

re-act

ATHLETES & “NON-ATHLETES”
AT HAVERFORD



POST-CONVERSATION
TRANSCRIPT

COMMUNITY
CONVERSATIONS

AN OMA/CPGC COLLABORATION

Athletes and “Non-Athletes” at Haverford

[re]ACT: Community Conversation Series

Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and Center for Peace and Global Citizenship (CPGC)

Friday, Apr. 8, 2016

Multicultural Center, Stokes 106

SESSION OVERVIEW

A dialogue and reflection on the athlete/non-athlete divide on campus. How can we as a community address issues relating to the divide and attempt to bridge the gap? What have been your experiences and thoughts on the interactions between athletes and non-athletes at Haverford?

[re]CC COMMITTEE

- Stephanie Zukerman, *CPGC Program Coordinator*
- Tamar Hoffman '16, *CPGC Intern*
- Benjamin Hughes, *OMA Program Coordinator*
- Oluwatobi Alliyu '16, *OMA Intern*
- Clara Abbott '18, *OMA Intern*

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- Miriam Putnam-Perez '18, *OMA Intern*
- Han Mahle '19, *OMA Intern*
- Rachel Romens '18, *Student Athletics Advisory Committee*

FACILITATOR

FACILITATOR

FACILITATOR

SESSION NOTES

WHAT IS ONE WORD OR PHRASE TO DESCRIBE HOW YOU PERCEIVE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VARSITY ATHLETES AND NON-VARSITY ATHLETES?

- Fracture
- Relatively healthy relationship but in a small community issues become magnified
- Frustration
- Caricaturized
- Assumptions
- Stereotypes
- Time restrictions
- Was also present thirty years ago
- Scheduling/Logistical issues
- Generalizations
- Parties
- Change how spaces feel
- Skewed student-body representation in extracurriculars
- Privilege
- Circumstantial
- Collective Responsibility

HOW DOES THE DIVIDE SHAPE SPACES ON CAMPUS?WHAT EFFECT DOES IT HAVE?

- Divide dissolves or is less uncomfortable in a smaller, discussion based class.
- Non-varsity athletes might feel more intimidated by fitness center (with big groups of varsity athletes).
- Club sports feel “stuck in the middle,” not sure what resources they have.
- Non-varsity athletes who are injured do not always receive the help they need.
 - Inaccessibility of a club trainer, the current club trainer is a more short term solution, funded by Students Council
- Is there a conversation in club sports that explicitly lays out resources for club athletes (trainers, etc.)?
- For club sports, we should post resources in the GIAC, so they are better advertised.
- Many people could be called athletes, so it is important when talking about this issue to specify “Varsity Athletes.”- important to change our language to create a deeper cultural shift.

QUESTION: *What is the divide? How would students define it?*

- Varsity Athletics are a very American cultural phenomenon.
- Teams tend to have tables in the DC where they all congregate together.
- Some athletes feel separated from non-varsity athletes by the amount of time and dedication they must put in, making it hard to participate in other groups on campus or even parts of the “first year experience” like Customs.
- Varsity athletes often want to participate in activities outside of sports but cannot because of their commitments.
- It can be a difficult social balance at first because varsity athletes often feel encouraged or forced to do things with their teams.
- Varsity Athletics are often equated with privilege or status symbols; being on a team seems like a luxury.
- Different priorities: some prioritize clubs, some prioritize sports, etc. - Different priorities should be respected.
 - We don't always respect the choice of prioritizing sports over discussion, etc.
- It is possible to find meaning and identity in the sports we play, they are not necessarily an insignificant form of identity.

HOW DOES CUSTOMS RELATE TO THIS DIVIDE?

- Behavior/engagement/social patterns differ between non-varsity athletes and varsity athletes because varsity athletes have other commitments besides Customs activities, feel tired, must be with their teams often.
- Customs is working to change its schedule to give people more time to sleep and take care of their bodies. It is important to remember that there are logistical challenges that make “the perfect schedule” impossible to design
- Customs people can be role models for uniting groups instead of highlighting the divide.
- Appreciating people for the things they do, the things they prioritize, the things in which they specialize, whether that be art, academics, sports, or something else- show up for others and the things they care about.
- Need to remind frosh that everyone is qualified to and deserves to be on this campus.

WHAT ARE SOME IDEAS ABOUT SPORTS IN RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNITY VALUES?

- Varsity sports force you to spend time with a group of people to preserve a team dynamic- team dynamic is extremely important for performance as well as happiness and well-being over the course of one's whole Haverford experience.
- Spending time away of one's team means actively carving out time that you would have spent with them. Each student at Haverford prioritizes their time differently with the goal of finding the best balance for them as an individual.
- We place a huge value on community/allegiance to the broader Haverford community- this sometimes makes people question athletes' reasons for coming here- Did they choose Haverford for sports or for the community we have? What about the sense of community within athletic teams?
- What does it mean to "deserve" to be at Haverford?

OTHER WAYS OF DEFINING THE DIVIDE AND THE EFFECTS IT HAS:

- Many myths circulate from one group to another (varsity athletes talk about non-varsity athletes and vice versa).
- Can often see the divide in class times, social/drinking times, the DC, admissions.
- Athletes are often scapegoats for problems (such as sexual assault/racism/classism, etc.) that exist on this campus. These problems are actually everyone's problems.
- People see teams as exclusive and in conflict with Haverford's community values.
- People feel an in-group out-group mentality with teams.
- Resentment builds up because of lack of dialogue across these groups.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

ADDITIONAL WRITE-IN RESPONSES

- Definitely emphasize this in Customs!! → PAF sessions about activities on campus
- Open + Honest Communication goes a long way. It seems like groups can be more accepting of others if they understand them.
- Social Spaces. Apartment 19 vs. Apartment 50
- As a varsity runner, I think most athletes over-exaggerate their time commitments and partying together is more caving into peer pressure than a necessary sacrifice.
- Talk more about the athletics = greek life issue
- I think it's important to address the issues of the divide b/w varsity athletes & those who do not play varsity sports in open spaces like this to create an open dialogue.
- Athletes WORRY about being socially subversive... the worry that your team will be weirded out if you don't hang w/ them.
- Each team brings their own coach, culture, schedule...and thus are different
- Mutual support! → show you care about everyone <3
- Can we have electric outlets on the bleachers? That way student can be at games and do homework at the same time (that's what stops me from going; computer dictates my life)
- Varsity athletes being seen as "privileged" which is often untrue and creates resentment both ways
- I think there will always be some sort of divide due to the nature of sport teams, which I don't think is necessarily a bad thing. However, we can do a better job clarifying myths surrounding varsity athletes & "non-athletes".
- In my 4 years I've barely had interactions w/ varsity athletes...will probably not have opportunities in the future to build relationships with some of them
- I would love to see more intentional partnerships on wellness that includes all students, independent of sports activity.

DISCUSSION CONCLUSION(S)

1. Let's continue this discussion, perhaps with a "mythbusters" campaign about varsity athletics/non-varsity athlete students
2. We should provide/display info in GIAC about resources for non-varsity athletes
3. We need to change the way we describe people as "athletes" or "non-athletes" so that our description does not demean either.