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We're Coming Out! – “Home” and “Away” Identities in the Field of International Education: An Emotional Construction and Negotiation of the Self

Paul St. John Frisoli

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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Frisoli, Paul St. John, "We're Coming Out! – “Home” and “Away” Identities in the Field of International Education: An Emotional Construction and Negotiation of the Self" (2007). *Master's Capstone Projects*. 2.

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Running head: WE'RE COMING OUT!

We're Coming Out! – “Home” and “Away” Identities in the Field of International Education:
An Emotional Construction and Negotiation of the Self

Presented
by
Paul St. John Frisoli

Submitted to The Graduate School of Education at the University of Massachusetts—Amherst
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
M.Ed
(International Education)



Center for International Education
May 2007

Abstract

Once upon a time, there was a young man from the country of Federation. In this era of postmodernism, Paul St. John Frisoli held fragmented and multiple identities that were at times complimentary and contradictory. He believed that whether he was angry, happy, frustrated, or satisfied that emotions offered clues to these identities. One day, Paul left for the islands of Banga Sharini where he worked on the WEZAP radio project that was funded by the Federation Agency for International Development (FAID). During his stay, he developed new Consultant and Foreign Identity selves while leaving his “home” identities of the Student, Family, and Secret Gay Partner behind. This adventure, told from an autoethnographic approach, examined his daily dairies and letters written to those in the Federation in order to highlight the validity of bridging personal and professional accounts of research in academic inquiry. Paul used the lenses of Cultural Studies to examine how international development work impacted his various fragmented identities. Throughout this self-discovery process, he continuously examined the emotions displayed during the construction his “away” identities while concurrently observing the interaction of these new selves with his “home” identities. What he discovered was a stretching effect on his “home” and “away” identities caused by power, agency, and emotions.

A Story for the Reader

Once upon a time...

We ignored the importance of our feelings, emotions, and personal lives in the workplace. We were taught that you need to “get the job” done. Our personal lives needed to stay at home and not impact our work. Furthermore, emotions were seen as “unwanted” influences that were “undesirable characteristics” of an employee that steered us off the path of efficiency for achieving goal-oriented workplace tasks (Muchinsky, 2000, p.802). Oftentimes, we had to follow these rules of emotion control, also known as *emotion work*, in order to remain employed in an organization (Harrell-Bond, 2002, p.73).

-“Hold on a second! What are you talking about? What are you trying to get at here?”

Who are you and how did you get into this paper?

-“I’m you and you are me! I’m trying to get me to get to the point so that the reader does not fall asleep of boredom!”

I’m a tad bit baffled, but it appears that I’m not effectively highlighting the analytical process that I am setting out for this paper. I’ll be more precise.

-“Wait. If I am going to tell a story, could I do it in a more grounded manner? Make it accessible. Make it enjoyable. It appears that I’m trying to tell part of my story. Do it from my experience. It’ll be more valuable to me in the future and possibly more enjoyable for the readers.”

Yikes! I think that I’m talking to myself here. So I want me to start over?

-“Exactly! I can do it! I know I can! Talk a bit more about who I am and who I am becoming.”

Okay, I guess that I can do that. Thanks for the feedback...here I go:

Once upon a time, there was a young man from the country of Federation. He worked hard and accepted almost every opportunity that came his way. After all, he liked to explore, take journeys, and find more out about others and himself while doing so. His name was Paul St. John Frisoli. But he was not just one true identity or one true self. He held fragmented and multiple identities that were at times contradictory (Barker, 2005, p.224).

-“Keep going! This is what I have to say! You’re on the right track!”

Yes, at times his identities agreed, disagreed, and agreed to disagree. They lived together but came out depending on the context, environment, and social interactions that he experienced.

-“That’s right! I think we are on the same page right now!”

Could you please stop interrupting me so that I can continue the story?

-“Sorry. I’ll try my best”

His Mum and Dad used to tell him that he was too sensitive, that he wore his heart on his sleeve. But he saw the value in reflecting and pondering his emotions and feelings. He knew that whether he was angry, happy, frustrated, or satisfied that such sentiments offered clues about who he was (Kleinman, 2002, p.382; Fischer & Ashkanasy, 2000, p.124). He took many trips throughout the

world. He worked and lived in Europe, Canada, West Africa, and throughout the Federation. Each time his emotions accompanied him and acted “as expressions of and lenses through which he understood what he encountered” (Sharpe, 2005, p.29). This perspective, though seemingly dangerous and culturally one-sided, offered him insights into his various constructed cultural and social identities.

One day, Paul and his multiple identities left the Federation where he took two 2-month trips to the volcanic islands of Banga Sharini in the Dian Ocean. There, he worked on a radio project for a non-governmental organization (NGO) that was funded by the Federation Agency for International Development (FAID). This project, the WEZAP radio project, was a new experience for him to interact in an organization that was comprised of a team of Banga Sharinians and two Federationalists who worked from afar. As soon as he signed his contract, Paul St. John Frisoli wore two new identity suits; he was a foreigner and an international radio specialist (also known as a consultant). These “away” identities developed while working, living, and interacting in Banga Sharini. His “home” identities, those of the student, worker, gay partner, brother, son, and friend remained with him. When we talk about Federation “home” identities, they were derived from “the expectations and opinions that other have of [him]” (Barker, 2005, p.220) that not only supported him, but seemed to have given him the tools to foster these new “away” identities.

Yet, he did not immediately jump into the “away” identities. As previously mentioned, he was a sensitive young man who felt his moods, emotions, and feelings for better or worse. His social interactions with the team of Banga Sharinians, other Federationalists, and even FAID seemed to have sparked emotional responses which could be classified as unprofessional according to NGO and FAID standards. They seemed to want a consultant who disassociated the personal from the

professional, which implied that emotions were not welcome in the WEZAP workplace (Harrell-Bond, 2002). After all, he was in Banga Sharini to get the job done and not let the job effect him personally. Even the living conditions in Banga Sharini rocked him to his emotional core. They challenged him to negotiate between his “away” and “home” identities. Were his “home” identities cast to the shadows? Did he forget from where he came and the loved ones he left back home? His emotional work experience challenged him on many levels. At times he wanted to give up. Sometimes he felt at home in Banga Sharini. His selves hugged and battled in his head, hence the contradictory nature of multiple identities.

Upon his return back to the Federation, he searched high and low for other consultants’ accounts of the emotional surge in the construction and negotiation of new and old identities while working in developing countries. Little had been done to examine emotions in international education development workplaces (Fischer & Ashkanasy, 2000, p.126). Excited and passionate about this experience which was dosed with fervor for getting his story out, he flipped through studies of the emotion work of humanitarian aid agents in stressful post-conflict settings. Paul discovered something uncanny; post-conflict aid workers, though placed in a very different context, also felt “trapped” in asymmetrical relationships defined by the donor of their projects, such as FAID (Harrell-Bond, 2002, p.53). Humanitarian aid, much like international education development, seemed to run like a business where the client became the donor and not the beneficiaries of the aid (Harrell-Bond, 2002, p.55). Paul always thought that aid was destined for those in need, not those giving the money. Though international development workers struggled with this concept, the donor implied that emotions and personal identity were put on the backburner. Development projects valued the satisfaction of the donors.

-“Wow Paul! This is interesting. We’re really talking here. I get it! We’re saying that when we worked in a different culture on a development project, the donor, such as FAID, became the client that development workers were obliged to satisfy. We experienced emotions and feelings that resulted from constructing our new identities in that environment while we also negotiated how to sustain and do justice to our “home” identities. Yet the organization for which we worked and some of the realities of Banga Sharini set up structures where we had to negotiate between who we are at “home” and who we are in Banga Sharini. What else?”

Well Paul, it’s not that simple.

Dear reader, emotion, for Paul, was a factor in identity construction and negotiation when interacting socially with human and non-human objects. The moral of this story is the following: other consultants may have encountered similar emotions and identity issues. Emotions in the workplace needed to be studied more during this era. Work of this nature seemed to be inherently personal and there was a need to acknowledge that the display and study of emotions were legitimate and valid forms of knowledge within organizations and businesses. In discovering one’s identity in a new context, we needed to realize the process was inherently messy and creative: “it involve[d] differences, conflict, fantasy, and emotion; it stir[ed] up anger, envy, depression, and many other feelings. To remove the mess by inspiring us to follow some common vision, share the same culture and pull together [was] to remove the mess that [was] the very raw material of creative activity” (Fullan, 1999)

-“So what I am saying is that I needed extreme and messy situations to make sense of the world. So, have I figured out who I am as a “consultant” yet?”

Well, Paul hasn't really determined or essentialized his "away" identities. He could not just package his identities from one another.

- "Why am I writing this story then? What am I going to find out?"

Wow, I'm asking challenging questions!

The adventures of Paul, as you will read in the following letters, offered insights into who he was, who he was becoming, and what the process looked like in terms of emotional display. Examining identity construction and negotiation in terms of emotions was a process for Paul. He offered up insights into his experience when he asked himself the following questions:

- 1) How does Paul construct his "away" identities and what are the emotional displays during this process?
- 2) How can the "away" and "home" identities interact together?
- 3) What did Paul learn in the process of this "away" and "home" interaction?

- "Sounds good to me. I can't wait to hear what my other identities had to say about this."

Don't worry. They were alive and well during the experience. I promise.

There you have it reader. Please read on. If you do, you'll dive into a mystical journey, an experience that actually happened. Enjoy!

We're a Legitimate Set of Identities

Dear me(s),

It's been a while since we've interacted and communicated together. As the Student side of Paul St. John Frisoli, I've been off-the-radar-screen from January until April 2007 because of our two trips to Banga Sharini. I seemed to have been lost in the process of creating the new Consultant and Foreign Identity selves. I allowed the WEZAP program to take over my life. You know how anxious I feel about not being able to sit down and write my master's thesis which I must submit in order to receive my Master's in Education degree from Zoo University (UZoo). If I am going to write this thesis I'm going to need your support. After all, this thesis is about all of our identities. Consultant (C), Foreign Identity (FI), Family Identity (F), Secret Gay Partner Identity (SGP), where are you guys? This is a research project that requires all your voices. Our journey is important.

Hello, where are you?

(C) – “Hey Student, I'm tired. I've been working for hours on end in Banga Sharini. I want you to explain who I am as a Consultant. I don't have the energy. I'm a working professional. I'm not sure I can contribute to the academic writing process.”

(SGP) – “I'm sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Student, but for as long as I can remember you guys have pushed me out of our life. Consultant, you never talked about me when you were in Banga Sharini. Student, you never put the personal part of the researcher in your work. My thoughts and experiences are ignored. Family, you've been shy and anxious about letting me into your realm. I'm pissed at all of you.”

(F) – Hold on a minute. We all need to come to some type of family agreement. We live together. We share the same body. We can't battle like this. It's time for us to work together. I think Student's idea is a great one. Finally we all get to have a say in a collective story while collaborating together.”

Thank you for supporting me Family guy. Paul St. John Frisoli, we are a multifaceted web of identities that the scholarly world is beginning to acknowledge. You guys are true, real and deserve to be legitimated (Sharpe, 2005, p.47). We are only fooling ourselves if we continue to think that I, the Student, can present this story from my one-sided perspective. Let's not deny our "active and situated" place in the field of research (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003, p.57). All pieces of writing are subjective and I need your experiences to demonstrate the process (Lincoln, 1997).

Don't forget that this story examines how emotions display our identities. Barker (2005) states that "[i]dentity is best understood not as a fixed entity but as an emotionally charge discursive description of ourselves that is subject to change" (p.220). It cannot be solely me, the Student, who writes the story. We flow into each other while attempting to discover who we have become and who we are becoming. We are all crucial to this process. What do you all think?

(SGP) – "Well, I like the idea, but I've done some research as well. I know that many scholars would not legitimate this story as a valid form of academic work. Though in reality, we cannot understand human actions without understanding the meaning that we put to our actions, thoughts, feelings, values and assumptions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.57). It seems obvious that we need to link the 'phenomenon' of one's academic and personal lives (Ellis, 2004, p.45). But the academic system is not created this way. Speaking from personal experience, at times we need to follow the dominant system in order to succeed and be safe. We cannot just stand up, shout out, and expect people to listen in a respectful way. You guys hide my identity for this same reason. What seems new, untraditional, and different is oftentimes discredited as too liberal, deviant, and dangerous to the status quo."

Yes, Secret Gay Partner, you are right about this. Yet, what is needed in academia today is work that speaks to multiple populations; scholarly documents that expand beyond the academy. Coffey (2002) articulates that conventional scholarly text has a tendency to look at social reality through scientific lenses that seem to be neutral (p.322). Is this not essentialism? Within academia, we must be cognizant that individual characteristics and experiences shape not only the researcher's analysis but voice as well (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

(C) – “Okay, Secret Gay Partner, I’m want to apologize for disregarding you. It’s difficult to let you out when we lived in Banga Sharini. I want to let everyone know that living in Banga Sharini has been difficult in an attempt to find my own personal Consultant identity. Student is adamant that we need time to reflect on our life to see who we are and who we are becoming (Ellis, 2004, p.114). From my standpoint, we need to bring some type of coherence to our personal and professional identities. This is a self-discovery as well as a creation process (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.746). Don’t forget, our identities are not fixed. It is possible that this experience will offer insights into how we can be more open to you, Secret Gay Partner.”

I would like to add to Consultant’s argument from a piece of work that I came across:

“We actively engage in identity (re)construction, and this is not simply an instrumental process. The actual lived experience of conducting fieldwork confronts, disrupts, and troubles the self. . . . Thus fieldwork can reconstruct, restore, or rewrite identity and sense of self; fragment or challenge the self; and provide new and different ways of understanding the self” (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003, p.55).

