators were strongly urged to address deep-rooted systemic racial inequities (Banks, 2005).

#### Conclusion

In 2005, Banks noted the thoughts of Santayana, a Spanish citizen raised and educated in the United States:

To ignore history is to doom oneself to repeat its mistakes. As our na-

tion grapples with diversity on an unprecedented scale we have much to learn from where we have been, which will help to decide where to go next. (p. 5)

This powerful quote by Santayana challenges educators to continue to research and understand the history of diversity in education on all levels. It is extremely important for higher education professionals to have an understanding of a history that displays where U.S. society fell short in its support of all students. By reviewing history and setting a vision for education in the future, society can learn the value of becoming multiculturally competent and inclusive of all cultures, which will create a rich educational foundation.

### *Current Status of Multicultural Education*

Education is on the verge of a new movement, Intergroup Dialogue, which stems directly from the MEM. Across the nation, colleges and universities are beginning to establish programs that transform their curricula and are recognizing that cross-cultural and intercultural understanding is essential for today's students (Humphreys, 1998). The practice of teaching through intercultural dialogue began around 1988 when the University of Michigan began an interdisciplinary program, Intergroup Relations. This course included participation in intergroup dialogues, which produced, and continues to produce amazing results on college campuses (Behling, Brett, & Thompson, 2001).

The increased curricular inclusion of Intergroup Dialogue programs indicates that they have become innovative and useful pedagogical practices. These programs are effective because they give students of all ethnicities an opportunity to learn experientially from their peers. In the classroom, the instructor facilitates the creation of ground rules and discusses values among small group of students from varying identities and experiences. These discussions begin to build trust among the students participating in the program. Participants are able to hear the experiences and the narratives of their peers and can challenge one another on the ideas of oppression, privilege, and power in society (Schoem, 2003).

Additionally, undergraduate diversity requirements are on the rise on campuses throughout the nation. Some universities have a mandatory course that begins to educate students about racial difference and racism in the United States while others allow students the freedom to choose among a variety of courses that fit into a diversity requirement. Conversely, there are numerous universities across the nation that do not have or require such programs. This article shines light on the history of education where schools and colleges were similarly resistant to change and multicultural inclusiveness. Universities that have not begun to transform their curricula, offer opportunities for students to dialogue, or infuse programs that help to develop multicultural competence should pay attention to the history shared throughout this article.

It is imperative for higher education faculty and administrators to analyze the history of pedagogical interventions in response to socio-political crisis for three reasons. First, a historical analysis of previous movements provides educators with insight into the strengths and weaknesses of prior interventions. Second, a historical overview can strengthen the current movement of Intergroup Dialogue by encouraging proactive measures and assessment of reactive approaches to socio-political conflicts. Third, future implications of this research will allow educators to analyze current pedagogical practices while constructing a culturally inclusive curriculum in preparation for the future.

By the year 2050, the United States will no longer be a predominantly European American country, as it is estimated that 50% of the population will be people of color (Banks, 2005). As the face of this nation changes, educators must continue to transform the classroom by infusing multiculturalism into the curriculum and into the ways in which faculty teach and approach social justice. Through this transformation, educators of all levels will incorporate the rich diversity of this country into their classrooms.

## References

- Arriola, C. (1997). *Mendez v. Westminster: A Look At Our Latino Heritage*. Retrieved January 18, 2007, from <http://www.mendezvwestminster.com/>
- Banks, C. (1996). The Intergroup Education Movement. In J. Banks (Ed.), *Multicultural education, transformative knowledge, and action: Historical and contemporary perspectives* (pp. 251-277). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Banks, C. (2005). *Improving multicultural education: Lessons from the intergroup education movement*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Banks, J. (Ed.). (1996). *Multicultural education, transformative knowledge, and action: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Banks, J. (1999). *An introduction to multicultural education*. (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Behling, C., Brett, T., Thompson, M. (2001). Educating for social justice: The program on intergroup relations, conflict, and community at the University of Michigan. In S. Hurtado & D. Schoem (Eds.), *Intergroup dialogue: Deliberative democracy in school, college, community, and workplace* (pp. 99-114). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Cordier, R. (1946). Cultural understanding through social education. *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 19, 359-364.
- Humphreys, D. (1998). *Diversity and the college curriculum: How colleges & universities are preparing students for a changing world*. Retrieved April 14, 2006, from Association of American Colleges and Universities, Diversity Web site: [http://www.diversityweb.org/diversity\\_innovations/curriculum\\_change/principles\\_and\\_practices/curriculum\\_briefing.cfm](http://www.diversityweb.org/diversity_innovations/curriculum_change/principles_and_practices/curriculum_briefing.cfm)
- Kelly, B. (2005). History of antiracism education: Lessons for today's practitioners. *The Vermont Connection*, 26, 55-68.
- Montalto, N. (1982). *A history of the intercultural education movement, 1924-1941*. New York: Garland.
- Schoem, D. (2003). Intergroup dialogue for a just and diverse democracy. *Sociological Inquiry*, 73, 212-227.
- Shafali, L. (2004). 1930s Multiculturalism: Rachel Davis DuBois and the Bureau for Intercultural Education. Retrieved April 9, 2006, from [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0JVP/is\\_69/ai\\_n6148140](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0JVP/is_69/ai_n6148140)
- Vickery, W. (1953). Ten years of intergroup education workshops: Some comparisons and contrasts. *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 26, 292-302.
- Zimmerman, J. (2004). Brown-ing the American textbook: History, psychology, and the origins of modern multiculturalism. *History of Education Quarterly*, 44, 46-69.

## A+ Does Not Mean All Asians: The Model Minority Myth and Implications for Higher Education

Nathaniel A. Victoria

*This paper explores the model minority myth and its current implications for higher education. Analysis of literature from the counseling, journalism, institutional research, and student services fields illustrates how the myth perpetuates stereotypes, both nationally and in the higher education field. Additionally, the implications of enrolling increased numbers of Asian Pacific American (APA) students relative to the number of higher education and student affairs professionals with APA lineage are discussed.*

*Have you ever sat next to an Asian student in class and wondered how she managed to consistently get straight A's while you struggled to maintain a B- average? . . . Asian students are considered amongst the best and the brightest in America. And although we hesitate to stereotype all Asian students, we cannot deny that, as a whole [*italics added*], they are doing something right.* (Abboud & Kim, 2006, p. 1)

This paragraph opened Dr. Soo Kim Abboud and Jane Kim's (2006) new book, *Top of the Class: How Asian Parents Raise High Achievers—and How You Can Too*. The disproportionate numbers of Asian Americans in what Abboud and Kim call the "top universities in the country," such as Cornell University and Johns Hopkins University, intrigued these sister authors. Attempting to explain this fact, they concluded that it "*has nothing to do with how they are born and everything to do with how they are raised*" (p. 2). I am shocked by the authors' failure to notice the perpetuation of what many Asian Americans find insulting—the model minority myth.

Traditionally, the model minority myth names Asian Americans as law abiding, physically and mentally healthy, economically wealthy, and academically successful (Kobayashi, 1999). This conception began in a 1966 *New York Times Magazine* article when social demographer and University of California, Berkeley Professor William Peterson used the term *model minority* to describe Japanese Americans who were increasing their social status financially as well as educationally through sheer effort. Since then, print media such as *Time*, *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, *Fortune Magazine*, books like *Top of the Class*, and television shows, such as *NBC Nightly News* and *60 Minutes*, have perpetuated this stereotype (Chang,

---

*Nathaniel A. Victoria received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wesleyan University, where he majored in both Dance and Psychology. He is originally from Media, Pennsylvania and holds an assistantship as the Academic Support Specialist for the College of Education and Social Services. As he approaches the end of his second-year in HESA, he is looking forwards to his future adventures in Washington, D.C.*

1993; Kobayashi, 1999; Wu, 2001). Nina Asher (2002) suggests another layer to the stereotype when stating that “as the model minority, Asian Americans are doubly marginalized, ‘simultaneously exalted and ignored in the U.S. imagination’” (pp. 268-269). If we address our individual actions through personal reflection, we can work toward making the double minority status non-existent. This article critically analyzes these assumptions and examines their ramifications for higher education practitioners.

### Challenging the Hegemony

*Model minority* is one of the many labels human beings utilize to make sense of the world. We are burdened with much information, so we adjust by systematically filing it. However, a consequence of this phenomenon is stereotyping, something that Ganahl, Ge, and Kim (2003) define as “a prevailing and frequently used image of one group as uniform (rather than as individually differentiated) used to categorize all members of the group on a limited number of dimensions” (p. 5).

Social stereotypes grossly generalize people. As Robert Chang (1993) asserts, the social stereotype of the model minority is dangerous because “it renders the oppression of Asian Americans invisible.” This stereotype causes some to see Asian Americans as successful and free from oppression. “This invisibility has harmful consequences, especially when those in positions of power cannot see” (para. 6). Invisibility due to generalizations is one problem with the model minority stereotype. The uniqueness of each individual is lost in the stereotype.

The selection of the term *Asian Pacific American* (APA) that this article uses illustrates this problem. During the Civil Rights Era, the term “Asian American” appeared in an attempt to unify the community. Kobayashi (1999) suggests that this social construct continues to reify the problems of the community. The APA community has diversified, yet “the term ‘Asian American’ has remained unchanged” (p. 5). There also may be a trend among Asian Americans to reconnect and create stronger ties with their ethnic origins, such as California Filipino Americans separating themselves in state personnel surveys (Nadal, 2004).

Many believe that racial categories are social constructions; this perspective has been supported in recent years due to the various studies that suggest there is no genetic code for racial phenotypes (Kobayashi, 1999; Riehm, 2000). The terms used in this paper will fall within this discourse of social constructionism. I combat one debilitating factor of the model minority myth, invisibility due to generalizations, by incorporating research on communities that fall within the APA category, while staying sensitive to specific ethnicities when possible.

The APA community encompasses a variety of groups that have resided in the

United States for various lengths of time. The Chinese, for example, have lived here since the 1800s when they were primarily employed as railroad workers (Takaki, 1993), while the Hmongs and the Laotians are more recent immigrants, immigrating to the country beginning in the 1980s. These differences lead to two problems within the APA community with respect to the model minority myth. The first is the potential lack of knowledge about the historic oppression that APAs have suffered. The United States has oppressed many APA groups, from the Exclusion Acts of 1882 and 1924, to the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII. It was not until the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 that roughly two thirds of the APA population came to the United States (Schevitz, 2000, as cited in Ying, Lee, Tsai, Hung, Lin, & Wan., 2001). Ying et al. suggest that this wave of immigration and “the timing (concomitant with the civil rights movement) . . . [leave] many Asian Americans . . . unaware of this country’s anti-Asian history” (p. 62).

Another error of the model minority stereotype is that it imposes a single classification on these varied and disparate communities while internally implementing a “divide and conquer” mentality. This mentality maintains smaller groups and does not allow for the building of larger coalitions. The assumed wealth of the APA community is an example of this usage. A superficial examination of census data shows that the median APA family income is higher than that of all other racial categories. When critically analyzed, however, this average ignores four key differences in the APA family structure when comparing it to the Caucasian structure. APA households tend to have more than one person earning income; looking at the mean income ignores this fact. Also, APAs are disproportionately concentrated in three states where wage and standard of living are higher, namely California, New York, and Hawaii. In addition, almost 95% of the 12.5 million APAs live in metropolitan areas. Related to the recent immigrant status of some APAs, there are also great disparities amongst the different ethnic groups (Chang, 1993; Chen, 2003; Kobayashi, 1999; Tatum, 1997). Kim & Valadez (1995) state that “while median family income of Asian Americans was \$41,251 in 1990, median family incomes of Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmongs were \$33,909, \$18,126, \$23,101, and \$14,327, respectively” (p. 2).

The final area of contention relates to another element of the model minority myth—education. Commonly held beliefs insist that with more education comes more wealth; however, inherent in this assumption is that all degrees, regardless of the race, ethnicity, gender of the individuals holding them, are equal. This assumption is not true when accounting for the effects of race on income (Barringer, Takeuchi, & Xenos, 1990; Chang, 1993; Suzuki, 2002). Professor Frank Wu (2001), expert witness for the Student Defendant-Interveners in the University of Michigan Law School Affirmative Action trial, *Grutter v. Bollinger*, discusses the falsity of this phenomenon. During his testimony, Professor Wu eloquently disentangled the

financial elements of the model minority myth. Using data from the 1995 Federal Government Glass Ceiling Study and controlling for education and occupation, he illuminated the fact that APAs in the United States make significantly less than their Caucasian counterparts. They also receive fewer promotions.

Dr. Jeffrey C. Chen (2003), former CEO of the General Science Corporation, also unpacks the idea of education as a gateway toward future success. Dr. Chen discusses the APA cultural phenomena that led to less success: APA culture has a tradition of humility, as well as a lack of alliances in the corporate sphere outside of their respective cultures. He suggests that the cultural aspects of what would be considered “submissive” in the United States facilitate the passing over of APAs for promotions.

### Separate but Equal

The concept of race as a social construction was previously introduced, and it is important to recognize that the United States still operates within it. Beverly Tatum (1997) uses David Wellman’s definition of racism, a “system of advantage based on race” (p. 7), to describe the current U.S. racial situation. Because of the colonial nature of the U.S. settlement, coupled with the fact that Caucasians hold the colonizer status, Caucasians are the only members of U.S. society that can act in a racist manner. But all people, regardless of their race and ethnicity, are able to act on their prejudice, what Tatum defines as “a preconceived judgment or opinion, usually based on limited information” (p. 5). The model minority myth supports this idea of universal prejudice.

Some scholars believe that the term *model minority* was created to perpetuate power dynamics that existed at the time of its creation in the Civil Rights era. Rohrlick, Alvarado, Zarua, and Kallio (1998) suggest that it was produced to “be a divisive term. Some believe that the implicit message in the term is that other minority groups are at fault for their own lack of success” (p. 2). Elizabeth Martinez (2004) concurs in her essay *Seeing More than Black and White*, stating:

The “model” label has been a wedge separating Asian Americans from others of color by denying their commonalities. It creates a sort of racial bourgeoisie, which White Supremacy uses to keep Asian Americans from joining forces with the poor, the homeless and criminalized youth. (p. 116)

Combating this label is essential for successful coalition building to happen.

### Education Re-examined

The model minority myth is the pervasive framework in which all APAs must work. Some APAs, such as Abboud and Kim (2006), do not recognize that they

perpetuate this stereotype. Although their book provides valuable information on raising children, it suggests that playing “an active role in [children’s] education” or “promoting an environment of healthy competition” are values unique to the APA community. By essentializing these characteristics as “Asian,” as well as generalizing their experience as Korean Americans to the entire APA community, Abboud and Kim perpetuate the myth that all APAs are successful in the classroom. Research contradicts this mentality: “Delucchi and Do (1996), Kim (1997), Thatchenkery and Cheng (1997), and Walker-Moffat (1995) all point out that Asian [*sic*] students’ performance has a bimodal distribution, meaning that there are extremely high achievers and others who are not” (Kobayashi, 1999, p. 12). Ying et al. (2001) also suggest, “success in the classroom does not implicate effective functioning in life” (p. 60). Their study found that for those APAs that were successful academically, their competence in other areas was not necessarily equal. All APAs are not “top of the class.”

Even for those APAs that successfully achieve in their higher education aspirations, the diversity of their areas of study is lacking. Dr. Nirmala Kannankutty (2003), Senior Analyst for the National Science Foundation, found that “compared to other ethnic groups, relatively high proportions of Asian American and Pacific Islander students are taking high school math and science courses” (p. 21). Other studies suggest that there is “pressure to excel and plan ahead for careers that ensure future financial security and success” (Asher, 2002, p. 274). Could situational and cultural characteristics explain this phenomenon? Is the model minority myth exacerbating this phenomenon? In short, yes.

The Immigration Act of 1965 facilitated the entry of many more diverse groups of APAs into the United States, and these diverse groups on average have come with many more professional degrees. For example, roughly 13% of Filipino Americans in the United States in 2000 were affiliated with medicine, with 6% of U.S. born Filipinos in the medical field. When compared to the over 15% of immigrants in the field, one can see that many more professionals are immigrating with degrees rather than pursuing education here (Bankston, III, 2006). This high proportion of immigrants in the professional field could be one reason why APA children are pushed towards math and the sciences.

Sijuwade’s (2001) study of family characteristics between Caucasian and Asian American high achievers suggests that parental educational expectations influence professional tracking. Sijuwade found that “all Asian parents report that they expect their children to make an average grade of ‘A,’” and that “nearly half of the Asian parents (46%) hope their children would choose the medical field” (p. 164). He believes that “most Asian parents still preserve the traditional attitude that parents would play a major role in their children’s education and career choice” (p. 165). The idea of what Alicia Campi, research coordinator at the Immigration Policy

Center of the American Immigration Law Foundation, calls the *Confucian ideals* possibly propagates the idea that math and science are the proper academic arenas. She says “tradition back home is that education unlocks opportunities. So there is a lot of pressure on their kids to succeed, no matter what job the parents have” (as cited in Woog, 2006). Kim and Valadez (1995) also suggest that APAs believe that “good education is perceived the most important means to gain economic success and social respect” (p. 8). These two things are important in APA culture. Working in this framework as well is the fact that “parental expectations and self-concept and vision are suggested to be factors which best explain higher education aspirations for all students” (p. 20).

Another factor may be the outside influences that students face. Lee (1996) illuminates APA issues when describing the stereotypes they may hear. She found that “geniuses,” “overachievers,” “nerdy,” “great in math or science,” “competitive,” “uninterested in fun” and “4.0 GPAs” are all common terms. Also, Hallinan and Williams (1990) stress the impact of the peer-influence process on higher education aspirations. These stereotypes track APAs into their current fields.

#### Perpetuating the Homogeneous Field?

Recognizing the model minority myth is the first step in solving issues APA students face. Even Caucasian practitioners in the field of higher education who espouse pluralistic ideals may be falling prey to this pervasive myth. Using the Situation Attitude Scale (SAS) (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1969), Liang and Sedlacek (2000) found that Caucasian student affairs practitioners reacted differently toward APAs. These practitioners rated APA students’ actions, such as fixing a computer, more positively according to the SAS when compared to the same action done by a student whose race was not specified. Liang and Sedlacek said that as “Ancis et al. (1996) reminds us, differences in an apparently positive direction do not necessarily suggest that prejudicial attitudes are absent” (p. 10). How would the non-technological APA student feel when the expectation of competency is discussed? Recognizing we all bring bias when working with students, including APA students, is important.

Bias affects not only APA students but also APA professionals. Although the numbers of practitioners of color are increasing, there is a disparity amongst the races. In January of this year, I was told that “about 3% of NASPA’s [National Association of Student Personnel Administrators] membership has indicated that they are Asian or Pacific Islander” (E. Soleyn, personal communication, January 17, 2007). Although NASPA membership only constitutes one area of higher education, it is fairly representative of the field at large. In the fall of 2003, there were only 4,813 Asian Americans who held full-time positions in executive, administrative, or managerial jobs in higher education. When compared to the total

of 180,161, the mere 2.7% is troubling (“Employees in Colleges and Universities,” 2006). It is disheartening to see the limited number of APA practitioners.

*The Chronicle of Higher Education's* (2006) recent findings in “A Look at Minority and Female Doctorate Recipients” suggest a continuation of disparity in educational leadership. In 2004, only 94 Asians (6.5% of total receiving doctorates) received their doctorate in “Research and Administration” in the field of education. When compared to the other racial demographics (Black, 614 or 32.9%; Hispanic, 214; or 18.2%, and American Indian, 38 or 29.5%), Asians are not really “ahead of the game” in all aspects (p. B16). If students feel engaged when they perceive a community, and one way to feel connected to a community is seeing others who look like them (Tatum, 1997), it is imperative that we increase the number of APAs in the field. We cannot let the dearth of APA leaders continue.

One way to increase the numbers of future APA leaders is to bring them into the leadership pipeline earlier. Programs, such as the NASPA Undergraduate Fellowship Program (a higher education practitioner preparation program), need to actively ensure that they do not perpetuate the inequity already existing in the field. Also, the number of APA people doing leadership programs with such groups as Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. and the American Council on Education needs to increase. Institutions need to support APA practitioners in their professional development.

Two necessary attributes of higher education in its current framework are a critical perspective and an individualistic attitude. The current structure does not incorporate some values espoused by the APA community, such as the Filipino core values of “fellow being; loss of face or shame; and social acceptance, the achievement of status and power, and getting along with the group” (Enriquez, as cited in Nadal, 2004). Also, do the existing stereotypes of APAs suggest an environment open to APA members? Consider the following examples:

“Submissive,” “humble,” “passive,” “quiet,” “compliant,” “obedient,” “stoic,” “devious,” “sly,” “tend to hang out in groups,” “stay with their own race,” “condescend to other races,” and are “racist,” “not willing to mesh with American culture,” “try to be like Americans,” “want to be Caucasian,” and “act F.O.B. [fresh off the boat].” (Kim & Yeh, p. 2)

By the field’s perpetuation of the “model minority” myth, limited number of APA administrators will remain. We need to change our environment, welcome new APA practitioners, and create a climate conducive to everyone’s success.

#### References

Abbound, S. J., & Kim, J. (2006). *Top of the class: How Asian parents raise high achievers—and how you can too*. New York: The Penguin Group.

