

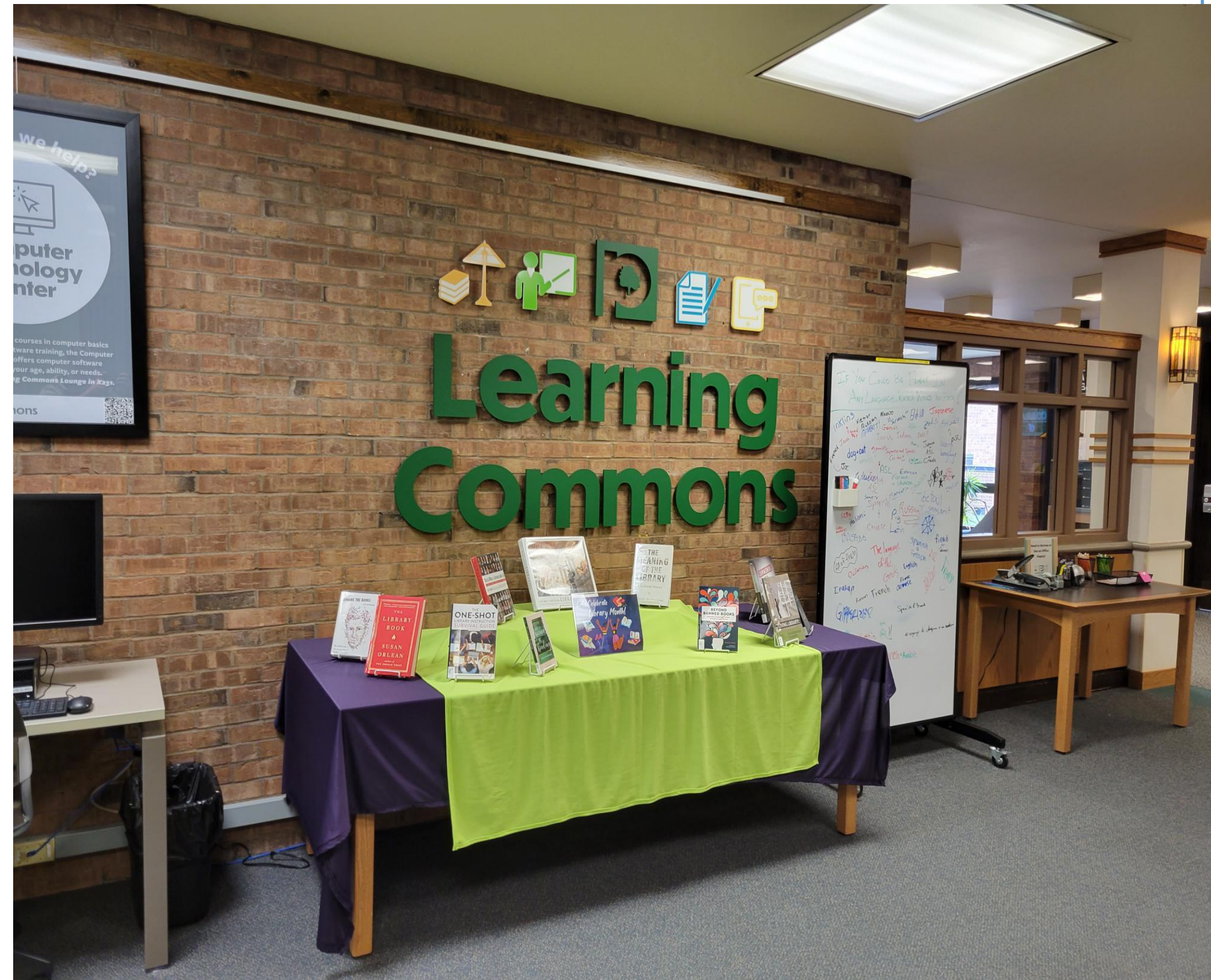
Exploring the Lived Experiences of Parkland College Students

Yashvardhan Ahlawat, Michael Bellamy III, Ethan Derringer, and Sheena Shane

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, ANT 103, Parkland College, Spring 2023

Introduction:

Parkland College is home to roughly 10,000 students, coming from various backgrounds and cultures. This diversity in the student body, led us to focus this study on the types of resources offered to Parkland students. We believe that the college answers to the needs of its students and that looking at these resources in terms of academics and mental health can help identify the challenges that students deal with in their lived experiences.



Habitus in cultural anthropology is defined as the “dispositions, attitudes, or preferences” that a community uses to create an identity (Griffith and Marion 2020). By observing the habitus of Parkland students, and how this community is supported we can better understand the student lived experiences. We further narrowed our focus by asking how the different resources and support services offered to students compared to the neighboring University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Methods:

We chose to conduct our research with a formal interview at one of the programs that help the largest and most diverse group of students, TRIO, as well as participant observation and reflexivity among our group members.

The interview we conducted sought to learn more about student life at Parkland College, with questions regarding TRIO’s role in helping students, difference between student life at Parkland College and the University of Illinois, and the impact of technology on the new generation of students. The questions used for the interview included:

- What's TRIO all about?
- What's the job like in TRIO?
- How are you exactly involved in student life?
- What are some resources the school offers?
- How is student life different here than UIUC?
- What are some impacts of internet and social media on students' lives?