Gay Secret Partner, we need to look at this story as a research project where we learn who we are and how our identities can grow and develop together. We need to express our feelings and emotions in academia instead of holding them back. As a result, we will be active agents who stress that the freedom to open up personally and professionally within the dominant culture of academia is acceptable (Spry, 2006, p.189). It is about time that the “I” in academic work is legitimated (Beverley, 2000, p.556).

(SGP) – “But I’ve never read a master’s thesis like this, at least not one that has been graded favorably. Student, we may suffer because of this. We need this degree in order for Consultant and Family to develop in the future. Are you playing around with us so that you can use your creativity? Don’t get me wrong, I support creativity, but I have a partner to support and doing this project may not let me go further in our career next year.”

Okay, you’re nervous. Hey, I’m a Student and I’ve done my research. There are many well-known scholars who write from a personal perspective, which is labeled autoethnography or a personal

narrative. One of the most well known autoethnographers is Dr. Caroline Ellis (2004) who explains autoethnography as:

“an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness” where the researcher examines “[b]ack and forth...First they look through an ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing outwards on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations” (p.37).

In other words, our story is an autoethnography where we are attempting to examine how our identities not only interact with others but how we interpret and respond to those interactions from cultural and social lenses. The self becomes the central role where we negotiation with ourselves (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003, p.54). It's a valid form of academic inquiry of the self that allows us to merge theory and personal story (Spry, 2006, p.191). Secret Gay Identity, do you see all the citations and references that I've been using? We've done our research and now we are relating it to our lived experience while adhering to academic structures.

(SGP) – “Well then, if it sticks to the rules and I'm not going to get in trouble for it, then I'm game. Count me in.”

(FI) – “You guys haven't let me talk at all. I know that I'm the Foreign Identity who was supposedly left behind in Banga Sharini, but please let me in on your academic circle. I'm not skeptical about this style of thesis, but I would like to know what it looks like and how you go about getting research from our own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It seems a bit contrived to me.”

Mr. Foreign Identity, we value your insights. Sometimes we get caught in the excitement of this thesis and forget the need to explain the process in more detail. One of the main goals is for all of our identities to speak with each other in this exploration process. It would not make sense to write this piece of work from a third-person, passive voice because then the reader may feel like we are being mysterious and detached from the self (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.734). We have to be clear that this piece is being written after the four month business trip to Banga Sharini instead of talk

about our experience from an ambiguous location (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.734). Paul St. John Frisoli made two trips to Banga Sharini. We left in the beginning of January 2007 and returned in mid-February. We came back to the Federation for three weeks of “relaxation” in order to return to Banga Sharini at the end of February. We worked in Banga Sharini until the beginning of April 2007. We will be going back soon, but currently we are working on understanding our experience with emotions and identity construction. It’s a great time to reflect in order to use these lessons when we return to the volcanic islands.

(FI) – “Thanks for the clarification; however, as I understand, when one does research he or she needs to have some type of raw data otherwise known as fieldnotes. I don’t think that we made a conscious effort to take detailed notes. How are you going to jump this obstacle?”

(SGP) – “Every night I wrote to my partner, Justin, to talk about my experiences living in Banga Sharini. I think that I divulged my identity struggles as being gay and in a relationship along with the emotions involved. We could use those detailed diary-like entries.”

That’s a great idea Secret Gay Partner. Daily dairy entries are great because they are not only private but they recorded our thoughts, feelings, actions, and experiences at the end of each day (Hyers, Swim, & Mallet, 2006, p.315). This is an effective way of getting into our insights (Hyers, Swim, & Mallet, 2006, p.313).

(C) – “I also wrote detailed emails to my supervisor, Barbi, along with Marie Antoinette, the project director who worked in the Federational head office. We could examine what I wrote along with their responses to my inquiries”

(F) – “Now that you mention it, I wrote letters to the rest of my family as well to explain what I was doing and how I was feeling. You know it’s been a difficult time for my family this last year. My Mum passed away and we’ve been trying to keep in touch and support each other more. I’m sure this has something to do with the reconstruction of my family identity. They are extremely personal letters, but I don’t think that we can ignore them. They demonstrate who we are and who we are becoming this year.”

Hey guys, it sounds like we have some rich personal accounts from which we can pull out some major themes and sub-themes for this story. I've been told that in letters, we put our moods, feelings, and ideas to the test where we question the strength of our identities (Yanay & Berkovitch, 2006). From these three sources, I'm sure that we'll have some great material to code.

(FI) – “You lost me a bit here. What do you mean by ‘coding?’ You are getting a bit technical, Mr. Student. I guess that is why you are studying. You are learning how to talk like a scholar. I thought that we were going to try to write in a grounded manner so that many different audiences can extract lessons of their own?”

Coding is a term that qualitative researchers use. It is a way to make sense of the fieldnotes and raw data. Our dear professors, Marshall and Rossman (1999) state that “[c]oding data is the formal representation of analytic thinking” (p.155). It will allow us to place our thoughts in an organized and logical manner. We should probably think of using two types of coding strategies to pull out major themes from our data. I've read about *Open Coding*. It is a strategy where the researcher reads fieldnotes line-by-line in order to “uncover ideas, themes, and issues no matter how detached” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p.143). I suggest that we read the fieldnotes in the order in which they were written so that we can see if there is a progression in our emotions and concept of our self as we discover our Consultant and Foreign Identities (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p.144).

(FI) – “I think that is a good idea. But we must have some general idea of themes before reading the fieldnotes. After all, they did come from us.”

You're right and we will write those “assumed” themes down before we start and later verify them with the raw data. But I'm sure that there will be other themes that arise of which we did not imagine.

(FI) – *“Student, you’re smart! You ate too many smart-sticks at the Smart Store?”*

Stop it! I’m blushing as I type. You know that the coding is not done. It’s a process that takes much time and reflection. Sometimes I feel like coding is the most difficult part of the process. This is why I also think that *Focused Coding* is useful after *Open Coding*. The challenge for a researcher is when to accept or throw out some of the data. *Focused Coding* gives priority to the original themes found in *Open Coding*. These are usually themes that have substantial amounts of data. In this case, we will be able to come up with sub-themes that offer deeper insights into each theme (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p.157). Because we will be examining emotions, we should also implement Lawrence-Lightfoot’s (1997) strategy of coding similar words, actions, or signs found throughout the data (p.193). We will highlight the expression of different emotions.

(FI) – *“Will everything fit together like a puzzle at the end of coding? Will our life make sense to the reader?”*

(SGP) – *“I hope not because as you know, I have major issues that you guys seem to ignore! I doubt that we will be able to pull out all of those nuances.”*

(C) – *“I agree with Secret Gay Partner. We are not linear one-sided beings.”*

There will be some themes and sub-themes that will offer insights for us and the reader. We must also be “intent on showing ambivalences and contradictions that occurred along the way than on declaring an outcome” (Ellis, 1997, p.130) because we want to let the reader in on the emotional process. We are all aware that sometimes our life does not make sense to us. Fullan (1999) expresses that at times, understanding comes out of messy and complex situations. Therefore, our story does not concern a cause and effect understanding of emotions in identity construction. It

seeks to highlight the process of weaving Consultant and Foreign Identity to the web of Paul St. John Frisoli's identities.

(FI) – “Why is this important for the reader? What are they going to get out of this story?”

That's another great question. If I had ten euros to give you for every good question you posed, then you'd be able to pay off my student loans. I cannot speak for the reader to infer exactly what they will extract from our dialogue. However, I do know that autoethnography is a tool that “inspires readers to reflect critically upon their own life experience, their constructions of self, and their interactions with others within sociohistorical contexts” (Spry, 2006, p.189). I hope that you, the reader, will be a co-participant in this story so that you may relate this to your own lives (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.744). I hope that life lessons arise from our dialogue for your own self-reflection and that you can participate more with the text in the “emotional process” instead of just examining and observing (Ellis, 1997, p.12)

Our story of living and working in Banga Sharini, though a tool for our own self-reflection and self-understanding, is a method of offering another piece of alternative academic work to foster new traditions of academic inquiry and practice. Autoethnography is a valid form of research that implements methods that are comparable to other forms of qualitative and quantitative research. Within the field of international development education, the following pages display discussions that are frequently had amongst other consultants. These informal dialogues have rarely made it to paper format. My goal is to continue such discussions so that we can question the inherent organizational systems of the international development industry. Just as autoethnography has opened academia at the seams, it is time that international development agency listen to the voice of not only the beneficiaries of their aid but those who are hired to consult for their projects. Emotions and

identity realization seem to be one of the first steps to bringing such discussions to the surface.

What do you say my fellow identities? Are you up for the challenge? Can we do this together?

(SGP) – “I’m about to cry. What a lovely connection to make. Maybe my voice will be heard one day. Maybe my Consultant counterpart will be open enough to talk about me and my partner, Justin.”

(C) – “You’re being a bit melodramatic Secret Gay Partner. I’m going to write the next letter nonetheless. My story needs to be at the forefront of this Banga Sharini adventure.”

(FI) – “Can I come?”

We’ll all be there.

Welcome to the Real World: Here's What You're Doing to Me!

Dear FAID,

My name is Paul St. John Frisoli. I am the Consultant working on the WEZAP program that you are financing in Banga Sharini. We have not formally met, but I can assure you that we have been working and negotiating in Banga Sharini so that WEZAP develops and materializes in a timely fashion. The purpose of this letter today is to inform you of some of the challenges and successes that we have had while working for your organization. I would appreciate if you would take time to read this, as I feel it will give you important insights on the impacts of FAID policies and procedures while working in a developing country context. For the past four months I have examined the implicit organizational culture and power that FAID exercises which inherently ask people, like myself, working on FAID funded projects to conform to a certain identity. One of my biggest challenges constructing this FAID Consultant identity is the attempt to blend FAID policies with local ideas of working in an organization. At times, they seem a bit disjointed and have an extreme emotional impact on my identity as a Consultant as well as an individual. I would like to make this letter a space where I can express the struggles and successes involved in the WEZAP program in an attempt to create a professional niche for myself as a consultant as well as demonstrating that your policies sometimes initiate messy working relationships. The successes that we have accomplished seem to stem from the WEZAP team and I in our attempt to build an atmosphere that answers to your rules and policies while also creating our own personal and professional relationships.

This letter explains some of these phenomena from the field. I must highlight that FAID language is not just an expression of culturally determined thought. It is practice that follows certain rules, conditions, and obligatory cultural transformations (Escobar, p.216).

(S) – “Consultant, this is a good use of a powerful scholar like Arturo Escobar. We must realize that Federational culture is inherently embedded in the policies of FAID. There is an inevitable negotiation between different social and cultural spaces that must be examined here. I suggest that you take a scenario to demonstrate and map out the disjointedness of FAID and the WEZAP working cultures.”

Thank you Student. It is my pleasure to present to you, FAID, a major obstacle that sometimes hinders the interaction of WEZAP employees from Banga Sharini and the Federation. It appears that money is a large factor that creates situations of discomfort and misunderstanding between all members of the WEZAP project. The funding allotted for the project is not sufficient to achieve the outcomes that you desire. Many of the strategies I am obliged to implement seem to answer to your policies and rules while ignoring the questions and concerns of the WEZAP team in Banga Sharini. I would like to offer some scenarios in order to examine how money influences the emotions of WEZAP employees.

I must admit that when I initiate a conversation concerning payment, compensation, and per diem, I feel intrinsically uncomfortable because it concerns people's livelihoods. In Banga Sharini, it seems that when we invite people to attend a conference or a seminar there is always a debate surrounding per diem rates. Unlike working policies in Banga Sharini, FAID policies do not allow for negotiation. I've been immersed in harrowing debates with the WEZAP conference and scriptwriting participants concerning this topic. The answer from Barbi, the Chief of Party of the WEZAP program, who is based in Anta, a country 500 miles away, is consistent:

“I have to inform you that FAID will not accept paying per diem to Ministers of Education. It's their responsibility and that of the Banga Sharinian government to take care of them. It would make the Federational government look bad. We cannot negotiate with the WEZAP scriptwriters as well. We have set one per diem rate, period.”

Another difficulty stems from the lack of monetary resources available to the project. Barbi has written to inform you that we are saving money wherever we can:

“The decision to rent a house, rather than house Paul in a hotel, is part of our per diem strategy. When the scriptwriters from Agadir and Malezini islands are in town (which is a total of at least 9 weeks between March and May) they will be offered lodging at the house, with Paul. The Guest House saves us over 9000 dollars in lodging.”

Yet as we will discover in the body of this letter, both these strategies; to save money by offering a minimal per diem rate along with housing all the members of WEZAP, result in constant discussion, skirmishes, and problems between the WEZAP scriptwriters and me, the Consultant. It seems to create an atmosphere where those who work hard to develop WEZAP radio programs have nominal encouragement and support from afar in order to “get the job done.” This lack of motivation and promotion of confrontation is even found in the NGO head office based in the Federation. I’m having a difficult time, as well, for being compensated for my work:

(S) – “Oh my! I remember this issue rather vividly. Marie Antoinette, the project director who backstops the administrative and logistic processes of the WEZAP program, has been rather slow at processing your paperwork for payment. Remember when I almost could not pay my tuition bill because of this?”