- A Look at Minority and Female Doctorate Recipients. (2006, September 29). *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. B16.
- Asher, N. (2002). CLASS ACT: Indian American high school students negotiate professional and ethnic identities. *Urban Education*, 37(2), 267-295.
- Bankston, C., III (2006). Filipino Americans. In P. G. Min (Ed.), *Asian Americans. Contemporary trends and issues* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Barringer, H., Takeuchi, D., & Xenos, P. (1990). Education, occupational prestige, and income of Asian Americans. *Sociology of Education*, 63, 27-43.
- Chang, R. (1993). Toward an Asian American legal scholarship: Critical race theory, post-structuralism, and narrative space. *California Law Review*, 1241, 81, 1258-1265.
- Chen, J. C. (2003). Asian American and Pacific Islander issues in industry. In *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders' Issues: The challenges of success, workshop proceedings* (pp. 23-26). Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation. Retrieved April 14, 2006, from <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2005/nsf0551/index.jsp>
- Employees in Colleges and Universities by Racial and Ethnic Group, Fall 2003. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, The 2006-2007 Almanac*, p. 26.
- Ganahl, D. J., Ge, L., & Kim, K. (2003, July/August). *Stereotyping the "model minority": A Longitudinal analysis of U.S. primetime network commercials, comparing Asian female and male characters to themselves and others*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, Kansas City, MO.
- Hallinan, M. T., & Williams, R. A. (1990). Students' characteristics and the peer-influence process. *Sociology of Education*, 63, 122-132.
- Kannankutty, N. (2003). A demographic profile of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States. In *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders' Issues: The challenges of success, workshop proceedings* (pp. 21-22). Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation. Retrieved April 14, 2006, from <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2005/nsf0551/index.jsp>
- Kim, A., & Yeh, C. (February, 2002). *Stereotypes of Asian American students*. New York: ERIC Clearing House on Urban Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED462510). Retrieved April 13, 2006, from [http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content\\_storage\\_01/0000000b/80/2a/35/2c.pdf](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/2a/35/2c.pdf)
- Kim, H. H., & Valadez, J. R. (1995, November). *Reexamination of the model minority stereotype: An Analysis of factors affecting higher education aspirations of Asian American students*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Orlando, FL.
- Kobayashi, F. (1999). *Model minority stereotype reconsidered*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Opinion Paper. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED434167)

- Lee, S. J. (1996). *Unraveling the "model minority" stereotype: Listening to Asian American youth*. New York: Teacher's College Press
- Liang, C., & Sedlacek, W. (2000). *Attitudes of White student services practitioners toward Asian Americans: Research and recommendations*. (Research Report No. 2-00). College Park: University of Maryland, Counseling Center.
- Martinez, E., (2004). Seeing more than Black and White. In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, Class, and Gender* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Nadal, K. (2004). Pilipino American identity development model. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32, 45-62.
- Peterson, W. (1966, January 9). Success story: Japanese American style. *New York Times Magazine*, 20-43.
- Riehm, R. (2000). "Race" as a social construct. Retrieved November 11, 2006, from <http://www.gossamer-wings.com/soc/Notes/race/tsld002.htm>
- Rohrlick, J., Alvarado, D., Zaruba, K., & Kallio, R. (1998, May). *From the model minority to the invisible minority: Asian & Pacific American students in higher education research*. Paper presented at the Association for Institutional Research 38th Annual Forum, Minneapolis, MN.
- Sedlacek, W. E., Brooks, G. C., Jr. (1969). *The development of a measure of racial attitudes*. (Report No. 10-69). College Park: University of Maryland, Counseling Center.
- Sijuwade, P. (2001). A comparative study of family characteristics of Anglo-American and Asian-American high achievers. *International Education Journal*, 2(3), 161-167.
- Suzuki, B. (2002). Revisiting the model minority stereotype: Implications for student affairs practice and higher education. *New Directions for Student Services*, 92, 21-32.
- Tatum, B. (1997). *"Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" and other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.
- Takaki, R. (1993). *A Different mirror: A History of multicultural America*. New York: Back Bay Books.
- Woog, D. (2006). *Children of Asian immigrants. What shapes their career paths?* Retrieved April 14, 2006, from <http://diversity.monster.com/asam/articles/childrenimmigrants/>
- Wu, F. (2001). Expert Witness for the Student Defendant-Intervenors in *Grutter v. Bollinger*. Compiled by the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action & Integration and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary. Retrieved April 14, 2006, from <http://www.bamn.com/doc/2001/010212-apas-and-aa-wu-excerpts.pdf>
- Ying, Y., Lee, P., Tsai, J., Hung, Y., Lin, M., & Wan, C. (2001). Asian American college students as model minorities: An examination of their overall competence. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 7(1), 59-74.



## THE MORAL CONVERSATION

The Moral Conversation, a concept developed by Dr. Robert J. Nash, is a scholarly genre of writing and discussion dedicated to argumentative thought and critical dialogue. A significant component of the Moral Conversation is the analytical examination of a specific issue within higher education, reflecting on the complexities of the truths within the many arguments about the issue. Our goal in dedicating a section of *The Vermont Connection* to the Moral Conversation is to present articles that examine the multiple perspectives of a given theme.

The theme for this year's Moral Conversation is *The Common in Community: Engaging Across Difference in Higher Education*.

## Higher Education's Missing Link: Examining the Gap between Academic and Student Affairs and Implications for the Student Experience

Gabriel Reif

*With the expansion of higher education around the turn of the 20th century, the field of student affairs was created to enhance the extra-curriculum and promote student development beyond the classroom. This allowed faculty to focus on scholarship and formal curricular education. Unfortunately, with their different areas of responsibility, student and academic affairs grew in divergent directions and eventually developed contrasting functions, values, cultures, and epistemologies. Today, institutions must address this issue by creating ways for student affairs professionals and professors to gain a better understanding and appreciation for one another's work; this will facilitate collaboration between these groups in pursuing their shared goal of student education and development.*

Higher education in the United States has evolved tremendously since its inception in 1636 in what was then the New World. No period brought greater changes to colleges and universities than the 100 years that spanned the late 1800s and first half of the 20th century. The expanded role of higher education in society and growth of enrollments during this period created a need for student affairs practitioners to oversee students' well-being and development outside of the classroom. Professors focused primarily on formal classroom education, as well as their research. While this division of oversight of students' experiences brought many benefits, it also created a rift between the functions of academic and student affairs. This division was exacerbated by the distinct cultures, values, and epistemologies of these branches of higher education.

This gap between student and academic affairs remains prevalent in modern higher education. It hinders collaboration between student affairs professionals and faculty and discourages students from making crucial connections between their curricular and extracurricular experiences. In this model, student success is compartmentalized and holistic development is difficult for students to achieve. Today, individuals within higher education must work to span the rift that it has created between the

---

*Gabriel Reif, originally from Amherst, MA, will be graduating from the University of Vermont's Higher Education in Student Affairs Administration program this spring. He has spent the past two years at UVM working as the Student Leadership Coordinator in the Honors College and has also donned various hats in the Center for Student Ethics and Standards, Residence Life, and the Dean of Students Office. Gabriel has gained much during his time in Burlington and is eager to graduate so he can take the next step of his journey, whatever that may be.*

classroom and the residence hall, the professor and the student affairs professional, in order to provide students with the optimal college experience.

### Overview

The original purpose of colonial colleges in the *New World* was to turn boys into pious, well-mannered men who would continue the traditions of their Puritan ancestors by serving “God and their fellowmen in the fullest” (Rudolph, 1962, p. 5). During the 17th and 18th centuries, the individuals responsible for the training and education of students on most campuses consisted of only institutional presidents and a few faculty. Beyond formal classroom instruction, presidents and professors lived among the students, either in dormitories or in the president’s home. Faculty were charged with monitoring student welfare and behavior in practically every setting, punishing students for minor violations and reporting major ones to the president. Meanwhile, presidents were responsible for a wide array of tasks, ranging from administering corporal punishment to assigning rooms. Boards of trustees established institutional policies and served as hearing boards for instances when students were accused of extreme disobedience (Leonard, 1956).

While this model of student supervision was trying for both students and college employees, it had certain benefits. Because presidents and professors wore multiple hats, not only were they responsible for administrative and educational tasks, but also their roles as mentors and disciplinarians tied them to the lives of their students beyond the classroom. Instructors were able to shape their students not only through formal curriculum but also by giving lessons in manners at the dinner table and lessons on cleanliness in the dormitories (Leonard, 1956). More importantly, the tight-knit community allowed the few professors and administrators to carefully direct their students’ growth so that they could become precisely what the institution intended.

Throughout the first half of the 19th century, higher education continued to change, but events in the late 1800s revolutionized the landscape of colleges and universities across the country. The Morrill Act of 1862 allowed for the creation of a land-grant institution in each state to encourage people from a wide array of backgrounds to attend college in order to gain the skills needed to help support a booming economy. Johns Hopkins University was founded as the country’s first graduate school. Other pre-existing institutions quickly followed suit by creating graduate and professional programs that emphasized research in response to the growing need for new knowledge brought about by the industrial revolution. Charles W. Eliot changed the face of higher education further when he instituted the elective system at Harvard University that gave professors the freedom to teach their own courses and allowed students to choose their own courses of study (Kerr, 1963). The turn of the 20th century brought further developments as land-grant

institutions began to strengthen ties to the states they served. The University of Wisconsin pioneered this movement, thus spawning the term “The Wisconsin Idea,” as it “entered the legislative halls in Madison with reform programs, supported the trade union movement through John R. Commons, [and] developed agricultural and urban extension as never before. The university served the whole state” (Kerr, p. 12). Kerr asserted that with this tremendous growth, the singularity implied by the title *university* made it no longer appropriate; instead institutions would be better described by the term *multiversity*, which encapsulated the diverse aims of higher education in the 20th century.

A major repercussion of the expansion of institutions of higher learning was that college presidents and professors were no longer able to devote as much attention to their students as they did prior to the mid 1800s. Faculty were still dedicated to the primary function of educating students inside the classroom, but now research and service were also priorities; the days of faculty dining and living among students were gone. The responsibilities of university presidents burgeoned with the creation of the multiversity. Kerr (1963) wrote:

The university president in the United States is expected to be a friend of the students, a colleague of the faculty, a good fellow with the alumni, a sound administrator with the trustees, a good speaker with the public, an astute bargainer with the foundations and the federal agencies, a politician with the state legislature, a friend of industry, labor, and agriculture, a persuasive diplomat with donors, a champion of education generally, a supporter of the professions (particularly law and medicine), a spokesman to the press, a scholar in his own right, a public servant at the state and national levels, a devotee of opera and football equally, a decent human being, a good husband and father, [and] an active member of a church. Above all he must enjoy traveling in airplanes, eating his meals in public, and attending public ceremonies. (p. 22)

With faculty and presidents preoccupied with fulfilling newly developed institutional objectives, someone else was needed to look after students.

In 1890, Eliot recognized the decline in attention received by students at Harvard. He requested the services of LeBaron Russell Briggs, an English instructor who was popular with the students, to serve as a “student dean” (Sandeen, 2004). The establishment of this position marked the creation of student affairs professionals in higher education. Other institutions followed Harvard’s lead, hiring and promoting individuals to monitor student behavior and well-being. Eventually, student affairs grew to become an integral component of higher education. Student services offices were created to assist students with many aspects of their lives, ranging from academic, career, and psychological counseling to departments dedicated to establishing bigger and better extracurricular activities. Further, graduate programs were created in the field and researchers began studying student development and

demonstrating the important role of student affairs professionals in enhancing students' college experiences (Lyons, 1990; Stage, Watson, & Terrell, 1999).

On campuses today, divisions of student affairs provide students with myriad experiences that allow them to develop competencies that would normally not be addressed through a standard curricular experience. For example, students hone their leadership skills through clubs and organizations while they explore new activities and experiences. Students are also presented with opportunities for community involvement, as they move beyond the campus and engage in service-learning (Lyons, 1990). On many campuses, student affairs professionals lead the way in promoting cultural pluralism and exposing students to the importance of diversity in modern society (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004).

### Discussion of the Problem

Student affairs and the extra-curriculum at colleges and universities complement students' academic experiences by providing students with opportunities for growth in a wide array of areas. Student affairs developed, however, as an entity separate from the academic realm of the university, which has led to a detrimental divide between student and academic affairs. These two areas of higher education have little, if any, functional overlap, and they have dissimilar values and cultures (Brown, 1990). The disconnect between academic and student affairs creates a disjointed experience for students and results in the compartmentalization of student success.

Rather than adopting a model in which a single group of people shares responsibilities for all aspects of a student's success in college, as exemplified by the colonial colleges, higher education currently divides the student experience into numerous segments. Specialists are assigned to specific components of students' lives. Certainly, this model has its benefits. For example, if a student is contemplating suicide, she or he can be better served by a mental health counselor with extensive training in that field than she or he could by a "jack-of-all-trades" who has little or no formal training in counseling. Additionally, if a student wants to learn about cutting edge computer science research, a professor in this field is more likely to be up to speed on current trends if she or he is able to devote more time and energy to her or his research rather than monitoring students in the residence halls.

On the other hand, allowing faculty and student affairs professionals to function separately from one another has detrimental repercussions for students. Because professors focus on scholarship and matters of formal education, they frequently become removed from the lives of the students they instruct. Today, due to the presence of student affairs professionals, faculty advisors for clubs are obsolete at many institutions. By limiting faculty interactions with students to the classroom,

students do not have as many opportunities for academically-oriented discussion during their free time as they would if professors were involved in the extra-curriculum. Furthermore, professors are seldom aware of the lives their students lead in the residence halls, drug and alcohol abuse on campus, or similar topics that fall under the oversight of student affairs professionals. This distance between students and professors encourages professors to dedicate more of their time and energy toward their research and for students to care less about their education (Brown, 1990).

Meanwhile, student affairs professionals are just as likely be removed from the classroom as professors are from the residence hall or student center. Most student affairs professionals, while they are familiar with student development theories, are not trained to support students' academic pursuits directly as tutors or supplemental instructors. According to Brown (1990):

Student development theory indeed has provided fertile ground for both program development and research, but too often it has blinded its practitioners to the fundamental mission of most colleges and universities. . . . Too many student affairs professionals [fail] to understand and participate in intellectual pursuits, which are, in fact, at the heart of higher education. (p. 247)

The separate roles filled by student affairs professionals and professors affect the way students perceive their college experiences. Rather than being cognizant of the holistic nature of one's education and development, students view their academic and extracurricular experiences as distinct and unrelated entities. According to Cardinal John Henry Newman (1996):

All that exists, as contemplated by the human mind, forms one large system or complex fact, and this of course resolves itself into an indefinite number of particular facts, which, as being portions of a whole, have countless relations of every kind, one towards another. (p. 41)

In order to acquire knowledge, a student should therefore understand the relations that link one fact to another. It may be easy for a student to see the connection between material taught in two courses in the same field, but tying information from a sociology textbook to a community service project can be much more difficult. Rather than creating ways for students to understand how different parts of their education are intertwined, most colleges operate in a disjointed fashion that break up a student's in-class experience from what takes place beyond the classroom, establishing what John Dewey (1916) called "the artificial gap between life in school and out" (p. 228).

A major factor that leads to the divide between student and academic affairs is the naturally segmented structure of higher education. Brown wrote (1990):

Some of the barriers to collaboration between academic and student affairs are no different from those that impede collaboration among groups

at most institutions. Because of the high degree of autonomy afforded faculty and the fragmented organizational structure characteristic of colleges and universities, collaboration does not emerge naturally. (p. 245) Other factors that contribute to the separation between professors and student affairs professionals include limited resources and a dearth of incentives for university employees to bridge the gap between the curriculum and extra-curriculum.

Beyond these barriers, contrasting values of professors and student affairs professionals exacerbate the misalignment between student affairs professionals and faculty. According to Lyons (1990), “student affairs professionals place special import on the uniqueness of the individual, on the relationships between thinking and feeling, on asserting worth and dignity of all people, and on the power of personal involvement in educational experiences” (p. 25). Pedagogical methods and educational environments are also of significant concern to the student affairs professional (Mueller & Stage, 1999). On the other hand, faculty members are generally trained as scholars in their field rather than as educators; most receive little formal training in teaching (Brown, 1990). Rather than focus on their students, educational approaches, or expanding their understanding of the institutions they serve, professors, who are encouraged by incentives such as tenure, devote their energies to their academic specialties (Sandeen, 2004). Furthermore, many professors often take an independent or competitive approach to their work. This practice is promoted by the way in which curriculum development, promotion, and resource allocation are structured in academic affairs (Brown; Sandeen). Most student affairs professionals, on the other hand, see the concepts of community and collaboration as integral to their work (Brown).

In addition to differing values, the issue of epistemological distinctions between student affairs professionals and faculty creates a deeper, less visible rift that keeps these two groups apart. According to Palmer (1987), faculty culture encourages competition and individualism rather than collaboration and community. Furthermore, professors’ way of knowing is “characterized by objectivity, analysis, experimentation, [and] separation of subject and object,” which is strikingly different from the subjective, affective perspectives of many individuals in student affairs (Brown, 1990, p. 245). Kuh, Shedd, and Whitt (1987) suggested that the epistemological divergence between individuals in academic and student affairs is one of the major forces that prevent collaboration among the groups.

While faculty and student affairs professionals both strive to educate students, the manners in which they attempt to reach this goal are markedly different. The functional and cultural divides between these branches of higher education lead to the lack of holistic student development. For example, take the case of a student who attends college with the intention of excelling in her or his courses and acquiring as much knowledge as possible in her or his field of choice. The place

for her or him to accomplish this goal is the classroom, and her or his ally in this process is the professor. The values of this student and her or his academic mentor are aligned; both believe that executing scientific method, performing research, understanding literature, and creating knowledge are the most integral components to a student's college experience. Meanwhile, the student may perceive the student affairs professionals on her or his campus to be unimportant in helping her or him achieve goals due to the strictly extracurricular expertise of most student affairs professionals. Other students may resonate more with the culture and values of student affairs and the opportunities it presents. While these individuals may still take their education seriously, they are more likely to devote their time and energy to the extra-curriculum because of the climate surrounding it, which is created by student affairs professionals.

In this manner, students gravitate toward the areas that exemplify their values and present them with opportunities to accomplish their goals. The diversity in cultures and opportunities between student and academic affairs is beneficial in one way because it allows for students to select the area that is right for them. The lack of overlap between these components of higher education, however, discourages students from experimenting in arenas in which they are not as comfortable. Students who are passionate about their studies and connect with their professors likely will not be introduced to valuable extracurricular opportunities, since faculty are unaware of them for the most part. Meanwhile, student affairs professionals frequently are not prepared to turn their student leaders on to opportunities for research or other forms of scholarship due to the gap between student affairs and the strictly academic functions of higher education. In this regard, the distinct cultures and functions, along with the paucity of collaboration and familiarity between student and academic affairs, are responsible for impeding holistic student development.

While the model of student supervision and instruction during the first 250 years of higher education in the United States had its drawbacks, it excelled in creating a cohesive experience for its students. Students lived and dined with the same individuals that instructed them in the classroom. In contrast with today's system, one person was made responsible for all aspects of a student's development and well-being. Today, dividing the responsibilities of assisting students with their academic and personal growth between professors and student affairs professionals allows for cracks through which students can slip; this certainly was much less of a possibility before student supervision was so decentralized. Furthermore, the disjointed nature of modern higher education makes it difficult for students to see how the lessons they learn inside and outside the classroom connect.

There are several steps that colleges and universities in the United States can take to begin to remedy the identified problems of the compartmentalization of student success and the divide that separates academic and student affairs. First, institutions need to assess their practices and make a conscious commitment to bridge student and academic affairs, creating an enhanced and more seamless experience for students. One way to achieve this is to “look beyond traditional departmental boundaries, which often have been barriers to coherence in undergraduate education” (Sandeen, 2004, p. 32). This initiative should be led by the central administration, which has the power to influence both faculty and student affairs professionals through the distribution of resources and the creation of programs that unite both professors and student affairs professionals in their shared mission of promoting student success.

An example of this work can be made visible through the use of a residential college system. This structure has been in place in European institutions since centuries before higher education reached the New World. Much like the colonial colleges, residential colleges place an emphasis on tight-knit communities that emphasize the involvement of a team of professionals in all aspects of students’ lives. Given the financial restraints and large enrollments at many universities, it would be hard for most institutions to downsize their student bodies. Residential colleges however, can be created within any school to establish a more intimate atmosphere, allow for more interaction between students and staff, and facilitate collaboration between individuals from the academy and those from student affairs.

A residential college functions by taking a cross-section of the student body and putting a small group of professionals from across the institution in charge of many aspects of the students’ education, well-being, and development. In large universities, it is very easy for professors and student affairs professionals to operate entirely within their distinct domains. The intimate nature of a residential college however, encourages professionals from various branches to become familiar with one another’s work and to collaborate on a variety of projects. This poses a challenge because individuals must work with people who possess different educational backgrounds, specialties, epistemological views, values, and roles within the institution. The key to overcoming these differences lies in understanding that “the academic mission of the institution is preeminent” (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1987, p. 8). With this goal in mind, collaboration between professionals in student and academic affairs is possible and the results present great rewards for the students these individuals serve. In residential colleges, faculty work alongside student affairs professionals in designing extra-curricular and co-curricular events that build upon coursework. Individuals in student affairs in turn become familiar with the college’s curriculum and may discover ways to directly assist students in their academic pursuits. Appropriate facilities encourage interactions among all members of the college in classrooms,

dining halls, residence rooms, and common spaces (O'Hara, 2006). The benefits of the residential college model revolve around a cohesive student experience that emphasizes the connected nature of knowledge and promotes holistic student development.

