Kelsey Frey

English 1106

Nicole Williams

1 April 2010

A nation-state of Sorts: Going a little deeper

Umbrella clasped tightly in hand, keeping my head down, watching my feet move with each step as mud and water squish beneath my feet, and slightly hypnotized by the black and white pattern of my rain boots, I “climb” across the drill field hoping, rather desperately, to make it to the awaiting Tom’s Creek Bus B before it pulls away from Burruss Hall. I’m not the only one making the journey, well the journey to somewhere at least, today, many students are boarding different buses when I make it across the street, quickly jumping over a steady stream of water on to the firm, concrete sidewalk. Clumsily closing my umbrella, I slide it under my arm and reach for the wristlet to find my Hokie passport. Rifling through dining receipts, ticket stubs, and a few cards, I am eventually greeted with my own smiling, slightly tanner face, and pulling the identification card from my bag; I step aboard the bus. Flashing a smile and the card to the driver, he acknowledges my entrance as well as other students with a nod while resembling something of a bobble head. Slightly dumbfounded by my luck of catching the bus so easily, I find a seat near the middle of the bus. It is still rather empty at this point, so I take the time to reflect.

My mind flows back to a previous World Regions class in which we discussed the definitions and importance of such terms as nation and nation-state focusing mostly on nation, which is a group of people who share a common culture, who want to have their own government, and want to rule themselves. Disregarding, slightly, the concept of government and ruling themselves, I, instead, focus in the concept of a group of people who share a common culture and immediately think of this project and its relevance to analyzing and understanding the bus system. Unlike a nation, we are not similar in our ethnicity, religion, background, or customs, yet we do all share commonalties that create a unique and profound culture of our own. On the surface level, the most defining factor is how much we all rely on the bus. Whether it is to get to our apartment, to get to the store, the math emporium, or even to get across campus, the bus system is a universal aspect of our lives joining us together each day. Furthermore, on a deeper level, or in my opinion, a more important level, the bus system serves a place of limbo, a transit if you will, a never changing yet always available part of our lives that forces us to come together, only if a for only a few minutes, and within those several minutes, different ethnicities, backgrounds, lifestyles, and belief systems come together, and if we take the time to look around so much can be learned and a wealth of knowledge and understanding can be gained from just simply observing our peers and their lives. And while, we do have a different background and belief system, our dreams, ambitions, fears, and desires in life are the same. We were all once misunderstood teenagers, growing or have grown into young adults finding our way through school, romance, peer pressure; good times and bad times; and ultimately, life.

“Pretty in Pink”

The picture of innocence sits before me: a girl no older than four, giggles lightly and finally wiggling free from her mother’s grip, she reaches her arm out in earnest to towards her pink balloon as her short pigtails swing slightly from side to side. Outstretched legs barely making their way to the end of the seat squirm uncomfortably under the formality of sitting down. Although quite young, you can immediately feel her energy and jest for life. Dressed completely in pink from the ribbons tired ever so delicately in her hair, to the furry coat fastened tightly around her chest, to the Hello Kitty purse sitting neatly in her lap, all the way down to the Keds tied on the wrong feet. As she squeals with delight, her mother chides her daughter for such playfulness and from what I can detect, the mother seems to scold her daughter through a very slight, yet detectable smile while still placing her index finger over her mouth in the universal sign of “be quiet”.

“The love connection”

As the bus lurches to a stop, a young man, perhaps a sophomore, steps aboard finding a seat next to a girl who appears to be tapping lightly on her iPod touch. She brushes a strand of dark brown hair away from her face revealing piercing blue eyes intensified by a stroke of black eyeliner above and below her eyelids. Dressed in a black fleece and a pair of dark, skinny jeans and black ballet flats, she seems relaxed and comfortable aboard the bus despite the chilly, wet weather visible just through the window behind her. It becomes apparent within only a few moments that the boy wishes to catch her attention; he makes several awkward movements as if to get her attention raising his hand slightly only to bring it back to his side abruptly. Caught off guard by his movements, she looks up as he sweeps his hair back dramatically. She flutters her eyelashes, perhaps on purpose or simply by coincidence. Nonetheless, he takes advantage of this fleeting opportunity and moves closer. Scooting towards her in the most “casual” way possible, and his water soaked, white t-shirt hanging loosely from his body smelling slightly of wet dog, he places his arm ever so suavely behind the seat mere inches from where she sits, and finally stutters into speech. “Do, do, I know you from somewhere?” he asks, tilting his head upward to make eye contact. Only just realizing that he has spoken to her, she shrugs her shoulders upward removing her hot pink headphones. Winding the headphone cords up around her iPod, he continues on bravely. “Well, either way, I think I’ve seen you around.” She laughs in a girlish manner revealing sparkling white teeth beneath high, rosy cheekbones. He continues peppering her questions revealing both his nervousness and excitement. He appears to find the courage to ask for her number, and without answering, she pulls her cross body bag from around her shoulder, and digging with in the tie dyed bag she reveals a blue ink pen and a notebook. Carelessly ripping out a page, she jots down her number, and pulls the cord to get off. She slides gracefully from her seat leaving the boy thunderstruck by his luck; he looks down at the number as if not really seeing it, and as if truly from a fairy tale, the sun peeks ever slightly out from behind the rainy clouds.