It’s all about accountability Student! FAID, in order to be paid I need to threaten people. Here is an excerpt of an email I wrote Marie Antoinette:

“Hi Marie Antoinette, You advised me to wait ten days for my consultancy payments to go through, but I believe those ten days have passed. I need to pay my tuition bill this week, if not, I get slapped with a huge charge. Please get back to me. I am a bit concerned about this”

Either from the Federational Side or in Banga Sharini, the organization that abides by FAID rules of accountability, procedures, and regulations seems to rock and prevent the WEZAP team's satisfaction.

(F) – “I don't know much about business, but is this a good thing...to disappoint your employees, I mean?”

Well Family, this is something that we need to examine. Dear, FAID, I believe that we need to examine the typical emotions that arise because of your structures. When the WEZAP team is trying to create new professional identities, there seems to be a lack of encouragement from your end. I have had to build my Consultant identity despite the multitude of barriers that you construct. It's time to deconstruct your organizational culture.

(SGP) – “I think that we should call this next section: FAID – the Structure of Federational Power. It sounds like we are going to uncover how FAID reflects certain cultural values in its organizational structure along with how power is inherently linked in this process. I would love to see the power roles that FAID creates in order to ‘get the job done’”.

Well my friend Secret Gay Partner, you are getting a bit ahead of me. It is not just FAID itself that reinforces power. It is also the actors involved in the WEZAP program as well. We'll entitle the next section as:

Working on the Outside

What we need to do for FAID is highlight the western concepts of business that encompass rules that are detached from Banga Sharinian realities. FAID has a defined structure that attempts to use seemingly neutral beliefs and values that do not necessarily transcend cultural borders. Therefore, these assumptions are powerful tools that tend to box those who are employed by the organization into specified roles. Such job implementation strategies do not often conform to the individual

characteristics of employee's identities. This is where the conflict often arises and "messy" emotions can spring forth. FAID needs to realize that their power structures control the money. They have the voice to either continue or shut it down the project without explanation. So we must ask ourselves, is this new Consultant just a FAID puppet?

(S) – "Once again Consultant, you stun me with your analysis. I would love to take some of this discussion further, especially on the description and development of the western concept of the organization and how power is inherently wrapped up in any entity that has hierarchical structures."

Exactly my Student friend! We would like our various identities, no matter how contradictory, to add their opinions and knowledge in order to examine how FAID, for example, adds to the construction of my Consultant identity. Let's examine how my emotions played out within the organizational system.

(S) – "Great start Consultant! In order to see how our emotions surfaced, we may want to start off by defining what a western organization is."

I give you the honor, Mr. Student.

(S) – "What is the definition of an organization? You must look at it as a process and not necessarily a fixed entity. A company, corporation, or institution attempts to 'organize' itself by using procedures to structure the process so that routine work practices function in an efficient, and at times cost-effective, fashion (Lewis, Bebbington, Batterbury, Shah, Olson, Siddiqi et al, 2003; Escobar, 1995). An organization is goal-oriented, which connotes that employees must work within these structural boundaries in such an efficient and factual manner in order to carry out tasks to reach its goal (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999). Because organizations search to attain a specific goal, they have their own interests in mind which must be achieved by their own attached value-systems (Flam, 2002, p.90). Consequences for these organizational structures include the creation of a rigid, conservative, and at times defensive system to change (Harrell-Bond, 2002).

You know student, you're bringing forth some true elements of FAID, which I hate to admit. At times I feel like I have to push an elephant through a hole the size of a pin head when conforming WEZAP technical and administrative activities to FAID standards. For example, the per diem issues that I brought up earlier in this letter are non-negotiable and err on the conservative and at times stingy side of business.

(S) – You see Consultant, I've researched this issue a bit and it seems that others tend to agree with you. Ferguson (2006), an acclaimed and respected cultural anthropologist concurs:

“Development discourse wishes to present itself as a detached center of rationality and intelligence. The relationship between West and non-West will be constructed in these terms. The West possesses the expertise, technology, and management skills that the non-West is lacking. This lack is what has caused the problems of the non-West. Questions of power and inequality...will nowhere be discussed” (Ferguson, 2006, p.242-243).

What are you trying to tell me Student? Are you saying that FAID uses western dominant cultural values to ‘get the job done?’

(S) – “That’s one way of understanding any organizational culture. However, we must be cognizant that organizations like FAID do not intentionally implement their procedures in order to dominate or push a cultural agenda. Such systems are found throughout organizations working in the Federation. Therefore, FAID implements the same systems of accountability that are founded on Federational values and beliefs of how business should be done. In this instance, FAID-funded projects need to follow their rules, which at times makes projects, like WEZAP, more accountable to the funding agency instead of the workers and beneficiaries to which the aid is destined (Harrell-Bond, 2002, p.68).

(F) – “That sounds counterintuitive to the goals of a FAID funded project. It appears that the opinions of the collective group of workers and beneficiaries are left out of the process in an organization.”

(S) – “This brings up important questions of FAID’s implicit power directives and dynamics. Because they do not seem to bend off their policies, such as giving more money when the realities of places like Banga Sharini do not seem to

mesh with their initial budget or negotiating with workers in terms of per diem cost-of-living projections, they exercise a definitive power that needs to be examined in more depth.”

Mr. Student. I have come across other forms of FAID’s display of power. Before the project began, they had the ultimate voice of when I was going to go. For example, I sat in Anta for 2 weeks, getting paid, while they determined if the political environment was stable enough for me to work. I understood their concern about my safety; however, when I asked my fellow Banga Sharinians about the political situation, they informed me that this has been the most stable period of the country in 15 years.

(S) – “This is an example of FAID direct power which also created a situation where the WEZAP project was losing money by having you sit in Anta for two weeks. Sometimes power turns over onto itself in mysterious and seemingly illogical manners. But we must also examine Foucault’s notion of power which defines power not as a top-down tool. A Foucauldian concept of power ‘... works more subtly through social relations as a structure of actions that aims to ‘affect’ a field of possible actions’ (Burkitt, 2002, p.164). Therefore, actors with defined roles implement power while subordinates have a choice to either comply or risk losing their jobs.”

Let’s keep talking about the per diem battles in Banga Sharini. Even after Barbi explained that per diem rates would not budge, the WEZAP scriptwriters still wanted to negotiate. Barbi abruptly responded with FAID policy and procedure talk by stating:

“I want to reiterate that we presented the per diem rates to the National Minister in February which he validated and approved. I have to underline and repeat that FAID policy must be followed, period. We cannot budge on this because FAID could audit us and ask to reimburse the extra amount that we would have given. We can’t go against the rules of FAID.”

The rules of FAID always seem to prevail. Though it often frustrates and stresses me as a consultant, I have no power to offer the WEZAP scriptwriters more money. I also have to listen to Barbi because she is my direct supervisor.

(S) – “This is exactly the type of situation that I wanted to highlight. One of my favorite authors, Stuart Hall (1997) often writes about how knowledge is linked to power. He states that ‘[k]nowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of ‘the truth’ but has the power to ‘make itself true.’ All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has real effects, and in that sense at least, ‘becomes true’” (Hall, 1997, p.49). If we choose to accept that the FAID policy knowledge is true, then we bend to its power without question.

It’s almost as if FAID is Big Brother watching to make sure that WEZAP uses their rules and power structures. They have two types of power; top-down and knowledge-based control. I’ve felt it personally. They have the ability to hinder or even close down the whole project, which causes me great anxiety. I never know if I am doing my job correctly in the eyes of FAID. They are a factor in constructing my Consultant identity, which demonstrates that identity is a social construction.

(S) – “Foucault would be of the same mind that Mr. Consultant is a docile body who is being transformed because of the FAID disciplinary practices. You understand who you are in relation to the rules. Once you deviate, you become the “other” who needs to be put back on the rails of FAID discursive practice (Barker, 2005, p.229). Barbi has done that to you when she reiterates FAID rules and regulations at nauseam.

It is not just FAID policies that form Mr. Consultant. It is also the relationships that I have with Barbi and Marie Antoinette who are actors within the FAID power chain, but living outside of Banga Sharini realities.

(SGP) – “You two make it sound like we are just a bunch of puppets to be contorted and maneuvered on strings. This is way too pessimistic for me.”

(S) – “Well Mr. Secret Gay Partner, I have to admit that this perspective is a bit gloomy, but ask yourself some questions; why don’t you let yourself ‘out of the closet’ when you are in Banga Sharini? Why do you get nervous in seemingly non-gay friendly atmospheres? What’s wrong with you? I haven’t seen faults within you.”

(SGP) – “Mr. Student, why do you have to challenge me like this? I don’t come out often in Banga Sharini because the rules are based on heterosexuality there. If I come out, I’m nervous and scared that I’ll be humiliated and criticized. You never know what could happen to me. I have to play by the rules in Banga Sharini.”

Exactly my Secret Gay Partner friend! I’m the Consultant and I have to abide by FAID rules when interacting with others in the WEZAP program because of potential consequences if I do not.

More specifically, I see myself forming much of my Consultant identity by the interactions that I have with not only Marie Antoinette, but especially Barbi as well. With Marie Antoinette, she has difficulty implementing FAID rules. I see and hear about what other people think of her. Barbi is not only my supervisor, but we know her on a personal level. She is one of our mentors and at times we want to demonstrate to her that we are ‘cut out’ for this type of work. In a sense, I guess I am a bit of a puppet, but I think that at times I am the agent who chooses to do so in order to get ahead.

(S) – “Escobar (1995) explains a similar concept: “Regimes of representation can be analyzed as place of encounter where identities are constructed...” (p.10). As long as Marie Antoinette and Barbi are working within the cultural and ideological FAID system, these relations of domination will continue (Escobar, 1995). If you accept the dominant views of FAID than you accept where you stand in the hierarchy of power (Lewis, Bebbington, Batterbury, Shah, Olson, Siddiqi et al, 2003).

Marie Antoinette has driven me crazy the whole time that I’ve worked with her. I won’t get into the emotions involved right now, but I’ve noticed that she does not seem to understand the FAID rules of efficiency and how the international development organization industry functions. She is the first person who set foot in Banga Sharini with the duties to set up the WEZAP office so that it was functional. She was also responsible for debriefing and working with the WEZAP employees on the procedures and policies that they need to implement. She brought over a very sophisticated color laser printer for the office, however, she neglected to research if we could purchase the appropriate

ink cartridges in Banga Sharini. The printer has run out of ink and she has failed to send the ink on multiple occasions.

(S) – “Before you go any further, I would like to include that organizations today try to “engineer human contribution” with set expectations about performance. When we demand that people conform to these almost mechanical, robot-like brains, we freeze them into their functions (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p.40). Your example of Marie Antoinette reminds me that if we fail to work in the efficient system, we are cast out as deviant.”

You also have to remember that Marie Antoinette was responsible for training the WEZAP staff on FAID policies and accounting techniques. However, she did not do so and as a result many of the WEZAP employees do not understand the per diem battle issues, which in turn make them look like they are being deviant and non-molding to the FAID system. Eventually, Marie Antoinette left the NGO for reasons beyond her control. She did not conform to the system and became an example of you what happens with deviancy.

(S) – “You could argue that because she did not follow the disciplinary guidelines, she was let go. Barker states that “Discipline produces subjects by categorizing and naming them in a hierarchical order. It does this through a rationality of efficiency, productivity and ‘normalization’” (Barker, 2005, p.230). The lesson of the story is that you follow FAID or you leave.

What about my interactions with Barbi? She is the Chief of Party of the WEZAP program. I’ve worked with her before when I was in West Africa for three years. Sometimes our relationship is a bit confusing because she is at times my mentor and my boss. I want her to see my work as “good” and “high quality.” I’m trying to construct myself as the “radio specialist consultant” in respect to her definitions of expertise. She is part of my personal foreign identity as well as my professional one. I’m getting confused with our relationship in fact.

(FI) – “You guys have been blabber mouths. I haven’t had time to jump in and talk about what it’s like trying to find my social space within FAID. This working/personal relationship that we have with Barbi is at times fulfilling and limiting. I’ll give you that. However, she’s been a great source of support for me during the transition to Banga Sharini. I am a big fan of the expression, ‘wherever you go you find a new family.’ Barbi has definitely become somewhat of a mother figure to me at work and then eventually in a personal sense. She has mentored me in a way that no one else has. She believes in putting me in a situation that I have never experienced in order to figure it out on my own. I’m learning a lot about myself. I now know that I have the capacities to make decisions and to be confident in myself despite the obstacles. She is an amazing person. I’m blessed to have her in my life in my time of big transitions.”

My Foreign Identity counterpart, I agree with you, but I also want to emphasize that she has also become my international development role model. She is very efficient at producing quality products in efficient manners and I’m always looking for her stamp of approval. Her encouragement really motivates me and lets me know that I’m doing things the “right way.” It makes me feel so good when she says things like “You are managing to move ahead on so many fronts at the same time, it is amazing. Congratulations!” or “Keep up the good work. You are doing wonderfully!” These are encouraging words that let me know that I am working within the system of becoming a consultant. I feel justified when she legitimates my work. It’s a joyful experience for me.

(S) – “You are accepting that the knowledge of being a FAID consultant is truth. You feel legitimized when you conform to that system of power. You feel like you belong. In reality, you are accepting the power and structures of FAID hegemony.”

However, there are times that I don’t understand from where Barbi is coming. She is the ultimate representative for the WEZAP program who is in constant contact with FAID. She has to assure that I conform to their requests; it is her duty. There was one instance where I was extremely upset

with Barbi. Once again this concern arose from issues surrounding money. I felt it was necessary to be compensated for the days in which I traveled to and from Banga Sharini since I was working.

