

Write On, Sister

Merry Ann DeVaney Sauls Annual Writing
Contest

May 2017

About the Contest

The Merry Ann DeVaney Sauls Academic Writing Contest was developed by the Writing Across the Curriculum Interest Group to enhance the prestige of academic writing in the disciplines at Cottey. The contest is named after an alumna of Cottey College who funded the endowment that supports it and who believed very strongly in the value of writing and communicating well.

All students are invited to submit writing to the contest. Writing done for courses in each of the four divisions of the college and in composition courses is eligible. Off-campus judges, professors in the relevant disciplines at other colleges and universities, choose the best from the finalists. The authors are honored at a public ceremony at the end of each academic year, and the top essays in each category are published annually in the publication *Write On, Sister*, edited by members of the English Department.

For many Cottey students, entering the Merry Ann DeVaney Sauls Academic Writing Contest is a way to seek public recognition for the hard work they do throughout the year. Typically between 60 and 85 entries are submit to compete for 10 top honors.

The Writing Across the Curriculum Interest Group seeks ways to promote writing in and across the disciplines and to honor the good writing students do at Cottey. It comprises faculty and staff interested in student writing and writing instruction at Cottey. In pursuit of these interests, the group conducted a pilot writing portfolio project and developed the Cottey College Academic Writing Contest. It also supports the Writing Center located in the Academic Assistance Center of the Academic Center.

To view past editions of *Write On, Sister*, visit the [Writing Contest](#) website.

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Contest Finalists

Academic Writing

- Malukah Fard-Allah, “Final Test Intro to the English Major”
- Veronica Wright, “A Discrepancy in Discourse Community Definition”
- Whitli Thomas, “Huntington’s Disease: Understanding Changes in Protein and DNA Interactions Driving Disease Progression”

Composition

- Rebecca Robinson, “The Daily Daisy: Texas, Textbooks, and Why You Should Visit the Library”
- Veronica Wright, “Understanding the Importance of Reflection”
- Alex Marroquin, “Female Breast Exposure: What Makes It Decent?”

Creative Writing

- Shayna Meisenheimer, “Where is the Dance?”
- Charlene Nicole Penick, “The Moss on the Cave Wall”
- Laurel Loyless, “Left Behind”

Everyday Writing

- Malukah Fard-Allah, “Adventures in Multimedia Writing”
- Christina Litherland, “Final Reflective Thoughts”
- Laurel Loyless, “Live, Laugh, Dove”

Professional Writing

- Kalina Jurkowski, “Query Letter for Lonely Planet”
- Abigail Baumgartner, “Deforestation in the Congo Basin: A Critical Look”
- Ellen Long, “Phi Theta Kappa IRB Application”

Writing in a Foreign Language

French

- Alex Marroquin, “L’année en Italie”

Spanish

- Grace Diaz, “Voces Inocentes”
- Kalina Jurkowski, “Una carta al presidente”
- Selica Pilyo, “La Pobreza en los Siglos XIV Y XV en España”

Internal Judges

Internal judges are part of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) group.

Academic Writing

- [Professor Jo Byrnes](#), Associate Professor of Dance
- [Dr. Mary Laughlin](#), Assistant Professor of English

Composition

- [Dr. Sarah Quick](#), Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Sociology
- Ms. Courtney Trautweiler, Library Director

Creative Writing

- [Professor Jo Byrnes](#), Associate Professor of Dance
- Ms. Courtney Trautweiler, Library Director

Everyday Writing

- Ms. Nancy Kerbs, Director of Assessment and Institutional Research
- [Dr. Sarah Quick](#), Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Sociology

Professional Writing

- [Dr. Julie Tietz](#), Professor of Psychology
- [Dr. Sarah Quick](#), Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Sociology

Writing in a Foreign Language

French

- [Ms. Stephanie Grgurich](#), Assistant Director of Admissions
- [Dr. Mary Mba](#), Visiting Assistant Professor of French

Spanish

- [Dr. Carmen Bourbon](#), Associate Professor of Spanish
- [Dr. Jorge Diones](#), Professor of Mathematics

External Judges

Academic Writing

Dr. Marcel Statksy Kerr, Dean of the School of Natural and Social Sciences and Professor of Psychology at Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth, TX.

Dr. Kerr is a graduate of Texas A&M University where she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in public relations. She went on to earn a master's degree and Ph.D. in experimental psychology from Texas Tech University in 1999. A lifelong learner, Dr. Kerr also holds a master's of education in Educational Technology from the University of Texas – Brownsville (2004) and in 2012 completed a graduate certificate in Executive Leadership from Cornell University's Johnson Graduate School of Management. Dr. Kerr's research and publications focus on survey development and psychometrics. Her most notable measure is the Test of Online Learning Success (ToOLS), which resides in the public domain and is used internationally by over 100 institutions of higher education to assess students' readiness for internet delivered coursework.

Composition

Ms. Haley Jameson, Associate Professor, Stephen F. Austin State University

Haley Hoss Jameson is a former Cottey dance professor. She is currently an Associate Professor and the co-coordinator of dance in the Department of Kinesiology & Health Science at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. She was inducted into the PEO sisterhood in Nevada, Missouri, and is grateful for the opportunity to serve Cottey College, the student participants in this contest, and her sisters in PEO.

Creative Writing

Dr. Julia Elliott, Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and English, University of South Carolina – Columbia

[Julia Elliott](#) is a fiction writer whose writing has appeared in *Tin House*, *The Georgia Review*, *Conjunctions*, *The New York Times*, *Granta* online, *Electric Literature*, and other publications. She has won a Rona Jaffe Writer's Award, and her stories have been anthologized in *Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses* and *The Best American Short Stories*. Her debut story collection, *The Wilds*, was chosen by *Kirkus*, *BuzzFeed*, *Book Riot*, and *Electric Literature* as one of the Best Books of 2014 and was a *New York Times Book Review* Editors' Choice. Her first novel, *The New and Improved Romie Futch*, arrived in October 2015. She is currently working on a novel about Hamadryas baboons, a species she has studied as an amateur primatologist. She teaches English and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, where she lives with her daughter and husband.

Everyday Writing

Mr. Craig Brandhorst, Senior Writer, University of South Carolina

Craig Brandhorst is the editor of USC Times (the faculty and staff news magazine at the University of South Carolina), assistant editor of Carolinian (the university's alumni magazine) and a former beat reporter and humor columnist for Free Times (an alt-weekly based in Columbia, S.C.). His comedic home improvement column Fables of the Reconstruction won a South Carolina Press Association award for column writing at some point prior to his current employment, but in the interest of a living wage and state benefits, he has since given up laughter.

Professional Writing

Dr. Lindsay Clark, Assistant Professor Business Communication, Sam Houston State University

Lindsay Clark is a recent graduate of Oklahoma State University's doctoral program in Rhetoric and Professional Writing. Her dissertation focused on raising genre awareness in graduate student writing. She's recently accepted a position at Sam Houston State University where she'll be joining the Business department and teaching Business Communications courses.

Writing in a Foreign Language

French

Ms. Christen Diehl

Christen Diehl teaches French and English and sponsors Student Council at Nevada High School.

Spanish

Ms. Deborah Bogart

Debby Bogard teaches Spanish for Crowder College and Cottey College.

Academic Writing

2nd Place: Veronica Wright, “A Discrepancy in Discourse Community Definition”

Because there are a variety of new concepts to grasp, entering college can be difficult. As new college students begins to navigate this unknown turf, they become a novice in a vast number of communities. Not just any type of community, but a discourse community. In “The Concept of Discourse Community,” John Swales defines a discourse community as a group of people who have a common goal. A discourse community has six defining characteristics: has a common goal, provides information and feedback (intercommunication), uses one or more genres to communicate and further its aim, has specific vocabulary (lexis), and has a reasonable ratio of novices and experts (threshold of members) (Swales 220). Having access to a plethora of discourse communities in college, Cottey College’s campus became a perfect place to test Swales’s theory. A club on campus named the Personal Literacy Club became the main target. This organization is similar to a book club, and students participate by reading a book or writing a personal piece relating to the club’s two-week theme. Then, they illustrate how their book or piece correlates with the theme. To determine whether or not this club is a true discourse community, an observation of their biweekly meeting and an interview was set in place to compare the Personal Literacy Club to Swales’s six defining characteristics. By gathering evidence through interviewing the Literacy Club Treasurer, Jacey Bass, and observing the club, it was evident that by Swales’s standards the Personal Literacy Club is not a “true” discourse community.