Results

TRIO is a grant funded program that helps students graduate from Parkland College and/or transfer to 4-year schools, meanwhile providing a safe environment while they attend the college. They also provide tutoring and tours to other colleges.



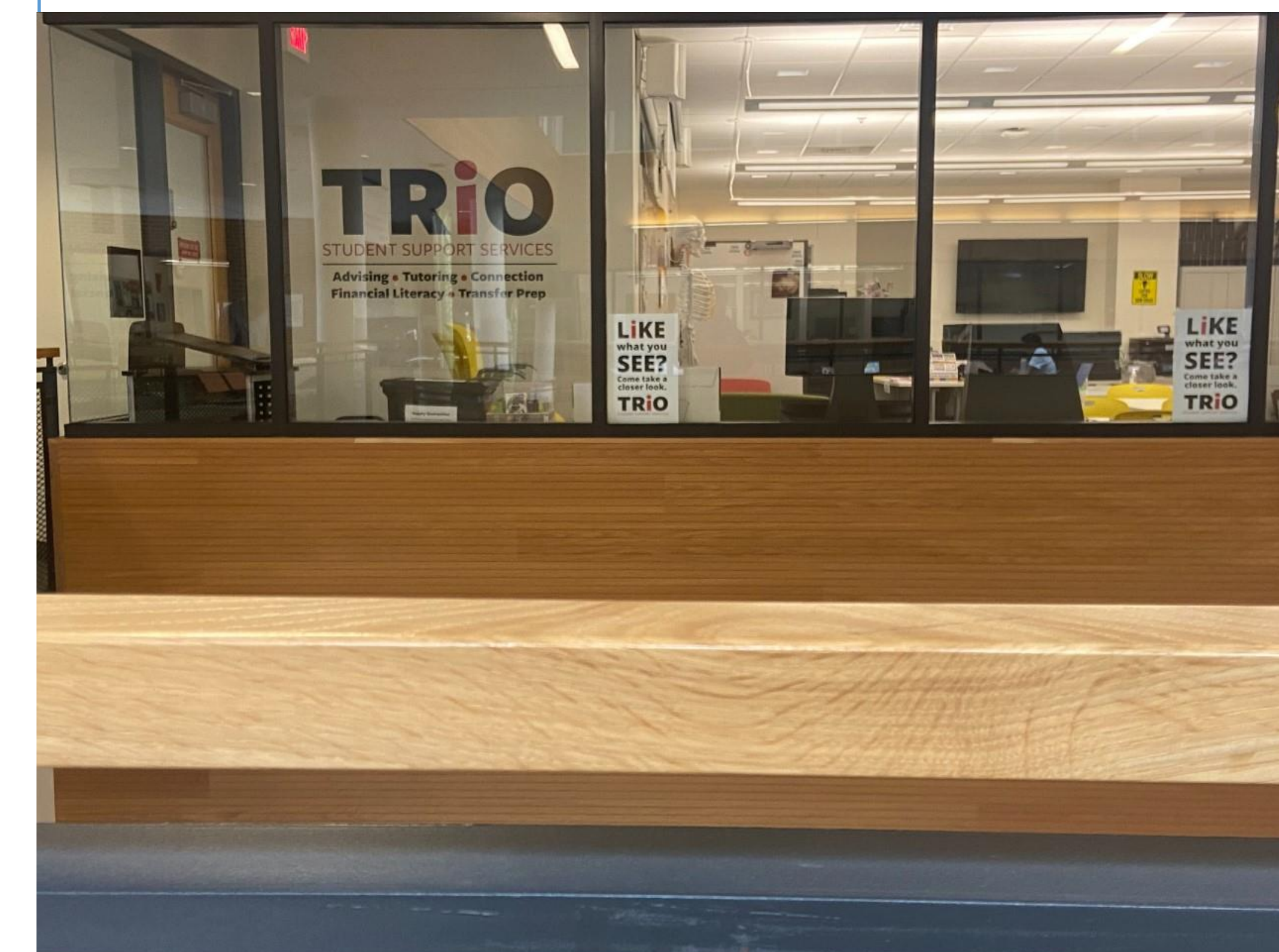
A summary of our interview shows that the mental health resources at Parkland are “above average,” given how they deal with more students working jobs, managing families, and attending college at the same time, unlike their counterparts at the University of Illinois. This suggests that students at Parkland deal with more stress from home and the workplace than those at the university.

When discussing the rise of technology, we were told that it has been affecting students’ behavioral patterns as well as their mental well being and social skills. Staff at TRIO have seen a decrease in these skills over time.

These findings agree with our own experiences where some of us have benefitted first-hand from the academic resources provided by the school, and from what we can observe from the resources available here and at UIUC, where some of our group attend concurrently.

Discussion

Our study helped us understand that Parkland College students are provided with ample academic services to help them through college and into other universities and/or jobs. However, students at Parkland experience higher levels of stress compared to four-year students due to the complex nature of their lives, to counter which, the college also provides mental health services that allow a safe space for students to lead a balanced life both inside and outside of school. We hope this provides a good starting point for other questions anthropology students might have on Parkland’s student body and their experiences.



References:

Images by: Michael and Ethan

Reference Cited: Griffith, Lauren Miller and Jonathan S. Marion. “Globalization” In *Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd Edition, edited by Nina Brown, Thomas McIlwraith, and Laura Tubelle de González, 304-331. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 2020.