However, Barbi responded with a rather curt and direct policy-driven e-mail to me:

“I can say that the decision to award (or not) consultancy fees for travel days is a FAID policy and there is no wiggle room on that one – whatever the policy is. You are working long hours. This is partly a function of this being your first experience. The terms of reference are drafted for someone who has extensive radio and consulting background. A lot of the hours you spent are learning hours”

(FI) – “I remember this situation. You were so busy that I didn’t have a space to reflect and be out in the open. You spent about a week at the end of your stay in constant Consultant mode. I was totally ignored.”

(S) – “From what I am hearing, you are bringing up topics that describe a conflict between your personal and professional relationships. If you don’t like something and the “bureaucracy” has gone against one of your principles, values, and beliefs, your superior can justify the decision by stating, ‘sorry, those are the rules’ or ‘just doing my job’...these concepts of rules and doing the job are the origins of great power. These rules present themselves as neutral but they have been adopted in different social and cultural contexts (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, p.708)

Even with Barbi, our relationship is constrained by FAID. Organizations that behave in machine-like manners become “complexities of structure, policy, and roles” that have rigid elements where we are not free to move. Being a consultant, I feel as if I live in a space of fear and anxiety because I’m not sure what FAID or Barbi will say at times (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p.37). She influences who I am while I become a Consultant and “radio specialist.” It does not feel, at times, like I am using my other identities to form this new one.

(SGP) – “Amen to that!”

(FI) – “You know Mr. Consultant, because we are going through this experience together, at times it seems like you get rather stressed and frustrated because of these interactions. FAID, Marie Antoinette, and Barbi do not work with you on a daily basis. You are the one on the ground that has to implement their required strategies and procedures. There must be some emotional impact on you.”

Foreign Identity, you hit the nail on the head. I am extremely frustrated. It seems like here at WEZAP, we spend so much time butting up against the invincible hands that are not located in Banga Sharini. Sometimes, I do not know how to proceed with our technical activities. I want everyone to know the immense challenges we face and that foreign interventions do not mesh well with the realities. It angers me that we cannot push along in an efficient manner.

(S) – “It’s true that these types of social structure seem to affect the emotional response and human emotional experience (Shilling, 2002). We have already attempted to emphasize that emotion is the experience and contact with the world and self via their involvement together (Barbalet, 2002). It is only natural that you feel internally angry, frustrated, and stressed.”

I am never able to express those pure emotions to FAID. My role is to follow their orders in order to produce the quality of work that Barbi expects along with the actual outcome for which FAID is looking. The incorporation of emotions does not seem to fit into such an equation.

(SGP) – “This sounds vaguely familiar to my identity as well. In Banga Sharini, there is no space for me to come out. Banga Sharini does not seem to acknowledge the concept of sexuality.”

(S) – “Both of your experiences can be considered ‘Emotional Labor’ which is also known as ‘Emotion Work.’

Could you please clarify for us? Your terms are helpful, but you need to explain.

(S) – “I can certainly expound. ‘Emotion Labor’ describes the ‘labor’ that is required to suppress feelings or emotions in order to maintain the appearance of professionalism and proper states of mind depending on your organizational environment (Sharpe, 2005, p.30; Morris & Feldman, 1996, p.987). In the workplace, emotion work does not reflect the personal authentic feelings, such as being stressed and frustrated at WEZAP. It promotes the role that the organization has placed on you, otherwise known as how you are supposed to show your feelings and emotions outwardly (Sharpe, 2005, p.31).

Exactly my Student friend! Even though I feel stressed on the inside, in order to work effectively with FAID, Barbi, and Marie Antoinette, I must put on a facade. This is somewhat the case with Marie Antoinette. We have to interact via telephone and email. Our relationship is purely professional; therefore, our feelings must remain at a professional level. When she fails to buy my plane tickets in time or process paperwork for me to get paid, I become a furious demon in my heart. However, I must remain calm and courteous with her in order to work together. If I didn't do that, I fear that she would take even longer or ignore me completely.

(S) – “You are ‘Deep Acting’ with Marie Antoinette. Deep acting is the process of shedding authentic emotions in order to facilitate the work interaction process (Flam, 2002). This can be an extremely effective way of being productive, but can also have severe effects on your emotional affect. Such an emotional dissonance can be destructive and lead to worker burnout (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p.992).

However, with Barbi, displaying my emotions to her is a bit more complex. Because we have created a personal relationship, at times I know that I can speak openly. Yet, I also want her to see that I am competent at being me, the Consultant, which in these cases I hide how I really feel. When I do conceal these emotions, I get concerned because I don't know where they go. Barbi offers me support in the construction of my Consultant identity, but at times I feel like I am just following someone else's model; I'm fitting myself into a box. I do not have a social network of friends with whom I can talk about these issues.

(SGP) – “Hold on there for a minute. Don't forget that our partner Justin and I speak via letters almost everyday. He offers great insights and support for us.”

Yes, you are right Secret Gay Partner. But Justin is not here on the ground. He does not know the smells, tastes, sights and experiences that we do. His support is amazing and has helped us continue

day-by-day, but we need someone who has lived this same experience. FAID organizational systems demonstrate not only the cultural values of the Federation, they neglect the realities of Banga Sharini. We at WEZAP are supposed to play the roles that the NGO has painted on us while adhering to a false FAID truth of running a project in a developing world. I feel trapped between those who are living outside of Banga Sharini and those with whom I work at WEZAP. I'm caught in the middle, being pulled in huge directions. The most difficult part is that this stretching hurts, but I'm not supposed to show the least bit of pain.

(FI) – “I think it would be helpful to examine the interactions with your colleagues in relation to the outside influences that impact your Consultant identity. Surely, these individuals help construct the Consultant Identity as well.”

You are right Foreign Identity. You've been with me all along. We should examine the interactions on the ground. They will offer valuable insights into where my emotional dissonance seems to flow.

Working on the Inside

Learning to be a Consultant has been a bitter sweet process when it comes to working with the WEZAP scriptwriters in Banga Sharini. Much of this identity construction process has been the result of how local culture seems to mix with the organizational demands of FAID (Raz, 2002, 246). Collaborating with the seven scriptwriters has brought out the extreme poles of my emotions. I have felt frustrated and angry while also experiencing joy and complete satisfaction. Such emotions have helped me realize who I am becoming as a Consultant as well as the need to foster my Foreign Individual Identity in order to step away from workplace stresses to appreciate the experience of learning, living, and discovering a new identity in a different culture. This new identity negotiation has not been a pretty process.

(FI) – “I would say that it actually has been a rather messy and ugly process. Finding time to develop myself has been a tough struggle when you, Mr. Consultant, choose to work 18-hour days. We must also explore how I fit into the identity construction process.”

I agree with you Mr. Foreign identity. The scriptwriters and I have established a tumultuous relationship where amazing and fruitful experiences spring to the forefront. Let's look at this whole process of extreme emotions that are embedded in our identity construction.

(FI) – “I like your thinking my friend.”

Let's begin with one of the first interactions that I had with all the seven scriptwriters. The day we all arrived in Roni, the capital of Banga Sharini, I held a meeting where I attempted to describe in detail the type of work that they will be learning, the timeline for our scriptwriting process, as well as the per diem policies and procedures. I explained the living conditions in which we were all going to live together in the same Guest House. At the end of the meeting, I asked the team to ask questions and address their concerns for the work schedule. At the end of the day, I wrote to Justin explaining what happened during this meeting:

“Everyone kept pushing me around saying that they don't have enough and that they aren't going to be motivated if they don't get more money per day. It's difficult being stuck in the middle. If it were up to me, sure, I'd give them some more money. I think that I am a bit over my head living and working with everyone.”

Each day, the scriptwriters would insist on getting a bigger per diem. We already know what Barbi said concerning this. However, this was an issue that I had to explain daily, before, during, and after work. It began to anger me in a way where I thought I was wearing this anger on my sleeve when working with everyone. I know that hate is a very strong word, but I developed a severe disdain for some of the per diem instigators of the scriptwriting team. FAID and Barbi explained to me that I needed to end all conversations. The difficulty was that I am a young man who was working with

very experienced and talented education practitioners in Banga Sharini. Ending such conversations was not possible from the lack of seniority that I had. I had to take these punches and my anger spilled forth every time.

(S) – “Before you continue to explain your anger in more depth, I would just like to highlight that anger is an emotional state that “stems from...actions by other(s) that deprive the self of the usual, normative, or legitimately expected benefits and advantages that accrue to one’s status, or that inflict such deprivations and punishments on others with whom one is identified” (Kemper, 2002, p.67). Another way to describe anger is that it arises from an intruding threat of offense to a particular concern (Fridja & Mesquita, 1994, p.54). Simply put, anger surfaces when social interactions persist in a manner that is contrary to one’s desires and wishes. In your case, Consultant, it seems clear that the continuous pushing of the per diem issue prompted your anger because you felt trapped in a corner without anywhere to proceed.

Student, I want to thank you for your clarification. Being pushed and pulled from the top (FAID, Barbi) and from the WEZAP scriptwriters was a tiring process.

(F) – “I know that I have a tendency to get angry when I am pushed in a way that I dislike or can do little or nothing about.”

The amount of per diem that they received did not allow them any wiggle room in terms of daily expenses. FAID expected them to establish routines that were limiting and uncomfortable. This blatant disregard for the WEZAP employees from up high also frustrated me. I feel that if you want your team to be happy, you need to motivate them financially and morally.

(S) – “You know that organizations’ goals are to make their products and ‘get the job done.’ Empathy for employees is oftentimes not a top priority for employers. This is one of the weaknesses of international development; NGOs often do not value the suggestions and the motivation of the people who know the conditions better than they do (Padaki, 2000).

I also became angry with myself because I listened to the team and wanted to help but could not. My hands were tied in order for me to remain in my position as the Consultant. I do think that because I was from the Federation, the scriptwriters saw my whiteness as something that could budge the policies. This labeling angered me more, especially when one of the scriptwriters, Samou, frequently represented the power of white people. He never ceased to insert comments about my whiteness and how I was supposed to be.

(SGP) – “Hey, I wrote to Justin about Samou’s recurrent comments about being white. One time I even explained: “Samou keeps making comments about white people. They are not direct comments, but he inserts huge assumptions in his statements. I feel as if I am watching his perceptions unfold a little bit with this living situation. At first he took me for someone who had no clue what it is like to live in a poor country, which was a bit amusing to me. But what do you say in such situations? Do you say ‘hey, I’ve lived in poor places and I’m not shocked by what I see’ in order to prove yourself, or do you just let it slide and let someone get to know you with time? I think it goes to show that people everywhere in the world make assumptions about who you are, where you come from, what you believe, and what you see.”

I wanted to relate to my scriptwriters to let them know that I too faced difficulties with the NGO in order to get paid. I understood, to some extent, their frustrations. But it angered me to know that they saw my whiteness as a sign of power over the sedimentary per diem issues. Because of these obstacles, we battled with anger, strong voices, and disbelief in order to hear each other. It was one of the biggest challenges I’ve faced in confronting someone. On top of that, we were supposed to be producing materials per FAID’s orders.

(SGP) – “These unsolvable confrontations have taken a toll on all of us. Because of these endless discussions, you documented every conversation for Barbi as well as working on technical activities into the nighttime.”

(F) – “You oftentimes did not go to sleep until 1am.”

(FI) – *“You did not let me develop as much as I would have liked”*

(SGP) – *“We all stayed in the closet so that you could work more and produce.”*

I am sorry for doing that to all of you. I think that I started to reach emotional burnout at work.

Not only was I unable to solve the per diem debate, I lived with the scriptwriters. I had no space for Foreign Individual Identity. I had little space for my “home” identities. I deliberately ignored Mr. Student. With the time that I monopolized, Student got none of his work done.

(S) – *“You are right my friend Consultant. Because I did not resurface in Banga Sharini, my anxiety level increased exponentially. We both experienced varying levels of emotional work burnout. Consultant, you could not fully express all that you just described to FAID, Barbi, or Marie Antoinette because we oftentimes restrict the display of our nasty emotions with authority figures (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p.998). Congruently, you felt that WEZAP was absorbing too many of your own personal resources which resulted in emotional exhaustion (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007, p.102). You spent too much time in the Consultant identity. You needed rest. You didn't get it. You did not feel like WEZAP was reciprocating your efforts as well as offering sufficient support (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007, p.102). You placed all of us in the background while you were not getting the results you expected with the hard work you put in. Your identity was one-dimensional. You flattened us.*

I must be honest as well. There were many moments where the WEZAP team helped spark my love, joy, and satisfaction in the construction of me, the Consultant. The negative moments did sour my experience, but I felt like near the end of the scriptwriting sessions, we established patterns of work that impressed me and meshed with the NGO concept of ‘getting the job done.’ In the lulls of the per diem fiasco, we collaborated together to produce what was needed. The negative speed bumps overshadowed the positives.

(SGP) – *“What I noticed was that you were most happy when we all got to come out and use some creativity in our job.”*

(S) – *“It’s possible as well that you became so disenchanted that when things finally picked up, so did your morale. After all, joy “stems from receiving benefits and advantages from other(s), especially when these go beyond what is usual, normative, or legitimately expected” (Kemper, 2002, p.67).*

(FI) – *“As much as the Guest House seemed to confine you to the environment at work, the scriptwriters and I had very personal conversations where we were able to get to know each other on a personal level.”*

When it seemed like WEZAP was at an all time low, I really got to liking Sage, an older gentleman scriptwriter. I called him the gem of the bunch. Interpersonal relationships in the workplace are essential. Employees will look towards each other for appropriate support when they are feeling tired and exhausted (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007, p.102). Sage helped me in a very gentle manner to integrate more into the social network of the scriptwriting group. For example, when my colleagues were not motivated to work, he quietly sat next to me and we collaborated together. In doing so, he called others to come and work. This process was the little gem that brought us together as a team. It was amazing and very satisfying.