The coming years will bring many challenges to higher education in the United States, but one of the greatest will be for colleges to reverse the momentum that has pulled academics and student affairs apart from one another. Professionals in higher education must begin to seek ways to collaborate in the shared goal of promoting student success. Obstacles preventing these changes will include budget cuts and advances in technology that will increase impersonal communications between university employees and students. Individuals in academic and student affairs must work in unison to overcome their differences and realize their common objectives in the attempt to provide students with holistic, interconnected educational experiences.

## References

- Brown, S. S. (1990). Strengthening ties to academic affairs. In M. J. Barr & M. L. Upcraft (Eds.), *New Futures for Student Affairs* (pp. 239-269). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: The MacMillan Company.
- Kerr, C. (1963). *The uses of a university*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kuh, G. D., Shedd, J. D. & Whitt, E. J. (1987). Student affairs and liberal education: Unrecognized (and unappreciated) common law partners. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 28, 252-259.
- Leonard, E. A. (1956). *Origins of personnel services in American higher education*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lyons, J. W. (1990). Examining the validity of basic assumptions and beliefs. In M. J. Barr & M. L. Upcraft (Eds.), *New futures for student affairs* (p. 22-40). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mueller, P. & Stage, F. K. (1999). Service learning: exemplifying the connections between theory and practice. In F. K. Stage, L. W. Watson, & M. Terrell (Eds.), *Enhancing student learning: Setting the campus context* (pp. 103-122). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. (1987). A perspective on student affairs: A statement issued on the fiftieth anniversary of *The Student Personnel Point of View*. Washington, D.C.: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.
- Newman, J. (1996). *The idea of a university*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- O'Hara, R. J. (2006). *Buildings and grounds of residential colleges*. Retrieved November 6, 2006, from <http://collegiateway.org/howto/buildings>
- Palmer, P. J. (1987). Community, conflict, and ways of knowing: Ways to deepen our educational agenda. *Change Magazine*, 19, 20-25.
- Pope, R. L., Reynolds, A. L., & Mueller, J. A. (2004). *Multicultural competence in student affairs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rudolph, F. (1962). *The American college & university: A history*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.
- Sandeen, A. (2004). The whole student: The growing academic importance of student affairs. *Change Magazine*, 36, 28-33.
- Stage, F. K., Watson, L. W., & Terrell, M. (Eds.). (1999). *Enhancing student learning: Setting the campus context*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

## Interdisciplinarity: A Major Issue

Jess Belue & David Buckley

*Interdisciplinary majors are a growing feature of the undergraduate university (Robles, 1998). Their widespread popularity should be of interest to both professional academics and student affairs professionals. These programs present unique opportunities to foster engagement across difference and to encourage a critically reflective learning approach, a style that the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002), the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and the American College Personnel Association (2004) all advocate. While highlighting the challenges and opportunities of interdisciplinary programs, these authors, who graduated with bachelor's degrees in interdisciplinary majors, will argue that these programs provide important opportunities for bridging gaps between the academic and student affairs spheres of university life.*

Modern Studies, American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Political and Social Thought are all examples of the growing numbers of interdisciplinary majors that transcend traditional disciplinary curricula. Interdisciplinary majors are unique in that they entail the joining of two or more disciplines to provide cohesive curricula or academic endeavors for students (Robles, 1998). Pedagogical models for these majors involve a number of collaborative approaches. Team-teaching, shared curriculum development, and encouragement of student-initiated planning are all elements of interdisciplinary majors that contribute to their collaborative nature. The authors experienced a number of these approaches while pursuing interdisciplinary studies.

These programs, which involve elements of cross-campus collaboration, student engagement in the academic process, and campus community-building, create many challenges and opportunities for colleges and universities. The opportunities interdisciplinary programs provide can encourage institutional progress. These programs fulfill institutional needs identified by many academic and student affairs organizations—they allow for student engagement in the learning process

---

*A graduate of the American Studies program at the University of Virginia, Jess is a second year in the HESA program. She advises the University of Vermont's Senior Class Council. Jess is looking forward to new adventures after marrying her co-author in July of 2007.*

*David Buckley currently works in Washington on issues of religion and progressive politics. Before that, he majored in the interdisciplinary program of Political and Social Thought at the University of Virginia, where he also led the International Relations Organization. His mother would be shocked that he co-authored an article out of wedlock.*

and critical reflection on learning. They also foster engagement across difference in higher education, including across faculty, student, and functional areas (i.e., academic and student affairs). Additionally, they encourage an in-class focus on diversity and promote a style of learning that appeals to a diverse group of students. At the same time, however, these programs create challenges—how to achieve excellence, avoid dabbling, and establish a responsible managing party. Despite the need for continued development of interdisciplinary programs, they meet the goals of both academic and student affairs professionals and, therefore, provide a potential method for bridging the gap that often separates the two.

### Methods

Having experienced interdisciplinary majors first hand and now both pursuing the academic and student affairs fields, we evaluate here the opportunities and challenges of interdisciplinary majors. We highlight ways in which these opportunities and challenges provide potential areas for the collaboration of academic and student affairs professionals. The theme of this edition of *The Vermont Connection, The Common in Community: Engaging Across Difference in Higher Education*, encouraged us to reflect on our experiences as students within interdisciplinary programs. These experiences provided a unique academic opportunity for students and professionals alike to engage across difference. Both authors also blended interdisciplinary study with campus leadership. These experiences gave the authors a sense of the bridges that interdisciplinary programs can help to build between academic and student affairs professionals. Yet, interdisciplinary programs also create challenges common in the bureaucratic and departmental environments of a university. We provide examples from our own programs in making our arguments, and we are familiar with a variety of interdisciplinary programs, each with different structures, guidelines, policies, and cultures. The literature on the field of interdisciplinary study grounds our writing.

### The Opportunities

#### *Fulfilling Established Needs*

Interdisciplinary programs have a unique role to play in achieving the vision of student learning that both academic and student affairs organizations have identified on campuses. In their publication *Greater Expectations*, The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) (2002) poses the question, “What should students be learning in college?” (The Learning Students Need for the 21st Century, para. 1). Using a philosophy of education that it calls *liberal education*, AAC&U answers this question, saying that all students should be prepared as intentional learners. Such learners are “empowered through intellectual and practical skills,” “informed by knowledge and ways of knowing,” and “responsible for personal actions and civic values” (The Learning Students Need for the 21st

Century).

Similarly, Gwendolyn Dungy (2004), the Executive Director of the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), wrote of the growing need in the late 1990s for a unified document of direction for the field of student affairs. With developing emphasis on assessment and the measure of learning outcomes and with a realization that the National Survey for Student Engagement measured student engagement in ways not purely related to student affairs, Dungy and others sought to create a document that would ground the work of student affairs in a current context and give guidance for the collaboration of faculty and student affairs professionals. The ensuing document, *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 2004), explores current trends and argues for the integration of academic and personal development to guide the work of both faculty and student affairs professionals. In response to a multifaceted student life, NASPA and ACPA call for *transformative education* (p. 8). This type of education, similar to *Greater Expectation's* liberal education, seeks to place students' "reflective processes at the core of the learning experience and asks the student to evaluate both new information and the frames of reference through which the information acquires meaning" (p. 9). Like AAC&U, NASPA and ACPA provide their field with a framework for incorporating student development with learning and intellectual development.

An answer to the call for both liberal and transformative education, interdisciplinary majors can provide opportunities for reflective and interactive learning and campus collaboration. These opportunities, therefore, are ones that stakeholders in higher education from across the nation are seeking. They provide both a deep level of learning in which the student has a voice and a method for campus collaboration that seems to be in great need at many institutions.

### *Student Learning*

Interdisciplinary programs provide a number of opportunities for innovative student learning that can benefit students as learners and as members of a broader community. Through these programs, students are able to explore different ways of knowing. As they seek knowledge in interdisciplinary majors, they are encouraged to evaluate the ways in which, and the disciplines through which, they attain knowledge. Students, along with faculty, select courses from many disciplines and use a variety of media to explore topics. Students, therefore, are able to evaluate not only gained knowledge but also the method of gaining knowledge. For example, within our own programs, we both used a variety of media to approach learning. From film to primary philosophy texts, from art to literature, from psychological theories to poetry, many genres became lenses through which we viewed a particular issue. In one of our programs, photographs became a textbook for examining racism in the South in the early 1900s. Nobel Prize winning drama sparked discussion

on the ambiguous legacy of colonialism in Africa. The use of these many media in one classroom or the ability to explore different media through multiple classes provides students with the opportunity to reflect not only on the subject being learned but also on the way the subject is learned—learning becomes holistic in an interdisciplinary classroom. Students not only learn what professors present, but they also reflect upon their own learning as they evaluate how and why the professor presented the material in such a way. For such learning to best occur, both classroom professors and student affairs professionals should guide this reflection process, asking students not only what they have learned but how.

This sort of learning brings with it the moral and cognitive development that student affairs professionals seek to nurture in students, particularly the values of multicultural competence in understanding and valuing cultures and communities. Students in one author's class explored the commentary of Romare Bearden's artwork on race, jazz, and the city in the 20th century. They engaged in a discussion around the unique portrayal of racial oppression through the eyes of the artist. The same class also visited the campus museum for lessons on pieces of art displayed. In another author's class, the plays of Wole Soyinka provided a compelling look at African history that enhanced the viewer's ability to understand events. These opportunities, which allow students to learn *how* to learn, may lend themselves to student affairs programming. Some programming ideas might include events focused on the multiple narratives, views, and stories of a community or culture, or events on different scientific approaches to problems, their potential consequences, and how engineers choose the approach based on those consequences.

Interdisciplinary programs not only encourage holistic learning but they also provide a reflective and interactive component to crafting a plan of study. Students participate in selecting courses that complete a cohesive curriculum. While they operate within certain program guidelines (such as a certain number of classes in a particular area or a certain number of upper level classes), students are able to choose courses and disciplines that best fit their academic pursuits. For example, a student might select classes in literature, politics, psychology and even science to construct a cohesive major in gender studies. In some instances, experiences outside the traditional classroom may also qualify as learning. A student studying bioethics might find that working in a hospital raises issues that relate to coursework. This experiential learning could, in many cases, be pursued as academic credit and could inform in-class reflection and future research projects. Thus, interdisciplinary programs provide students with an opportunity to share responsibility in learning and crafting their desired course of study.

This taking of personal responsibility for curriculum development further nurtures the kind of engaged, active student leaders whom student affairs professionals work to develop. In fact, many student affairs offices provide leadership development

programs, workshops, and retreats that encourage personal skills such as self-awareness, moral decision-making, multicultural competence, and priority setting. Student affairs professionals might also add to these developmental programs a component that encourages students to reflect on how their pursuit of course work, selection of classes, and development of curricula relate to their own priorities, values, and interests outside of the classroom. These administrators could help to nurture reflective interdisciplinary students through these kinds of programs. Furthermore, by developing their own curricula, students can combine their co-curricular interests through campus programming. With support of student affairs professionals, students can take what they learn in an interdisciplinary classroom and create programs that bring academics into student life. One example might be the showing of a TV-series and a follow-up dialogue about how the values of a society are portrayed, influenced, or opposed in pop-culture.

#### *Collaboration Across Difference*

In addition to providing a new pedagogy for student learning, interdisciplinary majors also encourage collaboration across campus in a number of ways. The power of this collaboration has a hold on today's universities. For example, President Daniel Mark Fogel (2006) of the University of Vermont recently commented:

To advance and realize [Vermont's] vision of being the nation's premier small public research university, it must find ways to promote collaborative interdisciplinary research . . . to a degree that is rarely if ever achieved in our siloed institutions of higher education. (para. 5)

Fogel highlights that to be a cutting-edge academic institution, the university must champion programs that encourage thought which spans disciplines and academic relationships which span departments. In universities where the "silos" of discipline remain ever intact, interdisciplinary programs provide a welcome venue for partnerships.

One type of partnership interdisciplinary majors encourage is faculty collaboration across disciplines. In an environment where they narrowly specialize in their departments (Boyer, 1990; Clark, 1963), faculty members rarely have the chance to pursue joint learning and teaching. In fact, faculty culture is known for its individuality in research and teaching (Clark). Therefore, interdisciplinary programs provide an opportunity for faculty to work together on their specialties across disciplines. For example, in a capstone course offered through the American Studies program at the University of Virginia, a Civil War historian and a scholar of Civil War literature combined to teach an interdisciplinary course on the war. Students viewed history not just through a textbook but also through primary sources and through cultural expressions. Faculty members were able to combine their disciplines in the classroom, crafting new material and ways of learning in the process.

Interdisciplinary programs can also encourage student collaboration across disciplines. In one of the author's programs, students came together who were studying subjects as varied as educational policy (effects of No Child Left Behind on schools of different socioeconomic levels), gender issues (problems and methods of adjudication of sexual assault on college campuses), and the changing, elusive nature of the American Dream. The commonality that tied these interests together was the grounding core coursework in political and social thought. These students had the opportunity not only to learn from faculty in different disciplines; they also had the opportunity to learn from each other. They were able to engage in common seminar discussions, help in refining individual research projects, and respond to student research as it progressed.

These programs can also provide the potential for collaboration not just across disciplines but also across undergraduate colleges (e.g., Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Architecture, Business, and others). For example, an engineering student might take ethics courses for a major in engineering and bioethics. A student studying architecture and urban planning could pursue classes in racial politics for a major that encompasses sociological aspects of urban planning. A student studying literature might also pursue business classes to examine the cross-sections of the commerce of publishing and the craft of writing. Thus, faculty and students would interact not just within their own school of sometimes similar disciplines (such as the liberal arts) but also with those from traditionally different disciplines. This sort of interaction could encourage new research, pedagogies, and institutional vitality.

In addition to cross-discipline interaction, interdisciplinary programs can provide unique opportunities for collaboration across functional areas, particularly between student affairs professionals and faculty members. These kinds of majors provide opportunities for unique student development on campus, such as focused residential communities, creative academic programming, and unique in-class speakers. This task of building collaborations between faculty and student affairs professionals will take active engagement from both sides, and from students, but if conceived correctly could provide important progress in building universities that better nurture student learning.

### *Diversity*

Interdisciplinary programs can also promote diversity on campus. By diversity, we do not mean the diversity of academic disciplines, which we have already discussed, but the diversity of individual identities. Interdisciplinary programs encourage the exploration of cross-sections of identity. Many programs, as the reader might notice from the titles of interdisciplinary majors that begin this article, provide a focused study of identities from religious belief, to sexuality, to race and ethnicity, to gender. These programs encourage cross-campus collaboration on these issues

of diversity that often resonate deeply with students, administrators, and faculty alike. These courses promote a multicultural competence that campuses strive to create for all in the community.

Not only do these programs provide an opportunity to study diversity in the classroom; they also encourage a type of approach to learning that appeals to a diverse group of students. Interdisciplinary programs encourage and nurture faculty and student interaction, student-initiated and creative projects, and student participation in learning. These majors, therefore, incorporate many of the pedagogical components that have been shown to appeal to students who have not been supported in historically predominately White classrooms (Hurtado, Milem, Clatyon-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). Interdisciplinary majors have the potential to serve as models for multiculturally competent pedagogies. This potential can be of interest to student affairs professionals who make meeting the needs of diverse students one of their top priorities. They could collaborate with faculty to guide in-class lessons on multicultural competence, so that students not only look at diversity through an academic lens but also through a personal lens.

### The Challenges

Given the above analysis, interdisciplinary programs may seem the prescription for all that ails contemporary American higher education. While the authors agree that such programs have great potential to meet the academic and student affairs goals for contemporary universities, that potential will only be realized if administrators and faculty consider a number of challenges. If the following issues remain unaddressed, the interdisciplinary model risks unaccountable students, administrative fragmentation, and isolation from the broader university community.

#### *Ensuring Excellence and Accountability*

While the flexibility of interdisciplinary programs makes them attractive to many students, it can also become their greatest challenge. The demands made by particular departments of their traditional majors are designed to ensure a solid foundational education in the discipline and guide students through material essential to success in the field. In contrast, many interdisciplinary programs “liberate” undergraduates from traditional major requirements in the interest of course diversity. Foundational coursework is eschewed in favor of exotic sampling. While there is certainly much to be gained from such diverse exposure, it must be balanced against the need for direction in an educational plan. A related challenge is ensuring consistent work from students after they gain admission into selective interdisciplinary programs. Both authors knew students who exerted less effort after being admitted to interdisciplinary programs. This decline in work ethic is a threat both to the intellectual climate of a university and the need for upperclass leadership outside of the classroom.

Two solutions can make significant progress in ensuring excellence and accountability in interdisciplinary programs. First, the program should integrate a core curriculum with carefully guided independent coursework. A shared core curriculum gives the program director the opportunity to assign foundational texts in the field of study to students and has the twin benefit of building intellectual and personal bonds among students. This curricular core, likely in the form of a seminar, should be among the most challenging intellectual experiences students have at the university. It draws texts from across departments with the unified goal of building the intellectual exposure that will enable future research. The University of Virginia's program in Political and Social Thought combines classics of political thinking, like Aristotle, Kant, Marx, and Arendt, with the sociology of Orlando Patterson, the literature of Nadine Gordimer, and the relentless critique of Edward Said. In addition to this curricular core, program administrators should work closely with students to develop course lists that will provide the foundational knowledge necessary for future research. The program then becomes an opportunity to develop a truly rigorous personal curriculum rather than a mere license to directionless dabbling. If faculty and student affairs professionals work together, co-curricular leadership and engagement could provide a part of the core curricular requirements of interdisciplinary programs. Interdisciplinary faculty might encourage students to apply their co-curricular involvement with their in-class learning for a class project.

Second, a capstone project or thesis serves as an effective end goal for the interdisciplinary students' study and challenges them to integrate their broad coursework into a unified project worthy of academic consideration. Effective programs require that this project be undertaken with the advisement of a faculty member and with at least the initial approval of the program director. This final project allows students to develop personal and professional relationships with faculty members, challenges them to focus their interdisciplinary work on a concrete product, and requires a level of in depth reading and writing that ensures the interdisciplinary experience is more than intellectual window shopping. Final projects could take many different forms. One of us wrote an independent credit-bearing thesis. One of us pursued a common class with all cohort members on the history of modern art, which was a completely new topic to all; this class encouraged students to use already-acquired skills from different disciplines to engage in a new form of learning.

Such a capstone project also presents potential for the development of student affairs programming. Campus thesis conferences or undergraduate research symposiums could enrich the broader university community and could encourage distinct interdisciplinary programs to interact as students conclude their research. Additionally, faculty and student affairs professionals could work together to encourage interdisciplinary students to consider projects that benefit the university community.

For example, one of our classmates studied campus policies on adjudicating sexual assault as she studied feminism in the United States. She worked with both faculty and a dean of students as she made suggestions for her campus.

*Funding and Managing Programs Beyond Departments*

A further challenge facing interdisciplinary major programs is administration and governance. The academic structure of the modern university centers on its departments or specialization (Boyer, 1990; Clark, 1963). Interdisciplinary programs exist specifically to broaden that departmental structure, a happy fact that brings with it a series of administrative challenges. Who will fund the program? Will faculty members be allowed to teach outside of their departments? Who will make decisions regarding curricular development? Who will review professor performance and ensure quality administration for students?

While interdisciplinary programs thrive by pushing departmental boundaries, these questions reveal the extent to which the departmental structure of the university is essential to their success. Without the financial and workload support from one or more academic departments, a viable program cannot be built. Even if outside funding could essentially build an autonomous interdisciplinary department, the program's director would need cooperation from colleagues in other departments to secure advisors for student theses and willing partners for the program's success in attracting students.

When such programs are successfully integrated into the departmental structure of the university, this challenge can become one of the greatest strengths of these programs. Faculty from across disciplines can come into regular contact with one another and engage intellectually by sharing advising responsibilities. Departments unable to launch new programs alone can pool funds to bring about interdisciplinary success. While there will be inherent political and ego-management issues in such a process, they are certainly not insurmountable for the skilled administrator. If, as Ernest Boyer (1990) says, contemporary universities should make "connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way" (p. 18), the success of these programs can be a key feature improving higher education in the United States today. Reduction of fragmentation and an increase in coalition building, we believe, would also foster an environment in which student affairs and academic bridges would be more easily developed.

*Serving the Broader University*

Given the widespread proliferation of interdisciplinary major programs and their tendency to attract already academically engaged students, forward-thinking college officials of mid- to large-sized universities and colleges must address one other concern: weakening the university as a whole while serving some students excep-

tionally well. If a dozen programs pull 20 students each into isolated academic environments in which students take classes not available to the general student population, the broader educational mission of the university may suffer. With this in mind, administrators must weigh not only the substantive merits of the program under consideration but also the total number of such programs already in existence in the university. Further consideration must be given to the effect that proliferating specialized interdisciplinary programs has on university unity. At their best, such programs encourage unity by promoting inter-departmental cooperation. At their worst, they further academic atomization through extreme specialization.

