

Literature Review Essay Samples

Jessica ###

English 30

Literature Review

The United States is a country with people who come from many different backgrounds. In my previous essays, I outlined the topic of racial diversity and the bicultural identity. My new focus is on the development of race relations at Penn State University, more specifically the effects of racial issues on students. Several documents that I have found shed light on the area. Gail Johnston's thesis entitled "The Racial Climate of Penn State" describes the history of racial problems at Penn State and different student perceptions of the racial climate in 1990. A University Park publication named "A Summary Report" states the outcomes of a 1992 summit that assessed the diversity initiatives of Penn State. The last document is a booklet produced by the Vice Provost for Educational Equity called "A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: 1998-2003." This pamphlet outlines steps to be taken throughout the given years to promote diversity. Information from Hoecker's 2002 thesis will reveal the amount of success the university's efforts have had. These works delineate the chronological progression of events throughout Penn State's history and display the effects of diversity initiatives in University Park. Finally, *Higher Education and the Color Line* gives examples of effective diversity programs at various American universities. By reviewing these documents, one may develop a comprehensive view about Penn State's status in promoting diversity in comparison to other institutions of higher learning.

Johnston's thesis, the earliest of these publications, has two sections. The beginning of the paper gives a comprehensive summary of the racial issues at Penn State. The origins of such problems can be traced back to when the United States District Court reversed Adams Law. Now, minority recruitment was no longer required by the government. The school pacified the public by assuring them that Penn State would continue to "intensify its recruitment programs, improve the environment for minorities, and increase its efforts to combat racism" (p. 12). In the spring of 1988, there was another episode that incited anger amongst the student population. The front page of *The Daily Collegian* featured pictures and an article covering three African-American football players that had left the school. Many students were incensed that this story was on the front page, believing that the reason was because these individuals were black. Shortly after this

negative incident, however, the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) elected Seth Williams, a black student, as their president. His election led to several positive changes including requiring Black and Women's Studies courses. Despite these improvements, a fifteen hour sit-in in which "eighty-eight students received summary citations for criminal trespassing" occurred on April 8, 1988. (These students were later given reprieves.) The cause for this protest was the school's refusal to have appointments with various minority organizations. This sit-in led to much progress; the Board of Trustees worked with students to create goals for the university. From then on, the administration proved more cooperative, although there were some minor conflicts.

The second part of this thesis measures student opinions about the racial climate of Penn State. On the whole, black students rated the racial climate as poorer than white students. There was statistically significant evidence that African-Americans were more likely to have witnessed or been victim of discrimination. They were also more likely to believe the University did not adequately address minority history. Conversely, whites were more likely to believe racial problems were exaggerated and the University has "made an effort to retain Black students" (p. 29). Both groups agreed on only one area, that is, racial segregation among students exists in social situations. Thus, disagreements on racial lines were pervasive in virtually all of the issues. Johnston concluded that "the questionnaire results showed a definite problem with the racial climate at Penn State" (p. 34). The next publication assesses university diversity initiatives and begins to discuss how they may attempt to resolve the racial problems that were outlined in Johnston's paper.

The University's booklet "A Summary Report" explains the results of an assessment summit on diversity initiatives at Penn State and identifies ways in which racial problems could be avoided. There were three main purposes of this summit, which was held on April 13, 1992. First, the attendees, who were students and administrators alike, wished to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the present racial initiatives. Next, they aimed to "develop a collaborative framework of understanding... with regard to diversity issues" (p. 1). Finally, the group intended to improve the status of diversity at Penn State. The topics which they discussed were diversity's impact on different areas such as undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff/administration, academic issues, etc. The most pertinent of these topics to my focus is diversity and student issues. Among the strengths the participants found was the plethora of programs and organizations for minority students. Also, much improvement has been seen in the recruitment of underrepresented groups which was aided by the increased bestowal of scholarships and other forms of financial aid. On the other hand, the group recognized a deficit of role models

for minority students and the tendency to devalue students' efforts to promote diversity. Suggestions on how to improve this situation were many. The attendees wanted to "create a critical mass of diverse people to make a difference in minority representation" (p. 8). To provide more role models, they proposed hiring faculty and staff of diverse backgrounds. Though this publication initiates a start to solving racial inequities and university inadequacies in addressing such issues, the next piece gives a more detailed description of how they intended to execute this plan.

