

English 180, Second Place; Professor, Dr. Jacqueline S. Wilson

Field Analysis

Faith Buie

The group I observed was Love Me Naturally, of which I am a member after joining at the beginning of the semester. Love Me Naturally is a group that focuses on learning to love yourself and learning self-empowerment; the group also teaches the importance of loving others as well. I found out about this group at the Activities Fair Western had during the beginning of the second semester. During the first meeting of Love Me Naturally, the members said that the group was here for about two years or so prior to me coming to Western. I do not recall who started it or why it was started. My assumptions are that some friends wanted to start a group to help people love themselves and others. Love Me Naturally meets every Wednesday at five in the Multicultural Center for about an hour, sometimes going over an hour if the conversation starts to get interesting. The group members, which consists of about eight to twelve girls, are a bunch of loud, funky, and friendly girls with equally funny personalities. After observing this group, I saw how well the members all communicated amongst one another so effortlessly by describing how they greet one another, joke around with one another, the type of vocabulary they use, and how they all say goodbye to one another when it is time to leave.

Forms of Address:

Whenever I walk into Love Me Naturally, I am greeted by whichever members are there before me. They wave and smile, saying hello to me, and I return it back to them. After that, they

usually go back to scrolling through whatever is on their phones or some members talk to each other.

“Hey, y’all,” That’s Jasmine, the “leader” of the group. There is really no defined leader to the group, but Jasmine is the most outspoken of the members, usually starting off the discussions, so one would assume that she was the leader. Jasmine greets us in a somewhat exasperated sounding voice as she plops down into one of the many cushioned lounge chairs.

“Hey,” we, the members, all say back, and some wave and smile.

“How y’all doin’” Jasmine asks next, “how was everybody’s day?” Some of members respond with: “Good,” and “It was decent.” Others just nod.

“How was yours, Jasmine?” Asia asks, another “leader.” She sits off in one of the corners. To an outsider, she would seem like she was a quiet member who barely speaks; but, just like Jasmine, she takes initiative in starting conversations; she is just not as outspoken as Jasmine.

“Well,” Jasmine starts with a laugh. She takes off her bag and gets comfortable, sitting up to tell us about her day and everyone starts to tune in, ready for a laugh, which comes not too much shortly after her first sentence. The greetings tend to be short and to the point and are used to get everybody’s attention and somewhat energize everyone after a long day. The way everyone greets each other shows how there is a mutual friendship amongst everyone, even with the new members; nobody feels awkward when at Love Me Naturally.

Vocabulary:

Seeing as a majority of the members are black women and from Chicago, such as myself, our style of talking is used in the group. AAVE, which stands for African American Vernacular

English, is what is spoken amongst the members. About a week or two prior, Jasmine was talking about how she was going to be walking in the fashion show that was happening at Western.

“Y’all, I got this bomb a** dress and the matching lipstick Rihanna wore in ‘Work!’” she laughs, flipping her hair for dramatic effect, smacking her lips, “y’all just don’t know, I’m finna be... and I got these cute heels... they little, but, I’m still gon’ kill it. This how Imma walk on stage.” She gets up and walks to the end of the room before turning around dramatically and strutting to the other end of the room. When writing about this feature of the paper, it was hard to actually pick up on it as I am used to hearing it, and I use this style of speech amongst my friends and family. Whenever I am talking with my friends and family, especially when talking or texting with my sister or friends, we tend to use phrases like: “I feel you or you feel me?”, “they tweaking/ trippin’,” and “what you on?” To me, this style of speech is more so related to a sense of community/ a sense of family; it is a way for us to relate to one another without being judged for how we pronounce words/ form sentences. Everyone I know talks in this way. To me, it is one way that links everybody together and shows that we all come from similar backgrounds.

Jokes/Joking Around:

There are a lot of jokes being said in the group. Not so much at the expense of the members in the group, but of actual situations that have happened to the members themselves like dealing with school and people in general. During one group meeting, we all talked about the police and the racial profiling that has happened to some of the members. Sometimes, they joke about each other, but it does not happen frequently.