(S) – *“Sometimes it can seem like you are at a breaking point where you will collapse. However, many claim that this point of stress is the where you learn to come up with creative solutions. Out of the mess, there comes a solution (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996).*

Sage has quietly helped me realize that you need to see the bright side of any dirty situation. Instead of perpetuating the inherent FAID power and dominance processes that consultants are expected to follow, Sage has taught me that collaboration translates to a team effort. I was the youngest in the group. Sage was the oldest and most experienced within the field of education. In Banga Sharini, it seems that the elder is more respected than the youth. He became my ally.

(S) – “You must understand that social support is a major contributor for job satisfaction and outlook (Dollard, Boyd, Winefield & Winefield, 2003, p.87). Mr. Sage’s intervention was the direct support that you may have been looking for that FAID, Barbi, and Marie Antoinette could not offer you because of their physical absence..

Without my recollection, the negative events eclipsed the process of interpersonal relationship-building that was taking place in the Guest House. Reflecting back on the living and working process, I see that we brought in a lot of humor to our work, which at times acted as a great coping strategy to the intense feelings of frustration that we all experienced.

(S) – “I want to make two major points that arise from this discussion. First of all, it seems as if we come from a society which believes that the nasty negative emotions should be avoided. Fullan (1999) wholeheartedly feels that you must form relationships with people that you may not understand or like. It is essential to work through the discomfort of these relationships which will eventually form more complex and comprehensive ones. As a result, work will become more creative and effective (p.23). Therefore, the humor of the WEZAP team seemed to be a way of weeding through your differences as well as offering a solution to the limiting nature of FAID policies (Flam, 2002, p.103).”

Wow! Once again Student, you seem to be reading my mind. Much of our humor surrounded around the per diem debate. The scriptwriters told me that the WEZAP program created a reputation for itself throughout the islands for being cheap. We laughed about this. In doing so, we seemed to work harder which molded us into a dynamic team. This may have resulted from the intimate nature of our lives. We worked and lived together. We started learning everything about each other. At 10pm each night we would sit outside in order to get a fresh breeze and talk about how exciting the whole process was becoming. I truly believe that when a small group of people get together to work intensely on a project, it is inevitable that personal relationships form out of the professional ones. This makes the work more enjoyable when you feel like part of a team. A team is a set of collective energies where we can all recharge from each other instead of being placed into professional boxes that prescribes how we are supposed to interact together.

(S) – “Scholars on emotion work state that emotions are natural ingredients as the social glue of workers (Raz, 2002, p.43). The team seems to have been built on all the extreme emotions. Instead of using emotion work with the scriptwriters, it may have been as powerful move on your part to let your true emotions shine in order to let the scriptwriters know how you feel so that they could do the same. The authentic emotions as well as living together has formed a family-like working structure.”

Final Reflections

So you see, FAID, working under the rules and regulations have been a rather turbulent experience in my new Consultant identity creation. I'm not sure if you understand the extent of your power. Your regulations attempt to place this identity and those of the scriptwriters into a box. Barbi is an amazing professional who I admire. She offers me encouragement while also policing me. At times, my relationship with her is confusing, especially when she pushes your rules of accountability. If I placed myself into the role that you prescribe, I would be a Consultant burnout. I must realize that she can offer me guidance, but her experience cannot discover my own answers into negotiating my professional identity (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p.21). We are all agents and can answer back to power thanks to our multiple identities.

(SGP) – “I like to think that I impact this viewpoint, Mr. Consultant. I know that I don't always let myself out of the closet; however, I know what it feels like to live an uncomfortable life. I always need to question where I stand and negotiate my comfort levels so that I am safe.”

Yes Mr. Secret Gay Partner, though I have neglected you in Banga Sharini, I know that I have learned from your experiences. I'm glad that I did not shield my emotions when working and living with the WEZAP scriptwriters. It has been a rollercoaster ride for all of us, but I am confident that the messy emotions have served to create a family-like environment of trust and collaboration.

There will be other times where we will experience the same difficulties, but we must be aware that

it is acceptable to feel and display such emotions, just as long as we are willing to commit to seeing them through in order to form fruitful relationships. However, I must also be aware that the construction of me, the Consultant, has impacted my other identities as well. In my attempt to create a social space in Banga Sharini with the WEZAP team, I may have neglected many of the other identities. The story of this journey continues in order to examine how the Foreign Individual, Secret Gay Partner, Student, and Family Identities are constructed and negotiated. They may be experiencing conflict just as I did with my scriptwriters

(FI) – “I think it would be appropriate to examine how this conflict may arise when you lived in Banga Sharini. We must tell the reader about the living situations in Banga Sharini, which are dissimilar to the conditions that the “home” identities are used to.”

Okay, we will remain in Banga Sharini.

(SGP) – “I have a feeling that we won't speak much in the next part of this story.”

This is exactly why we need to dive into the realities of Banga Sharini.

(F) – “We haven't even talked about the Frisoli family yet.”

You guys, please be patient, we are going to get there. Let's not get ahead of the story.

(FI) – “Just write the next letter already. The others will interject, like usual. Can I write this one?”

I'm not sure. Let's co-author this letter.

(FI) – Sounds good to me.

(S) – “What about me...when do I get to write more of the thesis?”

Don't forget Student. It's not all about you right now. Its about US!

The Best Kind of Friend: I hate you, I love you!

Dear Banga Sharini,

It's your good friends Consultant and Foreign Identities writing from the Federation. We hope that you are doing well. Have the volcanic and political issues subsided? Has the windy season squeezed out the humidity and torrential downpours? How about the major issues that you've been having with your electricity and water? To be honest with you, those conditions caused major problems for the WEZAP program. It's difficult to write radio programs when you don't have power. Do you remember the time when there was no water in the city for 5 days?

(FI) – "Oh my, that drove me nuts. I didn't shower for 3 days, which is a bit concerning because I sweat profusely when I am allowed out at night!"

Oh yes Foreign Identity guy, imagine what it was like at work during the day. Don't forget that we also got pretty ill during our sojourn. I think we were sick at least three times during the whole four months. I'm not talking about a stupid little cold. We got high fever spikes and major gastrointestinal pain, which is the politically correct way of stating that we had explosive diarrhea!

(FI) – "I think it is safe to say, Banga Sharini, we hate and love you at the same time!"

Reflecting on this work experience, it seems evident that issues of health, time, and your infrastructure impacted our emotions. Seen as obstacles, these three factors were inherently linked to each other as well as the social interactions about which I talked in our previous letter to FAID. They have really pushed my stress over the top at times. I almost felt like I was going to burst when you put up your unexpected blockades.

(S) – “I think that it would be helpful to use the Conservation of Resources Model (COR) to explore your stressful emotions. COR believes that most employees experience stress when there is an imminent or immediate loss of resources or inadequate return on investment made to maximize resources (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007, p.94). When you are used to reaching certain results and emotional rewards based on your cultural context, it seems evident that when you cross borders, achieving the same results are often skewed. Hence, your stress level rises as a result of a perceived loss of resources.

You're right Student, my stress did increase when I felt like the hard work that I put into the WEZAP program seemed to butt-up against the realities of Banga Sharini. Though you amplified my emotions, you taught me not only patience but important coping strategies to avoid emotional burnout. Little by little, I started to understand how you function, Banga Sharini.

(FI) – “Banga Sharini, you really helped Consultant increase his tolerance for ambiguity, which allowed me to come out, breathe, and begin to explore my own identity.”

(SGP & F) – “Good for you guys! You got to explore who you are. What about us? It is almost as if when you left the Federation, you left us behind in a Federational ditch. How do you feel about ignoring us and pretending like we didn't exist?”

My dear friend Banga Sharini, we are writing you today to discuss how your harrowing self pushed us to open up emotionally in order to find creative solutions to construct our “away” identities. However, your conditions seemed to put us in a sticky position to negotiate with our co-habitants, otherwise know as our “home” identities.

You better take care of yourself

(F) – “Do you guys know what my Mum used to say? She always said that without your health, you have nothing!”

I'm not sure if I believe that Mr. Family guy. Though we were sick at least 3 times during our stay in Banga Sharini, we did a good job of working while feeling feverish, achy, and miserable.

(FI) – “Consultant, you are crazy. You have way too much drive, even when you are sick. You have to realize that at times you must rest and accept what the conditions in Banga Sharini did to us. At times, you neglect that you live in a body that needs rest. You fizzle when you get home and then none of us gets to come out and play.”

Foreign Identity man, you don't get it, I have to work and produce results, no matter how I feel.

(FI) – “I would love to remind you of how miserable you were when you felt physically uncomfortable. I remember how you constantly felt like you were going to melt because of the humidity. The heat seemed to raise your emotional outburst thermostat. When it was extremely humid and hot, usually during the afternoon when your surpassed your tolerance level, you had a tendency to get extremely frustrated and angry at the smallest roadblock. Not only did you feel horrible, you acted like an asshole to people.”

I always apologized if I didn't act in a professional manner. Nobody is perfect and at times it is important to have an emotional response in order to establish relationships with people. You must remember what I concluded in my letter to FAID; at times conflict is a good ingredient to learn how to work in dynamic manners with people.

(FI) – “That may be true. But you worked your body to horrible and unhealthy extremes. You often worked long 16-18 hour days.”

(SGP) – “I would like to remind you, Mr. big-shot Consultant, you often wrote to Justin complaining about your over-exhausted state. One time you wrote explaining ‘I am getting sick again. I think that my body is worn out and if I pull more 16-hour days like these then I'm going to be passed out on the sofa!’ I would also like to refresh your memory that after such expressions of fatigue, you would commence with tirades about how WEZAP employees didn't know how to do their jobs. You got extremely frustrated with their performance when you were tired, hot, and sick. You failed to acknowledge the little gems in your team members.”

(S) – *“When you got sick, you still had your professional responsibilities. As a team leader you had to motivate the scriptwriters, which was another form of deep acting when you needed to be at home in bed (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Though you felt stressed and frustrated in Banga Sharini, you were expected to play enthusiastic roles, which were impossible when you didn’t take care of your body.”*

(FI) – *“We should also agree that at times your coping strategies to improve your health were far from logical. Part of that may be my fault as well. Banga Sharini is a beautiful set of islands that must be explored and enjoyed. The days that we went to the beach in order to unwind, it amplified your exhaustion. I recall one day we got painfully sunburned. We felt like we were going to vomit for three working days. Our body heat amplified the hot and humid conditions of Banga Sharini. We almost passed-out at work multiple times.”*

(SGP) – *“How about when you left Banga after the first trip? We arrived in Anta after 3 weeks of intense work. That same night, I forced us to go to a gay club. You drank way too much and danced until 4am.”*

Yes, I remember that instance. I had to get up and work the next day at 8am with Barbi. But I needed to get my anger and stagnant energy out of me after working so hard in Banga Sharini.

(S) – *“The COR model states that when you are extremely stressed, you implement steps to protect your resources, such as health and rest (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007, p.94). These may not have been the healthiest steps towards your recovery.”*

(SGP) – *“When we arrived back in the Federation after our first trip, our health degraded from traveling for two days in the arid airplane cabin.”*

(S) – *“I wrote to my student colleagues at UZoo and told them that ‘I have the worst case of jetlag that I’ve ever acquired. I feel like I have a horrible never-ending hangover!’ Once again we put aside our ‘home’ identities in order to recuperate. Before we knew, it was time to return back to Banga Sharini without once letting us out in the Federation.”*

(SGP) – *“This was not at all fair to Justin. We wanted to reconnect, but because of our lifestyle in Banga Sharini, we needed to recuperate by sleeping our time away at home.”*

During my first trip, my lifestyle was not conducive to my health, which inherently decreased my emotional tolerance level. In order to get acclimated to Banga Sharini's climate, I should have eaten regularly, slept, taken care of my health when my body was sending out horrible signs of fatigue. Instead, I worked too hard and partied when I felt like I needed to let my friend, Foreign Identity, out to play. My Consultant self appeared to be a rather powerful new identity that controlled the others. Even at home in the Federation, I remained fixated on the stresses of the project. I prevented my "home" identities from coming out to live our "home" life. I trapped myself in a routine of work and bad habits where I did not take my health or my other identities seriously. As a result, my emotions unfurled in Banga and at home.

I don't have enough time

Many of my health issues stemmed from my anxieties surrounding concepts of time. I just didn't have the time I needed to "get the job done." This was especially true during my second trip. My emotions spilled in response to both my social relationships and to the non-human concepts such as time (Burkitt, 2002, p.151). I had difficulties transferring my Federational concepts of time with those of Banga Sharini. As a result, I pushed my other identities away in order to make up lost time during the workday. As discussed earlier, there were repercussions on my health. Yet the consequences of this tactic also spread to my personal life.

(FI) – "This is true. But you must also recognize that during our second trip to Banga Sharini, you also felt motivated by your scriptwriters. These positive feelings of joy, happiness, and satisfaction seemed to allow me a space to appear outside of work. I started to create a healthier space to unwind and let myself out of the closet."

My insane schedule pressured me when I had major time-crunching deadlines. Time enforced my stress. I definitely felt guilty for ignoring my “home” identities. This guilt may have pushed me to create personal time for myself. I felt more open and ready to let “home” identities back out when I returned to the Federation for the second time.