Talking amicably on her cell phone, an older girl, perhaps a graduate student appears to be discussing her upcoming wedding with her mother. Her eyes seem to sparkle with delight over the details of the cake even more so when the topic turns to a dress fitting the following week. A fire, a passion, a zealousness rises from within her heart and screams from the patches of red just appearing below her cheekbones down to the irreplaceably smile that extends from ear to ear. She switches her phone to the other side, revealing a dazzling princess cut diamond engagement ring. Dressed plainly in jeans and a maroon Virginia Tech t-shirt, she puts her mother on hold for a moment to answer a text message and then to pull the cord positioned to her left, once again returning to her phone call, she sends her love to everyone in the family and eventually hangs up. Romance seems to the theme of this bus ride, it is enveloping perfume engulfs the bus with warmth; the entire bus stirs amidst a kindling romance of a new date to the beginning of a whole life as husband and wife.

Change, change, and more change

Change is what he asked for, and change is exactly what he got. Sophomore, Sam laughs slightly at my probing questions as he tells me that riding the bus is not the only new thing for him. A spring semester transfer, he has had to get to used the campus and life here at Virginia Tech. “It’s obviously different; I came from a community college, and this is a whole different experience, and even though I did bring my car, I hate wasting gas to just get to the math emporium so I take the bus instead.” Having tapped him lightly on the shoulder, he kindly removed his headphones with an answering smile. Wearing nothing but a light red sweatshirt and oversized jeans appear as his only source of warmth, he doesn’t appear to be too cold though his lips chatter slightly through his speech.

Sam is not the only student combating the changes of coming to a college campus. Freshman, Nicole, has voyaged out on to the bus this morning to go to the math emporium as well. We chit chat for several minutes as she sips a coffee discussing her reasons for riding the bus. Completely new to the world of the bus system as she used her car when she was at home, Nicole now relies completely on the bus for everything. She told me she uses the Blacksburg Transit around three to four times a week. With a slightly just woken up appearance, hair pulled loosely back in a long braid down her back over a cotton t-shirt and pair of dark jeans that are covered by a pair of leather knee high boots, she leans back resting against the seat and closing her eyes for a moment, she continues that the bus will become even more convenient next year when she moves in a condo just by the math emporium. She talks excitingly about this move and says that her and the bus have a long future together, but luckily, the bus stops just outside her new condo.

Mass transportation

Everyone can get where they want to go

Cheap, we all need cheap transportation because we are mostly college students the Blacksburg transit has 95% college students

We all eat need to get to store

Apartments, a lot of people live off campus after freshman year

Not really all in walking distance, cold in winter

May be doing different things in the bus (listening iPod, talking, worrying) all riding the same bus

Kelsey Frey

Nicole Williams

English 1106

1 April 2010

An Annotated Bibliography: Blacksburg Transit Research

n.d. Blacksburg Transit. Blacksburg Transit, n.d.. web. 29 March 2010.

The Blacksburg Transit website contains a variety of helpful information detailing everything from the history to maps and routes of the bus systems. Other information includes news and announcements, alternatives routes according to weather, a calendar, contact information including employment opportunities, and even a link for children that provides kids with fun and useful information about the buses and the bus system. The Blacksburg Transit while available to everyone it predominately dominated by Virginia Tech students and faculty making about 95% of ridership. While not all the information will be necessary for my project, the history, bus routes, and general information will all be extremely important in examining the bus system further. While my first hand, primary observations have provided me with the different types of people and their actions, an actual history of how the Blacksburg Transit came to be and its evolution over time will be helpful and further investing the culture of the bus system.

