EMU McNair Challenger

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In this issue, Dr. Chalice Randazzo shares her thoughts about how race and gender on resumes and other professional documents are “read” by potential employers. Michelle Lietz writes about American Indian identity and intersectional issues in academia, and Dr. Harriet Lindsay discusses women in STEM. Share our excitement about Undergraduate Symposium ’16, and look at our seniors’ graduate school admissions!

Names, Resumés, and Discrimination

Dr. Chalice Randazzo, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Written Communication

I was asked to write this article because of my experience with resumes: I’ve hired people, I teach resume writing in my classes, and I have been studying resumes for several years. My research considers how resume writers navigate the complicated relationship between identity and cultural expectations of U.S. resumes. For this article, I hope to share a piece of what I have found—and provide some advice—about names and discrimination in U.S. resumes.

What’s your name? What does it mean to you? What does it mean to others? Thanks to stereotypes that we acquire over our lifetimes, names can signal identity markers such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, geographical location, socioeconomic class, etc. Depending on a person’s experience with these stereotypes, the association between a name and one of these groups can lead to prejudices that might manifest as discrimination. When we make policy or placement decisions based on someone’s name, it is because of learned—and often incorrect—prejudices. The U.S. hiring system, ostensibly, mitigates discrimination by not requiring applicants to report information that might be used to discriminate against them (e.g., age, race, religion, gender, or marital status). But many of these identity markers are still connected to a piece of information we are all required to provide: our names. Several studies have explored whether employers might discriminate against an applicant because of the applicant’s name. The most well-known of these “name studies” is Bertrand and Mullainathan’s 2003 study from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They [Bertrand and Mullainathan] created fake resumes with two variables:

1. The quality of the resume: “high” (more experience, better certification) and “low”;
2. The applicant’s name: “White-sounding” (they used “Emily Walsh” or “Greg Baker”) and “African American-sounding” (their examples were “Lakisha Washington” or “Jamal Jones”).

They mailed four resumes (two of high quality with different names, and two of low quality with different names) to real job ads: all told, they sent 5,000 resumes to “1300 employment ads in the sales, administrative support, clerical and customer services job categories” in the Boston and Chicago areas (2). Then they counted the number of “callbacks” (when an employer called to set up an interview) each resume received. They found that resumes with “White-sounding” names received 50% more callbacks than resumes with “African American-sounding” names, even when the resumes were of equal quality.

The MIT study has been replicated with other ethnicities, including comparing “White-sounding” names with “Hispanic-sounding” and “Asian-sounding” names in 2006 (King et al.) and “Muslim-sounding” names in 2009 and 2011 (Park et al.; Widner and Chicoine). Although some of their methods are problematic (King et al., for example, did not use professionals to assess the resumes), they all found that “White” names were an advantage over more ethnic-sounding names. The name studies are still being replicated with some variations: e.g., ethnicity of the names, quality of the resumes, types of jobs applied to, and type of people evaluating the resumes. On a social level, these studies’ results have important implications: in order to obtain the same number of callbacks, applicants with minority-sounding names might have to apply to more jobs than applicants with “White-sounding” names. Considering that every application takes time to put together, it can result in a real disadvantage for minority applicants. In terms of advantage for “White-sounding” names, Bertrand and Mullainathan put it this way: (continued on page 2)
Names, Resumes, Discrimination, cont.} “Based on our estimates, a White name yields as many more callbacks as an additional eight years of experience” (3). That is why anti-discrimination education—and larger social acknowledgement and discussion of racial inequality—is extremely important.

On an individual level, though, you might not experience this discrepancy. In fact, some employers are actively recruiting minority applicants (for reasons I explore in the next section). As with all writing situations, it depends on your audience.

So, What To Do? My advice: Use your real name, depending on your comfort level. I still encourage you (as I would any of my students) to use your full, real name. When it comes to your last name, of course, there are legal reasons for this: if you use a false name on your application materials, you could be fired (or worse)! But there are two other, better reasons. Most importantly, you don’t want to work for an employer that has a problem with your race or ethnicity. Second, an increasing number of employers are realizing that racial diversity helps their organization. Managerial studies have argued for over 25 years that well-fostered diversity can help a team’s productivity and creativity. Employers are learning the value—monetary and social—of diversity, meaning your ethnicity will be an advantage.

Even after providing these reasons, I know that some students are more comfortable going by a nickname or using a different, legally given last name. If you’re very concerned about discrimination, or you’re just more comfortable using a different name, and you have the legal option to decide what’s best for you.

EMU McNair in Maryland!

Eighteen EMU McNair Scholars attended the University of Maryland’s conference, “Creating a Global Impact: Scholarship, Leadership and Excellence in the 21st Century” from March 10-13. Our scholars gave individual research presentations, attended a graduate school fair of over 100 doctoral institutions, and had the opportunity to interact with 250 McNair participants from across the country.