(S) – “Please don’t be upset with me if I play devil’s advocate here. However, I’ve read that humanitarian aid workers in post-conflict settings are often overstressed because they work under enormous time pressures that involve overworking and severe conditions (Diztler, 2001, para 13). Many of these workers express that it is almost impossible to manage their own personal affairs as a result of huge time crunches (Thompson, 1997, p.56). Banga Sharini is not at all a post-conflict setting. Why would time be an issue with you? Maybe you just need to accept that time is different in Banga and cease creating too much work for yourself.

I agree wholeheartedly with you, my Student friend. Please remember that time is defined differently all over the world. Here in the Federation, we could say that time rules us where we connote time with movement. If we are late, we are “running behind schedule.” It’s a catch-up game. However, each culture has different rules concerning time. In Banga Sharini, I bring this “catch-up” or “highly-scheduled” mentality to the islands, which may have been perceived as pushy and individualistic.

(SGP) – “In a letter to Justin, I explained this same concept. When I first arrive in Banga, I noted: ‘I forgot how slow things happen here. It is as if this continent slows your brain RAM. I feel like I’m working at 128M instead of the 512M that I use in the Federation.’ Getting used to a different movement causes certain emotional reactions.

The Federation also seems to be rather task-oriented. Each day I make a list in order to check off the activities that I accomplished. I frame my daily responsibilities within a time framework. In Banga, I often wonder what we did all day. I found myself asking how side conversations amongst scriptwriters could have been used in a more constructive manner. Jumping off the tasks at hand

created an immense amount of anxiety for me. When I saw the end in sight, I realized that we were squished and stressed to 'get things done.'

(S) – “I once read that one’s emotions are distinguished by attitudes, beliefs, and judgments which are determined by one’s cultural beliefs, values, and social communities from where one originated (Crawford, 2000, p.129).

Therefore, our concepts of time are learned. In the Federation, anxiety drives us to feel as if we must perform our professional duties. If we cannot achieve such actions, we exhibit learned emotional responses.”

I have an example of this contrived emotional process: It was Monday morning. I arrived at the WEZAP office early in order to print out documents for a training session that I needed to facilitate. When I arrived, Fatima, the administrative assistant, was not there with her computer, which is usually connected to the printer. I needed to install the printer software in order to print from my laptop. While I was in the process of searching for the software, someone came in to meet and greet me. He stayed for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, in my head, I thought to myself: “I can’t handle this stress right now. I need to print something and then start the workshop that was supposed to start 10 minutes ago! Please go away!”

(FI) – “Consultant, you are ruled by Federational concepts of time. You haven’t let me come out to negotiate and work through this bias. If you would only give up a bit of your control and allow me to discover how to interact on Banga Sharini time, you probably would be able to accept a new time framework in which to work.”

(S) – “You may not like what I have to say, but I’ll go ahead nonetheless. Certain amounts of anxiety and stress, such as the situation which you just explained, are needed in order to confront your assumptions and find creative solutions to seemingly fixed obstacles (Fullan, 1999). When you face the unknown or any type of difference, it seems evident that there must be a certain amount of anxiety evoked in you. This is natural and you must work with it instead of combating it.”

(F) – *“I haven’t added my family perspective in a while! Time, Paul, has always been an issue in your life. You definitely need to accept that working in a stressful situation induced by time constraints is inevitable. Even in high school you did a good job of placing your schoolwork ahead of your family. We are naturally anxious human beings. Your work identities, whether Student or Consultant, have pushed us to the side for a long time because you have not found an effective way to accept your stress. You don’t have faith in your abilities to perform.”*

(SGP) – *“Though you do take time to reconnect with Justin via daily email dairies, you continue to push away from him as well.”*

(S) – *“You, Mr. Consultant, know that we must write our thesis in order to graduate with our Master’s degree, however, in Banga Sharini it’s almost as if we don’t exist, that you don’t see the importance of letting us perform our identity functions as well.”*

I agree with your perceptions about my identity traits. Even when I arrived home after the first trip, I was not only jet-lagged, I created a situation where Student and Family had to order our schedule so that we had little time to relax and reflect on our experience together. It’s almost as if my airplane back to the Federation aborted its landing at UZoo.

(F) – *“We had many family events when you got back. The week we got back, our sister, Big Mama had her second baby. We babysat our niece, Kennedy when Big Mama was giving birth. But we did not have time to visit Big Mama and Baby Chase in the hospital. Baby Chase is our godson. Where are our family priorities? Our trip and school work came before important family events.”*

(S) – *“Well, I am the culprit in this instance. I had an important conference presentation to make in the city of Balti, which occupied our time. I’m sorry, but I couldn’t just ignore my Student self. I had to prepare my presentation and travel to and from Balti. It took time. I didn’t have any other option.”*

(SGP) – *“Wrong answer, Mr. Student. You could have withdrawn your presentation from the conference in order to take care of other ‘home’ identities that felt the need to expose themselves. Once again, you let your work rule over the personal identities. I’m actually looking forward to the end of the project so that Justin and I can reconnect. During the birth of Baby Chase and the Balti conference, we didn’t get to reflect in person on the trip and how we have grown together and apart.”*

I guess that the WEZAP program has fast-forwarded our life. Even when we returned to the Federation, my mind was focused on Banga Sharini because I knew that I would be leaving in 3 weeks. We were in constant movement. It was as if when we got off the plane, our life was traveling at the same speed of an aircraft in flight. It's difficult to remain calm while returning to our "home" identities when my spirit is still thousands of kilometers away. My first trip was a learning experience for me. Please be aware that when I returned to Banga Sharini, I started to create a space for my personal life to exist. I'm not sure if I succeeded in bridging my "away" and "home" identities, but identity negotiation is a process.

Sleeping, waking up, living with the enemy

Banga Sharini, I hate you. You've stirred up my frustrations, stress, and anger due to the fixed realities that are you. You lack continuous electricity in order for the WEZAP program to conform to our work plan. You pit me against the scriptwriters when it comes to lack of running water. How do you expect me to adapt and get used to these infrastructural realities? Must I accept that this anxiety is natural? Will it teach me valuable lessons of who I am, not only as a Consultant, but as a Foreign Individual as well as how to manage my "home" identities? You are the best type of friend. You have pushed me to see that in order to 'get the job done' and foster my other identities, I need to get past your obstacles. You're my patience and anger management coach.

(FI) – "You would never have said that, Mr. Consultant, four months ago. Though we are only 27-years old, I thought that we were going to have a heart attack because of your overwhelming amounts of stress while in Banga Sharini."

(S) – "Though I observed from afar, it was clear that the COR model of stress ruled you. The appearance of a threat to your habitual resources such as electricity and running water caused you to turn blue in the face. Each time that you could not believe the realities of Banga Sharini, your emotions responded accordingly (Barbalet, 2002, p.3). I can

honestly say that your reactions proved the point that 'Emotional intensity depends on the relationship between an event and a person's frame of reference, which determines the subjective meaning of the event' (Huy, 2002, p.34). Whether it was the frequent power cuts when you were on the phone to Justin, or the lack of water to shower after a long day in the hot sun, your motivation fizzled.

In the Federation, electricity and running water are taken for granted. Boy was I pitted with a major challenge when both of these elements were lacking in Banga Sharini. As scriptwriters, we needed to write our radio programs on the computer and use recording studio facilities in order to produce our shows. Yet, the electricity seemed to play tricks on us. This rocked my professional identity. I attempted to be creative and find alternate solutions to our power failures at the WEZAP office. During the last week of my second trip, I thought that I had discovered the answer by renting a generator and moving the office to the Guest House. We also borrowed an LCD projector from the European Union project so that we could digitally plaster our work on the wall in order to work in a more efficient manner. However, obstacles continuously arose with each strategic move.

(SGP) – "I wrote to Justin about this frustration. I remember typing: 'Nothing worked today. We did rent a really loud generator and move our office to the Guest House, but the generator has to be started by the owner, which means we turn it off every time the power comes back on in order to be considerate of our neighbors. When the power fails, we must call the owner and wait 20+ minutes for him to come turn it on. The LCD projector that the European Union lent us was snatched back by them without notice. My day was planned around that stupid machine! The scriptwriters seem tired and exhausted with this project. What can I do? I'm tired too.'"

The scriptwriters constantly hit me with questions concerning the water issues in the Guest house. One of the writers, Arzi, said that the water issue really annoyed him. It frustrated me as well. He constantly looked to me for the solutions. But if there was no water in the city, that meant we did not have water in the Guest House. My hands were tied along with the thousands of other people

who were without water. I was on the verge of tears each day that he criticized me for the water problems.

(FI) – “From what I observed, the infrastructure problems seemed to increase your sensitivity and emotions. Everyone on the WEZAP team was on edge. The littlest bump in the road sent you all into angered rants.”

(S) – “When one has a similar emotional reaction to such obstacles, time after time, such feelings seem to dominate our thoughts, which force one into a routine of moodiness that seems to close down one’s perceptions of the present context (Burkitt, 2002, p.163). You seem to get trapped in a vicious and narrow pattern of emotional outbursts. Please remember that ‘[L]ife is not neat, parsimonious, logical, nor elegant. Life uses processes we find hard to tolerate and hard to believe in – mess upon mess until something workable emerges’ (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p.17). We work in an environment that is differs from the Federation. You need to accept that these messy processes are necessary to find creative solutions. Remember the interactions that you had with the scriptwriters. At first you could not find a means into their social group. Negotiating your space into the group was at times harrowing. You adapted to a context that was different from your own in a way that helped build a scriptwriting team. You must remember that Banga Sharini teaches you important life lessons about your assumptions of the way ‘things should be.’ You need to accept the realities of Banga Sharini.

This of course is the perspective that I am starting to learn. When elements are fixed and inert, I need to accept them instead of attempting to transfer my working identity to Banga Sharini. This is one reason why this Consultant identity is considered an “away” identity. At times it is totally different from any working experience that I have ever encountered.

(FI) – “We must accept that the infrastructure enemy has benefited our sanity as well, even if we are not willing to admit it. Our health has been a major issue in Banga Sharini and the lack of electricity has forced us to relax!”

(SGP) – “Thank you Mr. Foreign Identity man. I’ve wanted to stop Consultant’s little pity party. You did write to Justin about this. Please just don’t focus on the negatives.”

(S) – “In any case, life uses messes to find appropriate solutions for someone (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996, p.13). Fullan (1999) strongly believes that from paradoxes, contradictions, and obstacles there arise a variety of creative solutions (p.4).

I do apologize for painting Banga Sharini as my arch-rival. Banga Sharini, you have helped me realize the importance of taking care of myself and creating my own personal space instead of focusing all my time on WEZAP work. I do recall writing Justin to explain that the lack of electricity forced me to shut my laptop when I was sick in order to sleep. If I had had electricity, I would have been in hospital being treated for heat exhaustion. Most Sundays, for example, the power failed immediately after I jumped out of bed.

(S) – “I remember this because we had decided that Sundays would be dedicated to thesis writing, though I know that if there were electricity, we would have worked on WEZAP instead.”

On Sundays, I spent time with the scriptwriters on a personal level. We would walk around the Roni food market in order to cook a nice Sunday meal together. Eating together was a therapeutic means to calm down. We often talked about nothing, but we made a rule to refrain from mentioning work-related issues on Sunday. This helped all of us unwind and rebuild our motivation for the week of work that approached.

(S) – “Honestly Consultant, you were on the verge of burnout before you caved into the power of electricity. If you had allowed yourself the chronic exposure of intense and stressful time and infrastructure inconsistencies, you would have really been in the hospital (Dollard, Boyd, Winefield & Winefield, 2003, p.88). I believe that your emotions clouded your perceptions of your personal accomplishments (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007, p. 93). If you had crashed, we all would have gone down with you. We would have been extremely angry with you. You may have felt guilty.”

I started to appreciate the lack of electricity, in fact. Though I would get anxious if the power did not come back on within a day, I knew that it was a time to sit outside with my colleagues and

establish much needed relationships. This did a lot for my working and personal relationships with them. They helped rekindle my spirits. After a while, I felt like my identity portrayed a calmness and acceptance of my living conditions.

(SPG) – “Near the end of your stay in Banga, Justin commented on your apparent tranquility. I’ve noticed the overall relief in your words. The calmness you present now is immense, it truly has illustrated to me how well you dealt with the challenges of the unknown – I am very proud of you.’ This may be a sign of your becoming more connected, not only with your scriptwriters, Banga Sharini, but with some of your ‘home’ identities as well. By allowing your anxiety to dominate, you forget about the important people involved in your life.”

You know Banga Sharini, we’ve been through a lot together. I hate you. I love you.

(FI) – “Can I please end this letter to our Dear Banga Sharini?”

Yes, I’d love to hear your insight on the following conversation that we’ve had with our identities.

You’ve developed as well in Banga. It’s your time to shine.

(FI) – “Thank you, though I don’t really need your validation to proceed! Banga Sharini, we know that this letter is quite long. We hope you had the time to read it. I know that my colleague, Mr. Consultant, had certain difficulties working with you. I don’t know what you did to him, but he was often sick. FAID and WEZAP obliged him to continue working. He almost burnt himself to a crisp with the amount of time that he spent in the office.

Unfortunately, he felt that in order to ‘get the job done’ he needed to forget that he lived in a world with other human beings. He swamped himself in his work and barely came up to breath when his body was aching for him to do so.