The close supervision of interdisciplinary students as they develop their custom curriculum is one way to address this concern. Students should be required to pursue upper-level seminars in related university departments and held accountable for their performance in those environments. When major grade point averages (GPAs) are calculated, it is important to include courses taken from the menu of interdisciplinary options in addition to whatever core curriculum all students in the program share. Students will take classes within departments seriously, draw more from those academic environments, and benefit the university as a whole in the process. One issue that deserves further study is the practice of freezing a GPA after admission to highly selective programs. Some selective interdisciplinary programs freeze students' GPAs at their pre-admission levels; future academic evaluation rests only on performance within the major program. While program members argue that such a freeze is necessary to allow students to focus entirely on their selected major, there is the undeniable risk of students neglecting their academic commitments in the broader university community when not held accountable through grading.

Student affairs professionals have a role to play as well in the integration of interdisciplinary majors into the broader university. The research conducted by students in these programs is often provocative and interesting and could be shared and debated through publications and the kinds of public research forums described above. Such forums can be of significant value not only in integrating programs into the university but also in building bonds between students in different interdisciplinary programs. Additional programming centered on learning through various media (especially stage, film, and music) can present further opportunities for program development that brings these academic majors into contact with the broader student body.

### Conclusion

Interdisciplinary majors provide great opportunities to improve the academic and student life environment of America's universities. While certain challenges must

be managed, when properly conceived, interdisciplinary programs can challenge students and engage faculty and administrators. Students can be informed by knowledge and ways of knowing and learn to evaluate both new information and the frames of reference through which the information acquires meaning. In the process, university professionals can make real progress in meeting the established goals of the AAC&U's liberal education and NASPA and ACPA's transformative education. Such students could learn much from each other and benefit the university as a whole. The diversity of the university becomes a strength and provides an opportunity for intellectual and programmatic engagement across difference. By developing these programs to capitalize on the strength of diversity, faculty and administrators can take advantage of a major opportunity.

## References

- Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2002). *Greater expectations*. Retrieved March, 2006, from <http://www.greaterexpectations.org/>
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Clark, B. (1963). Faculty culture. In T. Lunsford (Ed.), *The study of campus cultures* (pp. 39-54). Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.
- Dungy, G. J. (2004, April 14). Why 'Learning Reconsidered' now? *Forum: NASPA's eNewsletter*. Retrieved March, 2006, from [http://www.naspa.org/naspa\\_forum/forum.cfm?cid=2&fid=124](http://www.naspa.org/naspa_forum/forum.cfm?cid=2&fid=124)
- Fogel, D. (2006, November 10). President's report to the Board of Trustees. University of Vermont, Board of Trustees meeting. Burlington, VT.
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clatyon-Pedersen, A., & Allen, W. (1999). *Enacting diverse learning environments: Improving the climate for racial/ethnic diversity in higher education*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 26(8). Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development.
- Robles, H. J. (1998). *Interdisciplinary course and programs: Pedagogy and practice. Recommendations for planning, implementation, and evaluation*. California Community College.
- The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA). (2004). *Learning reconsidered: A campus-wide focus on the student experience*. Retrieved March, 2006, from [http://www.naspa.org/membership/leader\\_ex\\_pdf/lr\\_long.pdf](http://www.naspa.org/membership/leader_ex_pdf/lr_long.pdf)

## Bridging Differences: Building Community in Short-Term Abroad Programs

Jean Pak

*This paper is a personal reflection and exploration of the author's short-term study abroad experience in Apia, Samoa. The narrative will consider the elements of one author's personal experiences building community abroad in a limited time span and how these elements contributed to a successful short-term study abroad experience. The author will also examine the implications of these experiences, and of adopting a community-building perspective for short-term study abroad programs within higher education.*

Short-term abroad programs are an increasingly attractive means for a study abroad experience. The shorter duration of these programs, several weeks compared to a semester, make it easier for students to travel and receive credit toward graduation. While some critics of short-term abroad programs have questioned whether it is possible to build a sense of community between students and a host culture, I believe that short-term abroad programs can successfully build community. This paper focuses on short-term programs that occur during the intersession period between semesters.

The term *community*, as used in this article, is defined as a group of people who share a common goal. To build a cross-cultural community, it is critical to create an experience that allows students to understand the host culture beyond the surface level. This can be accomplished when students are encouraged to utilize the following tools: story sharing, reciprocity, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural communication, and cultural immersion and adaptation. These concepts provide a framework for students abroad as they experience new cultures and explore the relationship between their own lives and the lives of people overseas. Through these experiences, students will learn more about themselves, become more globally rounded citizens, and make connections with individuals abroad in the first steps toward building a global community.

The tools that I describe for successful short-term student abroad programs are drawn from my own experiences in one such program in Samoa. I recognize that all students or higher education professionals may not accept this vision of cultural immersion and adaptation. However, if we strive to create a non-tourist model for short-term study abroad programs, then it is possible to build community. It is a

*Jean Pak is finishing her second year in the HESA program and an assistantship in the Center for Cultural Pluralism. She graduated from UC Davis in 2004 and her hometown is in Fremont, CA.*

collective effort worth taking to enrich our worldview and share with communities abroad who we are and why we travel to their country. The responsibility rests on the student to become an active learner and inquisitor and on the instructor to encourage such a mindset.

### Sharing Stories

*Wherever a story comes from, whether it is a familiar myth or a private memory, the retelling exemplifies the making of a connection from one pattern to another: a potential translation in which narrative becomes parable and the once upon a time comes to stand for some renascent truth.* (Bateson, 1990)

Stories bring people together by illuminating the common and shared themes within their experiences. David Chanoff captures this idea when he says, “[A story is] not merely telling you things; it’s telling them in a way that reveals the habits of mind and quality of feeling” (as cited in Nash, 2004, p. 23). Stories draw us deep into conversations that are recited in a vivid and lively manner, and as we take risks to share our stories, our shared vulnerability connects us with one another.

This experience with stories was certainly similar to my own. I began my journey toward this realization at 5 p.m. on a warm and bright Tuesday at Los Angeles International Airport, when I decided to check in for my flight to Apia, Samoa five hours early. Unusually for me, I did not have my iPod or cell phone to pass the time. Luckily, my instructor Carla had also arrived early and suggested we talk to a woman sitting alone nearby. I sat down next to her and found myself suddenly intrigued and interested in the conversation. The Samoan woman, named Rina, narrated her life story through visual imagery, detailed observations, and anecdotes to which I could easily relate. She talked about the cancelled and missed flights she encountered while returning home, the love she had for wearing blue jeans, the significance of family, and the Samoan coconuts that she craved to drink. Our conversation took us deeper; Rina then talked about losing her significant other and how unsupported she felt while making choices around funeral arrangements. While I had not experienced this event, I understood this feeling of losing someone.

I shared with Rina the challenges of balancing traditional Asian cultural values and gender roles with Western values such as independence. I realized we both shared a similar love for home-cooked meals and missed our families deeply. Because of the unspoken trust and similar experiences that Rina and I shared, she was moved to show me a copy of her loved one’s obituary. Through hearing Rina’s story and sharing my own experiences, I was comforted as I began my journey abroad. Rina and I both were able to move past the sadness in our stories and find peace.

Throughout this process, my instructor was a key figure. She helped facilitate our conversation by teaching me two key concepts: listening and silence. I watched closely as my instructor, Carla, gently asked one or two questions and then listened. When she asked questions, the gentleness and tone of her voice allowed the conversation to continue deeper and deeper. As she modeled the process for me, I discovered that listening could be supportive. Sometimes, there are no words to comfort someone; but our presence alone can affirm the person. This experience helped me realize that honest dialogue between people will only occur through the thoughtful and intentional construction of personal questions. When instructors model such skills and practices, they prepare and teach their students to communicate in this way—to ask questions politely without being invasive. Instructors can also share with their students that when no words are being spoken in conversation, students can affirm their partners in dialogue by being present in the moment.

#### Reciprocity

*There is one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all  
one's life—reciprocity. (Confucius, n.d.)*

For me, the practice of building community abroad was further strengthened by my contributions to the host families with whom I stayed. Reciprocity or “mutual exchange [between more than one person]” means that one person is not bearing his or her soul or doing all of the work while others sit and listen or reap the benefits (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000). Though students go abroad to learn more about another culture, this traditional idea is very one-sided. Finding ways to encourage reciprocal learning between the international community and the student can make the exchange more balanced. In my experience, embracing the concept of reciprocity meant finding ways to give back to the community in which I was traveling.

While abroad, the families in the villages I visited opened their homes and cooked many delicious and filling meals for me. Because I was the guest, they were initially reluctant to accept my offers to help. However, I continued to express a desire to help with even the smallest tasks because the time and energy involved in preparing meals for around 15 guests was not simple. I talked about the importance of helping in my upbringing, which was one of the values I had learned from my own family. The Samoan families saw how much it meant to me to help, and after some persuasion, they assigned me tasks such as sweeping and preparing breakfast.

This experience taught me that even when families do not ask for help, they will rarely turn down an offer of assistance. In my experience, giving in small ways helped me to connect with those individuals with whom I was living. The tasks

involved may have seemed trivial, but the time spent together assisted in our creation of a cross-cultural community. The discussions in which we engaged while completing our tasks also contributed to our understanding of one another's cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values.

Through this experience, I also came to believe that sharing one's identities (race, gender, etc.) creates a sense of reciprocity that enhances the process of building community. While I had hoped to avoid the "What are you?" question, I discovered that it was inevitable. This question, while uncomfortable, ultimately became an important lesson for me. When people asked me about my identity and I responded "Asian American," our dialogue continued. People were curious about my ethnic identity rather than my racial identity as an Asian American. When I talked about my Chinese Indonesian heritage and the traditions of my culture, questions about my family background and history surfaced. As this conversation continued, I realized that the values of my Chinese Indonesian tradition were in many ways similar to those of the Samoan tradition. My discovery of these similarities brought me closer to the Samoan people. Through this experience, I came to believe that no matter what racial or ethnic group with which we identify, all people have a culture. By sharing our cultural values, traditions, and stories, we discover our commonalities and build stronger relationships with each other, strengthening our cross-cultural community.

#### Intercultural Sensitivity

*The idea of building community continues with the development of intercultural sensitivity.*

*The concept can be defined as being able to recognize multiple perspectives on an event or behavior, to recognize one's own cultural values and those of others, and to pick up on verbal and nonverbal signals. (Intercultural Competencies, n.d., para. 1)*

The process of developing intercultural sensitivity includes understanding and accepting the many factors that contribute to the lives of people from other cultures. These include economic privilege, clothing and dress, the effects of globalization, and the development of sustainable economies. As I saw the permeation of our products, music, and clothing abroad, I better understood how difficult it is to escape the influence of the U.S. The products sold and the clothing worn by many Samoans were no different than in the United States. Mainstream music (Top 40 Billboard music), by artists such as Sean Paul, was played loudly in the markets, and Samoans were seen wearing jeans instead of their traditional long skirts. As Dolby (2004) describes it, "America has been embraced by people [abroad]" (p. 22).

#### Economic Privilege

Being from the United States elevated my socioeconomic status in Samoa, whether

or not I wanted it to. As a student with a graduate assistantship, I knew that I was privileged to attend graduate school without having to worry about paying tuition. The tuition remission I received reduced my cost burden for the trip, and I paid at least \$2,000 less than other students. Education, particularly post-secondary education, is a luxury that many Samoans cannot afford. Samoan children pay for tuition, supplies, uniforms, and more. I met many individuals who talked about working every day with the hopes of sending their children abroad to receive an education.

Similarly, traveling to a developing country where the exchange rate favors the United States was another indicator of my privilege. The currency exchange rate of one U.S. dollar to seven Samoan *tala* meant that my money could be stretched over time. I could eat at a modest price and buy handcrafts such as bowls or jewelry for prices much less than it would cost at home. This presented a dilemma for me: Do I refrain from excessive spending, even though I can afford the purchases? A Samoan man whom I met illustrated the dilemma clearly when I admitted feeling uncomfortable with this wealth. This man asked me, “Do you think you are too good to spend your money here?” (personal communication, August, 2006). I reflected on the power of my economic privilege and realized that I was perceived by many Samoans as a rich American. This financial wealth dilemma exists for travelers in other developing regions such as Asia, Africa, and South and Central America.

#### Sustainable Economies

With an enhanced awareness of my own economic privilege, I was able to make conscious choices about how I spent my money. The man who had earlier questioned my purpose in his country taught me a valuable lesson about a sustainable economy. He said, “as long as you spend your money in the markets owned by the people or purchase crafts made in the villages, it’ll [make a difference]” (personal communication, August, 2006). Instead of spending my money at McDonalds or expensive restaurants, I purchased crafts in the marketplace sold by Samoan families. Through this experience, I came to understand that keeping money in the local Samoan economy ensures that the community, rather than an upper-level manager in a corporation, retains control. As a result, communities can use the money toward preserving their culture and society and supporting their families. This is an issue in Samoa, just as it is in the United States. The sustainable economy can be further supported when students on a short-term program carry out sustainable principles in their home country, contributing money to the local communities both abroad and in their own communities.

#### Clothing and Dress

Through this experience, I also learned to be sensitive about my attire. Sometimes, students may forget that the clothing they wear in the United States may not be appropriate in other countries. The traditional Samoan clothing, consisting of a *lavalava* (a long skirt) and a t-shirt covering my shoulders and legs, was new to me. I realized that I was in a different environment and that my Western ideas of dress did not fit in Samoa. As a guest in another country, I respected the Samoan cultural beliefs related to dress and skin exposure by learning to wear traditional clothing. As I learned to apply the techniques that community members taught for tying my *lavalava*, I continued to form connections. Moments and experiences such as this allowed me to see and join in a cultural tradition, while continuing to build relationships and a cross-cultural community with Samoans. My instructors were also instrumental throughout this process, as they wore attire appropriate to the culture and demonstrated various methods for tying my *lavalava*. Additionally, they provided reading materials in our pre-trip meetings that assisted me in understanding the cultural significance of this attire.

#### Intercultural Communication

Understanding the role of language in communication style also helped my classmates and me to bridge the gap between students and the host culture. Intercultural communication recognizes that the manner in which we talk has an impact on the message that is conveyed (Bennett, 1998). For example, non-verbal communication helped me connect with Samoans who did not speak English or had limited knowledge of the language. I remember my excitement at meeting children in one of the villages we visited. One girl, with big brown eyes and curly hair, greeted me with a huge smile as I stepped into the *fale* (house). My limited understanding of the Samoan language made it difficult for us to communicate and understand each other. When I asked her in English for her name, she responded in a manner that I could not understand. One of the other children helped me to translate the question. The girl then started spelling her name out loud while I attempted to pronounce it. After much practice, I could pronounce the girl's name, Tuumulinga, correctly. Our interactions were frequent and always non-verbal. I paid close attention to her hands and facial expressions as she grabbed a bunch of rocks and took my hands. I learned that there was a purpose behind the rocks; she was trying to teach me to play the game *aky*. Therefore, every time I said "aky" it was a cue to gather rocks for our game. I still attempted to speak English, at times saying I wanted smaller rocks or I wanted to trade my big rocks for her small rocks. However, I found that demonstrating what I was communicating helped us to better understand each other's cues. This recurring game of rocks was our connection with each other that resulted in a special relationship. While I did not know the words for *goodbye*, the picture that I drew for her and the hug that I gave helped to communicate her impact on me.

Even though we may not speak the language of another culture, we can still connect cross-culturally through observations and non-verbal communication. This can be achieved by being patient with ourselves and other people, and at the same time being committed to trying non-traditional communication methods. When students cannot speak the language of the host country, other methods such as drawing pictures or using hand signals might be alternatives to verbal communication.

### Implications

The experiences I had in Samoa were not only personally rewarding, but also can be viewed as a set of good practices for fellow student affairs practitioners and instructors of travel courses. Utilizing the concepts I described in my personal reflection, I have developed the following recommendations.

#### *Sharing Stories*

The process of sharing stories that was described in Samoa can be utilized both in American classrooms and abroad. Instructors can encourage this collaborative learning process, recognizing that it is common to many cultures outside of the United States, but is frequently overlooked within our country. The use of non-dominant pedagogies can also assist students in retaining and validating their own cultural values and traditions. This might include encouraging students to contribute or participate in the community through service projects and or developing sustainability programs that supports global learning.

Additionally, silence in the classroom can be powerful tool, especially when an instructor is facilitating a heated discussion. Instead of feeling pushed to generate questions, instructors may recognize that silence can help people reflect on the conversation and its meaning. Silence is powerful because it can provide a sense of peace. It allows strong emotions to be present and conveys the message that words are not always needed to comfort someone. Similarly, listening skills are critical in focusing on the conversation rather than allowing the thoughts in our mind to wander. Also, encouraging students to ask clarifying questions before making assumptions can prevent misunderstandings from occurring. At the same time, silence is a privilege, and instructors must encourage their students to take risks instead of hiding behind their silence.

#### *Reciprocity*

Instructors can support and encourage relationships among students and host families by sharing information with students about the host families and their roles. Also, having open discussions with students regarding the significance of being guests in a foreign country is critical. These conversations can bring an increased awareness for students, helping them find ways to contribute to their experience

abroad. It is also important that instructors work to create a safe space in which students may reflect on their own identities and cultures. Students can only develop a better understanding of others once they are aware of themselves. This process can be facilitated in a variety of ways. One example might be to ask students to write short narrative pieces about their family histories and experiences. This self-reflection, in addition to teaching students about themselves, will allow them to find similarities between their own experiences and the values and practices of the culture being studied. As building community involves a knowledge both of self and of others, this reflective piece is crucial to student learning, and to utilizing study abroad programs to create a global community.

### *Intercultural Sensitivity*

Instructors are also encouraged to dedicate time before the travel experience to the topics of intercultural sensitivity and communication skills. As students come to recognize the ways in which a person's communication style is influenced by his or her culture, they will be more comfortable in environments in which non-dominant communication styles are expressed. For example, many students in the United States believe that eye contact is essential in respectful conversations. However, this is not a commonly held value outside of Western cultures. Additionally, the experience and environment of higher education can be a culture shock for new college students. Student affairs practitioners have a responsibility to assist new students in their transitions through the creation and maintenance of safe and welcoming environments. This might be connecting students with community members, instructors, or administrators who could serve as role models.

Instructors of these short-term abroad programs can also support students' understanding of sustainable economies. They may explain how a family might use the money from selling handcrafts to support their children's education. Or, instructors might arrange for opportunities to meet and talk with community leaders involved in sustainability efforts so that students could learn firsthand what their money funds. Instructors frequently make the decision regarding where a group will be staying during the trip. In addition to encouraging students to stay with host families, instructors can also make a commitment to live in the village and contribute to local merchants rather than to corporate hotels.

### *Intercultural Communication*

It is uncommon to find a classroom in which all students communicate in the same way. Instructors therefore must become accustomed to facilitating conversations among a diverse group of communicators. This demand is only increased when the communication occurs cross-culturally. Instructors and administrators alike must find ways to encourage respect for varying communications styles and can open the door to conversation by acknowledging that these differences exist. Discussion about non-verbal communication prior to travel may assist students in

communicating with individuals who are unfamiliar with the students' language.

Together, these tools for building community honor the values and traditions of both the host and visiting cultures. Higher education must continue to demonstrate a commitment to cross-cultural learning and interactions, reflected in instructional teaching and co-curricular experiences. This means providing students the opportunity to engage in learning globally as well as locally.

### Conclusion

Building a cross-cultural community abroad is a multi-dimensional and complex process. In order for short-term abroad programs to continue building community, students must be encouraged to play an active role in the trip. Instead of arranging for students to sit in a classroom lecture, they could instead be provided the opportunity to meet with local community members. Additionally, instructors can arrange for students to live with families who will provide meals and hospitality. These types of experiences allow students to become active members of their communities and participate in discussions and activities with community members. Tammy L. Lewis and Richard A. Nisembaum (2005) discussed the integration of research and service in a short-term study abroad program in Costa Rica. It is this balance of academic and service-learning that enriched my understanding of Samoan culture. Through the conversations and experiences I had with Samoan individuals, I was able to connect my experience abroad to my classroom learning about internationalization. Instructors interested in developing programs might consider utilizing these concepts to help students learn about another culture, experience daily life in another country, and dialogue with members of a different community. These actions can result in long-lasting and meaningful friendships, and are the initial steps to building community with people across the globe.

## References

- American Heritage Dictionary*. (2000). Retrieved November 29, 2006, from <http://www.bartleby.com/61/38/R0083800.html>
- Bateson, M.C. (1990). Quotes about story and storytelling Web site. Retrieved November 10, 2006, from <http://www.storyteller.net/articles/160>
- Bennett, M. (Ed). (1998). *Basic concepts of intercultural communication*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Confucius. (n.d.). Quotes about kindness Web site. Retrieved November 10, 2006, from <http://www.quotegarden.com/kindness.html>
- Dolby, N. (2004). *Comparative education review* [ONLINE], 48(2), 150-173. Retrieved October 22, 2006, from <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/CER/journal/issues/v48n2/480201/480201.web.pdf>
- Intercultural Competencies*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 10, 2006 from [http://www.intercultural.nl/html/intercultural\\_competencies.html](http://www.intercultural.nl/html/intercultural_competencies.html)
- Lewis, T. L., & Niesenbaum, R. A. (2005, June 3). The benefits of short-term study abroad. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved December 11, 2006, from <http://chronicle.com/>
- Nash, R. (2004). *Liberating scholarly writing: The power of personal narrative*. New York: Teachers College Press.