"A Framework to Foster Diversity: 1998-2003" is a diversity plan for Penn State that lays out several goals for these years. The underlying premise for these goals is to prepare students for the future by introducing them to different cultural perspectives, allowing them to live in a welcoming community, and developing their character. One goal is to improve diversity initiatives by extending their reach to not only minority and international groups but to domestic groups, as well. The next objective is to create initiatives to ensure a favorable climate for all. Another challenge was to equalize enrollment, retention, and graduation rates among groups, while also recruiting nontraditional students. The subsequent goal was to expand the faculty to include women, minorities, and other underrepresented groups. Finally, the last goal was to introduce programs that will allow people to adjust and work effectively in this diverse society. This framework expresses Penn State's dedication to the values of respect and freedom. The next source reveals that despite its good intentions, this framework did not bring about an end to racial discrimination.

Despite the university's efforts to improve the racial climate, there were many events that took place which led to black protests. Hoecker's thesis entitled "The Black and White Behind the Blue and White: A History of Black Protests at Penn State" details more recent incidents involving race. For example, on October 6, 2002, La Keisha Wolf, who was the Black Caucus President of the time, received hate mail. Six days later, three black students along with one black trustee were also delivered hate mail. Later in her thesis, Hoecker lists several similar situations involving race from 1968 and 2000. Even after thirty-two years, the same issues concerning diversity exist. Professors want black students to speak on behalf of their entire race, while fraternities bar people from entering their establishments because of the color of their skin. Students refuse to have a roommate of a different ethnicity and make racial jokes that alienate groups. The school must specifically address these issues in order to make any significant improvements in the racial climate. To do so, Penn State could refer to the accomplishments of other universities, which are detailed in the next source.

Universities across the nation struggle with similar diversity issues. The final source *Higher Education and the Color Line* describes three areas that need to be addressed in order to improve diversity on campus. It also details specific institutions of higher learning that have effectively attended to these issues. First, there must be programs to augment educational aspects of a college, paying special attention to minority students. Rice University has a program that allows underrepresented students to spend a summer researching with a scientist. Not only does this program teach research skills, it encourages students to attend graduate school and pursue further learning. Next, the school behavior must be reorganized to promote diversity. Mount Holyoke has a commitment to hiring a diverse faculty and trains staff members to be sensitive to racial differences. They also provide race relations dialogues to encourage understanding on campus. Finally, a diverse population must be recruited and retained. Stanford University uses the residence halls as a place to teach about diversity. They design several programs to teach about making the atmosphere pleasant for everyone. These programs involve all students and give them each an active role. These students are some of the most satisfied with the racial climate of their schools. As these areas were addressed successfully by several universities, Penn State can follow the examples to help students with diversity issues.

Racial issues are eminent in all aspects of education. The listed publications display the development of diversity initiatives at Penn State. Johnston's thesis traces the history of race relations at this university. The earlier problems and conflicts laid the foundation for improvements to be made. This publication also reveals the large disparity between majority and minority groups on the school's racial climate. Within this context, we see the necessity for the administration to host this summit. By assessing the situation, these participants were able to find areas that needed improvement. The third work addresses these areas by listing several goals and ways in which they may be achieved. These publications show that the university has made an effort to make progress in the area of race relations. However, Hoecker's thesis shows that there is still much more work to be done in this area. Problems still occasionally arise, but Penn State can create a more diverse, supportive, and understanding atmosphere by implementing some of the programs that have been successful in other universities. These documents collectively show that even with a greater number of minority students enrolled and a higher rate of retention, diversity still remains an issue. In my next essay, I hope to argue that diversity cannot be achieved by simply putting people of different backgrounds together in one place. Rather, diversity grows out of the understanding that can only come from interacting with these individuals.

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10/17/05

English 421

Lit Review first draft

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) groups have existed on college campuses for over forty years (Beemyn, 2003). Since then, ethnographers have studied the collegiate environment for LGBT students. My research of Penn State's LGBT community, therefore, is not unique. In order to understand the history of these studies and their results, I reviewed several journal articles from authors who have researched LGBT groups on university campuses. The history of these groups, how the groups affect students, and how other students' attitudes impact the members of the group will aid in my own ethnographic research of a similar community.

Beemyn (2003) researched how LGBT groups first formed on university campuses. While some LGBT groups existed previously such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, the first on campus group formed in 1965. Stephen Donaldson created the group at Columbia University "after his suitemates complained about living with someone who identified as bisexual," (p.207). The article goes into further detail of the struggles to form the Student Homophile League (which many LGBT groups, including Penn State's, were originally called). Collegiate groups were cited as important to the entire LGBT movement. In addition to Columbia's organization, Cornell University's Student Homophile League (SHL) made significant advancements to improve the conditions on campus for LGBT students. Donaldson made the small group at Cornell an official chapter of his own organization in 1968. The Cornell group eventually changed its name to the Gay Liberation Front as they transformed into a more confrontational group utilizing sit-ins, boycotts, and protests. Beemyn says that this group "in no small way... ..contributed to the development of a large-scale political movement," (p.223). I was surprised at how early in history this group was politically active, and I will ask one of the leaders of Penn State's campus about what was going on here during this time period.