His negligence traveled to the Federation where our other ‘home’ identities were like a wind-up toy for him. He winded them up tight and let them run around like chickens with their heads cut off. I understand that you were working in mysterious ways. Mr. Consultant had two choices: first, he could have spun himself into emotional and physical exhaustion where he, Mr. Student, Mr. Secret Gay Partner, and even I would suffer. You led him on a path of acceptance and understanding. Once he was forced to rest and take some time for himself, I was able to jump out of the closet and let people know who I was. I love the scriptwriters and all those who work at WEZAP. We shared a bit of ourselves in order to find the humor and desire to work together. Your intervention has sparked hope that we, the ‘away’ identities can get along and collaborate with our ‘home’ identities. Sometimes the best kind of support,

Banga Sharini, is tough love. You've demonstrated that with Consultant. I only hope that we can listen to the 'home' identities in order to bridge the gap between Paul in Banga Sharini with Paul in the Federation.

Thanks for treating me like a little child. I guess I may have been pretty egocentric during the last four months. It does seem like Banga Sharini put me in my place. I thank you, Banga, for helping me. I'm realizing that I am an agent in the power struggle in the arena of international development. I must create a space for my other selves that work with my professional being. Ignoring the personal is to ignore part of who I am. I hope that we can reconnect sometime in the near future.

I've Been Busy, Too Busy

Dear Mum,

This is perhaps the most difficult letter I've ever had to write. The moments leading up to your death were painful and harrowing. Growing up, I never imagined what my life would be like without you by my side to support me in all my endeavors. You were my rock. You were my cheerleader. I felt like your favorite child. Seeing you dying in your bed, we wondered what we would become without you. Would we succeed in life? Would we ever accept that you were not around? I have tears in my eyes just writing this letter because I know you no longer have the answers to my life altering questions. I dream of you at least three times a week. In my dreams, it feels like you are all around me. When I wake I feel like I am living a nightmare. People say that you are still by our sides. A big piece of you is embedded in our souls. Our everyday interactions display who you were, who we are. I feel like a piece of me is missing.

It is time for me, as a son to open up and share with you my trials and successes during the last year. A big part of me thinks that I accepted the position in Banga Sharini not only to get professional experience, but to escape my "home" identities. Everyday interactions as a family member, a partner, and a student remind me of you. People come to terms with death in their own ways. I may have used this opportunity to flee the country in order to avoid feeling cracked and empty.

I'm not sure if you were aware, but whenever I live abroad, I have the tendency to quell my relationships and personal identities with people in which I have connected. After college, I moved to West Africa where I lost touch with my dear college friends because of the distance, new experiences, new environments, and infrastructure. In the process, I developed intense relationships with Federational youth experiencing a similar cultural assimilation. Lo and behold, those

friendships subsided as well when I left. Distance separates emotionally and physically. This trip has been another challenge where my “home” identities seem to have been put on hold or pushed into the shadows of my Consultant and Foreign Individual Identities. Is this right or wrong? I don't have the answers to such questions. But I do know that I am escaping the pain of you being gone. I know that my “home” identities have been crucial and such social networks have led me to this trip while also offering me tremendous amounts of support, growth, and learning about who I am. I'm scared of what will happen to my emotions if I let that support network back in.

This letter to you, therefore, is an attempt to examine how Banga Sharini has not only removed me from pain, but will also celebrate the social support that has shaped me into who I am, in all my identities. As sad as this is to accept, I'm moving on without you. But I want you to know who I am becoming and that I value the important life lessons that you offered me in your short and meaningful life. You have given me a gift. I want to share another one with you.

What it means to be a Frisoli

Mum, you were the Frisoli family pillar. We all looked to you for answers concerning just about every decision we made. Whether I was deciding what major to choose in college, where I should study abroad, what I should do after school, or how to treat other people, you supported me. As soon as you granted your approval, the rest of the Frisoli family fell in agreement. With you gone, how do we support each other now? I think that my way of coping with this loss is to get out of town. I decided to support myself and build a professional life that was disconnected from the rest of the family. Moving to Banga Sharini was the easiest way to get away from the sadness and become my own “away” identity that the rest of the Frisoli family has trouble relating to. Am I a coward? Am I heartless? How can I still be a member of the family when I need you here?

(S) – “I’m sorry to butt into this very emotional letter, but I may have some words of advice for you, Family man. I urge you to value the social networks, also known as social capital, that your family, friends and partner offer you. Whether it be in love, monetary support, or companionship, social capital, as defined by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), is “...the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition”(p.119). Important people in our life, for example, act as helping agents that provide opportunities, goods, and services (Field, 2005, p.9). Recognize that the Frisoli family has been a solid support system from the time you were born until today. The manner of their support may have changed, but they will always be there to help you whenever you call. Please don’t push them away.”

I agree with your analysis Mr. Student. Without my family, I would not have been able to attend UZoo.

(SGP) – “Justin offered an amazing piece of wisdom concerning our family: ‘I guess that I’m just feeling lucky where we are in our life....We are FORTUNATE to be at UZoo and able to make the horizontal and vertical moves...I mean we are so fortunate to have our families’ support in our endeavors...they have also financially, emotionally, and professionally supported us through this.’ You cannot deny that they have accepted our ‘home’ identities. They are proud of the Student, the brother and son, and the Gay parts of us. They love you for who you are, especially when you go off to work in developing countries.”

Yes, I know that their love is unconditional. But I feel like Mum’s love was the purest. I want her to be here to help me as well. I miss her love. But you must also realize that our family, with all the love that surrounded our household, was very private about displaying our feelings. Mum rarely shared her deep feelings during times of distress and conflict. Her death was an extreme event, where I feel like I used her avoidance strategies to suppress the painful memories of her throwing up in bed, talking to her dead father who she saw in the room, hyperventilating and curled up in a ball on the day of her death, and looking like a skeleton the moments after she passed away. These

images do not cease to come to mind. I want them out, away, and trashed. I want to remember you, Mum, as a healthy and normal person.

(S) – “We’re still grieving and we don’t even know it. Extreme sadness is defined as being deprived and lacking usually joyful and pleasant benefits and advantages from others, especially as the result of the death of a loved one (Kemper, 2002, p.67). I can pick out a variety of outward displays of your sadness. We’re establishing unhealthy routines in our life. We don’t eat at regular intervals. Some days we eat only at night. Other days we stuff our face with greasy food. Our weight has continuously wavered throughout the year. We smoke way too much. We started drinking mass amounts of strong coffee. When we drink alcohol, we usually get drunk. Are we punishing our body for losing our Mum?”

I’m a rather angry person with my family these days. I’m not going to dive into the details, but I’ve pushed myself away from them since Mum died. I’ve been detached and connected to my family in the last year. When I was in West Africa, though I was physically removed from them, I thought about them all the time. I always used to talk to my Mum at least once a month. She loved hearing about my adventures. With her death, I’ve removed myself from them, even though I’m only 1.5 hours away from home. In Banga Sharini, I haven’t talked to Dad that much. I actually forgot to let him know that I was leaving. He left many messages on my voicemail asking if I was okay. I seem to unintentionally remove myself with my hectic Student and Consultant Identities. This job has muted my relationship with my three sisters and Dad because I don’t have the time to be with them.

(C & FI) – “This seems like an argument we presented in the last letter. We feel like we don’t have enough time because we are so busy. However, we all agreed that we construct our own concept of time, which results in us favoring one or various identities over the others. We think that our “away” identities have allowed us to create a space to leave the family trauma of last year in the shadows.”

(S) – “It sounds like a coping strategy to remove ourselves from the pain we are experiencing. When Consultant and Foreign Identity have time and space to be born, we focus on how we can best develop these selves. What we leave behind seems to take a back seat in our life. We must also remember that emotional burnout results when we do not

successfully balance our personal and worker identities (Thompson, 1997, p.53). In the last letter we mentioned that since high school, we have a tendency to focus on work while placing our personal identities in second place. We may have taught ourself to use this as a coping strategy for potentially uncomfortable emotional situations. I would venture to conclude that Mum's death is an extreme case of an emotional situation."

(C) – "Is it possible that Mr. Family wants me to burnout emotionally in order to accept Mum's death? When I engross myself in my work as an escape, maybe I must suffer from burnout in order to confront these painful feelings as well as other emotional situations."

(S) – "This may be a natural means, as well, of avoiding role overload."

I'm not familiar with such a term, please explain my friend.

(S) – "Role overload occurs when emotion work is high in both work and home domains (Wharton & Erickson, 1993, p.473). In short, when you have too many emotional tasks to juggle, you can express role overload which may result in burnout. We actually may be avoiding 'home' identity emotions and feeling issues in order not to burnout."

Mum, it seems like I've got a complex series of avoidance techniques that I implement in order to avoid the pain and images that haunt me. Will I ever get over this process? I wish you were here to help me figure this out. It seems clear to me that while ignoring my Family self, I may be putting off a much needed bonding and cohesion with my family. When such overload occurs, I have a tendency to downshift and get out of an emotional situation such as this. Banga Sharini was the perfect opportunity to physically remove myself from the 1st anniversary of your death. What would you say about what I am doing? Will the family rebuild or are we moving apart?

What it means to be a gay partner in Banga Sharini

You know Mum, you did grant me an amazing gift three months before you passed away. Sometimes I wonder if you were concerned that I would be lonely without you. I feel like you gave part of yourself away so that I would be happy with someone who loves and cares for me in the same unconditional way that you did. The day that I told you I was gay you cried and asked me if I was going to be okay. You wanted me to be happy, but was concerned for my safety. I think it is safe to say that you led Justin into my arms. I've established a partnership which you would praise. Sometimes I feel guilty that I didn't let you meet Justin. You were sick and tired. I didn't want Justin to know you in that way. I have been blessed to fall in love with someone who I admire for his strength, energy, and humor. I am equally happy that Justin appreciates my idiosyncratic rants and mood swings. Sometimes I wonder why he puts up with me. We must really be in love because the messy parts of our relationship are minimized by our dedication and devotion for one another. But you know Mum, just as I have avoided the Frisoli family for the past year, I feel like I prevent myself from truly opening up to Justin. My work, at times, pushes into our relationship. Justin has taught me important life lessons about knowing when to leave work in order to enjoy each other and our personal lives. Being in Banga Sharini, though it separates us physically from each other, has taught us valuable lessons about our partnership and who we are as individuals. At times, I still feel like the Consultant and Foreign Identities take control during our personal time. I have failed to let my fellow co-workers know that I live with a man in a loving and meaningful partnership. In Banga Sharini, I am truly a Secret Gay Partner.

(SGP) – "I think that I'll take over from here Family guy. After all, this is my experience and the people want to know who I am and what I'm all about."

I don't really agree with you Secret Gay Partner. I mean, Justin and I have created a family together. Therefore, both of us are equipped to talk about this partnership in the context of the WEZAP program.

(SGP) – “You talk about the family stuff. I’ll talk about being gay in Banga Sharini. But I’ll definitely interrupt you when necessary.”

You little bitch! Whatever her majesty wants, she gets.

(SGP) – “So let’s talk about being gay in Banga, shall we dear reader? First off, let me tell you that I don’t exist there. I’m never mentioned. But I’m secretly let out to wander at night when we are alone in our bedroom together. Hey, don’t get any ideas! I’m not a pervert. I’m talking about the letters that I write to Justin. Each night I write to Justin, along with the other identities of course. Before retiring to my room, the scriptwriters let loose about their endeavors with women. It’s fascinating to live with a group of men. I’ve never done that before. They divulge anything and everything concerning women. It’s fascinating how I respond when they ask me about women in the Federation. I love Federational women. I love talking about hair, make-up...all the things that gay men are stereotyped to be. Mr. Consultant has become a professional actor by creating the aura of being straight. He doesn’t let me out of the closet.”

(S) – “I would like to direct your attention to Stuart Hall who mentions that people’s identities are molded according to how they are addressed and represented (Barker, 2005, p.233). In Banga Sharini, I am immediately labeled heterosexual. It is, after all, the norm in this world.”

(SGP) – “I understand that, but we must let the reader know that my gay identity is important to me. I’m not someone who flies the gay pride flag, but my I like men; that’s how I’ve always been. Why do I have to hide who I am in Banga Sharini? My relationship with Justin is deep and real. Hell, we’re almost ready to get married, which is legal in our part of the Federation. Why should I hold back a fulfilling and pivotal part of who I am in Banga?”

Not only do we love each other, we live together. According to Carrington (1999), a family is comprised of people who love and care for one another (p.5). Therefore, Justin and I are a family. Mum, you helped create this family, I am sure. Just like any family, we support each other while accepting the frustrations of merging a life together.

(S) – *“I’ve read somewhere that business travel, such as what we did in Banga Sharini, temporarily removes a partner to fulfill his family-related responsibilities (Westman, Etzion, & Gortler, 2004, p.415). When this occurs, family routines and support networks are shifted and challenged. This seemed especially the case for us while I was in and out of Banga Sharini. My job demands spilled over into the home (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2005, p.46). We are still experiencing a moment in our lives where Justin and I have to negotiate our home and work identities better.”*

(SGP) – *“In any case, working in Banga and being away from Justin has sparked a lot of frustration in both of our corners. Not only does the infrastructure prevent us from communicating regularly, but the separation is difficult. Justin wrote to me once explaining: ‘I’m realizing now that you being gone is getting tiresome, that the lack of communication is likely causing a build-up that cannot be overcome ‘by simply returning’...because let’s face it, we’re both changed men in the last month! That’s all okay, it is, and don’t think for a moment that I mean to place guilt.”*

As a family, the highest level of strain on our relationship seems to be before and after my trips (Westman, Etzion, & Gortler, 2004, p.425). When I am about to leave, I have to let Mr. Consultant get ready and focus on what tasks need to get done before I arrive.