The observation consisted of interviewing Ms. Jacey Bass, the club’s treasurer, observing the Personal Literacy Club’s biweekly meeting, which was about 45 minutes, and questioning members present at this particular meeting. In the interview, which lasted about 20 minutes, Bass answered questions in regards to how her club measured against Swales’s six defining characteristics of a discourse community. Bass stated that the club’s advisor regularly attends their meetings, yet she was not present at the one observed. The members present included President Alexandria Rowe, Secretary Chelsea Murray, Writing Leader Laurel Loyless, and Treasurer Jacey Bass. During this meeting, the group members each discussed pieces of literature they read and how they related to the theme of “the seven deadly sins.” After this, they revealed the next theme. I then proceeded to ask questions to better understand this community, and this lasted about 15 minutes.

The first characteristic discussed in the interview was existence of a common goal, and because a goal was apparent in the club, it was one step closer to being declared a discourse community. Swales delivers the idea that these goals “may be formally discussed” or they may be “abstract” (Swales 220). While interviewing Bass, she described the club’s goal in a more abstract way, meaning these goals were set forth by the club’s advisor Libby Hannon or previous members and described in the first meeting of the group. Bass describes her perception of the club’s goal as effectively “shar[ing] about what you read or what you write” as it relates to the theme. Since Bass was able to pinpoint at least one goal, this displayed the club’s accomplishment of the first characteristic of Swales’s six. During the observation, Rowe stated

the objective of the club is to increase the amount of reading and writing students practice and to help members improve their personal work, which is stated in the club's constitution. In this case, this group displays competence in this area of Swales's requirements, but one out of six characteristics would not satisfy Swales.

Next on the list of characteristics lies intercommunication, and through emails, the Personal Literacy Club demonstrates this characteristic. Bass states that the Secretary sends emails to keep the group connected and updated on upcoming events. Despite the fact most emails come from the group's Secretary rather than from the group, if needed, any member could communicate her concerns through email. Bass also explained that she has not exchanged cellphone numbers with any of the other members, so from her experience that form of communication is not utilized. So this would qualify as another check on Swales's list of the six defining characteristics.

As we dove deeper into the six characteristics, Bass revealed the fault in her club as lacking in methods to provide the group with feedback when a problem arises. This deters the group from being a true discourse community in the eyes of Swales. Bass suggested that the only type of feedback given at these meetings is towards the material at hand and not towards how they are achieving their goal. While observing this group, there was no sufficient evidence of any feedback exchanged between members. Rowe stated that the group focuses on giving feedback on personal pieces to help improve the girls' work instead. Yet if needed, the members could communicate any issues through email or during the meeting. Swales would argue this alone would eradicate the club from being a candidate for a discourse community, but we will look farther on.

Swales claims that a true discourse community utilizes "one or more genres" to connect and attain its goal, and in the Personal Literacy Club this characteristic is displayed by the use of the club's constitution, so by Swales's definition, this club fulfills the criteria for this characteristic (Swales 223). Swales states discourse communities must use genres to accomplish their goals. Rowe, the club's President, stated that the club's constitution entails the club's objective, making the club's goal known to each member. When asked about any written updates or schedules, Bass replied that emails were the only form of communication, which is primarily used for scheduling. She explained that the club uses conversation more so than any written communication. Although Swales does not believe conversation is a "true" genre, this group still uses conversation in place of genres and receives a similar outcome.

The Personal Literacy Clubs fulfill Swales's characteristics by using a specific lexis illustrating how they are a discourse community. Bass said that since becoming a member she has added two new terms to her vocabulary: "Reading and Writing Leader." She explained these terms as roles in the group that agree on the biweekly themes they use. While observing the group, Rowe briefly explained each of the leadership positions. I witnessed that the Writing Leader asked if any group members had any personal work to present that related to their theme, and then the Reading Leader would do the same but instead ask about literature pieces the members read. Since the Reading Leader was not present at the meeting observed, the Writing Leader assumed this role. Because of this group's use of unknown vocabulary, it meets another one of Swales's standards.

Since this club began the last week of spring semester in 2016, there are few members that can be acknowledged as experts, thus creating a faulty threshold of members and making it difficult satisfy Swales's last characteristic. Swales neglects to explain an emerging discourse community in his piece, and because newly found discourse communities are primarily comprised of novices, it becomes difficult to differentiate skill sets before observing the group. While observing, despite the absence of Libby Hannon, the advisor and primary expert, the group's president presented herself as a strongly educated member. She displayed this by prodding the group with questions, keeping the members on track, and leading the members to the next topic. The group's secretary, Murray, also exhibited a familiarity with the club, placing her in the expert range. Because of this, the club exemplifies a range of both novices and experts and fulfills Swales's characteristic.

By Swales's exact definition, the Personal Literacy club does not appropriate the standards of being a true discourse community. Yet after observing their meeting and interviewing members, I disagree with this. The group failed to reach only one of Swales's six standards, but the group had an ability to provide each other with feedback if needed. Despite Swales's idea, the Personal Literacy Club qualifies as a discourse community due to the found data. Since the club did not present any concerns with the execution of their objective, the members had little need to give feedback unless it was positive, which would not hinder the group. Overall, this did not cause a major skism in the group and the group was able to function properly making it a viable discourse community.

1st Place: Whitli Thomas, “Huntington’s Disease: Understanding Changes in Protein and DNA Interactions Driving Disease Progression”

Abstract

Huntington’s Disease is a neurodegenerative disorder caused by the expansion of CAG/CTG trinucleotide repeats within exon 1 of the huntingtin gene (HTT).⁴ These CAG repeats have been shown to form hairpins that will lead to expansion within the genome.⁴ These expansions, if continued in formation, will lead to a disease-length mutation. It has been found that the greater in length the repeat tract, the greater likelihood of CAG/CTG repeats that will be incorporated into the nucleosome.⁴ Studies have shown that these disease-length mutations have been shown to be favorable locations for nucleosome formation.⁴

Chicken histones, unlike recombinant histones, have many epigenetic markers. These epigenetic markers can alter the activity of the DNA.¹ Taking this into consideration, this study will focus on asking the question of: Do chicken histones will have a higher rate of nucleosome formation than recombinant histones? And even further: What are the identities of the specific epigenetic markers found within chicken histones?

It can be predicted that chicken histones will have a larger rate of nucleosome formation than the recombinants. Therefore, it can be assumed that the formation of nucleosomes will be greater for chicken histones than it will be for recombinant histones.^{4,5,6}

Specific Aims

Aim 1: Determining Amounts of Nucleosome Formation Recombinant and chicken nucleosomes will each undergo a protein test expression. Next, a nucleosome incorporation assay will be performed for each type of histone.

Aim 2: Determining the Identity of Epigenetic Markers Associated with Nucleosome Formation by CAG/CTG Repeats Using Western blotting, the identities of any marks that relate to CAG/CTG nucleosome formation will be analyzed. Nucleosome samples made with repeat DNA and non-repeat DNA will be analyzed, as well. These samples will be compared to determine if any marks are similar and whether any of these marks are found in repeat DNA and are not found in non-repeat DNA.

