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Introduction to Sociology

Project I: Culture

By Richie Heinlein

To examine culture, one must look and listen. However, being visually impaired makes it hard to “look”. Therefore “listening” is my strength.

Examining culture on a college campus may also be more complex than one might realize as well. One must examine not only the campus life, but also the life of students around the campus as well to get a clearer picture of college life.

First of all, is environment. I noticed that in my classes, there was a stark contrast on the day of this project on culture. In my Introduction to the Family class, there was no sterility to the environment at all. The students are free to speak not just by raising hands, but without as well. There is an open door for new opinions, debate, and new ways of doing things. In my Orientation class, It was different that day. The environment was very sterile and formal. There was a presentation that day and we all were seemingly expected to sit in our seats quietly. One presentation was made by a man in a T-Shirt and jeans, the other was made by a psychologist in a suit. That is a big difference! When the man in the suit was asking questions and expecting people to answer, no one really wanted to speak. This maybe because the students did not want to step out of line. Lessons were taught in a variety of ways. My Introduction to the Family instructor used humorous mannerisms. The Orientation class was starkly different with its formality, however, the class is normally more open, sometimes with candy for the students and instructor. As far as activities are concerned in my classes, that is done differently too. In my Introduction to the Family class, we are more hands-on. We break into “class families” and discuss what we are going to do for our extra credit class work and projects. In the Orientation class, it is more like discussion of the class material.

Next is the manner of dress on campus. I noticed that the manner of dress is extremely casual. Jeans and shorts are the norm for both genders.

Personal behavior is the next thing to be discussed here. I noticed a lot of people on cell phones that day. Many umbrellas that day were being used because of the rain. This brings me to my next point about personal behavior. My umbrella jammed and I needed help. Someone came to my rescue and got it unjammed and walked me to class.

The next thing is dialect. There are a lot of people who talk differently. I met a gal who was from Puerto Rico. This was the person that helped me with the umbrella and going to class. I also have a friend that I ran into and he is from South Korea.

Ministry is another part of campus life. I volunteer at the Wesley Foundation along with a lot of other students. We have dinner and fellowship. We also work together in ministry downtown every week.

Fun is a major part of campus life. However, "fun" can get out of hand. A lot of ECU and other students go to bars and unfortunately get drunk. I see it when I go out every week when I help with the above mentioned ministry program. However fun is not always taken too far. In fact, most of the time, not at all. A lot of our students have very strong hobbies like sports and video games. I have lots of conversations with people like this.

In conclusion, I think that campus culture is very much a melting pot of activity, both good and bad. I find it to be mostly good however. I see people caring for other people like my friend from Puerto Rico who I just met. I also see people talking differently and acting differently based on their nationality, hobbies and interests. In short, I see a rich stew of culture.