Scholars attended workshops on finding funding opportunities for graduate school, strategies for mastering the GRE, and finding mentors at the graduate level. A panel of academic deans from Cornell University, Howard University and the University of Maryland offered insight on the successful completion of doctoral studies.

Keynote speakers included Dr. David Wall Rice from Morehouse College and Dr. Debra Joy Perez, Vice President for Research, Evaluation and Learning at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Both encouraged the students to remain true to their mission to earn doctoral degrees, and to dedicate their careers to giving back to their communities.

The EMU McNair Scholars were also privileged to meet Ms. Carmen Gordon, our Program Officer from the Department of Education in Washington. Ms. Gordon spoke with our students about their individual research and listened to the poster presentations by our STEM students. Ms. Gordon is pictured 3rd from the right, middle row.

The Native Voice in Academia
Michelle Lietz, Graduate Student, English Literature

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending a lecture by Dr. Robin Kimmerer, a well-known indigenous professor in the field of Environmental and Forest Biology. While I listened to her speak, I remembered the ways in which we are all connected; that language matters in the pursuit of scientific knowledge, that history always has a role in literature, and that the natural world is always an important consideration in the functions of politics.

However, the best advice I received while attending her lecture was the simple reminder of how important it is to find your people, wherever you go. This can be a very difficult thing to do in academia, especially for marginalized populations. I believe indigenous scholars and professionals feel the need to remind the younger generations of these important considerations because only 4% of Native Americans are currently pursuing higher education past a bachelor degree. And for Native students, the pursuit of education is so often complicated by the marginalization of our voices in every aspect of academia.

It becomes difficult to remember where we fit, when so much of our time and energy is spent combatting the realities of a settler-colonial existence. Of all the statistics we read these days—suicide, rape, incarceration, police brutality, poverty—Native Americans top the charts in every category. However, we are not the only ones affected by these daily realities, and the people who can understand at least part of why these things really matter are indispensable.

In the end, “finding your people” tends to translate into a question of intersectionality. While I believe it is important to have people within your own field of study, sometimes the people who best understand us, and end up helping us overcome the most trying moments of our lives, are the people we find from other departments who think differently than we do, but share something of our worldviews. Most importantly, I believe it is essential to listen to the advice and wisdom of our Native women: they have often reminded me of the wisdom to be found in understanding others, and the importance of solidarity in all aspects of life.
A Very Nice Fluke

Dr. Harriet Lindsay, Ph.D., Professor of Chemistry, talks to Thomas Passwater

Many students who walk through the Mark Jefferson Science Complex know that EMU’s chemistry department is committed to excellence in research and mentorship. In fact, the EMU Department of Chemistry is a large department, making mentorship opportunities readily available for students.

Students may not know how unique this department is. EMU’s chemistry faculty are almost 50% female. This large percentage of female faculty matters both to students and to the department. No one is more aware of this than Dr. Harriet Lindsay, Professor of Organic Chemistry, who describes this phenomenon as a “very nice fluke.” Knowing that support for female students entering STEM fields is important, she is pleased to see this development within the Department of Chemistry. Working in this department is a large shift for Dr. Lindsay. During her graduate work at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, she was the only female graduate student in the sciences at her university. “It made me learn to eat spicy food,” she jokes.

Dr. Lindsay notes, however, that it is important to consider that the subdisciplines in chemistry have their own cultures. While we may be seeing a rise in female faculty members in certain subdisciplines, women may not be as well represented in others. She cites biochemistry and the life sciences in particular as demonstrative of this possible change. “Organic chemistry has this contest, it seems,” Dr. Lindsay says, “where they think time-on-task equates accomplishment.” While she does comment that time-on-task does often lead to accomplishment, she states that this also creates expectations that may limit who enters the field. That competitive culture may come from, Dr. Lindsay suggests, the demand in many institutions for research grants to pull in funding.

The expectation that researchers will put in more and more hours because of the assumption that time-on-task equals accomplishment, Dr. Lindsay says that this is a difficult field for women wanting families to enter. However, she also observes that more women seem to “embrace the suck” of this high pressure demand in STEM fields.

However, there is still a lot of progress to make, particularly in representation for people of color in STEM. Dr. Lindsay maintains that, though the number of women in STEM may be rising, it’s not uncommon for departments to have only one person of color among their faculty. “Part of that may be the result of peer groups,” says Dr. Lindsay. While governing bodies within STEM have peer groups for women, “there are few peer groups for people of color in the sciences.” She adds that “there are people thinking about that, because ultimately, representation and visibility for underrepresented groups matters.” (cont. on page 4)

It’s Symposium Season!

The 2016 EMU Undergraduate Research Symposium will take place on April 1, and EMU McNair will be there in force. Exceeding our record of 28 presentations in 2015, this year our scholars will be involved in 29 individual and team presentations. We are proud of our achievements both in developing research proposals, working in research labs, and writing papers on academically relevant and challenging topics.