Background and Significance

Genetics tells us that repeating units of between one and six nucleotide repeats, termed microsatellites, are naturally found within the human genome, and help to form variation within populations.⁴ While microsatellites that occur over generations help to form polymorphisms, microsatellites that undergo frequent change within a single generation are likely to give rise to certain neurodegenerative diseases.⁴ One of these diseases is Huntington’s Disease. Huntington’s Disease is a neurodegenerative disorder caused by the expansion of CAG/CTG trinucleotide repeats within exon 1 of the huntingtin gene (HTT) that can code for a series of poly-glutamine tracts in the mature huntingtin protein.⁴ These CAG repeats have been shown to form hairpins that will lead to expansion within the genome.⁴ The number of these repeats within exon 1 determines what category the disease will be classified as. Healthy range consists of five to thirty-five repeats, pre-mutation range consists of thirty-six to forty repeats, while repeats

measuring more than forty are classified as disease range.⁴ The onset of adult Huntington's Disease will manifest when the CAG/CTG trinucleotide repeats are between forty and fifty.⁴

When considering Huntington's Disease, it is important to understand how the proteins that cause the illness work. The 350 kDa huntingtin protein, whose N-terminal fragment is known to cause Huntington's, works by a gain-of-function in the mutant huntingtin protein.⁴ After observing these portions in brains of select Huntington's patients, proteases were found that are speculated to generate an exon 1 fragment, which would eventually give rise to trinucleotide repeats.⁴ These expansions, if continued in formation, will lead to a disease-length mutation. It has been found that the greater in length the repeat tract, the greater likelihood of CAG/CTG repeats that will be incorporated into the nucleosome.⁴ Studies have shown that these disease-length mutations have been shown to be favorable locations for nucleosome formation.⁴

Bacteria can be used as protein factories.³ Thus, I will use bacteria to produce my histone proteins. Using a plasmid containing the histone genes, essentially a small bacterial genome, the bacteria will produce the histones. A challenge I predict that may arise is the purification of the histones from the rest of the bacterial proteins. Luckily, these proteins will contain a special tag that will make them easier to isolate. Once I have collected the bacteria by centrifugation, I will break open the cell membranes using a detergent. Since the histone proteins are in solution, I can again use centrifugation to remove any insoluble cell debris left over from lysing the cellular membrane, leaving only soluble proteins.

Once I have the histone proteins in solution, I will use affinity column chromatography to separate the histones from all other proteins. The histones are tagged with 6 histidine (6-His) residues, which will bind to a nickel resin that fills a plastic column. Once the histones are bound to the column, it is washed, removing any proteins that do not contain the 6-His tag. The histone proteins are then released from the resin by eluting them with a molecule that has a similar chemical structure to histidine. I will monitor the purification process by running samples taken from each step in a polyacrylamide gel. I will stain the gel with Coomassie Blue and perform a Western blot to look for the histone proteins. Once the histones are purified, I will combine them with CAG repeat DNA to make nucleosomes and compare their behavior to nucleosomes made with histones isolated from chicken blood.

Chicken histones, unlike recombinant histones, have many epigenetic markers and these epigenetic markers can alter the expression of the DNA.¹ Taking this into consideration, this study will focus on asking what the identities of the specific epigenetic markers found within chicken histones that associate with the CAG/CTG repeat DNA and how do they influence nucleosome formation?

I predict chicken histones will have a larger rate of nucleosome formation than the recombinants because of their epigenetic markers.

Research and Design Methods

Aim 1: Before a competitive nucleosome incorporation assay can be performed, a test expression will be needed. A sample of pET29 on a kanamycin agar plate will be inoculated into two test

tubes each containing 1 mL of LB broth. Enough antibiotic will be added to assure growth of the desired proteins.

Both samples will be placed in a shaking incubator at 225 rpm and 37°C overnight. After the overnight growth period, each tube will be checked to assure enough growth occurred for the experiment to continue. The test tubes should be thoroughly cloudy. If enough growth has occurred, 1 µL of 1M IPTG will be added to one of the 1 mL samples. This tube will be labeled as induced and the other as uninduced. The tubes will then be shaken again at 225 rpm and 37°C overnight.

Both tubes will then be centrifuged at max speed for about one minute. The broth will be poured off the top and discarded. Next, 20 µL of SDS-PAGE Loading Buffer will be added to each sample. Both the induced and the uninduced tubes will be heat shocked for 10 minutes at 90°C. Each sample will be run on a 4-20% TGX gel to assure the proteins have expressed themselves. Fig. 1,2

This procedure is necessary for assuring that the proteins separate themselves from the DNA. If the induction does not work, we will be able to see this on a gel. The proteins need to be separated from the DNA for the purification process to continue.

There is a challenge that could possibly arise within Aim One. Many protocols call for induction times to be about two hours and growth of the bacterial culture to incubate for only four to six hours rather than overnight. Times have been adjusted to make success more likely for the test expression.

Once a successful test expression has been run, a lysis procedure and purification process will take place to separate the histones for analysis in Aim Two.

To start the procedures, a larger volume of bacterial proteins will be collected for the purification process. Two flasks of 100 mL LB broth will be inoculated with pET29 and grown overnight. The culture will be distributed evenly into centrifuge tubes and spun down for about twenty minutes. The top layer of broth will be poured off and discarded.

The remaining cells will be lysed. Three different types of buffers will be created for this. Buffer A will be made from 50mM Tris, 500 mM NaCl, and 5 mM Imidazole. Buffer B will be made using 50 mM Tris, 500 mM NaCl, and 500 mM Imidazole. And finally, a Lysis Buffer will be created using 50 Mm Tris, 500 Mm NaCl, 5 mM Imidazole, 0.1% Triton X-100, and 1 tablet of PIC per 50 mL immediately before use.

The bacteria, having been stored in a -80°C freezer, will be thawed to room temperature before use. The pellet will be weighed and 10 mL of Lysis Buffer will be added for every gram of bacteria along with the correct number of PIC tablets.

The bacteria will be sonicated 4 x 1 min, keeping the bacteria on ice. The lysate will then be centrifuged at 15000 rpm for 20 minutes at 4°C. The pellet will then be re-suspended in an equal volume of Lysis Buffer. The sonication process will be repeated. This process will be

repeated until the cells are lysed. The sample will then be centrifuged again at 15000 rpm for 20 minutes at 4oC. The lysates will be combined and if needed, stored at 4oC for purification.

Aim 2: Affinity column chromatography will be used to separate the histones from other proteins. The histones will be tagged with 6 histidine (6-His) residues that can bind to nickel resin that will fill a plastic column. A washing process will remove any proteins that do not contain a 6-His tag. Electrophoresis gels will be run for each purification sample before a Western blot is performed. The Western blot will be used to detect histone proteins.

Nucleosome samples from repeat DNA and non-repeat DNA will be analyzed, as well. Comparing these marks will be necessary for knowing which are found in repeat DNA samples but are not found in non-repeat DNA samples. The activity of chicken histones has yet to be compared to the activity of recombinant histones as a way of measuring nucleosome formation. Therefore, the behavior of nucleosomes made with histones isolated from chicken blood and nucleosomes made with CAG repeat DNA will be compared to potentially find answers. If it were to be determined that chicken histones cause a greater rate of nucleosome formation than recombinant histones, and the specific epigenetic markers within chicken histones discovered, each marker could be analyzed for its role in the formation of disease-length repeats. Since chicken histones will have epigenetic markers, their packaging into the nucleosome core particle is likely quite different than a recombinant histones⁷. Therefore, it could potentially be determined what factors play a major role in the formation of disease-length trinucleotide repeats that give rise to Huntington's Disease.

Conclusions

Huntington's Disease (HD) is a devastating neurodegenerative disease.² An estimated 30,000 people nationwide have HD and nearly 200,000 are at risk of developing this disease from an affected parent.² This research could potentially contribute a small portion to helping find a cure. The research proposed in this paper is just a beginning point. There are many more opportunities for further work in the field. There are likely many epigenetic markers within chicken histones; therefore, there will be many outcomes to analyze.

In conclusion, work in this field has potential to be beneficial to many people across the world.