(S) – *“We can frame this in terms of home and job demands. On the job front, we have quantitative, emotional, and mental job demands. Quantitative job demands are those activities that require a certain amount of time to accomplish. Emotional job demands relate to the degree of putting oneself in potentially stressful situations such as different cultural and social contexts. Finally, mental job demands refer to the degree of mental energy that one must exert on the job (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2005, p.45). Home demands can also be divided into the same three categories of demands.”*

This is a very helpful framework Mr. Student. I believe that before I leave, Mr. Consultant pops into the Federational territory and allows the job demands of Banga Sharini to infiltrate those of the family. Between the first and second trip, it was almost as if Consultant was physically present.

(SGP) – “We could not shut up about our frustrations and difficulties of Banga Sharini during this time. The job demands consumed all discussions with Justin, hence becoming tiresome. Paul even tired himself out mentally and physically in Banga so that his other identities could not shine when he arrived back in the Federation.”

One of the most frustrating aspects of being apart resulted from Justin wanting to be very supportive of this endeavor. Mum, when you passed away, Justin took amazing care of me in my time of utter disbelief, grief, anger, and sadness. He woke me up in the morning. He made sure that I ate. He became the nurturing partner in the relationship. This pattern continues today. I think that me being away was frustrating for him because he did not know how to nurture me from a distance. Our family was separated. While I was in a position to construct my new professional self that were determined by the roles FAID and WEZAP needed me to play, Justin did not have the same instructions.

(SGP) – “However, you cannot just say that Justin experienced frustration from the lack of face-to-face communication. We got immensely frustrated when he did not seem to understand the context in which we worked. We tried to share every moment and emotional situation with him, as if he were sitting next to us in bed every night. But with writing, the true essence of meaning gets lost. He was not able to feel, touch, smell, and see exactly what we were living. Our angst resulted from trying to share this experience with Justin, but our realities were always represented in written language, where meaning fuzged. At times we did not want to write at all, because whatever we did express was just a grain of sand compared to the beach of an experience we had each day.”

Our family suffered from the distance of our personal experiences. Mum, sometimes I wonder why I deserve to have Justin in my life. He acknowledged that I was trying my best to include him in my everyday happenings of Banga Sharini. He even once wrote, “I’m going to work hard on being more supportive in that respect and accepting things that are displeasing and out of my control. I want to be supportive and helpful, not a “hemorrhoid” that also needs to be dealt with in addition to other things.”

(S) – *“I must also admit that I was a dolt when we came back to UZoo after our first trip. Unable to engage in meaningful conversations concerning the future of our partnership, Justin nurtured me and helped me get back to good health. I not only traveled to Balti to present at a conference, I immediately returned to Banga Sharini.”*

(SGP) – *“I felt horrible concerning the way I treated Justin when I was back. But I made a promise to him that once back at UZoo for the second time, I would make more of an effort to shed the Consultant and Foreign Identities and live in the moment as a partner. It was not an easy task, but we put in so much energy and effort so that we wouldn't shatter the family atmosphere that we had created. It required emotion work, compromising, and many heated discussions that we are still having today. But the support and negotiation of our relationship brought up important questions about our personal and partner identities.”*

(S) – *“When you examine scholarly documents on ‘couples studies’, many couples have stated that “attempts to communicate caring and concern about their partner’s professional activities...communicated a great deal of respect for their working spouses as capable and talented professionals...” (Zimmerman et al., 2003, p.117). Without Justin’s awe and respect for the work I was doing, I’m not sure if we would have been able to endure these removed realities together. This generosity of unconditional love giving can be seen as one of the core values of a solid partnership (Zimmerman et al., 2003, p.119). His patience during the Banga Sharini experience held our family together.*

(SGP) – *“He gave selflessly when I felt out of balance and unsure if I could bridge my ‘home’ identities. His support reaffirmed in me that I was capable of anything. He was a crucial agent for sustaining my own emotional wellbeing.”*

In writing this letter, Mum, I’m realizing that I’ve been pretty selfish in our relationship. He has shed me with gifts, compliments, and helped when I most needed it. Whether it be taking care of me, believing in my abilities to ‘get the job done’, or making sure that I was still performing on the Federation home-front, he continuously stated:

“I will do whatever you need okay! And I will support you when all of your ducks don’t line up this semester and you’re frustrated...You will get through it, and in the end, things that don’t get accomplished will vanish amid the things that did – don’t let the small things get you!”

(SGP) – “Our interaction has made me feel guilty as a partner. I may be Secret Gay, which I’ve done a good job of shielding in Banga Sharini, but I’ve also been a negligent Partner who needs to let Justin know that I want and can be just as generous as he is. He deserves support, and more so, for putting up with my bitchiness.”

Mum, did you ever have this type of situation with Dad? Did one of you put in more effort than the other? Did you both love each other the same way? Sometimes I wonder what it would have been like if you had taught us about living with and loving a partner. I’ve never had a lesson on bridging my life with someone else’s. Sometimes I wonder if we should stay together because of this support gap. I also wonder if I am good for him. I know he is for me, but am I fair? Am I hurting Justin? Banga Sharini has brought forth such questions. Our physical separation has distanced us while at the same time reconfirmed our commitment to each other. It has been a struggle to negotiate our newfound independent lifestyles within the definitions of our partnership.

(SGP) – “Much of my anxiety in the relationship stems from the fact that I tried to pick up where we left off before I traveled. Justin is right when he says that we have both discovered independent parts of ourselves that we appreciate and would like to continue when we are physically together again. He is finding a new student and independent identity while I’m discovering a new cultural, social, professional identity while being a bit more detached from myself at home. Sometimes it feels like I am cheating on him by creating the Consultant and Foreign Identities that he hasn’t met yet. It feels unfair to be unable share that with him. I also feel like sometimes I’ve blurred the boundary between work and personal lives with him. Do we really love each other or are we living together for convenience? Am I leaching his energy for my own sake?”

(S) – “Please remember that home requires a high degree of emotion work as well. Partners support each other to increase ‘one another’s emotional well-being, such a nurturing, listening to problems, and other tales of daily experience, and promoting others’ happiness’ (Wharton & Erickson, 1993, p.469). Nurturing is not always exhibited in equal doses. Our concerns here are ‘real’ for you. Our choice of how to proceed is somewhat predetermined. We love

Justin so much that we want to give back more. It is also important for couples to respect and recognize the importance of independence and independent goals for each partner while also being aware of 'marital' cohesiveness (Zimmerman et al., 2003, p.117).

As Justin said, our partnership requires tradeoffs. Perhaps our relationship is a bit one-sided right now, but we must recognize that we've both never lived with a partner before. We have never had to handle traveling while someone else is waiting at the other end. But it is time for us to take a more proactive role in loving Justin. If not, we are going to push him away, just like we have done with avoiding the rest of our family this year. In the end, we'll be all alone to have our emotional burnout breakdown.

(C) – "I would also like to note that I would be a mess if it were not for Justin. He has given me important insights onto how to handle my job."

(FI) – "Because we are partners, he wants us to share this experience with him, however difficult it may be to bridge the 'away' and 'home' identities. He wants us to talk to him about the process."

(SGP) – "He deserves to hear the process of whatever identity is taking the stage. We are his partner. We need to share more with him."

This is where the major issue arises Mum. I hate to say this to you, but sometimes I blame you for this trait. At home, growing up, we never talked about the process of just living. Our conversations, at times, seemed a bit contrived and fake. I don't like to admit this, but I wish you would have opened up more to us and let us talk more about our feelings. Instead, since high school, you let me bottle up my feelings.

(SGP) – "Part of that suppression of emotions arose from being gay as well. We shouldn't just blame Mum. We didn't want people to know what we were truly feeling. It wasn't appropriate in high school to even accept that we were gay. I presume that our routine of closing down when it comes to the expression of feelings originated with our

sexuality. Now that we are in a gay relationship, maybe we feel uncomfortable talking about love or displaying our love for Justin because we have taught ourselves that we are deviant and that hiding is a safe way to live our life. I think that I'm a bit homophobic myself because of this experience in high school."

I'll see you in my dreams

Being in Banga Sharini has also created a situation where we feel the need to hide our family identity. So Mum, it may be because we didn't talk about our feelings at home or because I'm gay, but the Banga Sharini experience has been one of which I am not particularly proud. It seems to have acted as a shield to deny that you are gone as well as closing up from my partner. Is it because I feel that I don't have time to open up? Am I scared to do so? Do my Consultant and Foreign Identity selves overload me with information that I feel that I do not have the energy to unlock the 'home' identities again? I feel like I am at the edge of chaos where I could go ballistic and have a pre-mid-life-crisis, or sink back into my complacent manner of living my life with other people. The social interactions and networks that I have with others have shaped my life. Those at home still support my every endeavor. I think it is time to give back to my 'home' identities and demonstrate that I do love and can be an open individual for those who have stuck by me and loved me in return.

(S) – "We must thank Banga Sharini for this epiphany as well. Without this experience, we would be writing about a different topic for our thesis. This thesis is allowing us to realize that we, the identities, are all connected and that we all need to open up a bit more and accept the ambiguity, emotions, and pain that has accrued before, during, and after the experience."

(C) – "The physical distance is still a strain on identity linkages though."

(SGP) – "While letting your 'home' social network 'in' on the 'away' identities is quite a challenge as well."

(FI) – "We need to find methods that allow such interactions to occur. When we suppress who we are, it's like we are locking part of ourselves away. This means that all of us are closed in one way or another."

(S) – “We must acknowledge the dynamic natures of the self that are at times contradictory, but three dimensional and meaningful.”

So Mum, there you have it. Sometimes you don't want to acknowledge your faults and humanness.

With extensive pain and strife, you had to accept your imminent death. Thank you for your gift.

Thank you for making me feel special and unique. My sole wish is that I can be as generous as you

were. Justin has been my saving grace this year. I promise to take care of him just as he has done to

me. I love you and I miss you very much. I'll see you in my dreams soon. Please come as yourself

so that I can wake up feeling motivated and ready to start this new period of my life.

Is this the End?

Did Paul St. John Frisoli, along with his multiple identities, find what he was looking for on the islands of Banga Sharini? Did he live happily ever after? Does anyone every live the perfect life? Paul searched high and low on this emotional journey to discover from where he came and who he was becoming. His trustworthy companions, the identities of Family, Secret Gay Partner, Student, Consultant, and Foreign Identity collaborated together to seek out the answers to his questions. They were inherently linked in one body. They challenged each other. Sometimes the skirmished while at other times they complimented each other. Yet they negotiated their positions in relation to the social interactions in which they found themselves.

What became of the Consultant and Foreign Identities? The answer remains unclear. After 'getting the job' done in Banga Sharini, they awaited their departure for a third and final trip to the islands in the Dian Ocean. Nevertheless, FAID was not satisfied with the direction of the WEZAP program and put the project on standby. FAID power remained dominant, but Mr. Consultant recognized that in order to work on projects like WEZAP in the future, he must hybridize his character.

Learning to work within the hierarchical system is a must, while remaining true to his other identities was crucial. Though this approach required a constant representation by FAID of feeling inadequate and deviant, Consultant knew that he could not let this institution overtake him. He would need to accept certain ambiguities along with the inherent power of the system in order to put his foot down when he felt like he was being taken advantage of and given little support.

Foreign Identity urged Consultant to take the time to appreciate new cultural and social surroundings with the goal of establishing meaningful relationships with his colleagues. After all, he jumped into the realm of international education development so that he could meet people with diverse feelings and backgrounds.

But what about his overzealousness to work and avoid the “home” identities when he worked outside of the Federation? Did he come to any conclusions on that matter? Consultant recognized the importance of standing up to his workaholic tendencies. Work became an escape for not only Mr. Consultant, but for the Student self. They allowed their anxiety to take control. As a result they lacked the faith and trust in their abilities to ‘get the job done’ within reasonable time, health, and infrastructural standpoints. However, one day, while writing this thesis, they had an epiphany; living in different cultural contexts oftentimes amplified their anxieties. They disliked the construction of these identities and made a pact to accept that “home” identities were just as important to their emotional wellbeing and relationships with others.

Did they bring this perspective back to the Federation? The Family guy’s avoidance tactics did not magically evaporate. Don’t forget that we are all human. After the Secret Gay Partner and Family guy added their last period to this thesis, they ran home to kiss Justin and hold him tight. They recognized that giving back is also a means of receiving and revamping their energy. The gems of life are worth taking care of and supporting. All the faithful identities comprehended their inherent interaction and impact they had upon the other. They united in a movement to accept the emotional baggage of the past in order to create new and rich experiences in the future.

Dear reader, life, as you have noticed is full of mess. At times, if you accept that you don’t have control over yourself and others, then you will cope well with ambiguity. However, if you push too hard and disvalue the necessity for chaos and uncertainty, you may lead a confined life where you fail to see all the creative possibilities that are only a touch away. Please go in peace to reflect on this emotional negotiation and construction of the self. When you come back, we will discuss what it

means for sojourners, like Paul, to work in the developing country context. Do they exhibit inherent power because they come from places like the Federation? How do their whiteness and social classes interact with their colleagues on projects like WEZAP? What do people in FAID think of their roles as agents of power? How do they negotiate that power? Such questions are for the next journey of self discovery. Paul St. John Frisoli did find important answers to his questions after living on the volcanic islands of Banga Sharini. He also discovered that there may be many more bubbling up on the surface that we all must ask ourselves in the quest for self understanding. What are some of your most trying life questions? Let them erupt in any medium that you desire. Until next time.

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