With the student organizations firmly in place, Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker, and Robinson-Keilig (2004) aimed to assess life on campus for LGBT students. Some interesting findings included that freshman were considerably more negative towards the LGBT community than juniors or seniors. Also, members of the LGBT community showed greater interest in learning more about the history of the group than non-members. In these students which were designed to assess the climate, most LGBT students reported discrimination from other students solely based

on their sexual orientation. Interestingly, the faculty was not as concerned with these issues as were RAs and student affairs staff members. This is most likely because the faculty would not be in contact as personal as an RA or a student affairs staff member. I had never thought of this before and with recent accusations of faculty homophobia at Penn State, I think that this might apply here as well.

The same study found that conditions were clearly not ideal for LGBT students on campus. Stevens (2004) looked further into the development of LGBT (particularly homosexual men) identity on college campuses. The article covered the process of how environment can shape one's identity, particularly when that identity goes against the majority. Stevens noted that while all students go through this process, "gay students must also assess these environments for specific contextual issues concerning homophobia and heterosexism," (p.186). Stevens conducted a series of interviews with eleven gay men to understand their situations on campus. Most of them were found to go through a series of stages towards understanding their identities, but many of them explained how their support networks made the process easier. At Penn State, groups such as Allies create similar networks.

My own research studies these support networks within the LGBT. Evans and Herriott (2004) investigate these support networks through the ethnographic research very similar to my own. This research was conducted by four freshman students of the author. The four students (some gay and some straight) participated in LGBT group activities to learn more about these groups. Each student had entirely different experiences. One student, Annie, found that since she was unwilling to identify herself sexually, she was cast as an outsider. On the contrary, another student, Steven, became more open with his homosexuality. This article showed me that my own research will be greatly affected by my actions and attitude at these meetings.

While my actions will affect the research, I also need to be aware of how my actions, and those of other heterosexual students can affect LGBT students' emotions. Liang and Alimo (2005) study how heterosexual acceptance is important to LGBT students. The article noted that men typically are more biased towards LBGT students than women. The article presents a list of steps which need to be taken in order for outsiders to contact the group effectively. Some of these included that the outsiders need to see the LGBT students as equal, and that getting to know these students will support positive views of them. In particular, if an authority figure reinforces positive views, outsiders tend to follow. Liang's and Alimo's study tested to see whether or not white heterosexual students could impact LGBT relations. They found that when universities create

positive environments for both groups to interact, then the students tend to act positively towards each other.

Each article presented the findings of a professional research on LGBT student groups at universities. My own study of Penn State's LGBTA can benefit from seeing how other research was conducted. The studies all looked at slightly different aspects of how the LGBT groups function at universities and the factors which create positive and negative environments. Applying this point of view to Penn State, this research can help me evaluate the effectiveness of Penn State's support for the LGBT group compared to other campuses. More importantly, however, these articles provide insight into other students' experiences in similar groups at universities, which could help me understand the experiences of the LGBTA at Penn State.

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ENGL 421

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Literature Review Essay for Buddhism in PA

The research I am engaged in for my ethnographic essay, “Six Rings Sangha: A Zen Buddhist Subculture,” centers on one large aspect and smaller categories of that aspect. This large aspect is “Buddhism in America,” and the smaller aspects include: Zen Buddhism, demographics of Buddhism in America, and practitioner relationship with Buddhism. The subculture I chose of Because of this focus, the scholarly literature I chose to research incorporates one or more these aspects. Three deal with the largest aspect of Buddhism in America: *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America*, by Dr. Charles Prebish, *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia*, edited by Dr. Charles Prebish and Martin Baumann, and *The Future of American Buddhism*, by Rick Fields. One provides excellent background information on Zen Buddhism, the sect of Buddhism that my subculture practices: *The Eight Gates of Zen: Spiritual Training in an American Zen Monastery*, by Reverend John Daido Looi. And one gives a detailed look at demographics of Buddhism in America as well as the relationship practitioners have with their religion: *Heartwood: The First Generation of Theravada Buddhism in America*, by Wendy Cadge. All of these publications provide insight into the subculture of Six Rings Sangha, an American Zen Buddhist group.