Appendices

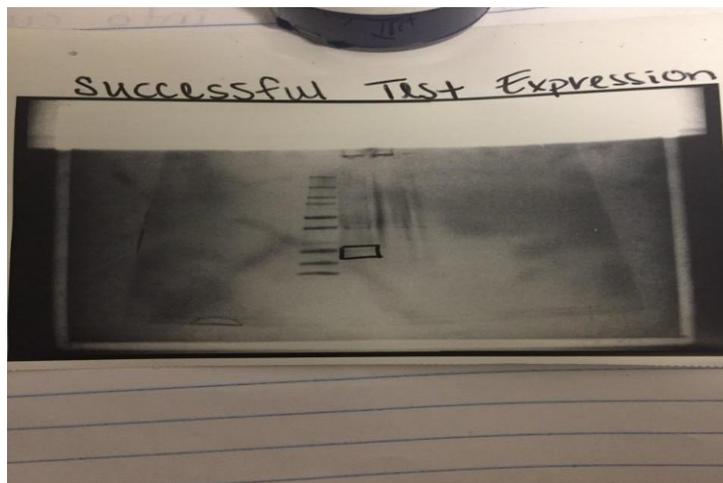
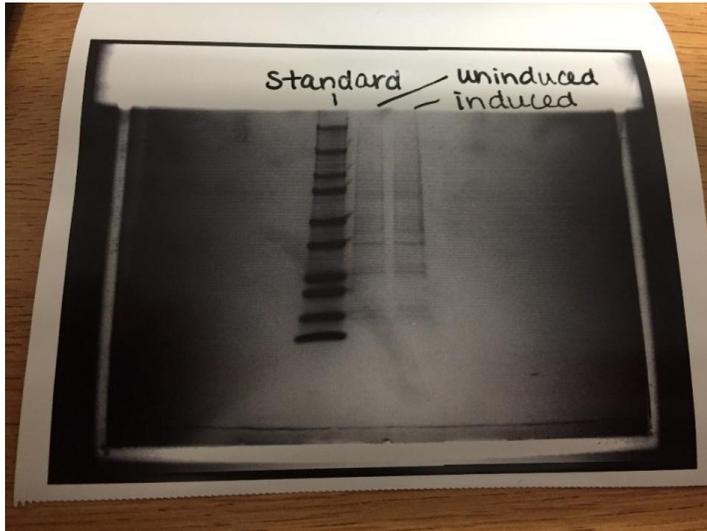


Figure 2: Successful test expression of pET29

References

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⁵ VOLLE, C. B.; DELANEY, S. AGG/CCT Interruptions Affect Nucleosome Formation and Positioning of Healthy-Length CGG/CCG Triplet Repeats. *BMC Biochemistry*, 2013. 14:33.

⁶ VOLLE, C.; DELANEY, S. CAG/CTG Repeats Alter Affinity for the Histone Core and Positioning of DNA in the Nucleosome. *PMC: NIH Public Access*, 2012.

*References for Figures 1 and 2 have been removed for identifying information.

Composition

2nd Place: Rebecca Robinson, “The Daily Daisy: Texas, Textbooks, and Why You Should Visit the Library” Texas, Textbooks, and Why You Should Visit the Library

As students, we spent a whole day every year of our elementary school career devoted to relearning Columbus’s story, coloring pictures, and making crafts to commemorate his achievement. We were taught to recite the rhyme “In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue” to make sure that we would never forget such an important date. Despite everything we have been taught, Columbus never landed on any of the land that we now consider to be the United States of America. He landed in the Bahamas, Hispaniola, as well as Central and South America, and yet he continues to receive credit for the discovery of America (Strauss). After learning this, I started to be more skeptical of what history textbooks told me, and for good reason. Textbooks are often seen as one of the most reliable sources of information for students, but after discovering how much bias is regularly present, I feel like I have to verify the information against other sources before I can rely on it. It is your responsibility, as both a student and an educated member of society, to know how to check the validity of information with other credible sources in order to combat the biases that exist in even the more reliable-seeming sources.

Aside from Christopher Columbus, various other historical figures have been distorted by biases in the very books that are supposed to be teaching students about them. Here are some details that you will rarely find in a textbook, about figures you thought you knew: Thomas Jefferson, an American Founding Father and one of our Presidents, fathered many children with his slave Sally Hemings (denying that any of them were his), while simultaneously degrading and talking down about relations and marriage between white and black people (O’Brien).

Thomas Edison, most famous for his invention of the lightbulb, was not the lone inventor that most textbooks paint him out to be. Rather, he was working with a team of scientists, but claimed that he was responsible in order to profit from the patent (Krystek).

Woodrow Wilson, known for his reluctant entrance into World War I and his work in establishing the League of Nations, was actually “an outspoken white supremacist who believed that black people were inferior” (Berkin qtd. in Loewen p. 20).

These discrepancies, along with countless others, could have been resolved by the addition of a single sentence into textbooks, but instead, these figures are remembered without these flaws. You, as a student, have probably accepted these important figures as two-dimensional heroes, because you trust the information that textbooks give you, and therefore don’t concern yourself with looking for more information.

Students should be able to trust the information that is provided for them in textbooks, and they shouldn't feel the need to look further in order to get the whole story. However, in this case, doing further research is important because textbooks often include, alter, or omit information in order to appease the textbook buyers. In the Washington Monthly article, "Revisionaries: How a Group of Texas Conservatists are Rewriting Your Kids' Textbooks," Don McLeroy, a history textbook evaluator for Texas, says that "The way I evaluate history textbooks is first . . . I see how they treat Ronald Reagan--he needs to get credit for saving the world from communism and for the good economy over the last twenty years because he lowered taxes" (McLeroy qtd. in Blake). However, McLeroy isn't concerned with whether or not textbooks discuss Reagan's negative impact on national debt, federal budget deficit, or trade deficit (Miller). This focus on positive information, while omitting the negative, can be attributed to one factor of the textbook market: Texas. The state of Texas buys the textbooks for all of the schools within the state (rather than every school buying them individually), making it the second-largest textbook buyer in the nation. This gives them a large influence over what is published in textbooks. Additionally, because Texas is generally conservative, their views will reflect this, resulting in the presence of conservative biases in textbooks. By not conducting further research, students are accepting information that is vetted by, marketed to, and biased towards a single, conservative part of the nation.

I am not suggesting that as a student, you need to thoroughly investigate every single piece of information that a textbook offers you, but, rather, that if you plan on using information from a textbook, you should do more research in order to better understand the topic. This concept falls under the umbrella of investigation of news media. Often, we think that investigating sources only needs to be done when a source seems unreliable, but you should do some investigation for every source that you utilize, especially those that you are using to support your argument in a paper or project. Evaluating information includes not only knowing how to investigate the source, but also knowing where to look to to be able to find reliable sources.

When doing research about historical figures or events, the first place you are going to want to look is your textbook but, as we have discussed, the information contained therein may not be fully inclusive of the topic you want to learn about, but that does not mean that it is a bad place to start! Your textbook is a great place to get a general understanding about the people or events that you want to learn about. After laying down a framework for your topic, the next step, while possibly the most obvious, is to head to the library. The Cottey College Library offers access to over 60,000 titles within the library, eBooks, countless databases (Academic Search Complete, Environment Complete, and Gale US History in Context, to name a few), and, through MOBIUS, books and materials from libraries throughout Missouri. The databases allow for students to access scholarly, peer-reviewed journals, meaning that the information has been vetted by professionals in the field and has been fact-checked; these sources are both reliable and credible. Another source that students don't often think of, are the librarians.

According to the ERIAL (ethnographic research in Illinois academic libraries) project, as reported on in the article "What Students Don't Know" by Steve Kolowich, students don't ask librarians for help, and it seems that students don't even recognize that they are an available, and outstanding, resource. The ERIAL project collected data from five libraries in order to discover the relationships between the library and librarians, and the students and professors on college

campuses. These studies revealed that “of all the students they observed -- many of whom struggles to find good sources -- not one asked a librarian for help” (Kolowich). Students don’t know how to good research, nor do they know who to ask or where to go for help, even when resources are readily available to them. Librarians know where everything is in the library, enabling them to help you find a variety of sources, and they know how to evaluate the sources for both relevance and credibility. At our Cottey Library, Courtney Trautweiler (Library Director) and Tatiana Jones (Library Technician/Cataloging) are outstanding resources who can help you find a variety of relevant sources and advise you on how to evaluate the sources that you find.

While librarians are a great resource, you can’t solely rely on their knowledge; you should know how to look critically at sources. When considering using any source for research, you should use your evaluation RADAR (“Evaluating”) to do a brief evaluation:

Rationale: Why did the author write this piece? Was it for an opinion blog, or a newspaper? Is the source inclusive of alternate claims, or are they omitted?

Authority: What makes the author qualified to write about this topic? Does the author have other published works, an affiliation with an organization or political party, and are they reputable?

Date: When was the piece written? While some information applies for a long time, other information is quickly outdated.

Accuracy: Do other sources report the same information? Was the information fact-checked or reviewed by experts, such as in peer-reviewed journals?

Relevance: Does this source matter and relate to the topic that you are working with?

