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Celebrating Student Scholars: An Introduction

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Celebrating Student Scholars: An Introduction

Maureen A. Scully and Esther Kingston-Mann, Guest Co-Editors

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Abstract: The essays in this issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* have received awards in The Kingston-Mann Student Achievement Awards for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Scholarship. Written by undergraduate students who address deeply urgent and important issues, each essay possesses a clear, distinctive voice. The authors do not turn away from difficult questions and do not waffle, even when they are dealing with questions and data that are ambiguous or contradictory. Although faculty may be accustomed to academic articles rife with qualifiers, indirect points, jargon, and a limited concern for relevance, the essays included here are the works of engaged researchers. They frequently include a call to action, sometimes persuasive for its subtle, measured tone. In this issue, students invite us to consider some traditional merits of scholarly work that have been lost, such as clear and jargon-free writing. They also point the way to new kinds of merit, such as using previously neglected information sources, paying attention to silenced or marginalized voices and questions, and raising issues of social justice. This introduction has three parts. First, we introduce the process by which we solicited and judged these award winning articles by undergraduate scholars. Second, we provide an overview of the essays' themes and some of the 'aha' moments that occurred when we recognized how much we were learning from the students. Third, we discuss how the students' research achievements might affect their role as engaged members of academia and the influence they might exert upon a much wider audience in an increasingly diverse civic sphere.

Maureen A. Scully, is Assistant Professor in the College of Management at UMass Boston. She holds a Ph.D. in organizational behavior and an M.A. in sociology from Stanford University. Her areas of expertise include organizational change efforts from the grassroots, beliefs about inequality and meritocracy in the workplace, and how diverse employees mobilize jointly to address inequality and improve the workplace. Professor Scully has been on the faculty at the MIT Sloan School of Management and at the Center for Gender in Organizations at the Simmons School of Management. She is a co-author of a textbook widely used in MBA programs, *Managing for the Future: Organizational Behavior and Processes*. In 2007 she co-authored (with David Levy) "The institutional entrepreneur as Modern Prince: The strategic face of power in contested fields" in *Organization Studies*, and (with Brenda Lautsch) "Restructuring time: Implications of work-hours reductions for the working class" in *Human Relations*. **Esther Kingston-Mann** is a Distinguished Professor of History at UMass Boston. She holds a Ph.D. from John Hopkins University, is a former director of UMass Boston's Center for the Improvement of Teaching (CIT), and original founder of The New England Center for Inclusive Teaching. Her publications include: *A Diversity Research Initiative: How Students Become Researchers, Change Agents, and Members of a Research Community* (Boston, 1999); *Achieving Against the Odds: How Academics Become Teachers of Diverse Students*, (Temple, 2003, co-edited with Tim Sieber), "Teaching, Learning, Diversity: Just Don't Call It Epistemology!" (*The Discourse of Sociological Practice*, 2004), and *In Search of the West: Culture, Economics and Problems of Russian Development* (Princeton, 1999). Professor Kingston-Mann teaches courses in Russian history, modern Europe, and the Cold War. Her current research focuses on the comparative history of property rights, with a particular emphasis on gender issues.

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I. THE KINGSTON-MANN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SCHOLARSHIP

This competition for undergraduate students recognizes and honors student achievements in scholarship that focuses on questions of diversity and inclusion.¹ The awards committee seeks submissions of work that (1) applies a gender, race, culture/ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic class, age, disability, or sexual orientation analysis to research in any discipline, or (2) focuses on the contributions of women and men of diverse backgrounds to society, history, culture, or thought in any area of study. Interdisciplinary approaches, and analyses that consider the intersection of multiple dimensions of diversity, are particularly encouraged. The awards committee is composed of faculty members from eight colleges and universities² in the New England region whose student population includes many non-traditional, not highly privileged, first generation college students.

Before the awards program was created, there was an abundance of awards that recognized students for leadership, involvement in campus or community life, athleticism, or high grades across their classes. But few reward students for their original research and acknowledge them as emerging practitioners of the kind of work that faculty do. This award

¹ This program gratefully acknowledges support from the Ford Foundation, the Chancellor's office at UMass Boston, and generous donations from the other participating campuses.