“Like I like that the weather is nice and all, and I like being outside, but only for a short period of time,” Jasmine says after a discussion about the weather, “like I will not go to a kick back with my mother. She’ll be outside, y’know, chilling with everyone, and I’ll be ready to go after two hours.” Everyone starts to laugh. Jasmine continues, “be getting all hot and sweaty, and then bugs be coming out. I don’t know about y’all, but I *absolutely hate* flies.”

“Oh, my God! Yes!,” Felicia says, “just hearing them buzz just...” she shudders for emphasis on her complete dislike of flies.

“Yes!” Jasmine agrees. She proceeds to talk about how she has a strong hatred for flies/bugs in general, saying how when there was a fly in her room, she had to leave the room and go to another part of her house.

“Maybe I’m being extra (dramatic; too much), but I really hate flies,” she pauses and slouches after she finishes her spiel. “Nah, I’m not being extra, I really, genuinely hate flies.”

“No, you’re being extra, Jasmine,” Asia says, which results in everybody laughing, including Jasmine. “You’re so dramatic.” This is the one example I’ve seen of them teasing someone. Usually, they joke about their day, and dealing with their professors or people in general.

Leave Taking:

When the designated time has been reached, or passed if the conversation was good or the members were simply having fun, it is time to say goodbye. “Well, it looks like it’s about that time,” Jasmine usually says. It is usually when everything has settled down as in no one is really saying anything anymore, or someone has realized that the time has gone over. Everyone will usually stand and say goodbye to one another. “See y’all next week,” Asia, Jasmine, or any

of the other members will say. Sometimes, someone will ask if anyone has a weekly obsession they would like to share, which is just something/ someone that a member of the group has been obsessed with for the week or just in general, and if somebody does have one and they wish to share it, everyone will usually stay behind a little longer and listen to what it is about. The meeting last week concluded with Jasmine and Felicia discussing how they were in love with this new lipstick, as they are the makeup lovers of the group. Sometimes, the weekly obsession will be a music video, or, to one member named Makaila, her weekly obsession was herself, which earned her approval from the members.

After studying Love Me Naturally, I can see that the relationship among members is super friendly and relaxed. Yes, the group is friendly because they include anybody who walks through the doors and decides to join them. Nobody shuts anybody down when they have something to say, and the members tend to listen intently whenever somebody inputs their opinion. I think the conversation shows that the group is very laid back, but, to me, the conversations seem to be catered to people who are like the members of the group. Sometimes, it can be catered to all, but some of the conversations that take place within the group can only be truly understood by us, black women, and that is where I think some of the separation lies. Sometimes, the conversations that we have can only truly be understood by the people that go through them, and the effects it has on the community like dealing with the police, and even the way we communicate- using AAVE- can also be another barrier.

There is no defined leader of the group, because it is just a conversational group, but Jasmine being so outspoken and the one who gets the conversations started, she seems like she is the leader of the group. Jasmine definitely dominates the conversation, but that does not mean

she does not let anyone speak, and she does let them say their whole piece, and she allows others to put in their input as well, and because of that, I do not think it has any effect on the group as no one seems to mind her outspokenness. In fact, everybody seems to enjoy her commentary. There are no outward tensions in the group; everyone seems cool with one another. Whenever there are discussions, everyone's opinions are welcomed, and there will be a pause to let others say what they want to say, so the group is very inclusive.

To sum everything up, I learned while watching, being a member of the group, and actually paying attention, is that these girls and I are pretty much all the same. From our upbringing and our high school days, they were all pretty much similar. Before when I would just sit around and listen, I never really paid attention to the dynamics of the group; I never realized how funny and friendly they were to one another. They always remain respectful to whenever someone is talking and listen intently. They also know how to have fun and are not afraid to be themselves, even around new people.