After evaluating a source based off of these guidelines, you will have a pretty good idea of the credibility and reliability, and can make the decision whether or not you can depend on it.

With so much information in the world, it would be foolish to assume that every source you come across is accurate, unbiased, and reputable. Many sources, textbooks included, address only one side of an issue, and while said sources may be helpful in forming a general picture of any given situation, they only provide parts of the picture. Even when a source seems reliable and unbiased, like a textbook, keep in mind that additional research can never hurt, and will likely even help you to discover more. You, as the researcher, are responsible for finding additional information to combat biases and inconsistencies within the source. You have tools available to you both at your fingertips, and at the library. As a student and an emerging member of society, you are responsible for settling for nothing less than the whole truth.

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1st Place: Alex Marroquin, “Female Breast Exposure: What Makes It Decent?”¹

Introduction

Over the past century, the decency of the female body has been a question within society, specifically the decency of female breasts. Some questions have been raised during this time period, such as what aspects create the label, “decent” for breast exposure in public? For example, how does the decency of an image of a woman performing the natural act of breastfeeding compare to the decency of a sexualized image of a woman? What makes people react the way they do to the exposure of these breasts in their separate situations, and when is it appropriate and safe for women to perform the action of breastfeeding in public if at all?

In recent studies about the decency of breastfeeding in public, it has been found that in various regions of the world, there are different opinions on the act depending on the culture surrounding that area. In a study conducted by Stuart-MacAdam and Dettwyler (1995), findings suggest that western countries tend to sexualize the breast. The authors elaborate by saying that in these western cultures, the image of a female breast has been so sexualized that it has become almost forgotten what it’s true purpose is: to feed children. However the researchers also found that in non-western societies, specifically in West Africa, the people were either appalled or amused that breasts had a sexual connotation specifically in the male eye within western cultures. These African people also thought it was unnatural and perverted and couldn’t believe that men could possibly be sexually aroused by women’s breasts. Nonetheless with these cultural differences, ultimately, breasts are scientifically intended for breastfeeding and nurturing human beings: “Even in western/industrialized countries, breastfeeding is necessary and optimal for child health and growth” (p. 170). Breastmilk is a vital form of nourishment for a child no matter the discomfort the procedure of achieving the liquid may bring to the public eye.

Extending the idea that the female breast is made to nurture, even in classic American Literature, Steinbeck (1939) shows that the female breast is truly and ultimately to function for feeding humans in his work, *The Grapes of Wrath*. As the novel is coming to an end, one of the main male characters is on the verge of death by starvation, and his only hope and chance for survival is through the nourishment of either soup or milk. Because there was no way of making soup due to the lack of ingredients resulting from the poverty that arose among the people living in the Dust Bowl era, milk was his only hope. The solitary source of milk was from a lactating young female protagonist who had just lost her child to stillbirth, so in the end his system was replenished through her consent. This scene signified rebirth and his life was saved because of this sustenance.

In conclusion then, breastmilk is a substance that essentially keeps humans alive at certain stages of their lives. However, the vitality of breast milk isn’t seen the same in modern societies. Even in the United Kingdom, a majority of people from certain areas perceive breastfeeding as dirty and obscene as told by Kirkham (2007). The author reported that women will be asked to leave public areas such as shops, restaurants, shopping malls, museums, and many other places no

¹ Note: This paper has been excerpted because it contained primary research not approved by the IRB. The Results and Discussion sections have been deleted to protect the participants in the study.

matter how discreetly they attempt to feed their child. Because women can not feed their children in public without being seen as an indecency, this action has been deemed as not only inappropriate, but even disgusting in some instances. The researcher said people even relate breastmilk to bodily discharges that are ultimately wastes such as menstrual blood and lochia (the discharge women secrete after giving birth). Because of this relationship society has created, women are oftentimes told to go into public restrooms to breastfeed their children. This then causes mothers to feel self-conscious about their duties, and forced to hide the natural procedure from the public.

Haro and Wenske (2014) emphasize the issue of women being forced into bathroom stalls to feed their children in an imaged-based awareness campaign. These women pictured for this campaign are portrayed in dark, dirty bathroom stalls with annoyance and helplessness in their countenances, with quotes such as “Bon appetite,” “Private dining,” and “Table for two” printed above them. These images from the campaign display the results and reality of the setting mothers oftentimes have to encounter to feed their children if they want to do so with their breasts outside the privacy of their homes. It is a result of ignorance also emphasized in Horsey’s (2012) political cartoon in which a woman who is breastfeeding her child on a bench in a shopping mall is being told that she can not be allowed to “brazenly” display her breasts in public all while there is what seems to be a Victoria’s Secret advertisement in the background (Figure 1). Through this general negative opinion displayed within these images, it is clear that hypocrisy and anatomical sexualization is the central issue within our western society on the opinion of what is considered decent.

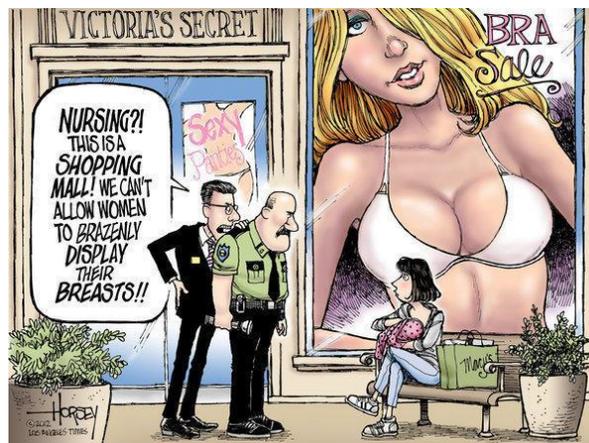


Figure 1. Breastfeeding moms deserve privacy, even in a crowd

Even the most highly-held women in popular culture are not safe from the sharp judgmental eyes of the public within their first stages of motherhood. For example Martin (2015) tells that Alyssa Milano uploaded a “throwback” picture on instagram of herself breastfeeding her daughter and was attacked for doing so. Commenters were stating how inappropriate it was for Milano to be posting an image of her breasts. However Milano defended herself by saying that if Miley Cyrus could show her nipples and be sexualized for them, she could show herself doing with her nipples what they were meant to do. By stating this Milano encouraged mothers to not be ashamed for performing their duties. She overcame the cyber-bullying and came out on top with

a standing belief in the desexualization of the female breast by expressing her disconcert about the public opinion.

With these studies presented, even though awareness has been raised about the decency of certain images of women in public, more work is urgently needed to figure out the reasons as to what exactly about breastfeeding makes the public uncomfortable to witness such a natural occurrence? There hasn't been much discussion on how certain images of female breasts differ in the eyes of the public.

Therefore, this study aims to seek public opinion and reactions to images of female breasts, particularly those relating to breastfeeding and events that partake in result of breastfeeding, to understand how and/or why people disapprove of breast exposure and why these opinions about breasts tend to be so sexualized in our society.

This paper is structured by providing methods in which research will be conducted, followed by the results achieved through data collection as an analysis as to what these results could mean in regards to society.

Methods

In this section information on how this particular study will be conducted is provided for the benefit of future researchers in the same or similar field of study.

Research setting and participants

This research took place at a small private women's liberal arts and science college in the Midwest. Only female students between the age range of 18-25 were included in this research. International students were also included. Within this search, students from Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Mexico, and various parts of the United States were surveyed. When choosing who would participate, there was a targeted group of people, specifically those who I would often interact with, especially girls in my suite and those who would visit my suite mates. It was not difficult to create diversity within this study because of the friendships made throughout the year with international students.

Data

To answer the research question, a small survey question as well as an image-based survey was created. A follow up concluding question was conducted post image-based survey. Those being surveyed were asked to circle one response (always appropriate, sometimes appropriate or never appropriate) to the question, "When do you consider breastfeeding in a public area appropriate?" The participants were then given a packet of printed images with "In no more than 3 sentences summarize what you see or feel from these following images," printed on the first page and a space below each image or set of images for each person to write their response. These images were placed in a specific order to escalate their emotions. The emotional pattern used was negative (Figure 2.), neutral (Figure 3.), positive (Figure 4.), negative (Figure 1, see introduction).