² Emmanuel College, Lesley University, Massasoit Community College, Rhode Island College, University of Massachusetts Boston, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, University of Massachusetts Lowell, University of New Hampshire

was created to celebrate student scholars, and specifically to recognize how the diversity of our students helps them contribute perceptible scholarship on diversity and inclusion. In addition, the regional character of this project permits student achievement to be recognized in a cross-institution process, and introduces their work to students and faculty beyond their classroom, their field, and their campus. The Kingston-Mann awards explicitly celebrate students as scholars, and welcome them into a process of generating and disseminating the new ideas that nourish higher education. In this process, students who may have experienced a sense of marginality within the university community can begin to see that their work may contribute to the university's core commitment to scholarship.

The award focuses specifically on diversity/inclusion scholarship. Our call for submissions explicitly defines some elements of inclusive scholarship, and include an appendix and a bibliography.³ Some of the approaches to inclusive scholarship that we emphasize include:

- Recovery and examination of the contributions of people of color, women, people with disabilities, lesbians and gay men, and/or working class people to a field, period of history, social movement, cultural arena; and/or
- Analysis of the operation of gender, race/ethnicity, religion, class, age, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age in shaping the issue, person, text, practices, or social/cultural phenomenon under consideration. In the best

work, these issues are understood as interrelated and interdependent and are analyzed together rather than separately.

Since successful papers frequently raise provocative questions, we suggest that students may

- Choose a text, theory, or primary source central to the field and examine its representation of, or assumptions about gender, race, ethnicity/culture, religion, class, sexual orientation, age, and/or disability;
- Choose a prominent or representative person in the field and examine some aspect of her or his life and or work from an inclusive perspective;
- Examine the language or key term(s) of a field and consider the underlying assumptions about gender, race, ethnicity/culture, religion, class, sexual orientation, age, and/or disability that are built into or implied by that language or term. Reflect upon how we might view the issues differently by taking an inclusive perspective.

For members of the awards committee, the judging process is quite challenging. It turns out to be difficult to select 3 winners (and 3-5 honorable mentions) from a set of 25-35 outstanding papers that come from eight very different academic institutions. Committee members engage in lively debates about the papers, and sometimes wish students could hear the stimulating and enlightening discussions that their work generates. This sentiment is reflected in the notification letter sent to the award winners, which states "Your work makes a valu-

³ For information about the call for submission, the awards process, and past winners, see our website: <http://www.km-awards.umb.edu>.

able contribution to scholarship that expands our understanding of ideas and experiences that have not always been acknowledged or recognized by traditional disciplines. We enjoyed the opportunity to read and learn from your submission.”

At this point, the awards program has continued for four years (2005-2008). Student contributors to this issue of *Human Architecture* were responders to our call for papers to all of our previous winners. We are delighted with the range of disciplines and topics their works represent. We miss the papers that are not included in this volume, because authors have variously moved abroad, become engaged in graduate studies in another state, or are busy encouraging their own children to prepare for college and the surprisingly exciting learning it holds (especially among our older students). Some students may have decided that their topics, and the candid standpoint from which they were addressed, were too personal to share widely in print.

In these pages, we celebrate student scholars as representatives of how diversity and excellence are allies rather than enemies. Each year, we hold a festive banquet to present the awards to students in the presence of friends, families, faculty advisors, and administrators from their own campuses. Students have greatly appreciated the comments made by awards committee members about what was original and inspiring in each essay.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF THE ESSAYS' THEMES

The essays in this special issue share a concern for occasions past and present when human possibility is thwarted, tal-

ent unrecognized, and grave injustice perpetuated. Their work holds out the hope that myths can be busted, cycles broken, and dreams pursued.

In “Nobody’s Mother and Nobody’s Wife: Reconstructing Archetypes and Sexuality in Sandra Cisneros’ ‘Never Marry a Mexican,’” Laura Paz seeks to “bridge the literary gap between cultures,” of Mexicans and others, by explaining the archetypes of womanhood (good mother, bad mother, traitorous woman) that she shows are engrained in Mexican culture. Through the lens of Cisneros’s work, she questions these archetypes and exposes their role in constraining women’s actions and ideas. She tells the story of La Malinche, in the time of Cortes, beginning with an exploration of the layers of culture and meaning in the very name La Malinche and then tracing her shadows in Cisneros’s story. According to Paz, “What Cisneros is trying to challenge is how a woman in the Mexican culture measures herself by the standards her masculine society has created, and how no matter how hard she tries to escape it, she unconsciously measures herself against those ideals as well.”

