Response to Fiction

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In Michael Boylan’s text *Rainbow Curve* the notion of race and skill intersect in an environment primarily focused on white players. It is in this text that the author identifies that topics such as race, politics, and corruption intersect on and off the field. Throughout the text these themes are presented in the text, and the author aims to identify that each one of them plays an integral role in the characters; primarily in the main character. With a strong integration of the past as part of the rhetoric for the story’s present time the author identifies a precedent of oppression for the players in the game.

In the opening chapter, and scene of the book Boylan embodies these ideals and sets the stage for the entirety of the novel. This identification of the tone is set early on, and done so in such a manner that properly allows individuals to see the strength of someone to overcome their own status in life and deal with the myriad of challenges that may come their way. The first passage begins forward in time with it being 1984. The description of the scene is one of a classic sports environment in which there is a team of players working to prepare for the season ahead. The players are practicing out in the desert of Arizona and are working to prepare for an upcoming season. The description that is set forth describes the difficulty that the team is having, that they are being pushed too far by their coach and manager. Buddy Bael is the first character introduced by name in the text, and his significance carries forward as his relationship with Bo becomes central to much of the text.

As Buddy Bael gets up and goes over to the team and a look inside his understanding of the team comes about. Buddy Bael believes that the team complains too much, that they do not know how easy they truly have it. With the advancements of their industry they should be happy and not be complaining about their current situation; but rather they should be happy with any level of opportunity that they are given. That notion carries heavily throughout the text as Bo is plagued by a similar thought pattern, that later in the text when he gets less playing time he should be grateful for the status he has on the team at all. The message is that individuals given an inch should not ask for the mile, but those in a position of power who decide to extend gratitude do not expect more requests but rather contentedness from the party receiving.

The primary focus of the first chapter of the text; however, comes when a stranger observing the team playing is brought to light. The individual is sitting watching the players on the field darting his eyes back and forth as the team practices. The mysterious man was then approached by the pitching coach stating to the man that the practice of the team was not open to the public. Sam Dowel, the pitching coach and the next character identified by name foreshadows the role of the character. It is then after an inquiry that the man states that he is a pitcher, and Dowel states that the man is too old to be a pitcher and immediately negates anything he has to say. The stranger, who we learn later to discover is our protagonist Bo, states again he is a pitcher and proves his prowess to the men. First when he is brought on to show his skill he downplays his abilities and throws a few easy pitches. It is then when the guard is down from the team, and they expect nothing of him that he demonstrates the hard hitting throws he is capable of.

The point of view that is reflected in the text is one that then presents that individuals are judged on their appearance and their capabilities are downgraded. Bo, in the text explicitly states that he is a pitcher and yet he is disregarded because of his perceived age. When he shows the coaches and the players his ability he breaks their perception for that moment in time. The view point is then that individuals have to work to break the boxes that others put them in. This is exemplified after Bo is able to demonstrate that he can throw a pitch at 92 miles per hour, that Sam Dowel is said to speak to him in an entirely different tone than he did in the beginning of the chapter. The tension and message of Bo is not just that he did not look like a pitcher that was of a viable age, but it is also that he is Latin American. The text explicitly states that scouts avoided players from the region because of the political climate, but then Sam decides to move forward and introduce Bo to Buddy Bael.

I agree with the message and point of view which the author presents in the text. The complexity of fitting in to a group is exemplified by Bo in this first chapter. I agree with the means by which Bo goes about presenting his skills, as he downplays them at first because he knows he is talented and does not need to out rightly shove his skills in their face. He is humble in his approach, calm and collected about the abilities he has and knows that they will speak for themselves. The point of view asserts that individuals are striving to integrate themselves into environments that they know they are capable of excelling in, but must first deal with the challenges of opposition and misconceptions regarding their character.

Within the context of this passage from the text, the practical and theoretical philosophical principle at stake is that of integration and adherence to norms. The problem at hand is that individuals operate under the guidance of social norms, and if the social norm is one of exclusion than that trend is difficult to break. Bo is different in many ways. Foremost, he was thought to be too old to be playing the sport, and secondly, he is of Latin American descent. Both aspects of his character are challenging for Sam Dowel to take in but he continues to establish an interest in Bo.

The first principle that creates a positive reaction and correlation to the theme is that of perception. The text presents Bo in a negative light initially to present that he is actually more impressive than he seems. An objector to that would not that his perception as an outlier in appearance is correlated to his status as a Latin American in baseball during a politically challenging time period. However, to refute that objection Dowel is so impressed by his skills that he ignores that challenge and brings him to Buddy. The second principle that is applied to this text is an understanding of positive symbolism. Thus, Bo is seen in this chapter as a beacon of hope for individuals of Latin background in the sport. Objections would indicate that the explicit mention of the political climate suggests that inclusion will not mean positive symbolic power. However, to refute this Bo’s unassuming nature shows that he has more talents than is seen in this first chapter. He shows a wealth of skill that is not known in full to either the reader or the characters within. The third principle is that of egoism, where Bo does not represent an overinflated ego despite having great talent. Objectors would state that Bo has in inflated sense of ego in that he delayed showing his true skill so to deceive the team at first. However, Bo’s gradual showing of his skill portrays his presence and ability to balance his character to both skillful and humble simultaneously.

The three philosophical concepts relate to the way in which Bo is represented in this first chapter. HE is not given a name, but he is seen just by these three major character traits of: unassuming, talented, and Latin American. The latter trait is essential to the rhetoric of the story which indicates that there is a significance in the entirety of the story that there is someone who is capable of being talented and from a politically tumultuous background and that they can be integrated into the team. The author solidifies that in this introductory chapter to the text the reader builds a perception of Bo that is open to change and understands the possibility of a challenge.

It is then this introductory chapter that exemplifies a challenge that many minorities have in the modern age. That challenge is one of inclusion in a time of rejection. However, if an individual is able to have the skill they are able to take the first step and get their foot into the door, which is exactly what Bo has done in this first chapter. In the modern age individuals from minority backgrounds deal with challenges to integrate themselves. The text focuses on Latin Americans specifically and that is addressed in modern times with the political climate of the United States. Currently, minorities are pushing for DREAMER acts in which individuals who are illegal citizens that are underage will be granted residency and be able to pursue a future. Many of these individuals have to prove to those that challenge them that they are not the negative stereotypes or challenge that their political climate suggests. Rather these individuals are seeking out to show they are skilled students, athletes, and members of society just as Bo had to do in the text by Boylan.

The significance of the philosophical connotations then suggests that there are notions of the world that have not changed from the 1980’s time setting presented in the text. The points that are understood about the world now represent that minorities are still facing challenges and many times they have to exemplify why they are not their stereotypes. Individuals cannot enter into an environment where they are the minority and expect to not be met with the preconceived notions of others. Rather they must do what those who support the Dream Act do, and what Bo did, which is stay humble and confident in one’s abilities. That confidence then transforms the perception of those around you, and then elucidates that change is possible if individuals are capable of staying true to their primary mission and the vision that they are seeking to create.