The first set of images in this survey were a collection of three pictures from a campaign created by Haro and Wenske (2014) to raise awareness about targeted mothers who breastfeed in public.

The mothers are pictured in bathroom stalls with quotes such as, “Private dining,” “Bon appetit,” and “Table for two,” printed above them, see Figure 2.



Figure 2. When Nurture Calls

The following image (Figure 3.) was that of Brazilian fashion model, Gisele Bündchen breastfeeding her twelve-month-old child all while getting prepared for an event.



Figure 3. Gisele Bündchen Breastfeeds Daughter Vivian While Getting Hair, Makeup Done

Next, an image of a mother and her child sharing a moment in which they experience their activity together in public. The mother is looking down at her child who is smiling at her and breastfeeding in a baby carrier.



Figure 4. From the Wanderlust set I posted for [@tulababycarriers](#) I love this one. My little breastfeeder-to-go

Finally, Figure 1. (see Introduction) is that of a political cartoon in which a woman is told she is being indecent by a male security guard while feeding her child, even with a large advertisement of a busty woman in the background.

Following this set of images, the participants were given a full page to answer the question, “What do you feel after seeing these images? Do you think it should be more socially acceptable for women to breastfeed in public?”

Data collection

To collect data, participants were asked a few days ahead of time if they would like to participate in a survey about public breastfeeding. They were told the process would take between five to ten minutes to complete depending on how much effort was put into responding. Gathering all of the surveys took between two and three weeks. Like stated previously, people who I knew well enough were the ones that would be targeted, especially since an international student from Zimbabwe was in my suite. If participants could not take the surveys in my suite, they were allowed to take it wherever they needed to as long as they had no outer influence to skew their answers. If participants were taking the survey at a time when they were around others, they were kindly asked to not converse or ask anyone else for an opinion to influence their unique responses.

Data analysis

With the survey where the participants circled a response, the data was analyzed quantitatively. The data was then placed in a table to compare the amount of responses. However the image surveys were separated depending on how the participants first answered the short survey, if they answered “always appropriate,” those surveys were gathered and analyzed together, same with the other responses. The two sets of image based surveys were compared to spot any details in which the responses really differ when placed side by side. Word choice was to be strictly observed within the responses to the image based survey.

Conclusion

Implications

Society will sadly continue to sexualize breasts for a very long time. While this societal generation, specifically the women of this generation are working hard to break from the social norms constructed by especially the western culture, it will take a lot of confidence and perseverance to power through.

Limitations

Due to the size of the college, only twelve surveys were conducted and with a fraction of the semester that was given to allow this data collection, there weren't too many more surveys that could have been conducted. Also some of the responses to the image survey were unclear because the participants may not have fully understood what they were being asked. In addition, secondary resources, such as scholarly journals were not found from any further databases other than those provided by Cottey College.

Future Research

In future research, the male opinion could be included, especially if conducted in a general public area rather than at a women's college or university. More time could be spent on the project itself, rather than just one semester through a college writing course.

Also the wording within the image survey could be further improved. Instead of asking "In no more than 3 sentences describe what you see or feel from these following images," one could pose for the participants to respond to, "In no more than 3 sentences express what these images represent to you as a member of society and if you would consider the acts in these images appropriate."

From the reactions to Figure 1, there could also be additional pictures included within the image-based survey, specifically an image of a sexualized female in comparison to an image of that same female performing her motherly duty placed side by side.

Final conclusion

More work needs to be done to fully understand what makes people react in the way they do toward these images.

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Creative Writing

2st Place: Laurel Loyless, “Left Behind”

She left me. I never saw this coming. She must hate me. I look out the window a howl in sorrow with tears pouring out of my eyes in waves. I gave her my whole life and she just up and left me. I trot over to the couch and pout with my head in the pillow. I rub against it a few times to dry up my tears. I was obedient, I did whatever she wanted me to do. I brought her gifts, yet she would reject every one with her nose turned up to the air. She left me. I never saw this coming. She must hate me. I never hurt her, even when she tugged at my hair in that certain way that rubbed me wrong. She liked it, she said, so I let her do whatever she wanted. I protected her. When we took long walks on the beach, I kept a vigilant eye out for muggers and dark, shadowy figures. Does she thank me? No, she scolds me for being so paranoid. She left me. I never saw this coming. She must hate me. We’ve been together for years. I was just a young pup when we met and our time together has been amazing and I’ve grown so much. Then why did she leave me? What did I do to deserve this treatment? Sure, I was a little clingy, but I just wanted to be around her. She didn’t have to kick me out of the bed so much when I tried to snuggle up to her. I suppose I did make her mad when I made a mess in the kitchen and she had to clean it up. Fine, I admit it. I’m awful, no wonder she did what she did. She left me. I never saw this coming. She must hate me. I can do better, I swear. I can help her with the chores around the house. I can clean up the floor. I can eat all the leftover food in the fridge, so that she doesn’t throw out so much. She left me. I never saw this coming. She must hate me. I would do anything as long as she comes back to me. Oh, she’s back. She must have heard my thoughts somehow and now she’s back for me. I run to the window and watch as she walks up the driveway purposefully. She has a bag. It’s full of something. Something crunchy-sounding. What is in the bag? I run up to her and give her my best questioning stare. She smiles at me. I try to smile back, but fail miserably. “Who’s a good boy?” She exclaims. Me, I’m a good boy. I hop onto her lap and she gives me the treat while petting my head. She has come back for me. I totally saw this coming. She must love me. We lay down together a while and then she pushes me off her lap. I awaken from a slumber and lift my head. “I’ll see you later, boy. I’ve got to go to the salon.” I whine and grab at her jeans in desperation. The door closes with a loud slam. She left me... I never saw this coming... She must hate me...

1st Place: Charlene Nicole Penick, "The Moss on the Cave Wall"

The area was cool and moist. We loved the moist; nothing pleased us more than to live in an area like this. It was dark too, another asset. We had been on the cool surface of the hard rock for years, watching. We grew and we watched the world. Drip. Drip. Water droplets came down from the ceiling and pooled in front of us. We did not know where the water came from; we did not care. Water was our friend. A stream of sunlight would sometimes peer into our home and that, too, was welcome. Also our friend. Drip. Drip. We would not want to live anywhere else; we did not even know where anywhere else would be. A light breeze came through and we sighed in content at the feeling. Our existence was complete and fruitful. We slowly spread across the rock and fulfilled our purpose. Soon, the rock would be covered in our green fuzz. We heard a sound and we listened. A creature was coming into our home. It was no matter to us. Creatures came into our home all the time and they never disturbed us. They would take a look into the pool of dripping water and sleep. Eventually, they would leave our home and we would be undisturbed again. The creature stumbled in, less graceful than many others had been. This creature was odd; it was taller than most and its front feet were swinging oddly, rather than crawling on the ground. No matter. It would take a look into the pool of dripping water, sleep, and eventually leave. The creature was dripping as well. The creature's dripping water was red and coming from one of the two limbs it was stumbling around on. The red water was less friendly than our water. We didn't like it. The creature approached us and we saw that it was also dripping from its face. The creature passed our dripping water and we were disappointed. It went near us. Its face-water dripped onto us and we didn't like it either. It had something bitter in it, something we didn't like. The creature took a piece of us and riiiiiiipppppped part of us from the wall. Slowly. Painfully. We didn't like that. We didn't like that at all. We didn't like this creature.

The creature wrapped the part of us around her arm. We didn't know why. We didn't understand. Why would the creature do that? The creature's red water continued to drip through our ripped-off part and the creature made sounds. Distressed sounds. The creature voiced how we felt about being ripped. We were so focused on the first creature that we didn't even see the second one appear. The second was larger, much larger, than the first. It was the clearly the same kind. It had no red water dripping from it. It held something long and brown. We had seen small pieces of the long, thin brown thing and we knew that this was the same thing, but larger. Also ripped off. Why all the ripping? Why all the horror? The larger one took the brown thing and slammed the head of the smaller one. Slam. Slam. Slam. The red water splashed everywhere. All of over us. Disgusting. We didn't like red water. We didn't want red water. The larger one left and the smaller one stayed. Red water flowed everywhere. Red water mixed with other things. We didn't know what it was, but we didn't want it. We wanted our stream of sunlight and we wanted our water. Our clear water. The larger creature left, but the first one stayed. It stayed for a long time. The red water faded out and our water came back. Eventually, the creature started to leave. In a way. It slowly became the dusty floor of the cave we were used to. White pieces of it stayed behind, but we did not care. We continued to spread over our home. We continued to exist in happiness. Nothing was left of the creature except for those strange white pieces. We grew over that as well. We stayed on the wall, watching the world. Our sunlight came in through the cave and our dripping water provided a pool. We were content.