Our team presenters include:

Kyana Dixie, Kyla Sherman, Iris Vincent, Faith Williams, “Analysis of Gender Specific Toys on Complexity of Play”


Brandie Bentley, Alyssia Hence, Demarco Johnson, Rebecca Luth, Yeliani Valdez, “A Forgotten Group of Vulnerable Survivors: Intimate Partner Violence and its Gender-Based Effects”

Deborah Munganga, Nyambura Njee, Victoria Fisher “They’re Takin’ Our Jobs: Undocumented Workers and the U.S. Workforce”

Individual presenters include:

Shahana Chumki, “Analysis of Gene Conversion Tracts in Saccharomyces cerevisiae”

Brandie Bentley, “An Examination of Minority Mental Health in the Juvenile Justice System”

Victoria Fisher, “A Study of How Globalization Affects Social, Environmental, and Governance CSR Reporting”

Mariah Brito, “Selection of Aptamers for Microcystin-LR with Capillary Electrophoresis”

Mikael Dunn, “Analysis of Gene Conversion Tracts in Saccharomyces cerevisiae”

Allante Moon, “An Analysis of the Elderly and Drug Abuse”

Iris Vincent, “Pornography: Is Empowerment Possible in Oppressive Structures?”

Deborah Munganga, “Modernizing the Congo”

Jesse Smith, “Production of Atg11CC2-3 by Ligation Independent Cloning for Characterization of the Atg11 Complex”
(A Very Nice Fluke, continued)

Dr. Lindsay suggests that good mentorship, particularly for women and people of color, is invaluable. “I think students respond when they see faculty around that look like them.” When choosing mentors, Dr. Lindsay says, “Find a good mentor and stick with that person.” She also encourages students to “find a mentor they can communicate with about both academic and personal issues.”

I’ve Been Admitted to Grad School! What Now?

This year, the entire McNair senior cohort has been admitted to one or more graduate programs! The National Day of Acceptance is April 15, and many of our Scholars are struggling to decide which program to attend. Our advice is to take several steps before accepting that all-important offer:

- Examine your research and career goals and try to determine which graduate program is the best “fit” for your future.
- Read each program’s description. Look carefully at the faculty’s list of publications. Read the faculty research and think about who might be a good mentor for you.
- Compare offers of funding, graduate and teaching assistantships, the length of funding, and the possibility of applying for scholarships at the institution.
- Research the cost of living in the university community. You can google “graduate student cost of living in...” to read data provided by the institution, and blogs written by actual students.
- Think about whether you wish to live near campus, where housing is typically more expensive, or commute—in which case you’ll need good public transportation or a reliable car.
- Contact current graduate students through the university’s Graduate Student Association (GSA), department grad student groups, Facebook, or by asking faculty to provide you with student names.
- Ask questions. Speak to department heads, professors, admissions representatives and students.
- VISIT. Visiting a campus is always the best way to get some sense of the atmosphere between students and faculty.
- Speak with your mentor and your McNair team!
- Allow yourself to breathe. You’ve worked very, very hard and deserve to celebrate!

Congratulations again! **We are very proud of you!**

Graduate School Admissions!

Rasheed Atwater (Dr. Anna Ferreira, mentor): Master’s Program in History at Eastern Michigan University

Kayla Boyd (Dr. Carol Schlageck, mentor): Master’s Programs in Journalism at Northwestern University, Boston University, Northeastern University, City University of New York and the Newhouse School of Journalism at Syracuse University.

Tiffany Browne (Dr. Ramona Caponegro, mentor): M.A. Programs in Higher Education / Student Affairs at Eastern Michigan University, University of Indiana, University of Michigan and Bowling Green University

Dominique Canning (Dr. Eric Acton, mentor): Doctoral Program in Linguistics at the University of Michigan, M.A. programs at N.C. State

Shahana Chumki (Dr. Anne Casper, mentor): Doctoral Programs in the Biological Sciences at Wayne State University, Michigan State University, and the University of Michigan

Troy Deskin (Dr. Rusty McIntyre, mentor): Doctoral Program in Experimental Psychology at The Ohio State University

Diamond Jones (Dr. Maria Milletti, mentor): Doctoral Program in Chemistry at the University of Iowa, Southern Methodist University (SMU)

Rosaly Maldonado (Dr. Yvette Colon, mentor): Master’s in Social Work Program at the University of Pittsburgh and Fordham University.

Brialle Ringer (Dr. Marti Bombyk, mentor): Master’s in Social Work Program at Washington University, St. Louis., Master’s of Sociology at Eastern Michigan University

Mikki Smith (Dr. Janet Okagbue-Reaves, mentor): Master’s of Sociology at Eastern Michigan University, Master’s in Social Work Program at Wayne State University

William Trice (Dr. Ernest Behringer, mentor): Master’s Program in Physics at EMU

Summer Research Programs and Internships:

- Brandie Bentley, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Minority Health Disparities Summer Research Program
- Jesse Smith, Internship Program in the Biomedical Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania
- Mariah Brito, Project SEED Mentor through the American Chemical Society
- Allante Moon, Summer Internship at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Ann Arbor