## Creating an Inclusive University Athletic Team Through Systematic Alliance Building

Delilah Poupore

*Diversity training efforts often attempt to address exclusion in groups by creating opportunities for engagement across difference. However, this work tends to happen through singular, isolated programs. The author's experience working for five years with an National Collegiate Athletic Association Division One women's athletic team and coaching staff demonstrates that ongoing diversity training efforts make significant changes possible. The training efforts lead to increased structural diversity, increased ability to address mistreatment, and the ability to deal more openly with the effects of race, gender, sexuality, age, religion, and social class on the team and coaches. The team's successes around inclusiveness have been matched by its on-court teamwork and winning record.*

Few group environments demand a search for commonality like that of a sports team, a group of people who have common activities, goals, values, and norms. Yet, the emphasis on “common” values and norms may conceal a hidden expectation for athletes to assimilate into dominant cultural norms established by or for those with the most social or political power. Ultimately, such a pressure to assimilate can create an unwelcoming team environment, particularly for those who do not fit within the dominant culture. This dynamic can be seen today in college sports. For example, coaches have been sued for creating hostile environments for lesbian athletes or Muslim athletes (American Civil Liberties Union, 2006, para. 1; National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2005, para. 1).

Diversity training efforts often attempt to address this exclusion by creating opportunities for engagement across difference. However, this work tends to happen in singular, isolated programs, with at most yearly follow-ups. For example, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) offers fundamental and advanced diversity training programs for universities who wish to proactively address diversity

---

*Delilah Poupore has served as the special services coordinator within the UC Santa Barbara Housing & Residential Services department for the last nine years. As a student affairs generalist, Delilah has led strategic planning, educational equity and benchmarking efforts as well as provided diversity training within and outside the department. In 1998, Delilah co-founded a diversity consulting firm, The Dialogue Consultants, and has worked with campus groups across the country. Delilah received her B.A. degree in Philosophy from Middlebury College in 1989 and her M.Ed degree from the University of Vermont in 2003. Since graduate school, Delilah has also focused on her singing/ songwriting career, recording three CDs as part of an acoustic duo. In January 2007, Delilah moved from Santa Barbara to Maine, where she provides “alliance building” training for sports teams.*

issues. However, the trainings are two or four hours long and are intended to be offered only on an annual basis (NCAA, 2006, para. 1).

The key to significant progress toward creating an inclusive team environment requires moving beyond the one-shot program and creating ongoing efforts to build alliances across differences. Below is the story of the Division One women's basketball team and coaching staff at University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), which has maintained a deep, ongoing engagement of difference. The process and results described below can be adapted for use by student affairs professionals in other settings, such as residential life staffs, fraternities and sororities, and with the many other kinds of "teams" that exist on a college campus.

### Background

In 2001, I received a call from the campus sexual harassment educator, Judy Guillermo-Newton, asking if I would assist her with a race-related conflict on the women's basketball team. She knew I worked in the Housing department and provided diversity training and mediation in my work at the University as well as through a consulting company. Judy, a heterosexual Philipina American, told me she wanted to collaborate on this project with a White ally who could also address heterosexism. As a former Division One college athlete myself, I was particularly drawn to working with this group. Together, along with Maria Mahoney (a student affairs professional who interned with us), we formed a diverse team for this project.

When we met with the head coach, we were told that the two African American players on the team were feeling belittled by the comments of some of the White players. When the coach was told of the situation, he admitted he had not known where to begin in addressing the problem and had called the campus sexual harassment educator who then called me.

At first, we were concerned that we would have a one-shot program with the team, which would not address underlying issues that would be likely to crop up again. That is, we would come in, provide a little education and facilitation, the coach could say he had "done something," and the players' feelings would be temporarily assuaged. Instead, the coach committed to an ongoing, in-depth attempt to create an inclusive organization. He expressed that because he viewed the team members as student-athletes, he was committed to the development of life skills. Our work would also be in support of an NCAA Core Value: "An inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes . . . from diverse backgrounds" (NCAA, 2006, para. 3). Therefore, our goal was to create a team and coaching staff who were not only more diverse (in terms of race, sexual orientation, class, and religion) but also skilled in addressing mistreatment and inequities. We wanted

the team and staff to have processes for dealing with conflict and to communicate openly with how racism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, religious oppression and classism affected the players and coaches.

When we began in 2001, the team had a majority of White, Christian, middle-class athletes; most identified as heterosexual or were not out about being lesbian or bisexual. Meeting with the team and coaches, we learned that in the past, few athletes of color joined the team because they often felt peripheral once they did join. The silence around sexual orientation on the team created an environment in which lesbian and bisexual athletes either did not come out, or, in some cases, left the team. In addition, the predominance of Evangelical Christians made prayer a pre-game activity, which created tension for some athletes who were not Christian. Due to these dynamics, the coaching staff was limited in whom they could recruit and retain. Clearly, there were numerous opportunities for learning and change, which could help create a more inclusive organization.

Over the next five years, the team and coaches undertook the unique effort to go deep into the engagement of difference with a group that could easily have settled for a more limited sense of team. By learning the tools necessary to become allies with one another, the group became more able to value individual differences, to support change, and to acknowledge and address conflict and the impact of oppression, or the systematic mistreatment of team members.

Certain things did not change over these five years. The team and coaches remained committed to their existing team values. In addition, they maintained a commitment to the common goal of winning, and they continued to do so. They maintained their top record in the Big West Conference and achieved their highest-ever National Championship performance. Though the road was not smooth at every point (barriers will be described below), the values and skills that were learned contributed, and continue to contribute, to many individual and team successes.

#### Our Work with the Team

As trainers, we employed models we used in other settings; the unique situation in this case was the duration of time available for training. At the beginning of each year, we communicated our training assumptions and why the team was participating in diversity training. Then, we introduced several *pillars* (key concepts), which were taught during parts of the year when three- or four-hour trainings were possible. During the season, we held one-hour monthly sessions, which focused mostly on group dynamics. At the end of each season, we conducted evaluations to check progress and make plans for the next year.

*Our Assumptions*

We wanted the team and coaches to know our assumptions and to convey that they were indeed only assumptions. We were not coming in to tell them “the Truth,” with which they had to agree. This process would be an opportunity to learn and try new ways of being with each other, but no one would be asked to change who they were. We communicated that all groups would benefit from this type of work, and by participating in diversity training, they were in fact models of how a team can be. We described the three pillars that I developed with my consulting company, The Dialogue Consultants, which would serve as scaffolding for the rest of our discussions. These three pillars were supplemented with skills for listening across differences.

*The Pillars: Self-Awareness, Awareness of Others, Understanding the System*

The first pillar was self-awareness. We began with this pillar to show group members that everyone has a culture, a history, and a set of beliefs that are formed by their backgrounds. We started with self-awareness because we wanted to avoid the type of training in which people in dominant groups learn about “others.” Our experience showed us that this more traditional approach to diversity training creates distance between people, and, at best, leads to paternalistic attempts to “help the less fortunate.” Therefore, our trainings began with exercises for participants to learn more about themselves.

For many of the athletes and coaches, these were unusual activities. They were more familiar with interacting physically with each other. So, just learning about what makes them “tick” and how to tell their own life stories were big steps for many of these student-athletes and coaches. Particularly because we were working with athletes, we attempted to include physical components in the trainings wherever possible to appeal to those with kinesthetic learning styles. For example, we introduced a discussion about being allies through a physical game in which the whole group had to climb through a spider web of string. Following the exercise, the group talked about what it was like to ask for support and what type of support they most needed. This easily led into a discussion regarding the role of allies.

The second pillar was focused on increasing awareness of others. We used exercises that allowed people to tell their stories with one another. We often began the year by having the “rookie” players talk about how it felt to be new, while the “veteran” players talked about what they remembered about starting on the team. We saw one of the first major team behavioral shifts in 2002 when the veterans developed a strategy to welcome and include the new players, realizing that they wished that they had been welcomed in this way when they were new.

We used various exercises to help the players talk about the effect (or lack of effect) of race, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, and ability on growing up and on

their current daily lives. During the first discussions, we strongly encouraged the athletes and coaches to tell their stories and refrain from judging or assessing the “truth” of someone’s story. This helped raise the levels of honesty and trust as most participants felt they could talk about their lives without being criticized.

A third pillar of the training was increasing understanding about the “system” we operate within. Here, we introduced the concept of *oppression* as developed by academic and activist Ricky Sherover-Marcuse (1988), emphasizing that this phenomenon is carried out through societal institutions as well as through individual actions. We also discussed how oppression could be internalized, such that people end up believing the misinformation they are told about their groups and take it out on themselves and others in their groups. Stressing our belief that people resist these roles as best they can, we encouraged the team and coaches to take steps to become allies to one another by uncovering stereotypes, learning accurate information, interrupting oppression, creating inclusive environments, and thinking about ways to change institutions.

#### *On-Going Monthly Check-Ins*

With these pillars in place, it was possible to discuss some of the day-to-day group dynamics with a larger perspective in the monthly check-ins. For example, one player mentioned that she felt belittled when people made negative comments about Kmart clothes, explaining that her family was working class. From her story, others realized that they had negative stereotypes about working-class people and that they were perpetuating those stereotypes through their language and jokes.

In another example, on road trips, the team would make decisions about where to eat or what to watch on television through a majority vote. With only two African American players on the team the first year, a majority-win vote meant that the decisions were made by the White players every time and often reflected White culture (e.g. watching *Friends* on television). The team was able to discuss this during the monthly check-in and change their decision-making process to allow for more diversity in activities.

In another monthly check-in, stereotypes about lesbians arose. The environment in women’s sports can be hostile to lesbian athletes, as explained in detail in Pat Griffin’s (1998), *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sports*. Griffin writes that the “fear of the lesbian label continues to control women’s sport” (p. 49). Not surprisingly, the team and coaches at UCSB reflected some of these predominant attitudes. For example, discussions about homophobia on the team unearthed the stereotypes that lesbians try to “convert” heterosexual women or that they are sexually promiscuous. So, the first time a player “came out” on the team, it was a very emotional session. Over the five years, however, the heterosexual players and coaches became allies while the lesbian and bisexual

players addressed their internalized homophobia. The environment on the team changed quite drastically, so much so that the athletes almost came to take for granted their new environment, which was safe for varying sexual orientations. In the diversity training sessions, they would discuss what it felt like to bring their same-sex partners to team events. Within a few years the change in the environment was very evident: a top player not only brought her partner to the end of the year awards ceremony, but proudly and publicly introduced her to the boosters (community members who give financial and moral support) present at the event.

Creating a welcoming environment for lesbian and bisexual players brought up concerns for some of the Evangelical Christian athletes. It was important for us as trainers to find a space for them to talk about their concerns, as the conflict would not have been solved by declaring, “If you aren’t pro-lesbian, you’re homophobic.” The heterosexual Christian athletes met separately with a heterosexual trainer to talk through the differences between 1) Evangelical Christian-based beliefs about sexuality and 2) discriminatory or hostile behavior toward lesbians and bisexuals. An amicable agreement was formed on the team, but we often felt this topic could use many more hours of work than time allowed.

Each year, the coaches also learned the same pillars and engaged in practical discussions. They were encouraged to talk about their own stories and to focus on working relationships, rather than to immediately focus on the concerns of the team. The idea was that the coaches could best teach by demonstrating to the team that they were also doing their work. Head Coach Mark French agreed that “understanding and valuing the differences on the coaching staff [were powerful tools] for teaching and role-modeling” (personal communication, November 21, 2006).

#### Success Factors

There were several factors that helped to keep this process going. Most important was the support from the head coach. He conveyed his support during recruitment and devoted significant time for trainings throughout the year. In this way, players joined the team aware of the commitment to diversity and perhaps self-selected to sign up for a team that would deal openly with diversity issues.

Another key factor was the presence of an on-campus facilitation team that was trained and available for a long-term commitment. After experimentation during the first years, we found that setting the schedule before the year began ensured that the sessions would occur. We scheduled the longer sessions during the fall pre-season, in the winter break, and in the spring after the season’s end, with the shorter sessions occurring throughout the season. The number of sessions each year allowed for increasing awareness along with time for putting the awareness

into practice. One without the other would likely have been less successful, and the combination allowed the players and coaches to develop their thinking and skills over time. Also, since the facilitators did not have to travel to campus, the program was very affordable, as well as flexible.

Finally, it was important to the players that the coaches were also involved in training efforts. This created both a common language and experience among the players and coaches. Importantly, players and coaches felt safer doing the work separately, so rarely did the two come together for the trainings.

### Barriers

One potential barrier was concern from the coaching staff about the willingness of the community and boosters to accept the team's changing perspective on inclusion. Though the team environment was becoming safer for people to share more about themselves, the change did not necessarily mean the greater community would be supportive. The head coach decided early that he would stay committed to the plan of creating a more inclusive team even if there was resistance from outside the team. This did not ever become a major issue, and there was speculation that new fan bases were created as a result of the changes.

There was also a fear of a can of worms being opened through these trainings and discussions. Indeed, by openly addressing oppression, more issues were brought up by the players, along with a heightened expectation for resolution of the issues. The coaching staff may have needed additional support to deal with these additional responsibilities, and this wasn't always in place for them.

### Application to other University "Teams"

Many organizations use the term *team* when they discuss group dynamics, labeling group development activities as *team-building*. Therefore, any group that functions like a team could apply the lessons learned through this basketball team's work.

Residential life staffs and other peer leadership groups often have a diversity component in their trainings. If the training only occurs in the fall, additional sessions that build on the fall training could be offered in the winter and spring. In addition, supervisors could lead monthly check-ins that invite staff members or leaders to discuss the ways heterosexism, classism, ageism, etc. affect the group. These regular check-ins could allow for changes in policies and practices, perhaps clearing out resentments or preventing resignations. Fraternities and sororities also carry out diversity training efforts on many campuses. By creating a long-term relationship with a Greek organization, a facilitator could build trust to guide deeper discussions than those that usually occur in a one-time training.

Professional staff could also engage in systematic anti-oppression work with other student affairs professionals on campus and perhaps with other groups, such as faculty. Similar to the dynamic with the coaches and players, the modeling provided by the professional staff could demonstrate to students that ongoing work makes a difference and leads to more empowered and dynamic relationships.

Many student affairs professionals, particularly if they have attended graduate programs, have researched diversity and oppression issues. In many cases, these professionals already provide trainings for groups on campus. Campuses could draw upon the skills of these professionals, pairing them with sports teams, fraternities and sororities, diversity-themed residence halls, or student leadership groups. These partnerships would have the potential not only to transform campus culture but also to bring satisfaction and learning for the professional.

#### Summary

Through systematic, ongoing alliance building with the UCSB women's basketball team, there has been marked change between 2001 and 2006. Athletes feel safer to come out as lesbian or bisexual, and heterosexual athletes have the awareness and skills to be allies. The racial diversity of the team has increased; athletes of color are now the majority of the team. In addition, the team deals more openly with how racism impacts their decision-making and communication.

Jenna Green, a current team member who is biracial, recently expressed that her White team members are "more open-minded and considerate" due to the ongoing trainings (personal communication, November 16, 2006). Recent graduate Karena Bonds noticed increased understanding of differences on the team due to the opportunity for people of "all sexual backgrounds to talk honestly" (personal communication, November 30, 2006). In addition, team members interrupt jokes and comments that reflect classism and racism. The predominance of Christians on the team and its effect on team dynamics are discussed openly, and the facilitators have noted an increased willingness to listen to Christian athletes' feelings and beliefs by non-Christian team members.

Karena Bonds also reported that over the years, players applied more and more of what they learned during diversity training to their personal lives. She explained:

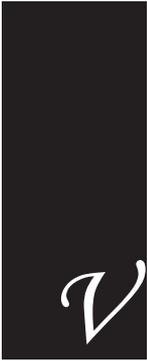
I noticed a difference in my own life when I began to set rules in my house that stated that my house is a hate free zone and that I would not tolerate any negative comments about sexual, racial, cultural, or financial differences. (personal communication, November 30, 2006)

The diversity training efforts supported Coach French's commitment to the student-athlete's development on and off the court.

The last five years have shown that as racism, sexism, heterosexism, religious oppression, and classism are systematically addressed (ongoing over a multi-year period). Athletic teams can become inclusive environments that bring out the best in each person (student-athlete and coach). The method we employed at UCSB is different from many other diversity training efforts in particular because the training has been for the athletes and coaches, it takes place regularly throughout the year, and happens over many years. There is no sense of a one-shot effort, but a realization that organizational change happens with effort and support over time. The successes of this team and coaching staff do not mean there is no conflict, or that discrimination or mistreatment is absent. However, the difference between this group and many other groups is that this team and coaching staff have the skills, awareness, and processes to address problems that arise. Importantly, this case study demonstrates that a team that brings out the best in each person can maintain and actually improve its performance and record on the court. Organizations seeking to function as inclusive teams are welcome to adopt and adapt the model that was used successfully with UCSB's basketball program.

## References

- The American Civil Liberties Union. (2006). *The ACLU in the courts since 9/11*. Retrieved November 11, 2006 from [http://www.aclu.org/pdfs/safefree/sin-ce911docket\\_20061013.pdf](http://www.aclu.org/pdfs/safefree/sin-ce911docket_20061013.pdf)
- Griffin, P. (1998). *Strong women, deep closets: Lesbians and homophobia in sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- National Center for Lesbian Rights. (2005). *Former player files discrimination complaint against Penn State coach Rene Portland*. Retrieved November 11, 2006 from [http://www.nclrights.org/releases/pr-pennstate\\_110305.htm](http://www.nclrights.org/releases/pr-pennstate_110305.htm)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (n.d.). *Our mission*. Retrieved January 27, 2007, from [http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/about\\_ncaa/overview/mission.html](http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/about_ncaa/overview/mission.html)
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2006). *Diversity education information*. Retrieved November 11, 2006 from [http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal!/ut/p/kcxml/04\\_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y\\_QjzKLN4j3CQXJgFjG-pvqRqCKOcAFfj\\_zcVH1v\\_QD9gtzQiHJHRUUAc0tpTA!!/delta/ba-se64xml/L3dJdyEvUUd3QndNQSEvNEIVRS82XzBfTFU!?CONTENT\\_URL=http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/about\\_ncaa/overview/mission.html](http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal!/ut/p/kcxml/04_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y_QjzKLN4j3CQXJgFjG-pvqRqCKOcAFfj_zcVH1v_QD9gtzQiHJHRUUAc0tpTA!!/delta/ba-se64xml/L3dJdyEvUUd3QndNQSEvNEIVRS82XzBfTFU!?CONTENT_URL=http://www2.ncaa.org/portal/about_ncaa/overview/mission.html)
- Sherover-Marcuse, R. (1988). *Liberation theory: a working framework*. Retrieved December 10, 2006, from [http://unlearningracism.org/writings/lib\\_theory.htm](http://unlearningracism.org/writings/lib_theory.htm)



REFLECTIONS

As members of the University of Vermont (UVM) Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) community, past and present, we acknowledge the value in listening to one another's stories. We hope that you will enjoy these reflections as they chronicle the continuing journeys through HESA's past, present, and future.



## POINTS OF VIEW

In 1937, a group affiliated with American Council on Education adopted the document, *The Student Personnel Point of View*. The document served as one of the first guides for those entering the field of student affairs in higher education, providing foundational values and functions for the field. For the 70th anniversary of the document's adoption, *The Vermont Connection* has asked three of its revered community members to reflect on the document and its relation to their work.

## Student Development Educators: Stewards of Collaboration

Robert D. Kelly

Vice President for Student Development  
Seattle University

The American Council on Education (ACE), through *The Student Personnel Point of View* (1937), discussed many aims of student affairs work. The document asks colleges and universities to “consider the student as a whole” (ACE, p. 1). For the purpose of this reflection, I want to explore the issues of coordination, collaboration, and cooperation and how they relate to whole student development. This philosophy of student affairs stresses the development of the student including the academic, emotional, spiritual, social, and vocational dimensions of students’ lives. At Seattle University, a Jesuit institution, we believe that faculty, staff, administrators, and colleagues, in coordination with students, must strive for a total educational experience encompassing not only the classroom, but the campus and community as well.

While this belief is sometimes easily expressed through mission statements, in annual reports, and to prospective parents and students, coordination, collaboration, and cooperation are crucial to Seattle University’s effort to bring about student success. In and of themselves, no group can educate the whole student. Excellent teaching needs to be in coordination with outstanding opportunities centered on the academic experience. Examples of these opportunities include student involvement in campus governance, internship programs, and community service opportunities that link students with local, national, and justice international efforts. These opportunities contribute to a vital and engaged campus life. Further, as faculty, staff, and student development educators collaborate on programs and services, our students benefit in a variety of ways. These collaborative efforts enhance education, develop competence, define character, and manifest leadership for a diverse and ever-changing world. Most recently, we are exerting a concentrated effort discussing the idea of “Collaborative Education for Leadership.” The mission of the University is centered on educating the whole person, developing professional formation, and empowering leaders for a just and humane

---

*Dr. Robert Kelly is the Vice President for Student Development at Seattle University. He is also an affiliate faculty member in the Student Development masters program in the College of Education. He holds a Ph.D. in Education Policy and Leadership from the University of Maryland, a Master’s degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) from UVM, and a bachelors degree in Political Science from Loyola College in Maryland. He can be reached at [rkelly@seattlen.edu](mailto:rkelly@seattlen.edu)*

world. As such, it is not difficult to imagine a role more important for student affairs professionals in this process.