Sincerely,

The Moss on the Cave Wall

Everyday Writing

2nd Place: Laurel Loyless, “Live, Laugh, Dove”

I was walking through the grocery store shopping for soap and pondered the many different choices; I came upon the Dove brand. Images popped into my mind of positive body acceptance commercials by the Dove company. I am about to grab a bottle of women’s soap when the price catches my eye. I am confused by what I see. I’m shocked to learn that the women’s soap is \$0.09 more than the men’s soap. My new impression of Dove was not a positive one; instead, all I could see was the unexpected inequality shown between men and women. The Dove commercial titled, “You’re More Beautiful Than You Think,” displays the strides that women have made to overcome the inequalities between the genders; however, the commercial also suggests that women have made it, women have no need to continue to fight for women’s rights and, while the commercial strives to better women’s stance, the company continues to charge unfairly for women’s products. The Dove company has contributed to progress in the women’s equality movement, but their unfair pricing contradicts their implied desire for equality. This Dove commercial shows a diverse selection of women who describe themselves while a forensic artist sketches them based on those descriptions. Later on, other people describe the women and the two sketches produced are compared. In each case, the sketch created when another described the woman was more beautiful than those created by the woman’s self-descriptions. “You’re More Beautiful Than You Think,” shows two things: the opposing ways that women see themselves versus each other, and what these views mean.

The women in the commercial see themselves as less than they are. The forensic artist, Gil Zamora, asks the women questions while they are separated by a white curtain. The white curtain could represent a rebirth that the women are about to go through that will cause them to better see their true beauty. He asks them questions about their facial features and sketches them based on the answers. The women say things like, “My mom told me I had a big jaw,” and “I kind of have a fat, rounder face.” These descriptions all focus on features that the women find undesirable or even ugly. These features mentioned are seen as ugly because society has told the women so. While Zamora and the women are talking, light filters through a wall made completely of windows. Zamora, and the Dove company, is shown through this use of light, to be revealing the women’s true selves. As the commercial goes on, the women describe the things they hate about their appearance instead of focusing on the positive aspects of themselves. The next step was to have other women come in and describe the first group of women. These descriptions were much different. They described things like the woman’s cute nose, thin face with prominent cheekbones, and “nice eyes, [that] lit up when she spoke.” All of these accounts were positive. The other people could see the first group of women’s features that were appealing and made her beautiful to them. The second group described the women with smiles on their faces and admiration in their eyes. These responses were much different from the frowns by the first group. The final sketches were revealed and Zamora told the women, “So here we go. This is the sketch that you helped me create and that’s the sketch that somebody described of you.” The women could not believe what they were seeing. Many of the individuals were left speechless. One woman commented on the contrast saying, “She looks

closed off and fatter, and sadder too. The second one looks more open, and friendly, and...happy.” The difference between the sketches was staggering. The women who looked at the sketches that they had taken part in creating did not like what they saw. The individuals were looking at an illustration of how they felt about themselves, or how society told them to feel about themselves.

The differing sketches displayed by the two groups says something about women and how they are taught by culture to view themselves. One of the women in the commercial muses, “I should be more grateful of my natural beauty. It impacts choices in the friends that we make, the jobs we apply for, how we treat our children. It impacts everything. It couldn’t be more critical to your happiness.” It is true that the self-worth that women put on themselves affects every aspect of their lives. This self-worth can be negatively impacted by the media that presents an impossible look to achieve as “the norm.” Another woman says, “We spend a lot of time, as women, analyzing, trying to fix the things that aren’t quite right and we should spend more time appreciating the things that we do like.” Society teaches women to improve what is “wrong with them” and continue doing that until they reach an unrealistic “perfect,” which, in reality, can never be reached.

This commercial seems to send a positive message out to women and girls that they should be grateful for who they are and see the true beauty within. While this commercial, and other, similar, Dove commercials, strives to present women as unique and beautiful, it also sends a subtler, negative message. Susan Douglas discuss this negative message in her essay, “Enlightened Sexism.” She discusses 1950’s and ‘60’s advertising that showed women as “Watusi-dancing bimbettes on the beach or stay-at-home housewives” (283). There was an illusion in this that women’s goals were not changing, when they, in fact, were. “Now,” she says, “the media illusion is that equality for girls and women is an accomplished fact when it isn’t” (283). Contrary to what the Dove commercial suggests, the fight for equality is ongoing. The Dove commercial, and other commercials like it, suggests that women have achieved much equality so there is no need to continue to fight. By the end of the commercial, there seems to be a sense of closure. The words, “You are more beautiful than you think,” are shown on screen before the Dove logo, thus reaching a “satisfying conclusion.” This conclusion is not realistic. The truth is commercials like this one are only a winning battle in an ongoing war against sexism and gender discrimination. Douglas says, “Then [the 1950’s] the media were behind the curve; now, ironically, they’re ahead” (283). While women have indeed made progress, they have not made as much progress as the media would have the general public believe.

Another negative aspect of this commercial is that the Dove company does not practice what they preach. One of the Dove soap products that is advertised for women are \$0.41/fl. oz. while the soap product that is advertised for men are \$0.32/fl. oz. That is a quite the difference! The Dove company tries to convince women and girls that the fight for gender rights is over, and yet they still support the view that men are valued above women by the price they put on the different products. As the saying goes, “Actions speak louder than words.” Dove’s actions are saying that their desire to turn a profit outweighs their desire to treat women and men equally. While Dove has made strides in feminist media, they are not showing that those ideas and values can be applied effectively. The company is, in fact, contradicting itself. This

contradiction affects women negatively. Women look at the Dove commercials in admiration as one of the few companies who shows women of all shapes, sizes, and races. However, once women realize the difference in pricing, they might feel cheated. Women may feel like the company only wants their money and does not truly care about them.

In conclusion, the Dove commercials have helped women by portraying females as truly beautiful inside and out, although they still have to work on their applications of these messages in real life. Studying pieces of pop culture, such as this Dove commercial, can help us to better understand the media, how it shows the world to be, and how it can affect our world either negatively or positively. One essay says, “Consequently, as an institution, popular culture can exert tremendous power on creating particular versions of the world by privileging certain ideologies. It is, thus, imperative to continually critique films that have mass appeal especially to youth” (289). The war on inequality is a series of continuous battles that are not finished and the army of revolutionaries must march on.

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Douglas, Susan. “Enlightened Feminism.” *Women's Voices Feminist Visions*, edited by Susan
Shaw, 6th ed., McGraw-Hill Education, NY, 2015.

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Visions*, edited by Susan Shaw, 6th ed., McGraw-Hill Education, NY, 2015.

1st Place: Malikah Fard-Allah, “Adventures in Multimedia Writing”

[Adventures in Multimedia](#) Writing (link to blog)

Professional Writing

2nd Place: Ellen Long, "Phi Theta Kappa IRB Application"

APPLICATION FOR REVIEW
SUBMITTED TO THE COTTEY COLLEGE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
IRB No. _____ (To be completed by the IRB Chair)

Name of Project Director: Dr.Fernando

Department: Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS 190)

Phone: Ex. 2180

Title of Research Proposal: The Effect of Globalization on Cultural Appropriation

Starting Date: 11-15-16 Duration: 11-29-16 (2 weeks)

Source of Funding (if any): N/A

All requests must include the following: completed and signed Application for Review; completed Review Category Form; brief description of the research including the methodological and analytical techniques; copies of consent forms (or a request for exemption from informed consent with justification); copies of all surveys to be utilized in the study or, if incomplete at the time of submission, a description of the topics to be covered and sample questions; and any additional materials that will assist the Board in completing its review.

Estimated Number of Human Subjects Involved in the Project: 100

Characteristics of the subjects (check as many boxes as appropriate.)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minors | <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> College/University Students |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School Students |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Incompetents | <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School Students |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Others (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty/ Staff | |

II. Type of Review Requested (select one)

- Exempt Expedited Full

(See Review Category Form.)