Bang, Chulho. Integrated Model to Plan Advanced Public Transportation Systems. Diss. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, date. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1998. Print.

This source was a case study conducted utilizing the Blacksburg Transit. In the study, the buses were equipped with GPS. While this study was conducted in 1997, it provides a lot of information regarding numbers such as the amount of people riding the bus on average as well as the most populous times of the day. While this study is mostly just provided reasons for the Blacksburg Transit being the most optimal choice for doing the case study, it still provides a wealth of information regarding the bus system and some of statistical information needed to analyze patterns of the bus system.

“Blacksburg Bicentennial Timeline.” Spec.lib.vt.edu. University Libraries Special Collections. N.d. web. 29 March 2010.

“Timeline of history of Virginia Tech”. spec.lib.vt.edu. University Libraries Special Collections, n.d. web. 29 March 2010.

These two sites site created by the Special Collections of the Virginia Tech Library provides a timeline of the history of Virginia Tech as well as the town of Blacksburg. Although these are simple timelines, I believe it will be enormously helpful in understanding the background of the bus system and becoming more aware of what is occurring at Virginia Tech and in Blacksburg throughout its history as well seeing the evolution of transportation here at Virginia Tech and Blacksburg. The more information I can gather regarding how the bus system has changed and the reasons for its creation will definitely help me understand how the bus system came about. For instance, the timeline discussing the increasing amount of students living off campus and thus there was a need for the bus system transportation. The information seen in the time line of Blacksburg discussing issues surrounding the community including important, influential dates as well as the firsts of the community such as the first fire truck and police car.

n.d. facilities.vt.edu. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, n.p. web. 29 March 2010

The Alternative Transportation link of the Virginia Tech website provides information all types of transportation offered for students and faculty without a car entitled: “No car, No problem”. This site provides some general information about the Blacksburg Transit specifically but also discusses eco friendly transportation alternatives. Once again, I am most interested in the information provided about the Blacksburg Transit, but the information provided throughout the page can be helpful in determining perhaps why some students and faculty do use the bus as well as all the different types of transportation options at Virginia Tech. The website encourages the Blacksburg Transit as well as riding a bike.

Levinson, Herbert. "The reliability of transit service: An historical perspective." Journal of Urban Technology 12.1 (2005): 99-118. Academic Search Complete. EBSCO. Web. 1 Apr. 2010.

Another historical perspective seems important in fully understanding transportation as a whole as well as the bus system specifically. In this article, Herbert Levinson details a variety of aspects of the transit system, but focusing on the technological evolutions of the bus system and the rider’s dependency on the bus on regular basis. These are both important concepts for the Blacksburg Transit specifically, and one of main observations I have made thus far in my project is that we are similar in our dependency on the bus whether it be because of commitments such as class or meetings or changes in the weather, the students, faculty, and members of the Blacksburg community all depend on the bus to be on time and simply run everyday for work, school, and life. This article puts an emphasis on this dependency and importance of the bus system evolving technological so the bus will remain reliable for its riders.

Miller, James. Transportation on college and university campuses: a synthesis of transit practice Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2001. Print.

This book source discusses the concept of public transportation in a college setting and importance of alternatives and solutions other than cars in order to deal with parking and other issues that go along with a large dependency for transportation. This source also examines different methods of creating cheap, efficient transportation for colleges and college towns while still providing safety and security. While the entire source many not necessarily be important, there are several key chapters that discuss issues that relate to my project. Such as financial aspects of the bus system as well issues centering around parking. Visual data tables and surveys were conducted in this source to provide a true student perspective.

Transit People. Transitpeople. TransitPeople, 2001. Web. 28 March 2010.

I felt it was important to have information about the history of transportation in general and its evolution throughout time. This website, Transitpeople, is fairly simple, yet provides a lot of information about how transportation has evolved throughout time and the use of transportation all over the world. Boats, trains, cars, airplanes have all been the center of historical events and life changing moments in history. From connecting the east and west to the civil rights movement, transportation has created exciting and influential times and through examining this history, I feel it will provide insight into the Blacksburg Transit and how it has evolved to the Virginia Tech campus and its use throughout the town of Blacksburg. Even more, in the context of other student’s individual and familiarity with other types of transportation from home whether that be from something in the United States or abroad.