Explaining the role of student affairs educators to faculty, administrators, and colleagues is one area of my position as the Vice President for Student Development. Most recently, an academic administrator asked if the work done in student affairs was essential to the mission of the institution. I responded that the institutional mission and educational philosophy dictate that the work done by student affairs professionals is more than essential; it is necessary and of critical value to students' learning experiences. Manning (1996) states that student development educators understand their role as critical, "not because of their relative importance to the academic mission, but because their purposes and mission are intrinsically essential to the mission of higher education" (p. 2). Also, the work of student affairs is at the core of a Jesuit education, which affords all educators an opportunity to develop women and men of integrity, deeply committed to improving the life for all persons. The Jesuit identity makes Seattle University different from other universities in that Jesuit education is not focused solely on knowledge acquisition and personal development for the sake of becoming more learned or attaining personal success but also for the sake of becoming an engaged and responsible citizen.

Take, for example, the Division of Student Development's perspective on the Seattle University statement, Collaborative Education for Leadership:

Rooted in the Jesuit educational tradition, the mission of Seattle University integrates core values of a collaborative education: *education of the whole person, professional formation, and empowering leaders for a just and humane world*. The Division of Student Development shares responsibility for the success of the university's Strategic Plan, which is to bring about through collaboration greater integration and intersection of three areas: (a) academic excellence, (b) education of the whole person, and (c) Jesuit Catholic identity.

Dedicated to recognizing the potential of each member of the community, our enthusiastic and qualified staff cooperates to provide students with access to and participation in a vital and engaged campus in the center of one of the world's most vibrant cities. It is within this greater society that we experience the challenges of educating our students to find a healthy balance in their lives as they encounter the reality of our demanding world with its advancing complexity and ever-expanding opportunities. Programs are intentionally designed to help students be increasingly conscious and selective in all that they do, to be reflective and make intelligent decisions, to work with teams and build relationships and community and to embrace the challenges of managing their time and energies.

Emerging at the intersection of all of these areas is our model of Jesuit Education for Leadership: A Premier University Empowering Leaders for a Just and Humane World. Student Development educators are hard at work cultivating intentional, developmental, and diverse programs so that our students gain not only academic competency but also a sense of spirituality, values and confidence to speak from the heart that only comes through real experience. (Seattle University, 2006)

While *The Student Personnel Point of View* provides a foundation for framing the work of student development educators, it cannot be expected to serve as the educational philosophy for *all* student affairs work on *all* campuses. An educational philosophy for student affairs is rooted in the aspirations, goals, and historical statements that undergird the institution itself. Understanding the context of the institution is critical to understanding one's role and student affairs philosophy.

That said, student affairs professionals have the opportunity to serve as stewards of collaboration. We need colleagues for our work to be done well, and we should be unapologetic, respectful, and proud for what we do better than anyone else. Student development theory has grown, and the knowledge of student learning and engagement is seen as the responsibility of all educators. Still, it is those individuals on our campuses who possess the know-how, talent, initiative, desire, and aptitude who can role model for others what it means to coordinate, collaborate, and cooperate for the best interests of students and our universities. This is *my* student personnel point of view.

#### References

- American Council on Education. (1937). *The student personnel point of view*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Manning, K. (1996). Contemplating the myths of student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, 34(1), 36-46.
- Seattle University (2006). *Division of Student Development: Annual report*. Seattle, WA: Author.

## Educating the Whole Student in 2007

Pat Lampkin

Vice President for Student Affairs

University of Virginia

One year ago, a group of 25 students and I boarded an Amtrak train and began the 29 hour ride from Charlottesville, Virginia, to New Orleans, Louisiana. This trip began the second phase of an interdisciplinary January Term course, *Technology and Citizenship*, offered at the University of Virginia (U.Va.). Why, when asked to offer reflections on the 70th anniversary of the *Student Personnel Point of View* (SPPV), am I writing about this experience?

I offer this case study to show that the core philosophy of “educating the whole person,” in the 1937 SPPV, remains the essence of student affairs work. Generational differences, world influences, and institutional factors have changed, and our knowledge over the decades has and will continue to advance. Still, our primary focus should emanate from the challenge of considering the ways in which these elements influence students as they struggle to reach their full potential.

The intent of this article is to remind us that our work, which at times might be thought of as common sense in practice, does not just happen. It is instead the product of our expertise, training, and relationships with students, and the ways in which these factors come together with clarity as we help students connect a sense of self to their intellectual pursuits. The greatest challenge to being effective in this capacity surfaces when we lose sight of our own purpose and confuse roles; when we try to make what might appear simple more difficult. As student affairs professionals, we should be unapologetic about our contributions, which when at their best may go unnoticed. We need to be comfortable within our own roles of stating the obvious, being behind the scenes, and challenging the current approach if there are inconsistencies of theory to practice. I hope, as you reflect through this unique case, you think of your own situations and break down your daily work to make the most of keeping students at the core.

---

*Dr. Patricia M. Lampkin was named Vice President and Chief Student Affairs Officer at the University of Virginia in October of 2002, having served the university in many capacities since 1979. She serves as an adjunct professor in the Curry School of Education's Center for the Study of Higher Education and teaches an undergraduate seminar on honor and ethics. She is the co-author of Mountains and Passes: Traversing the Landscape of Ethics and Student Affairs Administration. Ms. Lampkin is the recipient of several awards from the University of Virginia community, and in 2000 the University of Vermont presented her with the Saba Dignitate (“With Dignity Uncompromised”) Award, which honors alumni/ae who are exceptional educators and leaders in times of change.*

Trust and Collaboration

The idea for “*Technology and Citizenship*” was developed following a conversation I had with an academic faculty member in which we were discussing the devastation in New Orleans and how we wanted to help. This conversation resulted in an interdisciplinary course that was cross-listed in three schools—the College of Arts and Sciences, the Engineering School, and the School of Architecture—with a recognized service component for credit. These were not easy boundaries to cross at an institution where service is not yet recognized as credit bearing. The first phase of the course was held at the University of Virginia, and the second phase was practical research on-site in New Orleans. Despite concern on the part of academic administration and risk managers, the course was ultimately approved because of the relationships and reputations of the faculty and administrators who were involved. In fact, the final stamp was not dependent upon a rigorous syllabus but the reality that a student affairs professional was going to be part of the team on-site in New Orleans. The University’s risk manager trusted my judgment and ability to make sound decisions around where we would be sleeping, eating, and working on a daily basis. No matter how much planning took place for this trip, there was a high level of risk involved due to the non-existent infrastructure in New Orleans. The willingness of the University’s academic administration to sign off on the course and trust us to manage the risks allowed a higher level of learning to take place during the week.

Interdisciplinary Learning

The class met at U.Va. during the first four days to examine the city of New Orleans before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina from the viewpoint of the architect, the engineer, the scientist, the policymaker, and the media expert. Students not only examined what led to this terrible disaster but also how each of these fields might approach the rebuilding efforts. Many questions were posed and explored: What is the relationship between technology and citizenship? How did reliance on technology make New Orleans a vulnerable area? What are the key technical, organizational, and cultural factors that contributed to the disaster associated with Katrina? How can we rebuild a city in a way that incorporates the best of architectural and engineering design? As citizens, how can we participate in such discussions as well as in relief efforts? In the evening, we focused on the discipline of human interaction to prepare for the reality that the class would live and work together throughout its week in New Orleans. The discussions focused on establishing ground rules for group living (i.e., we can’t presume to help others if we are not in touch with ourselves) and thinking about how we respond to and manage constant group activity without basic comforts (the high school where we were staying was giving up its auditorium floor for us to sleep during the first week back in session since the hurricane).

We spent time learning how people respond to disasters. What would those around us be experiencing? What safety issues should be considered? How would we make sense of what we learned in the classroom with what we would be seeing?

The topics discussed during these evening sessions are often overlooked in experiences of this type. We did not leave to chance that the group would develop healthy communication and group living practices; we knew we needed to dedicate time and energy to addressing these issues. In assessing the course experience, this aspect was essential to the success of the class and represents the final discipline—the discipline of human interaction—that we live everyday as student affairs professionals. These evening sessions allowed us to address the challenge of assisting the students in developing a broader and deeper human awareness of themselves and others and making the connection back to the knowledge base they were forming. When reality set in and we didn't find hot showers for the first three days, we had in a theoretical way talked about these issues. We established a common language to sort through our own individual differences so the group could move beyond itself and assist those who we were going to help. We had “code words” for needing personal space in an otherwise fully immersed group living situation. Our ability to manage similar circumstances stemmed from our discussions about these possibilities.

After studying the city and ourselves from the viewpoints of these disciplines, we boarded the train to New Orleans to engage in a week's worth of recovery efforts. As the only professor accompanying the students on the train, I spent my time getting to know the students with whom I would be living for the next week. Another professor and a teaching assistant had flown down to do prep work for our arrival.

#### Flexibility with Purpose

As the train slowed to our first stop in Lynchburg, Virginia, the conductor came through our car asking if a Joel Morgan was on board. I was thinking, “We are barely out of Charlottesville, and I am already missing a student!” I was quickly relieved to discover that as we looked out the train window, Joel's parents and neighbors had come to see us off. They had signs of support and food packed for our trip. The rest of the train ride, although long, can only be described as natural group bonding.

The type of work we thought we were going to do changed almost daily, depending upon the needs of our hosts. While we were in New Orleans, students helped returning Xavier University Preparatory School seniors complete college applications, pitched in with clean-up and light demolition work at Xavier University,

participated in a city planning meeting, toured the city and levees, completely “gutted” six houses, cleaned a school cafeteria in preparation for reopening, cleaned and salvaged several school trophies, and visited with University of Virginia alumni/ae in the area.

Flexibility became a key element in making this experience successful. The tension in the group would mount when plans changed and smaller groups were altered to fit the tasks. Individuals wanted to express their disappointment. At times you could feel the frustration from individuals of not wanting to adjust the original plans. The human lesson we had discussed—about remembering this trip was not about us but about those we were going to help—came into play every day. Most of the students found great satisfaction in “gutting” houses: it was physical, you could see results, and some of the human stories that were uncovered were life changing. However, on one particular day, our hosts asked one of the groups to clean trophies for one of the schools in which we were working. Given the toxic conditions, the cleaning process was not easy, the work was not fun work, and the students did not see the purpose. Again, the mantra became “this is not about us, it is not our place to judge what is important.”

A year later, one of the students who took the course and graduated is teaching in the reopened school. He said that the trophies are the first thing you see when you enter the school; they are all the school was able to save. By reminding ourselves of the purpose of our journey and being sensible, we were able to keep a constantly changing situation calm and productive. At times when the best laid plans go awry, the most effective problem solvers, organizers, and observers of the human condition are student affairs professionals. We do it everyday as we keep our focus on the end goal of helping students grow and as we allow the situation to determine our path to reach that goal.

Each person in the class kept a journal and participated in a blog to assist in the reflection of the experience and to bridge the academic work with the on-site work. As we faced our last day and needed to move all of our gear at 5:00 a.m. so the floor that we were sleeping on could be set up for an all-community celebratory Mass, I was once again struck by the generosity and flexibility of those who allowed us to come and work. At the very time they were trying to get settled, they welcomed more chaos because they were willing to share their plight. I know if we were asked to use the Lawn (the historical and symbolic center of our University) the night before graduation, the answer would be, “No,” and we probably would not even entertain the reason why. Yet on the week that three schools were forming into one, faculty, students, and their families still living apart or within combined families welcomed us with open arms without thinking about whether their needs might be greater than ours.

It reminded me that when faced with something out of the ordinary or with bureaucracy we should not be afraid to take the risk or ask, “Why not?”, and by all means we should not be one of the individuals looking for reasons to say “NO.” Disasters change people and bring them in touch with what is really important. This experience reminded me to help make connections and observations from the everyday events in order to learn these lessons.

I was also struck with the number of personal and technological belongings we had to move. In many cases we had more individual possessions with us for a week’s worth of work than all of the possessions many of those around us were able to salvage. We discussed this feeling of embarrassment, and many of our students only returned with what they had on their backs so they could at least leave what they took with them for those who were rebuilding their lives.

#### Millennial Generation

This intense week reaffirmed my belief in our students, their energy and commitment to serving others, and yes, their reliance on technology. I learned that I may need to adjust how I set expectations, but they can be just as high, requiring just as much energy and selflessness from the student, often helping the student to surpass the standard. Their approach may not be as effective or in line with the way I may proceed, but the result is usually better because it reflects their perspective and commitment. I may need to deliver the message differently, model differently, point out issues that seem basic to me, and learn from them on issues that seem basic to them, but as long as we know our end goal, we will have more success when we are discovering together.

I also learned to appreciate the connection that this generation of students have with their parents. In many ways, one of the student’s parents saved this trip. When we arrived in New Orleans and three quarters of the city was still without electricity, working water, and food establishments, it was a set of parents who helped me make the connections and find the resources necessary to keep 25 students safe, healthy, and productive. It was another lesson in knowing our own limitations, when to ask for help and how to enjoy the journey. I do think the next time I think about saving the world, I might realize that street signs and electricity sometimes help you know where you are going!

#### Lessons Learned

As a 30-year practitioner, this experience highlighted basic practices that I believe are central to the student affairs profession:

- Don’t underestimate our value as risk managers

- Teach and model communication practices
- State the obvious, and keep it simple
- Operate with purpose and with flexibility (these are not mutually exclusive concepts)
- Remind ourselves that we can't tell people how they should learn, but only what we hope to achieve
- Understand the students' attributes and adjust the program to them
- Realize our own limitations, and ask for help when appropriate

While these concepts are fairly straightforward, the challenge is recalling them in the context of our daily work. The pace of university life and the demands and expectations of people can sometimes interfere in our ability to “keep it simple” and remember what's essential. This opportunity highlighted how easy it is to become distracted and lose sight of what we do and why we do it and the importance of focusing on what's at the core of our work.

#### Resources

In preparing the article, the following documents were reviewed:

*The 1937 Student Personnel Point of View* and its 1949 revision ; NASPA's 1987 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative: *A Perspective on Student Affairs; The ACPA Student Learning Imperative*; the AAC&U National Panel Report, *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College*; the AAUP *Joint Statement of Rights & Freedoms of Students*; and NASPA and ACPA's *Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*.

## The Student Personnel Point of View: A Foundation for Change

Keith Miser

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

I am honored to be invited by *The Vermont Connection* to write a reflection paper on the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View* document on the occasion of its 70th anniversary.

This is an especially exciting assignment for me since I will be retiring in July 2007 after working 40 years in the student personnel profession and for 31 years as a senior student affairs officer. My early years were spent at Indiana University, 17 years at the University of Vermont, 12 at Colorado State University, and 7 at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. I have enjoyed every day of my life as a student affairs professional helping build institutions and making differences in the lives of students.

My life as a Student Affairs professional began in 1967 with my first course in Student Personnel Administration taught by the late Dr. Nel Koester at Indiana University. I was a graduate student and a residence hall staff member. Ironically, my first assignment was to read the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View* on its 30th anniversary and to discuss whether or not the principles illuminated in the document were still relevant to student affairs administration in 1967.

The '60s era was a time of turbulence in America and in American higher education. Indiana University, as many college campuses at that time, was undergoing great social change. For one of the few times in American history, a large public outcry against a very unpopular war in Vietnam challenged the morality of the government's belief that war was a necessary evil. Students were demanding that university administrators recognize their rights to control more of their own college experiences, and soon universities across the nation found themselves being dragged, willing or not, into a vociferous social activism and protest period. The youth culture challenged the older generation and all of its values, authority, beliefs, and systems.

The graduate students in Dr. Koester's class, me included, were brash, outspoken, articulate student activists of that era. We attacked the *Student Personnel Point of View* and concluded, as young professionals, that nothing written in 1937, 30 years in the past, could have any value to us at all. Many in that class saw this document on its 30th anniversary as reflecting part or all of the values that students in the late 1960s

were fighting to change. After a heated discussion we agreed, rather reluctantly I might add, that maybe some of the principles and values in the *Student Personnel Point of View* did “fit” the 1960s era and could be of value to us in a profession that was just developing and evolving. As graduate students we reacted finally to this document in a positive way, mostly because of the work of our instructor.

What about today—2007—another 40 years after the discussion during that fall semester in 1967? Having mellowed somewhat over these 40 years, it was refreshing for me to read this document again. Today I realize that the basic principles, philosophy, and values articulated 70 years ago are still relevant and still form the foundation of the challenging and vital work of student affairs professionals. Even though the world is significantly different today, the philosophical foundation outlined in this historical piece still addresses the educational issues and challenges of our own turbulent and changing times.

Several dimensions of the student affairs profession, however, stand out today as being especially different from 30 years ago, and certainly different from 70 years ago at the time of the initial adoption of the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View*. Three of the areas of greatest change that I see are the change in relationship between students and their institutions, a change in access to higher education, and changes caused by the impact of modern technology. Let us look at each of these three changes in the light of the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View*.

The document emphasizes that the role of higher education is to teach values and moral behavior as it was then defined. In 1937 institutional policies such as women’s hours were constructed to identify and regulate expected behavior on the part of students. In the late 1960s through protest movements, court challenges, and student activism, this in-loco-parentis doctrine was abandoned for the most part as an important role for colleges and universities. Most universities began to reject the idea that they acted “in the place of the parent.” Around 1970 college students were allowed to make their own personal behavior decisions, and the university, through student affairs professionals, began to play a pivotal developmental role to assist students with making wise choices that advanced their own

---

*Dr. Keith Miser will retire this year, after over 30 years in the field of student affairs, as Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at University of Hawai‘i Hilo, a position he has held since 2000. From 1988 to 2000, he was Vice President for Student Affairs at Colorado State University, where he was also a member of the graduate faculty in the School of Education. An active believer in international cooperation, Dr. Miser was able to develop links between Colorado State University and the National University of Belize, an association he continues to support. He served as Dean of Students and Associate Vice President for Administration at the University of Vermont from 1975-1988, and taught in the graduate program there. Dr. Miser received his Ed.D. in Higher Education from Indiana University.*

development. Very rapidly the role of student affairs professionals moved from a primary expectancy of behavior regulators to the role of facilitators and student development educators. This change was a dramatic one for our profession, and it changed dramatically the university's relationship to students. Even with these changes, the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View* principles and philosophy were still relevant. This is true in spite of a major shift in roles away from the college or university as a surrogate parent, a shift which changed the emphasis and priority among the philosophical standards articulated in the document.

Secondly, over the past 70 years there has been a dramatic change in post-secondary education with regard to the diversity of students in attendance. When I was a junior in high school in 1957, growing up in a small, rural Indiana community, I had never met a person of color, and only about 10% of all high school graduates across the nation went on to college. I was the first member of my family to go to college and was only one of a small number of students from my high school to attend a college or university. Today over 60% of high school graduates enter some form of post-secondary education. The demographics of these students attending and graduating from institutions of higher education are much more diverse both ethnically and culturally in every university. Today, in some major urban universities, students of color are the majority of those attending school. At my present university, the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, 70% of the students attending come from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Access has increased dramatically since the 1965 Higher Education Act that created Federal Financial Aid. This opened the doors to higher education for many more students and allowed our institutions to become much more diverse. In 1937 higher education was mainly for the children of the wealthy, the majority of students were men, and most students attending college were White.

The *Student Personnel Point of View* statement is silent on the issues of access and diversity and all of the related challenges, roles, and responsibilities for student affairs professionals. Student affairs staff today welcome the roles of fostering diversity, enhancing all students' access and success, and promoting community through respect, communication, and the valuing of differences. If the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View* were written today, I am confident that the authors would speak to this critical aspect of student affairs work.

Finally, the tremendous growth of technology has changed and is changing the way student affairs professionals serve students. When I was a freshman in college in 1959, there were no color or cable televisions, no copy machines, calculators, tape recorders, cell phones, email, video tape, or computers. Most of these important administrative and enabling tools were not even available when I started working as a student affairs professional in 1967.

All of these advances and hundreds of other new technologies have changed the very way we communicate with students and work with each other. Technology has created new ways to interact with students and new ways to serve them productively. Distance learning has now advanced to the point where thousands of courses are offered to students located many miles away from the institutions offering the courses or degrees. The educators of 1937 never could have imagined these technological advances or the applications of distance learning to student affairs. They would have been shocked at MySpace and Facebook, e-mail, and students communicating in ways to be “friended” by another student. These technological advances are shaping and changing our profession as new ways to communicate and work are being adapted to student affairs professional activities.

The *Student Personnel Point of View* still holds true, however, even with the technological advances over the years. It does not mention technology, but it does give us a professional philosophical foundation that helps define the *reason* we are working with students and why we use technology. In many ways the 1937 *Student Personnel Point of View* is timeless in the dimensions it addresses even though if written today it would certainly mention and address these new forms of technology and their impact on our profession.

To care for students, to assist them with their growth both intellectually and personally, and to help them mature and develop their own value systems is still our charge; it is this charge that is articulated so well in the *Student Personnel Point of View*. We still strive to coordinate services, to link with faculty colleagues, and to build bridges with secondary schools. Our professional associations are still seeking ways to better cooperate. Research and assessment which provide a culture of evidence in our profession are part of our everyday lives. In this milieu, the *Student Personnel Point of View* still stands as an important benchmark and a foundation document for the current challenges that face our profession.

