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Ethnographies of Work: A Student’s Experience

During my first semester at Guttman Community College, I was able to take my first Ethnography of Works (EoW) class course. Professor Gatta introduced us to EoW, meaning using different methods and researching a field of work to gain a better insight of what is being studied. Throughout the course, we studied various work environments in which we were able to participate in fieldwork during class. At that time, we would go to work sites to map, observe, and interview people. For the semester-long project, we were given professional fieldwork, in my case at the New York City Bar Association (NYCBA), where we needed to observe a day in the life. As a requirement for the project, we needed to construct a PowerPoint highlighting life at the NYCBA as well as a written paper going more in depth about the research methods we used and how we came up with the information.

At the NYCBA, my two peers and I were introduced to many people, including Jorge L. Escobedo, who is the Director of Pro Bono Partnerships, and Deborah Martin Owens, who is the Executive Director of Diversity and Inclusion. While gaining potential information for the project, I felt inspired by the professionals and honored to be in the same room as them. In high school, I developed an interest for law, and to continue this spark I joined my school’s moot court and mock trial teams. It was there that the spark continued to ignite. Due to my consecutive involvement with the team, I received an award from the NYCBA. Thinking that the NYSBA and the NYCBA were the same organization, I grew excited when walking through the doors of the City Bar Association. However, once the interview began I realized they were not the same associations. Nonetheless, my excitement only grew more.
While asking questions to the interviewees, I learned that no road is ever written in stone. Through all the workers’ experience, I became amazed by the variety of positions they each encountered and how it was all vital to the point in the careers they are now in.

After completing the presentation and the EoW I course, I received an email from Professor Gatta with an application to be a participant in the Launching Your Career workshop. When reviewing the application, it gave information about networking and becoming more involved in transitioning into the work place in the field of law. This workshop would provide vital information during each weekly session to help with resumes, interviews, and feedback, etc. For the application, I needed to write a personal statement where I would include the reason behind my interest in the workshop. I mentioned my family, and how they are my anchor and how I must bring pride to the family name. I also stated, “Attending the ‘2019 Launching Your Career Seminar Series’ would be a stepping stone in achieving the long journey in the field of law to a young Mexican-American female. Being able to be part of this seminar alone will be proof to my Spanish-rooted family that there is hope for us Latinos in a mixed mindset of a nation. The ‘2019 Launching Your Career Seminar Series’ would further open doors for me to expand my options in how I would like to go about achieving this goal that I have.” While writing these lines to be selected as a participant in the Seminar series, I felt that my dream would soon become a reality.

After thinking whether I should apply, I took my chances and, lo and behold, I was accepted. When I found out I was accepted, I became super excited. This was the highlight of my first year at Guttman.

For the first session in March, the workshop was based on “Drafting Personal Statements & Writing Skills.” I remember while on my way to Richards Kibbe & Orbe, I began to think of
what the first session would be like. I imagined multiple undergrads and a few grads, since this is who the workshop was intended for.

However, once it came time for the ice-breaker, I found that the majority of participants were either seniors at senior universities or graduates who are either entering or now in a job pertaining to the field of law. Only a few were juniors and sophomores, leaving me as the only freshman at a community college. Due to this, I felt intimidated and began to feel shyer and tried isolating myself. I began to think that this was a wrong move and that I shouldn’t have applied in the first place.

After talks with my parents and friends, I came to realize how honored I am to be part of this “Launch Your Career Seminar” series. This allowed me to become more open and social. Not only have we received tips for writing our personal statements for law school, but we also have gained information on office etiquette, mock interviews with potential lawyers at Jenner & Block, resume feedback and tips, and introductions to federal judges Margo Brodie and Edgardo Ramos. After each session, I feel confident and highly motivated to continue my journey to my career path after law school. I wish to study political science after Guttman at a senior university and then apply to law school. After this, the road to my career begins.

Thank you.