In “Gretchens and the German Garrison,” Jaclyn Foster considers the many roles that women played, or were consigned to during the rise of Nazism in Germany. She demonstrates that women’s activities spanned many categories, from followers to resisters, and describes how women’s role as mother was appropriated by “the Nazi obsession with genetics and pure Aryan blood.” Woven into her account is the nagging question of why historians have neglected to account for the many roles of women at this time. She finds contradictions in their roles—for example, in the Hitler groups that perpetuated the idea

of women's contentment at home even as they drew women out of their homes for meetings.

In "Rape Warfare and International Humanitarian Law," Eugenia Trabucchi argues that rape warfare is often overlooked as an unfortunate byproduct of war, when in fact it is often part of a purposive strategy for demoralizing and annihilating the enemy. She forces us to pay attention to rape warfare and to take a hard, sobering look at its forms, its uses, and most important, its victims. She details the suffering of raped women, focusing on their abandonment and stigmatization, the fate of children they bear as a result of rape, the humiliation of the men whose honor was built on protecting "their" women, and the devastating toll such strategies inflict on entire societies. Trabucchi tells these stories to call attention to rape warfare and moves the reader with a careful, unpolemical, and measured tone that is both eloquent and effective.

All three of these essays consider how the defining and enacting of gender—in its intersection with multiple identities of race, ethnicity, class, and nationality—create subtle limitations, confusing choices, and terrible tragedies for women. Each also holds a kernel of hope for how the human spirit can resist limitation, expose contradictions, open a door to emancipation, and survive to rebuild a community.

The next two articles offer hopeful accounts of what happens when alternative possibilities emerge and even energize formerly marginalized members of society.

In "'Without Ever Leaving the Ground, She Could Fly:' Ecofeminism and Soul Fulfillment in Toni Morrison's *Pilate*," Jessica Gama explores the possibility that eco-feminism can halt the op-

pression both of women and of nature. She considers the role of Pilate in Toni Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon* as "a model of how to live a fulfilling life outside of capitalism's grip," particularly in contrast to the greed that elsewhere depletes resources and relationships. She draws on Morrison's writings to demonstrate that, in the "minor heroines" around us who reject convention, we might see the wider benefits of living simply and authentically.

In "Goodridge et al. v. Department of Public Health et al.: The Role of Litigation in the Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage," Jose Luiz Prado Filho examines how a court decision has ramifications beyond legal precedent and can mobilize a community. He demonstrates how the "Goodridge" decision increased the awareness of rights among gays and lesbians, increasing their sense of legitimate standing and full participation in the community and its rituals. Gay rights activists innovated new strategies. The general public also increased its awareness and understanding of gay rights issues. Through surveys and moving quotes from individuals, Prado Filho creates a portrait of how in practice, the cause of inclusivity can be advanced.

In these two preceding essays, individuals and social movements overcome the odds to create alternative visions for what society could look like. Why is such change so hard to accomplish? The next two essays remind us how deeply the past, our own and that of our ancestors, can constrain possibility—but also inspire the quest for change.

In "Inescapable Past," Marie Nelson's literary analysis of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* demonstrates the painful collision of Indian and Western cultures. Through carefully woven examples from the text, she shows that "indi-

viduals are usually a carbon copy of their environment, history, and family, even though this is often unconscious." Old prejudices live on and gradually warp relationships, for example, creating disturbing preferences among middle class Indians for all things American. Nonetheless, the novel and Nelson's reading of it end on a note of hope for escaping the limits of the past in moments of clarity, "as when fog clears to reveal golden mountain peaks" (Desai).