THE KENNETH P. SAURMAN  
MEMORIAL AWARD

This award honors Kenneth P. Saurman, who will long be remembered for his dedication to the field of student affairs and to the graduate program at The University of Vermont. After his death in 1980, a memorial fund was established for a prize recognizing the outstanding graduate in the program. This award is a reminder of the professional excellence and commitment Kenneth P. Saurman inspired in his students and colleagues.

Each spring, a committee of faculty members in the College of Education and Social Services selects a student, or students, who best display(s) the established award criteria. Those recognized: (a) show a record of outstanding achievement; (b) demonstrate ability to make outstanding future professional contributions at both local and national levels; (c) demonstrate future ability to make outstanding intellectual contribution to the field in the areas of research and scholarship; (d) show evidence of having fostered a sense of community and cooperation among peers, staff, and faculty; and (e) show evidence of outstanding contribution to the University through internship and practical experience.

In May 2006, the Kenneth P. Saurman Award was proudly presented to Nicholas E. Negrete.

## Relationships and Life: Some Lessons Learned

Nicholas E. Negrete  
2006 Saurman Award Recipient

*When you see a new trail, or a footprint you do not know, follow it to the point of knowing.*  
(Uncheedah, The Grandmother of Ohiyesa) (Nerburn, 1999, p. 78)

Relationships inform who we are as individuals and enrich the lives of those around us. They allow us to explore those things that are unknown and bring us to a place of knowing. Relationships are often the foundation of many success stories, build bridges toward understanding difference, and help us navigate a world where loneliness is a feeling that can easily surface. As I reflect on my time in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) program at the University of Vermont (UVM) and my current profession, I am struck by this one word: *relationships*. Prior to HESA, I never really thought about myself as a relational person, and I certainly took many relationships for granted, expecting them to occur and persevere in a vacuum. Much of why I chose to attend UVM's HESA program, however, was because of relationships I had developed with people in the program and those that were established in my time during interview weekend. In the same way, much of my decision to stay and develop as a professional at UVM was due to the relationships I had established and the people with whom I had closely connected.

The word *relationships* continues to surface in every realm of my life, and I cannot help but recognize the importance of relationships in my personal and professional life. Relationships, good and bad, inform who we are and who we want to become. I recently read Mitch Albom's book, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, and I connected strongly to some of the lessons learned by the main character, Eddie. I think these lessons can be translated in many of our own lives. This reflection will take a few lessons learned and apply them to my personal and professional life under the premise that relationships make life what we know it to be. Without them, we would struggle to make meaning of our own lives in every realm—personally and professionally. If one's life were visually mapped out, its blueprint would be guided by the relationships within that one life. It is our relationships that inspire us to keep going, follow our curiosities, and grow from a point of not knowing to a point of knowing.

---

*Nick Negrete received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Chicana/o Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He graduated from the HESA program in 2006 and currently serves as the Student Services Advisor for the African, Latino, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) Student Center.*

## With Family

*Sacrifice is a part of life. It's supposed to be. It's not something to regret. It's something to aspire to. Little sacrifices. Big sacrifices.* (Albom, 2003, p. 93)

Deciding to go away to college was one of the most challenging decisions I have had to make. To some, this decision is not a difficult one to make, but to others like myself, there is much at stake when leaving family for a considerable length of time. My parents tried very hard to entice me to stay home and attend a university that was within fifteen minutes of my house. I turned down a car offer and gift money to get away and have a “traditional college experience.” At first, this was a decision I was very happy with, and I soon learned how to establish my own autonomy. After my first couple of years as an undergraduate student, however, I began to feel distant from my family. I noticed that our conversations had changed in ways that made me feel like an outsider. Others believed I thought I was too good for the family, being one of the only people in my family pursuing a bachelor’s degree. I soon realized that I had made a sacrifice in my decision to go away to college. I sacrificed relationships with my family members, both extended and immediate. I sacrificed family vacations, birthdays of loved ones, even births, deaths, and marriages. All of these life-changing experiences were the cost of my pursuit of a degree in higher education. Many say that everything has its costs. I never thought *everything* meant my family.

In retrospect, I do not regret going away to college. In fact, I think I learned what it meant to be an adult very quickly and how to be more self-reliant. I learned how to build new relationships and create a different kind of family, a home away from home. I learned how to cherish what I had at home and made a more concerted effort to strengthen my family ties. Even now, I am constantly reminded of the distance that exists between my family and me, both physically and emotionally. Being the only one in my family with a master’s degree is something many people look at as a success, and rightfully so. However, as I admire my degree on the wall, I am not only reminded of my successes and triumphs but also the sacrifices and challenges that afforded me such a degree.

As a student affairs educator who works closely with students, specifically first-generation college students, I witness similar struggles and sacrifices being made. Sometimes my students come to me and share how conflicted they feel about being so far away from home. Other times I can see it in their performance, socially and academically. I often refer back to my personal experiences as a college student and share my perspectives on family, relationships, and the similarly difficult decisions and sacrifices I made. My hope is that I am able to illuminate some realizations within my students and empower them to take the relationships they are so scared to lose and redefine them so that they have permanence in their lives.

With Colleagues

*Sometimes when you sacrifice something precious, you're not really losing it. You're just passing it on to someone else.* (Albom, 2003, p. 94)

Upon arriving at UVM to begin my graduate work, I was asked the constant question, “Why UVM?” At first, I would ramble off an answer that was socially pleasing and portrayed the HESA program in a positive light. However, I finally took some time to really ask myself, “Why UVM?” As my time at UVM became a little more permanent, and I surprisingly took a job offer that required me to stay at UVM (as I was certain I was going back to California), I really began to ask myself, “Why UVM?” Through this questioning, I found myself reflecting on the strong relationships that were built at UVM with many colleagues—some who have moved away from Vermont and some who have given me much reason to work at an institution like UVM. Nevertheless, I truly believe that “sometimes you are where you are supposed to be and you may not even know it” (Albom, 2003, p. 58).

Entering the HESA program with a cohort of 17 people was enticing to me, as I was able to establish meaningful relationships with people who had come from very different backgrounds and experiences. The investment of such relationships allowed me to expand my worldview, and dig deeper within myself to answer questions like, “What is my student affairs philosophy?”; “How are my multiple identities infused in such a philosophy?”; and, “How do I enact my philosophy in the work that I do with those who may come from other philosophies and narratives?” There’s that word again, *relationships*. The relationships I had established allowed me to enact what we know as moral conversation and understand the various perspectives and experiences that inform who we are and what we do.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the personal sacrifices necessary to spend time in the classroom, at work, and in the community of student affairs. The precious sacrifices I chose to make are the friends and family back home that I left behind to pursue my chosen profession in student affairs. On the other hand, this allowed both my colleagues and me to share with each other our past experiences, which allowed us to establish a more grounded worldview of who we are and what we aspire to become, passing along to each other our wisdom, character, and personal narratives. For this, I will be forever grateful to know that my student affairs narrative has been shaped by those who have challenged me, nurtured me, and validated me, all the while experiencing their own personal sacrifices.

## With the World

*There are no random acts. That we are all connected. That you can no more separate one life from another than you can separate a breeze from the wind.* (Albom, 2003, p. 48)

Higher education in the United States has gone through many transformations; however, those who experience it remain some of the most privileged people in the United States and across the world. Social responsibility is a tenet that I strive to infuse within my own student affairs philosophy and is one with which I hope our students leave college, embracing their roles as socially responsible and educated citizens. Institutions of higher education have the capacity to promote dialogue around social responsibility and empower students to enact such a tenet in ways that educate, enlighten, and enrich campus communities.

I like to think of myself as a world citizen—not just a citizen of my own city, state, and country, but a citizen who acknowledges my role in the world and how closely I am connected to world issues. My relationship with the world happens through my interactions with people, as I share with others my worldviews on life and understand the world from their own lenses. It is amazing how much one can learn by simply stepping out of the comfort zone of one's own backgrounds and perspectives, taking a moment to be enlightened in another's.

College should be a time in which students prepare to be world citizens and own the concept of interconnectivity, understanding that “we move through places everyday that would never have been if not for those who came before us” (Albom, 2003, p. 123). I challenge myself everyday to connect myself with the world in ways that put things into perspective for me, as I am developing a sense of who I am and who I want to become.

## With Impermanence

*Life has to end, Love doesn't.* (Albom, 2003, p. 173)

Moving forward in my life as a student affairs educator, I have come to the realization that many students and colleagues will come and go, including myself. Nothing is permanent, and how we approach this reality affects the way we approach our own lives. There are numerous opportunities to establish relationships within a field in which people are at the center of our profession. People may come and go, but relationships have the ability to remain strong and persevere with change. Whether that is moving across the country, finding a new job, or coping with the passing of a loved one, I think the fear most of us have around establishing great relationships is the fear of losing them. Like death, it is our fear of impermanence in the world, or in this case, impermanence in someone's life. How do we make

sense of this and have faith in impermanence? Again, it is the way we approach this question that matters the most. I like to believe that relationships indeed have the ability to establish permanence in our own lives. If not the people, their words of wisdom, their shared experiences, their nuances, their laughter, their joys, their fears, their successes, their challenges . . . their narratives.

### References

- Albom, M. (2003). *The five people you meet in heaven*. New York: Hyperion.
- Nerburn, K. (1999). *The wisdom of the Native Americans*. Novato, CA: New World Library.



THE FINAL WORD

Each year, we invite a member of our community to write The Final Word. The Final Word contributor is the consummate student affairs educator and serves as a role model to us all through dedication, wisdom, and compassion. This year, we are fortunate to conclude with Jackie Gibbons, Professor Emerita, counselor, advocate, and friend.

## The Final Word

Jackie Gribbons

Being invited to write the “Final Word” is both an honor and a huge responsibility. The invitation implies that the writer offers sage advice and counsel that might make a difference in how we go about what we do in our profession and our lives. In a way, I find myself in an enviable position since I will really retire at the end of the 2007 academic year, and I am compelled to seize this opportunity to share what may be some of my “final words” to the HESA community. This epistle will be a truly personal reflection, and I promise to avoid using two of the all too-often used embellishments: “passion” and “vision.”

After over five decades in education and 41 years at the University of Vermont, mine will be an unusual perspective from which to reflect upon what has been a long and fulfilling career in education, and I hope to pass on five of the most important beliefs and values that have been so enduring for me and have guided me through my journey. I surely do not profess to offer panaceas, but hopefully, some of these tenets will ignite those you wish to attain or validate those you already hold dear as you do your best work and envision your dreams for a hope-filled future.

BEING YOURSELF . . . Being yourself mandates that you know who you are and what it is that is the core and essence of who you are as a person. It begs the question: how can I be myself unless I know who I am? It isn't often that one chooses one's life work as early as I was blessed to do so. In the eighth grade I knew that I wanted to become a teacher. I discovered that whether I was teaching elementary school children, junior high school, undergraduates, or graduate students, several things resonated with me. . . . at any level, what was required was consistency, directness, honesty, fairness, and openness. It was important for me to find a comfort zone that permitted me to meet and greet others and reduce the possibility of intimidation that came with the implied power of my position.

---

*Professor Jackie Gribbons has been a faculty member of the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) program since its inception in 1970. After 27 years of service to the University of Vermont (UVM), Jackie retired from her administrative duties in 1993, remaining with the HESA program as a faculty member. At the end of this year, she will retire from the HESA faculty, and will receive the highest honor bestowed by the UVM, an honorary doctorate. Professor Gribbons holds a M.A. degree in Counseling and Physical Education from Case Western Reserve University.*

Consider the challenges of being “you,” everyday; or, of putting all of your cards on the table, all of the time; or, of telling it how it is and being a straight shooter without demeaning or destroying the recipient of the message; or, of being true to yourself while being open to possibilities—new thoughts, new feelings, new ways of doing, and new ways of seeing and appreciating your world. Being myself in these ways has mainly worked for me in my quest to be an authentic person.

Everyone has a set of tenets upon which is built a professional style, philosophy, ethics, and demeanor, remembering that integrity is at the core of everything. It has been my belief that our students and colleagues deserve to know who we are and how and why we make decisions that affect our desired outcomes. Surely we have known colleagues who have operated within self-serving hidden agendas, or who seem to have split personalities that have made us wonder who was showing up this time. I implore you not to be one of them.

BEING COMPETENT . . . No one expects us to know everything there is to know or to be exceptional in every skill set. But, the expectation is that we will learn what we need to learn in order to be competent in our practice. For me, it became a need to find qualities and skills I didn’t know I had. I soon discovered that there were experts in my discipline from whom I could learn and that these qualified people were anxious to teach others what they knew so well. I remember the times when I was appointed or elected to positions requiring skills or knowledge I had yet to master. Learning from others was essential, and I acquired tutoring in budgeting and financial management, fundraising and development, and strategic planning. I also learned that asking the right people for the right information would become central to the relationship and the outcomes both parties would be proud to cultivate. It became apparent that there would be more than one mentor in my life and that multiple mentors would be there when I needed to develop professionally. Eventually, I would become a mentor for others. This seemed to occur even when I was unaware of its status, so I learned to take extra care in what I said and did, never knowing who might be taking it all in as gospel.

Competence requires a full measure of confidence that you can do what you say you can do blended with a boat load of humility. I also learned the helpful lesson that no matter how often others told me how well I performed, there was no such thing as being indispensable. What a totally liberating realization this was for me! I could still try to do my best without feeling that I had to say “yes” to every new option because I knew there were others who could do what I could do . . . differently. Being competent brings material and intrinsic rewards and dilemmas. Salary increases and promotions may come with the territory as does increased responsibility and additional assignments to verify that you have proven yourself in the heat of pressure and demand. Ah, but to know down deep that you have really done an exceptional job may be the greatest reward of all! Competence is

huge, and in the end, the world will finally detect a “faker”□ most of us would never want to fall into that category.

RESPECTING OTHERS . . . Social justice in its broadest definition is not a trendy concept. It is real and dictates that we must be committed to work hard to understand, appreciate, and respect all of the differences that encompass our expanding world. This requires that we take positive action to right the wrongs all around us. Social justice can and should be obviously prevalent on our own campuses. Supporting those who are marginalized, or extinguishing and looking beyond the labels, or treating others with respect for who they might be or become are all steps toward a more just campus. The issues are extensive and often daunting, but we can make a difference in our daily work. How about being a champion for the unpopular or struggling student; or, working with colleagues to create a climate that is safe and nurturing; or, developing your own sensitivity and awareness of barriers you never recognized before; or, just being honest that you need to learn more about the issues and actually doing it?

In our ever-changing society, I have been inspired by the honest caring of colleagues and students who believe that we have a mission and responsibility to make our institutions a place where we can all learn and prosper under the banner of genuine civility, opportunity, and respect. I know I still have much to learn and to do, and humaneness and hope have always been at the center of what has given me the courage to take the next step so that I, too, could make a difference. Be mindful that empathy, sensitivity, and caring are noble qualities but are not enough unless they include taking action in ways that matter and feel right to each of us.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROFESSION . . . Not everyone will become a renowned and prolific writer of scholarly articles and books. Not everyone will become the president of a prestigious national professional association. Not everyone will become the keynote speaker or presenter in demand. Not everyone will chair a committee or task force. But, everyone must become involved in the life, welfare, and growth of our profession. I believe we all have a responsibility to give back more than we receive.

Like many things we bring into our lives, we learn that involvement is good at our own time and pace and that the balance toward which we are striving is different for each of us. For me, the most rewarding experiences were those that came as the result of being involved professionally. These experiences became mirrors that reflected images that were new and self-defining for me. The support I received from others motivated me to become a leader in their eyes, and I was encouraged in ways that brought out the very best of me. I became aware of my strengths as well as my Achilles' heels. I delved into issues otherwise foreign to me, and I learned to do my homework before opening my mouth. Being surrounded by the

most highly recognized women leaders in the nation was like learning by osmosis as I watched, listened, and considered within a safe and nourishing environment. I marveled at the great minds and creative insights that produced significant policies and programs that would change the landscape of higher education, especially for women. I finally learned what the “big picture” was really all about. Best of all, I met my closest friends having served on committees and executive boards with these talented people with whom I developed lasting personal relationships □ many that are now more than three decades in duration.

And, so I challenge you to contribute to the profession at the local, regional, or national level and to test out your talents, give freely of your ideas, and reap the mutual benefits in ways that are meaningful, rewarding, and lasting. It is guaranteed that you will become a better person and professional for having given back to the profession and its constituents in life changing and substantive ways.

BEING HAPPY . . . I have seldom understood why folks remain in positions that become their life’s work, complaining all the while how frustrated, trapped, and unhappy they are. What a way to go. Some people choose to be happy, and some people choose to be glum. Happiness in the workplace can serve as a stimulus for well-being and contentment, enabling a person to overcome some of the greatest odds. When I speak of being happy, I am not thinking that everyday is full of “fall on the floor laughter” or “rose petals scattered across every pathway.” I am thinking instead that being happy is a state of mind that makes me eager to go to my work, engage with others in productive ways, and wonder at the day’s end where all of the time went (including those 14 hour days that seemed to never end and left me exhausted).

What I learned early on was that our profession is highly social and interactive and that most of us thrive in this kind of environment because we like to work with people for the common good. In fact, this is a major reason many graduate student candidates espouse when asked why they want to enter the higher education and student affairs arena. And many new and bright eyed professionals exclaim: “and to think I am being paid to do what I love!?”

For most, happiness is feeling good about who you are, what you do, and how others respond to your overtures. It seems that the climate must be conducive for happiness to occur and that happiness can be contagious. Think about how you respond when greeted with a smile, genuine laughter, and good will that seem to create energy otherwise absent. I have tried to smile and laugh a lot and to find humor in most things. Besides, rumor has it that laughter is good for mental health and the digestive system. As a consequence, I tried to see the bright side even when doom and gloom raised its uninvited head because I knew that this, too, would pass and tomorrow would be a new and better day.

Looking back, I can honestly say that happiness has been around me almost all of the time, and I continue to be grateful for the people who have been part of my life as well as the challenges and opportunities that I have created and have been placed before me. Feeling blessed and fortunate is an understatement of good fortune. It boils down, I believe, to a compatible fit with the University of Vermont and the trust and faith placed in me to do my best. Quite frankly, being happy is tied with good health as number one on my list of “must haves.” So, think about it . . . if we’re not having fun doing this thing called work, why are we doing it, anyway?!

As I close, I would be remiss not to include several additional insights that are part of my “job jar” . . . work hard, but work smart and decide whether you want to work to live or live to work . . . take control of your life, and make good choices . . . create just the right amount of personal and social distance between you and your students and supervisees so that you can offer the professional expertise they seek and deserve . . . become “expert” in something that captures your deep interest and commitment whether or not it is in your job description . . . do your best today—it may not be what it was yesterday or might be tomorrow—no one can ever ask more of you, nor can you ever ask more of yourself . . . try not to take yourself too seriously as it is seldom all about you . . . check your ego at the door along with your coat . . . remember that there is no perfect person, place, or position . . . love yourself first and then give to others what they need . . . respect the dignity of your own experience . . . and, be of generous spirit.

I learned a long time ago that nothing lasts forever, and I am aware that timing is everything. Being a “sports junkie,” I would love to liken my forthcoming retirement to Michael Jordan when he knew it was time to hang up his basketball sneakers. I, too, want to go out at the top of my game, while I am still able to dribble the length of the court to the foul line from where I take ascent to the final slam dunk. And like the game of basketball, I have realized that if I didn’t take the risks of scoring, I would have missed 100% of my shots!

In some ways, these past years have been surreal, but I will carry all of the memories with me forever. And, it is with deepest thanks and appreciation that I enter this final sentence.



## NEW CONNECTIONS

Each year, members of the graduating HESA class write original papers in the form of a comprehensive exam in order to meet graduation requirements. These papers take the form of original research, scholarly personal narratives, literature reviews, and argumentative essays. The Full Board of *The Vermont Connection* is pleased to share topics from the Class of 2006, along with the “New Connections” they have made following their graduation. What follows is the current placement of members of the Class of 2006, followed by the title of their comprehensive exam and an abstract. Please feel free to contact the authors if you would like more information about their topic.



**Adriana Alicea-Rodriguez**

Hall Director

Texas A & M University

***From MUFP Fellow to Alum: The Experience and Impact of the Minority Undergraduate Fellows Program***

In 1988, NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education created the Minority Undergraduate Fellows Program (MUFP) with the intent to increase the number of ethnic minorities who would pursue a career in higher education and student affairs. However, during the 2006 Annual National NASPA Conference, MUFP transitioned into a new national fellowship program known as the NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program (NUFP). These changes were made despite the fact that few assessments were conducted related to the experiences of MUFP alumni or its impact on the Fellows' pursuit of a career in higher education and student affairs. To undertake a more complete assessment of the program, a quantitative research study was conducted with the intent to learn about the experiences of alumni while they were participants in the Minority Undergraduate Fellows Program.



**Katie Bisang**

Community Development Educator

New York University

***Educating The Whole Student At A Secular University: A Personal Journey to Find Hope and Faith***

As a student affairs administrator I examine pluralism in the context of religion through my own personal journey with Catholicism and my background beliefs. My journey has included dialogues both in and out of the classroom setting with professors, family, friends, and partners. Reflecting upon my foundation of religion and background beliefs, while learning about new faith communities, I want to be able to educate the whole student in a safe environment in which they can share every aspect of their identity including religious and spiritual beliefs. It is my hope that through sharing my personal experiences and stories, in the form of Scholarly Personal Narrative, that I will open the door to a more pluralistic learning environment in the academy.

