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Ethnography paper

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The College Life

Many of us might have perceived college to be like a story we were told or maybe a book we read or a movie we saw. Some of us might not have had anything to think about before we started college because we were the first generation. We might change the thoughts we had after we have taken a few classes. Every day there after we will have our own stories and memories to carry with us to share with our children, siblings, and others. We also have to think about what college will be like for our children.

Before going off to college some people hear simple stories while others might hear a more detailed story. Either way they are all stories we put into perspective before we take that college route ourselves. A friend of mine said before she began college she heard it was fun, easy, and hard. What does this mean to a young person though? College can be fun because you are getting away from home and meeting new people. It can also be fun because you are now able to venture off and go to more parties because you are not under your parent's roof. One of the worst elements of college though is not having someone breathing down your back about assignments, which means you have to be self-motivated in order to, succeed.

On the other hand some people are given a more personal take and told not to get pregnant because they are away from home. A lot of women are even told not to go

places alone because college campuses are not safe. My sister said she was told not to go where her friends were going to school because college is hard enough. Like most of us are told you have to stay focused in order to succeed and once you lose that focus it's somewhat of a journey to get back. Some of us do not know what to think before we go to college because there is no one around that has that experience to let us know how it could be. Before I applied to any school my knowledge was very minimal. The college life is very different from high school and a lot of the stories I heard were from teachers and counselors.

Unfortunately we cannot leave out how the words of others effect a person's perception of college as well. If we here college is going to be hard we might go in saying we cannot do it or we might decide that we need to push ourselves harder to be successful. College is not meant to be easy and that might affect how well we will do. College can be hard because you have to learn to adjust to different things that you might not have done in high school. On the flip side of that some of us might not even be concerned with what others tell us because we are going to do what we want to regardless of what they say. Stories can either change the way we feel or have no affect at all. My sister stated that "I was more concerned with me and not what others thought because I was the only person to decide if I would be successful or not."(Interview 4/24/07) I was not concerned with they way I was told I needed to act because I knew I was the only person that would affect my grades.

As for books and movies influencing the imagination it all depends on the type of person you are. Higher Learning influenced me because it was about black people getting a higher education so they could be more successful in life. This movie did not

really influence a friend of mine because she went to a community college and like most movies and books they are about universities. My sister on the other hand said books and movies did not really influence her it was the teachers that got her imagination flowing. Some of these movies are a display of the softer side of college and some display the more serious side so they might or might not have an affect. Books and movies basically help us form an opinion about what college could possible be like. Some other books people might think about School Daze, With Honors, Boyz in the Hood, and Skulls. These are just some of the college based movies that might have influenced my generation. Each one has a different element of college involved. In Boyz in the Hood, the student that was going off to college was tragically killed before he made it there to continue his higher learning. The movie Skulls is about a fraternity and the secrecy of being involved in the society.

Then comes the aspect of understanding what college can be. Before entering college some believe it's just a place to earn a degree or it's the next step to "higher learning." College also seems to be than what it actually is because it is so different from high school. Some people might think college is a place for the "smart" kids that know what they want to be in life. For a lot of black people like my self, college is a way to get out of the ghetto and continue their education. My sister said for her college was a way to learn more about her culture and heritage, something that's not taught much in high school. These thoughts can also influence how a person feels after being in college. My sister said college was different for her because she never had to study before and she had to find out what studying meant because she got her first D in a class. Note taking was a very different part of school because she did not need those skills in high school to do

well. I felt the same way when I started college because I never really needed to utilize my time to study I did well on tests without studying.

After being in college you do not really rely on stories that you hear because you have your own experiences to look back on. For some people it's not as overwhelming as they heard it would be. We also change our opinions because we know that each professor will have different rules and expectations that follow the college guidelines. Although, it does not seem as though the professors want to help they are always willing to help but it is up to us to take the initiative and ask for help. Some things are more challenging for some more than others.

Regardless of how things go we all take some kind of memories with us and some are good, some are bad. One of the best memories that my sister had about college was learning about African American history and culture. She learned that black people were the first to do a lot of things but we do not learn that much in the normal high school curriculum. She also said she learned about Malcolm X for the first time. A lot of things inspired my sister in ways she just can't explain. Many of us might have similar experiences. One bad memory she said was that since she came from an all black neighborhood she had a culture shock because she had to learn how to adjust to other cultures. My sister also said she had to make herself into a different person in order to adjust in the classroom.

So, how can college be different for each person? Some think college can be different because it's a way to get away from family. This is because family can be stressful sometimes and school might be that escape from it all. College can also be different because you are venturing out on your own and have to learn how to make new

friends and soon realize that your family is not there to protect you all the time any more. College might also be different because you are giving limits to what you can and cannot do. For instance, some professors have an absent policy that only allows you to have so many unexcused absences without failing you in the course.

Unfortunately, college might not be the same for younger siblings and your children. My sister is not worried about college for her son because he already knows what he wants to major in and he is elementary school. Her concerns are more about her daughter because she thinks she will have more of a party attitude while her son has good social and academic skills. School will obviously be different for the younger generations because technology is advancing more and more everyday. Since, technology is advancing it will also be dangerous because it will be so advanced and easier for the government to invade our private lives. College will have a theme more like the Jetson's in the future because of all the technological advances.

Ultimately, we all carry stories with us before we enter college and once we leave college. We ourselves determine how successful we can and will be. In the future the world will be a better place for the younger generations but there will also be some common issues amongst the people. Stories about college help us shape how we think about some things and that's what they are meant to do. These stories might not influence our every thought but they will make us think about different things some time whether they are good or bad. College is meant to be a step to become better and achieve more in life and the education is needed to advance in the world. Knowledge is the key to success and if you do not get insight you might fall short in your path.