In "Olaudah Equiano: Facts About His People and Place of Birth," Friday Onyeoziri revisits the remarkable 1789 autobiography by Equiano, long considered the first account in the first person of the life of a slave and "the paradigm of the slave narrative, a new genre." He asks why critics doubt the veracity of Equiano's claims to have been born in the Ibo lands of Nigeria. He addresses these critics, but not by exposing the racism that might underlie an attempt to diminish or retell Equiano's past. Instead, he examines how closely Equiano's account resembles the cultures and traditions of the Igbo tribe. Onyeoziri draws on an unlikely source by turning to research on cognition—studies that document how early in life people can form memories and how late into their lives these memories will last—in order to restore the power of Equiano's story of remarkable resilience in the face of slavery.

We leave these two essays wondering how individuals can escape the bonds of the past, and also why certain talents and cultural contributions are routinely overlooked or diminished. The next two essays explore pathways to success in education and careers—and what it takes to support opportunities for those usually barred from these paths.

In "Tutoring Down the Rabbit Hole: The Inner-City Classroom, and What I

Found There," Manda Lynne Kindle opens with a confession of trepidation on first entering an inner-city classroom, "terrified of saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, of overstepping my bounds or—worse—circumventing them entirely." She tells the story of how she came to appreciate the oral tradition that students (even those labeled as low achievers) brought to the classroom. Kindle worries that her students will be stuck in a cycle of being devalued and unmotivated. She raises a call to validate their urban culture, the insights they gain from their experiences, and their wish for community. She sees the sparks of originality that fly when these are honored. Kindle appeals as well to teachers to learn from them and to provide them the learning environment in which they can develop skills for success.

In "The Experiences of Women in Computer Science: The Importance of Awareness and Communication," Mia L. Parviainen addresses the enduring puzzle of why so few women are enrolled in computer science programs. On the basis of 15 interviews with women in computer science, she investigates the factors that first interested them in computer science, and later helped them stay the course. According to Parviainen's evidence, parents and early teachers helped create the awareness that a technical career was possible—and even that "joining the geek squad" could be interesting and "cool." Although communication from faculty and fellow students may all too often reinforces stereotypes or sets up obstacles (such as beliefs about who has the right experience to do research), in some instances, it can open up a sense of possibility for women. These factors do not form a neat model, instead, they comprise a "tangled web" that women encounter and negotiate.

These last two essays take us to the contemporary world of work and leave us to wonder how the ideas of these student scholars may help reshape the ways diverse groups of people study, work, shape the polity, and create new environments together. All these essays by student scholars reflect a serious engagement with the dynamics of oppression and emancipation, constraint and possibility. Their work suggests that diversity and inclusion scholarship not only documents the legacy of obstacles, but also points the way toward learning across differences in the quest for peace, healing, justice, meaningful lives, opportunity, and shared prosperity.

III. STUDENT SCHOLARS IN THE INCREASINGLY DIVERSE WORLDS OF WORK AND CIVIC LIFE

Faculty members engaged in inclusive teaching know that we need to educate students for a diverse world. The scholarship of our award winners clearly show us how they absorb these lessons and advance our thinking. Students from diverse backgrounds ask different questions, from a different angle and standpoint. On a broader level, providing students with a deep appreciation of research and the products of research is essential for a healthy economy, democracy, and society. In an increasingly diverse global economy, students who research such topics are better equipped to negotiate the opportunities before them, and some will become courageous agents of change.

Having closely examined the wide range of topics, disciplines, and time periods evidenced in these essays, it is worth considering where our students go next. Some may join academia; others

will shape public policy, or improve public health, or manage diverse workforces. Research on diversity shows that it best enhances learning and economic effectiveness when it is part of the core work of an organization, rather than being relegated to the margins, or emphasized in official statements on the virtues of tolerance. In the workplace, economic performance will be enhanced not simply by having diverse employees working side by side, but by understanding how they can best interact, learn from each other, rethink the work at hand, and create new synergies.

As our students go forward to the worlds of work and civic life, their deep understanding of diversity is a resource for creating more inclusive institutions. They have become producers rather than consumers of knowledge. The awards program inspires student excellence—and allows students to show us new meanings of what excellence can be.

