

## Research Conference Outline

I like to think that I can just introduce myself to you  
In a snap  
But I don't want to lie to you  
Not like that  
That wouldn't be fair to you  
And I am also scared to let you in  
But when I am done  
It wouldn't surprise me if I was like another piece of paper to you

I like to think that you don't view me as a piece of paper  
Something that can be crumpled and thrown away  
Forgotten in time  
You'll probably walk out of here  
And forget that I even existed

But I'll introduce myself anyways  
The best I can at least  
I can start by telling you this

I like to think that I am the sun  
Shining brightly in the sky  
Providing warmth and smiles to all who pass by

I like to think I am a strong oak tree  
Growing everyday  
Watching my leaves fall  
With every mistake I make

I like to think I am a brick house  
Building up walls to protect myself from the outside world  
Letting only a few in  
To the secrets and stories, I hold dear

### 1. Introduce myself and the basic overview of the project (work in progress)

Good morning! What you just heard was a snippet to one of my poems called "Who am I?". My name is Sophie Margulies and I am a rising senior majoring in Communication Studies with a concentration in Cultural Communication and minoring in Mandarin, Chinese. Today I will be discussing my ongoing research project titled "Who Am I?: Poetic Inquiry and Intersectional Identity" by first providing a brief overview of the project, second analyze three of my poems and third, go over the implications of my paper.

2. Very brief framing of the project (1 min literature review) (30 sec- 1 min of what poetic inquiry is)

The project itself stemmed from my experiences when being asked the question of “Where are you from?” Which for most is an easy question as they think to where they have lived most of their lives or where they were raised, but for me it is one that continues to be challenging as I am a third culture individual. According to Polluck (1988) Third culture individuals are children who have spent a majority of their life in a culture other than that of their parents’ which in turn creates a sense of rootlessness as one is constantly moving around from place to place every couple of years. My mother was an indigenous Paraguayan and my father is a former US diplomat, with this said, I was born in Asuncion, Paraguay and have lived in Mauritius, Peru, Honduras and the Dominican Republic. So, when people ask me where am I from? I am at a loss of words. Do I tell them where I currently live? Or do I tell them where I was born? For over a year now I have been trying to answer these questions through writing poems in my cultural communication classes. With these poems, I decided to delve deeper to figure out my answer using poetic inquiry in conjunction with intersectional theory and borderland identity.

According to McCullis (2013), poetic inquiry in research is part of the ethnographic genre of creative analytical practice which allows the use of poetry as an analytical device in data collection as a tool to view data in unique ways that can help yield new insight or just a unique way to represent one’s findings. In this case, I look into intersectional theory, which refers to the interactive variety of social identity structures such as race, class, sexuality and gender as stated by McCall (2015) well as implies that every person in society is placed at some sort of intersection of multiple social identity structures and therefore is subject to varied social advantages and disadvantages.

### Poems and Analysis

For this project I use researcher-voiced poems which uses field notes, or creative, autobiographical or autoethnographic writing as a data source. My collection of six poems that have been written throughout my cultural communication classes. But today, I will be sharing one of my poems titled “Finding One’s Place,” and examine it using the collaborative model of inquiry in where I will be analyzing the language and word choice to identify my intersectionality amongst my identities.

The first poem that I will present, “Finding One’s Place” is about my internal conflict of my avowed and ascribed identities.

## **Where are you from?**

This question may seem a quick answer for some but for me it causes a range full of emotions.

How do I respond? Do I state the place my family and I have lived for six years now? Or do I state all the countries that I have lived throughout my life?

## **But Who Am I?**

Honestly, describing myself is like trying to build a puzzle of a thousand pieces.

It is hard. It is confusing. But all in all, it is mostly frustrating.

In society's eyes, I am seen as a white American female

In my friend's eyes, I am seen as a white female

In my dad's eyes, I am seen as a Hispanic American female.

In the eyes of all the survey's I have ever taken, I am seen as a Hispanic white female.

In my eyes however, I see myself as a Hispanic American female who is still trying to find my way in the world.

But back to "Where are you from?"

The answer is, I do not know.

The answer is, I am still trying to figure that out.

But what I do know is that

I am the daughter of a diplomat who had the privilege of living around the world her whole life.

What I do know is that

In society's eyes, I am a white American female.

I am seen as such because of my light skin.

I am seen as such because of the way I speak English.

I know my privilege and I know where I am marginalized.

But I also know my intersectionality.

That although I am light skinned and am regarded as white, I am Hispanic

it is an identity that I own, what makes me, me.

Not that it has been easy being me.

Whenever I tell people that I am Hispanic

They gasp. They gawk. They grin.

And they say "Yeah right".

But what do they know?

They do not know that I was born in a Hispanic country.

I am proud of being Hispanic.

Or am I?

I am afraid of speaking out and correcting people when they categorize me as a "White American".

It is an unconscious decision.

But why?

It all started in 1997

When I was born as a Hispanic American, female in Asuncion, Paraguay.

I was considered as such until I think back to my first memory in an institution.

This was during kindergarten in Lima, Peru.

There I was considered "Gringa" or "American"

and I considered myself as such.

Not that being "American" put me in the dominant group.

I was not considered the "norm" abroad.

In a private American school, the wealthy Peruvians were the norm who could afford the education.

My family did not have that money.

My education was paid by the United States Government.

I did not speak Spanish.

I only spoke English.

I was the minority.

I ended up speaking Spanish fluently.

But abroad my “Americanness” and me being “Hispanic” always classified me as part of the subordinate group.

In the United States, things were not any easier.

Sure, I was considered “white” but I was not “American enough”.

My experiences made me different.

A never-ending cycle of not being a part of a category.

Through the use of poetic inquiry I sought to dissect the word choice of this poem as well as a....

### 3. Sum Up and implications

Through the use of my poems and intersectional theory, I focus on non-verbal communication to articulate the experience through the use of wording and language. Although this project aids in my self-actualization, I hope that more individuals will use poetry as a resource to discover who they are, and aid individuals who are in the same situation as I am to better understand where they belong in this tug between society and culture. Poetry allows for story telling and connection amongst others that resonates with them in their lives in evocative ways. I believe in order for poetry to have a greater impact on research, those who engage in such practices need to share their processes and products with the entire community, which is what I am doing now and hope that more individuals follow suit.

I like to think I am the branches that you accidentally walk into  
The ones you forgot existed  
The ones you slap away just as quickly as you walk by

I like to think that I fit in the USA  
I mean its my fifth year here  
Longest I have stayed anywhere  
But I still haven't had a grilled cheese or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich  
But when people ask me about where I am from  
I don't feel like I belong anymore

I like to think that I am a proud American  
But no offense this country doesn't learn from history  
So, I am not proud of many things  
But anyways

I like to think that I am proud to be Hispanic  
I mean that is what I write down on all my paperwork  
But

I stopped correcting people when they call me white  
Honestly,  
I got tired of proving my heritage

I like to think I just opened up  
To you  
And maybe I did, just a little  
But seriously  
I am trying to figure out where all the pieces fit into this puzzle  
That creates me