The first publication, *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America*, by Dr. Charles Prebish, provides an excellent account of Buddhism’s migration to the United States and its subsequent development. Written in 1999, *Luminous Passage* outlines how Buddhism came to America, what it looked like then, and what it looks like at the time of publication. It focuses on aspects of community, or sangha, that developed in America, and also points out some changes that Buddhism underwent and continues to undergo. One of the most interesting things that the book deals with is the question “Who is a Buddhist?” This question is at the center of discussion on American Buddhism and also raises another issue the book deals with: diverse communities and their roles in America. This will be particularly useful in my research of Six Rings Sangha as I try to classify the group as a specific type of Buddhist group.

A similar publication that will actually expand on *Luminous Passage*, is *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia*, edited in 2002 by Dr. Prebish and Martin Baumann. The large collection of essays regarding aspects of American Buddhism has specific focuses that will

support my research. For instance, “Who is a Buddhist? Night Stand Buddhists and Other Creatures,” by Thomas Tweed, “Repackaging Zen for the West,” by David L. McMahan, and “The Challenge of Community,” by Ajahn Tiradhammo, all emphasize aspects of American Buddhism that can be seen in Six Rings Sangha. As a whole, *Westward Dharma* points out some issues about Buddhism in America: the ethnic split in temples and communities, the focus on meditation as a western phenomenon, and the challenges of inclusiveness in American Buddhist communities.

An interesting perspective that stems from the Buddhism in America scholarly works comes from Rick Fields in his article, “The Future of American Buddhism.” This article deals with what Buddhism in America looked like in 1987, what some of the argument about what American Buddhism should look like, and what Rick Fields thinks it will look like in the future. In spite of a witty humor, Fields makes some excellent points about the apparent ethnic division in American Buddhism, the pluralistic nature of Buddhism in America, and attitudes of American Buddhists. To conclude his article, he establishes eight “commonalities” that he feels all Buddhist sects in America will have in the future. These include: a practice based religion, primarily made up of lay Buddhists, strong influence of Feminism, increased dialogue between psychology and Buddhism, Buddhist voice advocating a just and compassionate society, a democratic structure, discussion of hierarchy, and an emphasis on life-affirming aspects of Buddhism.

More specifically, Rev. John Daido Looi’s book *The Eight Gates of Zen: Spiritual Training in an American Zen Monastery*, written in 1992, illustrates the complexity of the Zen tradition and its teachings in America. Daido begins the book by subtly describing the cultural differences in Japan and America so that one can understand the reason for certain aspects of American Zen training. He explains the difference of Zen training in America and Japan through the example of martial arts training: in Japan, a black belt was achieved because it became black from dirt after years of training—contrarily, the multi-stage colored belt system was invented primarily for a Western desire of progress. These themes of American Buddhism guide the reader throughout the rest of his book where he outlines the “eight gates” of Zen practice: Zazen (meditation), Zen Study, Academic Study, Liturgy, Right Action, Art Practice, Body Practice, Work Practice. These characteristics and specific gates of American Zen practice that Daido proposes can clearly be seen in Six Rings Sangha.

From a more demographic perspective, Wendy Cadge’s *Heartwood*, written in 2005, offers an ethnographic look at two Buddhist temples in America. One temple is ethnically Thai and located near Philadelphia while the other is mostly Caucasian and located near Boston. The book

outlines characteristics of each temple that give insight into Buddhist groups in America. For example, the Caucasian group was made of various smaller groups with little sense of community, but a common focus on meditation practice. In contrast, the Thai group had a strong sense of community but most members did not practice meditation on a regular basis, they participated in the religion through church like services and community events. Like Fields, Cadge also hypothesizes about the future of Buddhism in America. She chooses to focus on Buddhist sanghas' need to pass on tradition and teachings. With an aging population of teachers, it will become more and more difficult to transmit the tradition of a Buddhist group to future generations. This same issue is something that Rev. Dai-En Bennage, the teacher of Six Rings Sangha, deals with as well.

From the research I have completed on the subculture of Six Rings Sangha and these publications, a number of themes concerning Buddhist groups in America emerge. The largest theme deals with Buddhism's arrival, development, and future in America. Within this theme there are various questions that the scholarly publications deal with: "Who is a Buddhist," "What does a Buddhist community look like," "What does being a Zen Buddhist in America entail," and "How will the Buddhist tradition be passed on to future generations of Americans?" The literature that explores these questions and themes gives a lot of insight into the culture of Zen Buddhism in America and will greatly support my research regarding the smaller subculture of Six Rings Sangha.

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