APPENDIX: SOME NOTES ON INCLUSIVE THINKING AND WRITING—APPROACHES TO INCLUSIVE SCHOLARSHIP

In this section, we have highlighted some characteristics of inclusive approaches to thinking and writing. Not every scholar would necessarily agree with each and every point. Some would include additional points; others would place a different emphasis on the points raised.⁴

1. ASSERTS THE CENTRALITY OF MULTICULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS to history, society, and cul-

⁴ For a deeper understanding of the goals and methods of inclusive scholarship, refer to the bibliography of books and essays, that follow this section.

- ture. It seeks to recover the lost or unacknowledged work and thought of historically marginalized peoples in all areas of human endeavor. Such scholarship reveals contributions to the public and so-called 'private' spheres in every historical period; it frequently shows that when previously ignored contributions are taken into account, traditional thinking about a particular period must be revised. (See bibliography, Anne Fausto-Sterling and Patricia Hill Collins.)
2. **BEGINS WITH AN AWARENESS THAT MUCH PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP HAS BEEN NARROWLY FOCUSED.** In contrast to a white, male, Eurocentric, heterosexist, and elite view of 'reality,' it seeks to uncover and examine the way that traditional perspectives have operated within a discipline or across disciplines. Multicultural research projects involve showing how particular groups, lifestyles, methodologies, categories, practices, metaphors, symbols, or art forms have been devalued or rendered invisible by the narrowness and exclusivity of traditional fields. (See bibliography, Charlotte Bunch, Paul Gilroy, and Minh Nguyen.)
 3. **DOES NOT TREAT THE EXPERIENCE OR PERSPECTIVE OF ANY ONE GROUP AS IF IT WERE UNIVERSAL.** It does not take the experience of white, European American, middle-class, heterosexual, abled men or women as the norm. It suggests that men and women from different races, socio-economic classes, and other statuses might view and experience the world in different ways. Inclusive scholarship is careful to reflect a recognition of difference and diversity in the way it structures topics and formulates questions and answers. (See bibliography, Elizabeth Minnich, Ronald Takaki, and Janet Zandy.)
 4. **IS DEFINED AS MUCH BY THE KINDS OF QUESTIONS IT ASKS AS BY THE WAYS IN WHICH THOSE QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED.** It seeks to find new ways of thinking about people and the relations among them and new ways of thinking about nature and history by asking new and different questions that reflect an awareness of the preceding three points. (See bibliography, Eduardo Galeano, bell hooks)
 5. **GENERATES NEW MODELS AND PARADIGMS** as the diverse voices it includes in its scholarship demand new starting points both for description and analysis. (See bibliography, Caroline Hau, Paula Moya.)
 6. **TENDS TO BE INTERDISCIPLINARY** in its approach. This means that scholars do not allow traditional separations among the so-called 'academic disciplines' to get in the way of developing richer and more comprehensive explorations of critical issues or questions. (See bibliography Gloria Anzaldúa and Chandra Talpade Mohanty.)

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POSTSCRIPT:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS (2007-8)

ESTHER KINGSTON-MANN
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS
FOR EXCELLENCE IN DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION SCHOLARSHIP

- Gerri August, Department of Education, Rhode Island College
- Arlene Dallalfar, Department of Sociology, Lesley University
- Joyce Gibson, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Massachusetts Lowell
- Gerald Janey, Department of Physics, Massasoit Community College
- Marjorie Jones, Department of Education, Lesley University
- Esther Kingston-Mann, History/American Studies Departments, University of Massachusetts Boston
- Carolyn Panofsky, Educational Studies, Rhode Island College
- Robin Robinson, Sociology/Anthropology Department, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
- Arlyn Sanchez Silva, Department of Foreign Languages, Emmanuel College
- Maureen Scully, College of Management, University of Massachusetts Boston
- Mohammad Tamdgidi, Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts Boston
- Laura Brooks, Program Assistant, University of Massachusetts Boston



L to R: Maureen Scully, Eugenia Trabucchi, Jessica Gama, Mia Parviainen, Chancellor Motley, Esther Kingston-Mann, Keynote Speaker Hubie Jones, Friday Onyeoziri, Lydia Ginnell, Marie Nelson



L to R: Carolyn Panofsky, Marjorie Jones, Joyce Gibson, Maureen Scully, Gerry Janey, Esther Kingston-Mann, Arlene Dallalfar, Robin Robinson

Photos from the
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at UMass Boston, November 2007