**Jason Cha**Assistant Resident Dean  
University of California, San Diego***Evangelical Faith in the Academy: The Journey of a Born-again Evangelical in the Secular Academy***

This paper is a scholarly personal narrative about my experiences in the secular academy as a born-again Evangelical Christian. In telling my journey of faith and how it has shaped my development as a student through college and graduate school, I address issues of faith and spiritual identity development and its impact on the process of meaning making. I also explore the climate of spirituality, faith, and religion on today's secular institutions of higher education and offer recommendations on creating safe space for students to seek and discover their faith identity.

**Amanda L. Cook**Career Counselor  
The University of Vermont***Oceans Apart but Right at Home: Reflections on Indigenous Traveling*****Michael M. DeBowes**Assistant Director for the Center for Student Ethics and Standards  
The University of Vermont***Interrogating Whiteness: One Graduate Student's Journey in Developing a Nonracist White Identity***

This paper is a scholarly personal narrative (SPN) account of my experiences in coming to see how whiteness informs my life. Through writing about my life and integrating relevant scholarship, I explore issues such as whiteness, racial privilege, and the developmental journey of defining a positive, white antiracist identity. After exploring my journey through my first year in graduate school, I offer recommendations for white student affairs professionals who seek to understand themselves and the students they serve in their quest for racial justice.



**Aaron Ferguson**

Program Support Manager  
The University of Vermont

***Living in the Questions: One Student Affairs Professional's  
Perspective on Student Development***

The world is becoming more global, and students need to understand how they fit into this increasingly complex world. As the academy strives to open its doors to more and more people, it is apparent that the form and function of institutions must change to accommodate increased differences inherent in a larger constituency. Students do not all think, learn, and live in exactly the same way. Furthermore, what is important to students morally, ethically, and spiritually is becoming a greater concern for students and is something that is rarely addressed in higher education. Experiential learning pedagogies can serve to broaden how scholarship and learning are perceived in U.S. higher education to leave room to address the moral and ethical development needs of students in addition to their academic training. This paper argues for a shift away from the traditional view of students as knowledge assimilators toward a view of students as creators of their own knowledge and perspective. Incorporating student's experiences into their academics and their academics into their own lives through different forms of experiential education can meet this need. The author uses his own journey through this developmental process to highlight ways in which experiential learning pedagogies have shaped his experience and can be used in many aspects of higher education to foster student development from the whole-student perspective.



**Kimberly Herrera**

Program Advisor  
American University

***Racial Awareness in The Green Mountains: One Puerto  
Rican Woman's Journey***

This paper is a scholarly personal narrative (SPN) about experiences of a Puerto Rican woman dealing with racism. Through the author's writing she explores her own identity using Jean Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development and produces examples of her development in each stage. The author discusses her experiences with racism and how that had affected her views about White people throughout her life. During her journey in graduate school, she learned to change her perspectives and develop skills to converse with White students about important topics such as race and racism. Finally, the author offers recommendations for

student affairs professionals on how to hold conversations with White students and give examples of what has helped her in her own experience.



**Gina Ippolito**

Exchange Program Coordinator  
The University of Vermont

***International Students and the Office of International Education at the University of Vermont: A Needs Assessment***

In this study, I explore the experiences of several international students at the University of Vermont (UVM), specifically in relation to the Office of International Education. This research highlights and assesses the needs of international students utilizing ethnographic interviews, document analysis, and environmental observation. Additionally, this study provides best practices within student affairs administration in order to better support international students on our campus.



**Tamia Rashima Jordan**

Program Coordinator  
Duke University

***Higher Education for the Formerly Incarcerated Student Population: Implications for Student Affairs Professionals***

Reducing criminal activity is as much a function of developing practices to reduce the likelihood of recidivism as it is a function of addressing social ills that lead to crime in the first place. Education in general and higher education specifically has the ability to reduce recidivism and affect long lasting positive change in the lives of formerly incarcerated individuals. Moreover, student affairs professionals are positioned to play a critical role in the reduction of recidivism in this population. The hope is that higher education would serve this population as another way to remedy injustice in our society including the deleterious affects of poverty and racism.



**Heather Maginnis**

Assistant Director of Student Programs  
Georgetown University

***Agents of Change: Female Administrative Leaders and the Transformation of Higher Education***

Presently, a variety of new changes and demands challenge the future of higher education. In order to meet these demands, leaders must dismiss convention and historical precedent, and break through paradigmatic boundaries to inspire change and empower institutions to move forward. Leadership must be redefined and restructured to reflect the changing nature of its constituents and the global economy. The call for new leadership in higher education implies a shift to transformative or post-industrial leadership models as the means to be successful. Currently, in the male-dominated culture of administrative leadership, higher education seems to lack the innovation needed to facilitate this shift. Female leaders, however, have traditionally exemplified the very skills and qualities heralded as those necessary to bring higher education into the 21st century and beyond. This paper examines the current challenges and leadership models within higher education, and how women can meet these new leadership needs, acting as agents of change in the academy.



**Nicholas E. Negrete**

Student Services Advisor for the ALANA Student Center  
The University of Vermont

### ***Bringing Visibility to an (In)visible Population: Understanding the Transgender Student Experience***

In this qualitative study, I explore the experiences of two transgender students at the University of Vermont (UVM). This research highlights and examines the social and academic experiences of transgender students utilizing ethnographic interviews. Additionally, based on the interviews conducted, this study provides best practices for student affairs administrators in order to better support transgender students on our college campuses.



**Michael D. Payne**

Residential Education Coordinator  
The University of Utah

### ***A Facebook for Millennials: An Examination of a New Technology in Higher Education***

Over the past six years, starting with the high school graduating class of 2000, Millennial students have entered the doors of the Academy and now make up the majority of the current undergraduate population. As Neil Howe and William Strauss, authors of *Millennials Rising* (2000) stated, Millennial students are “talented in technology,” and this talent has ushered in a new wave of challenges

and opportunities for academic communities in the form of online communities. Since its inception in February of 2004, Facebook, an online directory created by a Millennial student at Harvard University, has made its presence known. Understanding technology as well as communities like Facebook is a first step for student affairs professionals. In this paper I provide an in-depth look at Facebook, discuss online communities and how they impact real communities, illustrate the effect Facebook is having on college campuses, showcase what can and is being done on college campuses, and offer questions for student affairs professionals to consider.



**Tricia Rascon**

Public Programs Coordinator

University of California, Office of the President

### ***Answering the “What Are You?” Question: The Experience of Undergraduate Biracial Women in the Academy***

According to the United States Census, the number of Americans who identify as biracial has significantly increased in the last several decades and will continue to rise in future years. As a result, today’s colleges are encountering a greater number of students who fail to fit within the traditional single-race categories that exist on applications, surveys and in the minds of many individuals. Through focus group interviews and current research, this qualitative paper explores the experience of several biracial female undergraduates in the academy. What does the racial identity development of biracial college women look like? Are the experiences of these women in line with current development theories? How does their racial identity shape their college experience?



**Stephen M. Sweet**

Residence Director

The University of Vermont

### ***A Qualitative Study of Student Affairs Professionals: Attitudes Toward Army Reserve Officer Training Corps***

This qualitative study was designed to gather information, using individual in-depth interviews, about student affairs professionals experiences with and attitudes toward students in the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps. The article also offers suggestions for creating a campus climate more inclusive of this unique group of students.



Daphne Wells

Residence Director

Florida State University

***Black like Me: The Unique Experiences of Black Women  
who serve as Student Affairs Practitioners at  
Predominantly White Institutions***

Within the last decade much progress has been made toward advancing the number of administrators of color in higher education administration. Among those numbers is a significant increase of Black women entering the field. As Black women are becoming more visible in the field of higher education administration, instances of sexism and racism against these women are also becoming more visible. This study looks at the experiences of Black female administrators at predominantly white institutions from the perspectives of race and gender as told by 3 Black women currently serving in those roles.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

It is indeed an honor to join this year's Editorial Board of *The Vermont Connection* (TVC) in extending acknowledgements to the University of Vermont (UVM) Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration (HESA) community.

To those closest to me during my HESA experience, it comes as no surprise that this Berkeley native struggled through two years of what I perceived to be a relatively taxing meteorologic and racial climate in Vermont. Nevertheless, whenever I am asked about my UVM experience, I tell people that Vermont was challenging . . . yet, the sense of community I felt during my two years of graduate school was greater than that which I experienced at any other period in my life. (Actually, I don't say it with such grammatical formality, but the sentiments remain the same.)

From White privilege to William Perry, Schlossberg to Seven Vectors, this community of classmates, administrators, and faculty helped me make meaning of the theory that would ultimately better inform my practice.

More importantly, the community I found in Burlington, Vermont, supported me through my struggles unrelated to textbooks. Sometimes assistance came in the form of practical advice—*you don't wear ankle socks with snow boots*. Other times I needed to be guided through program-related epiphanies—*apparently "part-time student" plus "part-time professional" amounts to (or at least feels like it amounts to) full time student who happens to work full-time*. Most often, the support was far less tangible, yet ultimately left me with the feeling that I mattered. It is this communal support that allowed me the space to better understand who I was as an educator and as a whole person.

---

*Simon Kiyoshi Hara is a 2005 graduate of the HESA program at The University of Vermont. He is currently employed at the University of San Francisco as the Coordinator for Multicultural Student Services.*

Upon attending a few of the TVC receptions at professional conferences as a student, I was heartened to find that this incredible community extends far beyond Burlington, Vermont. At those receptions, I also came to realize that *The Vermont Connection* is more than a scholarly journal; it is the HESA community's touchstone. It is our rallying point. TVC is our *Giving Tree*, supporting us in a variety of ways, depending on our needs. As graduate students, it provides us opportunities to grow professionally, personally, and communally through the fundraising, editing, and coordinating process. As professionals, the journal provides us with a vibrant communal space for scholarly discourse long after we have finished defending our *comps*. And as conference attendees, it provides us with a time and physical place to reconnect with our friends and colleagues, to be affirmed in our decision to join this community of kind and thoughtful human beings.

On behalf of the 2006-2007 Full Board and *The Vermont Connection*, I would like to thank each of you for your generous contributions to the journal and your support of the UVM HESA community.

Sincerely,

Simon K. Hara '05  
Coordinator for Multicultural Student Services  
The University of San Francisco

The Editorial Board of *The Vermont Connection* would like to thank the following individuals who contributed to our successful fundraising year. Our alumni/ae and friends are responsible for the continued vitality and success of our efforts.



**Leadership Circle**  
***Donations of \$250 or more***

Wendy Lou Baker  
Bridget Kelly  
Robert Dwayne Kelly  
Jason Carroll Locke  
Merin Eglington Maxwell  
Robert H. Minetti  
Robert J. Nash



**Vector 8**  
***Donations of \$100 or more***

Brian Patrick Taisuke Arao  
Joshua Paul Armstrong  
Valerie L. Bagley  
Jane Ellyn Bittcher  
Janice Pelkey Bramson  
John F. Brennan  
Patrick Joseph Buckley  
Tom R. Burke  
Elizabeth Bowman Burtis  
Nancy Jane Cable  
Matthew Robert Caires  
Julie Innes Caruccio  
Magarete Reilly Couture  
Richard James Couture  
Jacob Lee Diaz  
Gary Lee Dukes  
Jerry E. Flanagan  
Pamela Kay Gardner  
Deanna M. Garrett  
Jackie M. Gribbons  
Jillian Y. Gronski  
V. Hilton Hallock  
Jeffrey Robert Hanson  
Bryan G. Hartman  
Kimberly Anne Howard

Deborah Ellen Hunter  
Susan Robb Jones  
Christopher B. Kennedy  
Dina Ann Lindquist  
Kathleen Ann MacKay  
Kathleen Manning  
Deborah Orr May  
Jerry Allan May  
Paul Joseph McLoughlin, II  
Mollie Marie Monahan  
Martin Hershel Nadelman  
Jennifer Anne Ostermiller  
Raymond P. Quirolgico  
Grace Cotter Regan  
Thomas Everett Robinson  
Robert C. Rothhouse  
Linda Vaughn Schreiner  
John Fredeick Schwenger  
George Matthew Sousa  
Sharon Braga Sousa  
Joe Speidel  
Annie Stevens  
Barry Joel Taylor-Bram  
Kurt Michael Thiede  
Blythe Farrington Treuhaft  
Jennifer Wegner  
D. R. Wells  
Kimberly Ann Wipf



**Editorial Board Club**  
***Donations of \$75 or more***

Joyce Ames  
Brian Edward Canavan  
Paula M. Cogan  
Carlos A. Costa  
Jonathan Henry Jankowski  
Lester John Manzano

Matthew Neil Milner  
Timothy Ryan Shiner  
James Anthony Pietrovito  
Janet Early Pietrovito  
Jason A. Zelesky

 **Green & Gold Club**  
***Donations of \$50 or more***

Kevin Lee Ahuna  
Kelly Haggerty Ahuna  
Christine Ellen Anthony  
Patrick James Beatty  
Kathleen M. Berning  
Corin Elizabeth Blanchard  
Allan Patrick Blattner  
Carolyn Maxwell Blattner  
DeMethra LaSha Bradley  
Patrick A. Browne  
Nicole Marie Chabot  
Amanda Louise Cook  
Lael Croteau  
Richard Thomas Culliton  
Carolyn Ann Davis  
Edward M. Davis  
Michael Addison Dunn  
Patricia Kendig Eldred  
Wesley J. Eldred  
Richard John Gatteau  
Jennifer Lynn Hart  
Betty M. Hibler  
Eric Thomas Hoiland  
Kirsten Anne Jackson  
Laura Blake Jones  
Linda Christine Kasper  
David Allen Kembel  
Kim Barth Kembel  
J. Philip Kirchner  
Karen A. Kirchner  
Sabrina Kwist  
Surabhi Lal  
Kimberly Kirsch LeSage  
Alicia Claudelle Lewis

Kristi Lee Lonardo  
Brian T. MacDonald  
Peggy Ann Mahaffy-Dunn  
Sally LaPan Mahon  
Sarah Conant Martin  
Keith M. Miser  
Anna Iannuzzi Molettieri  
Joseph Thomas Nairn  
Nicholas Efren Negrete  
Adam James Nelson  
Jean Marie Papalia  
Rosemary Jane Perez  
Anne Conaway Peters  
Louis Dean Phelps, IV  
Sheryl Schoen Poole  
Janine Elizabeth Pratt  
Christiana Jane Raether  
Czarina Elena Ramsay  
Patricia Sophia Rascon  
Enzo Rebula  
William Reid Root  
Steven M. Rose  
Alan Lee Sickbert  
Gail Dawson Smith  
Charlotte Ann Taylor  
Kim Anne Thomas  
Barbara Howland Verrier  
David Arthur Verrier  
Janet Edgar Walbert  
Kathleen Wall  
Cynthia Baxter Watchmaker  
Amy Marie White  
Rebecca J. Wiefersch  
Steven John Wolff  
Michael Paul Anthony Wong

 **Donor's Club**  
***Donations of up to \$50***

Ruth E. Abelmann  
Kathleen Knight Abowitz  
Anu R. Ailawadhi  
Adriana Alicea-Rodriguez

Anonymous  
Katie Jennifer Antos-Ketcham  
Peter Scott Antos-Ketcham  
Kristin Bowman Backhaus  
Carol Miller Bardon  
Michelle L. Bartley-Taylor  
J. Justin Bayer  
Jessica Lauren Belue  
Larry Belue  
Nancy Belue  
Katherine Bisang  
Zafir George Bludevich  
Allan Sheridan Blume  
Barbara Cummelin Boyson  
Kelley Page Brandt  
Kimberly Jo Brandt  
Allen W. Brouillette  
Darcy O'Keefe Brouillette  
Douglas R. Brown  
Heather Hering Brown  
David T. Buckley  
Mary Kim Cannon  
Kristin Wallace Carpenter  
Barbara Dean Carskaddan  
Gary Alan Carskaddan  
Gretchen Junk Casey  
Douglas E. Chiappetta, Jr.  
Susan Schirmer Chiappetta  
Rachael Kathryn Class-Giguere  
Mark A. Coppes, M.D.  
Robert L. Davis  
Deborah Ann Desjardins  
Douglas Alexander Dickey, Jr.  
Joslyn P. DiRamio  
Joseph P. Farragher  
Aaron Michael Ferguson  
Sue Henry Feuerstein  
Victoria Domina Fisher  
Rachelle Ann Flisser  
Kathleen L. Floyd  
Andrew D. Flewelling  
Kirsten Freeman Fox  
Suzanne Fritz

Corynn Marcum Gilbert  
Patricia S. Goen  
Darrell Lee Goodwin  
Nancy Granger  
Amy Elisabeth Grieger  
Michael Gerard Gunzenhauser  
Simon Hara  
Anne Daignault Hartman  
Gail Christina Howard  
Robert Douglas Hradski  
Gina Marie Ippolito  
Adrea Lynn Jaehnig  
Suzanne Eileen Jolly  
Nancy Ann Just  
Edward John Keagle  
Martha Burroughs Keagle  
Bruce David Kelly  
Lorraine Betz Kelm  
Robert John Kelm  
Anne Claxton Krabacher  
Robyn Hogue Kummer  
Stephanie Nelle Kurtzman  
Anne Laubenheimer Larget  
Ellen Whitten Lencioni  
Lewis Scott Lerman  
Jennifer Poreda Lian  
Mary Therese Liscinsky  
Ann Crittenden Livingston  
Kimberly A. Ludwig  
Patricia Marin  
John Paul Mascetta  
John Hubbard Miller  
Joe Michael Millington  
Katie Flanagan Mobley  
Seth Mobley  
Alison L. Moll  
Jacqueline Marie Murphy  
Carrie Smith Nee  
David Nestor  
Erika Nestor  
Marian Frank Newman  
David Thomas Ouimette  
Gisele Laffaye Pansze

Trent Woodson Pansze, M.D.  
Kathryn Frances Paraggio  
Michael David Payne  
Jennifer M. Pigza  
Heather Parkin Poppy  
Louis George Provost  
Marlene Collins Provost  
Lori Elisabeth Robichaub  
Monica J. Sargent  
Kennith Hans Sartorelli, M.D.  
Marybeth Bacon Sartorelli  
Peter Robert Sawyer  
Jared Scott Scherer  
Lara Elizabeth Scott  
Marie Driscoll Shuman  
Nancy Hoole Simoes  
Julie Ann Slone  
Katherine J. Stevenson  
Samuel Christopher Stevenson  
Karen Netter Stonely  
Sadika Sulaiman  
Steven Michael Sweet  
John deCani Taylor  
Trisha C. Tchume  
Melissa Dawn Thomas  
Debbie VanSchaack  
Judith Johnson Venega  
Adam Christopher Warrington  
Sarah Greenleaf Warrington  
David M. Welbourn  
Lynn Bitzer Welbourn  
Carol Frances Williams  
Rise L. Wilson  
Susan Aleen Wilson  
Scott Thomas Wolterink  
Jennifer Ann Wowk



## GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

*The Vermont Connection* publishes articles dealing with student development, professional development, administrative concerns, and creative programs to improve student services. Manuscripts should focus on: original research; replication of research; reviews of research/literature; essays on theoretical, organizational, or professional issues; reviews of current literature relevant to the field; or practical reports of experiences from the field.

## Style Guidelines

Manuscripts must be clear, concise, and interesting with a well-organized development of ideas. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition* (2001) should be followed for reference style and general guidelines.

- Double space all material, including references, quotations, tables, and figures. Leave extra space above and below subheadings and allow generous margins (at least one-inch margins).
- Because manuscripts are processed through an anonymous review system, they should contain no clues to the author's identity or institutional affiliation (with the exception of a separate title page as outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition*). Where appropriate, institutional identification will be inserted after acceptance of the manuscript.
- Research manuscripts should total no more than fifteen (15) double-spaced, typewritten pages (approximately 3,000 words) including references, figures, and tables. Shorter articles are accepted and encouraged.
- Original research (literary, qualitative, or quantitative) is encouraged. All such work should be applicable to the higher education and student affairs professions.
- Field reports should not exceed three (3) pages (approximately 600 words in length). They should briefly report on or describe new practices, programs, or techniques. Authors should supply additional background information for interested parties who may request it.

- Dialogues/Interviews should follow the manuscript guidelines outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition*. They should take the form of verbatim exchange, oral or written, between two or more people.
- Book reviews should not exceed five (5) pages in length (approximately 1,000 words). Proposed titles to be reviewed should be approved by the Full Board. Authors are fully responsible for obtaining such texts. Additionally, it is the author's responsibility to secure permission to quote or adapt text content. A copy of the publisher's written permission must be provided to the Full Board before any manuscript can be published.
- Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all references, quotations, tables, and figures. Authors should make every effort to ensure that such items are complete and correct.

#### Submission Instructions

- Form and content of manuscripts should comply with the above style guidelines and the general guidelines of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition*. Manuscripts that do not conform to these guidelines cannot be considered.
- Never submit manuscripts that have been previously published or are currently under consideration for publication.
- Material should be submitted electronically only; visit The Vermont Connection website for more information.
- It is imperative for authors to adhere to all dates outlined in the Call for Articles.

*The Vermont Connection* Editorial Board will be responsible for all publication and editorial decisions.

**Visit [www.uvm.edu/~vtconn](http://www.uvm.edu/~vtconn) for additional information.**

NOTES