If this or a similar research protocol has been approved by the Cottey College IRB or any other college/university IRB, provide the information below:

Date _____

Project _____

IRB granting approval: _____

III. Participant Consent

- A. Consent obtained from individuals

Consent obtained from legally authorized representative _____.

- B. Method of presenting information on which to base informed consent:

Written

Oral

(For an oral presentation, attach a summary of the information which will be presented orally to the prospective subjects, signed by the project director.)

- C. Attach a brief description of the methods used to select subjects for this project.

IV. Attach a description of the project (See Procedures for Obtaining IRB Approval, Section III.)

V. Agreements

By signing this form, the project director (and, if the director is a student, her faculty advisor/instructor) agrees to the following:

- A. The project director will comply with Cottey College policies on research and investigation involving human subjects.
- B. The project director will provide documentation of selection and informed consent procedures upon request by the IRB.
- C. The project director will inform the IRB of any planned changes in procedures which involve human subjects, giving the IRB sufficient time to review and approve such changes before they are implemented, and to supply IRB with such progress reports or annual assessments as it may require.
- D. It is understood that any approval granted by the IRB applies to this project only and only under the conditions and procedures described in the application. Any change in the protocol or conditions set forth will require separate approval.
- E. It is understood that the identification of human subjects in any publication or medium (print or electronic) is an invasion of privacy and requires the execution of a consent

form. Informed consent must be obtained from each subject or the subject's legally authorized representative. Documentation of the informed consent must be retained, in a secure environment, for a minimum of four years after termination of the project.

Date: 11-13-2016 Signature: _____

If the project director is an undergraduate student, the student's instructor or advisor for this research proposal must sign the form.

Date: 11-13-2016 Signature _____

The Board will act on an application within fourteen working days of the submission date. The principal investigator will be informed in writing of the Board's decision within seven working days of the date that the decision is made.

- Approved for Exemption from Review
- Approved after Expedited Review
- Approved after Full Review
- Not approved (explanation attached)

Signature of the IRB Chair

Date

REVIEW CATEGORY FORM

Indicate the review category for which you are applying.

Application for exempt review. Check all categories that apply. Submit one (1) copy of materials.

- Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational setting and involving normal educational practices
- Research involving the use of educational tests, if information from these sources cannot be linked to the participant
- Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, where these sources are publicly available and data cannot be linked to the participant.
- Research involving observation of public behavior where the participant's behavior is not linked to their identity.
- Research involving survey or questionnaire procedures where responses are not linked to the participant

Note: See Procedures for Obtaining IRB Approval, Section VI: A-E, and "Protection of Special Classes of Subjects."

- Application for expedited review. Check all categories that apply. Submit three (3) copies of materials.
- Collection of voice video, digital, or image recording made for research purposes.
 - Research on group or individual behavior or on characteristics of behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, communication, cultural beliefs, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.
 - Collection of hair and nail clippings in a non-disfiguring manner.
 - Collection of deciduous teeth at the time of exfoliation, or of deciduous or permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction.
 - Collection of excreta and external secretions (including sweat), saliva, skin cells, sputum, placenta removed at delivery, or amniotic fluid at time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor.
 - Recording of data from adult participants (18+ years of age) using noninvasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely used in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Examples: physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance; weighing or testing sensory acuity; moderate exercise, muscular strength testing.
 - Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture from adult participants (18+years of age) who are in good health, not pregnant and weigh at least 110 pounds.
 - Collection of supra- and sub-gingival dental plaque and calculus in a routine manner.
 - Study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens that have been collected or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).
 - Continuing review of research previously approved by the convened IRB where no new participants will be recruited.
 - Research on drugs or medical devices that are not new investigations.
- Application for full review. Check all categories that apply. Submit six (6) copies of materials.
- Research that utilizes deception of participants.
 - Research that involves the manipulation of participants' behavior, with or without the participants' knowledge.

- Research that involves new and/or untested procedures.

III. C. Methods used to select subjects for this project

Currently enrolled Cottey College students who are 18 years old or older will be invited to participate in this survey. The survey will be developed in SurveyMonkey and a link will be embedded in an email that will be sent via the campus email system to all enrolled Cottey students. Participation is restricted to students 18 years of age or older as this is the age of consent. The first page of the survey will be the consent form, which will ask students to verify their age. If the student is under 18, she will be skipped to a page that thanks her for participating and she will not answer the questions. The consent form for students accompanies this IRB application.

Current Cottey College faculty and staff will also be asked to participate in a survey. The survey will be developed in SurveyMonkey and a link will be embedded in an email that will be sent via the campus email system. The first page of the survey will be the consent form, which will also ask faculty and staff identify their employment designation. If they are faculty, they will be asked to further classify themselves by academic division: math and science, humanities, social sciences, and fine arts. Staff will be asked to further classify themselves by area: student life, academic affairs and other. The employee and academic qualification information will be used to qualify the answers and show the diversity of responses. The consent form for faculty and staff accompanies this IRB application.

IV. Description of project

This project is an exploration of cultural appropriation from a global perspective that will be submitted as an Honors in Action project for Phi Theta Kappa. In order to achieve the honor of 5-Star status, Cottey's Epsilon Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the last active chapter among the founders, completes two projects—A College Project, and an Honors in Action project.

The College Project aims to impact Cottey and our surrounding community while the Honors in Action project impacts the greater world community. This year four members of Phi Theta Kappa are completing the Honors in Action project. It is called "How the World Works: Global Perspectives." We will complete and submit a research paper that explores one of eight themes chosen by the international chapter. We chose to explore the theme of Beauty and Vulgarly. We are specifically researching the influences of globalization on cultural appropriation and fashion. We are seeking IRB approval because we would like to present our research to the campus community, and we may be invited to present it at the Phi Theta Kappa international convention.

We define "appropriation" as "to take or use (something) especially in a way that is illegal, unfair, etc." We have applied this definition to the cultural aspects of religion and fashion. The aims of the study are to gather information from a diverse student body and faculty to discover how prevalent cultural appropriation is in the everyday lives of this population, as well as to understand the relationship between globalization and cultural appropriation.

Currently enrolled Cottey students 18 years or older will complete an online survey received through email. The survey will ask their thoughts about cultural appropriation and whether they have ever experienced or noticed cultural appropriation. The survey accompanies this application.

Current Cottey faculty and staff will be asked to complete a different online survey. They will be asked about their thoughts on cultural appropriation, its effects, and the effects of globalization on appropriation. The survey accompanies this application.

The results will be analyzed with the goal of answering the following questions: How strongly does cultural appropriation occur in their life? How prevalent is appropriation in their life? How does globalization affect appropriation and the subjects' perceptions of it?

1st Place: Abigail Baumgartner, “Deforestation in the Congo Basin: A Critical Look”

Introduction: The Issue At Hand

Forests face considerable pressure from climate change, logging, and cash crop agricultural trends introduced by economically developed countries. As a result, forests in economically developing countries face ongoing threats to the continued existence of their forests due to these anthropogenic forces (Ifo et al. 2016). The Congo Basin rainforest is among the forests threatened by these factors. The Congo Basin rainforest is among the most important tree assemblages in the world, along with the Amazon rainforest. Across the world, over one billion people receive their livelihoods from forests (Brown et al, 2014), and, in truth, all of humankind owes its current ability to live and breathe to forests and other plant life.

The Congo Basin rainforest is found in six countries, among which are the Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Cameroon, and the Central African Republic, and the rainforest spans around 200 million hectares of land (Brown et al. 2014). The rainforest is the main source of water and food for many of the ethnic groups living in and around the forest. However, the same forest that supports human life is under attack by human mismanagement of environmental resources. Therefore, it is imperative that the countries who have responsibility for the preservation of the rainforest implement new policies and enforce laws that protect the forest from human threats. The Congo Basin rainforest, though critical for all of humanity on the earth, is even more important for those who live in and around it and more directly depend upon it for their day to day needs. Because the issues around deforestation are crucial, and I personally have a great interest in deforestation, I chose to consider this problem. Moreover, Wangari Maathai’s book made me especially interested in the Congo Basin rainforest, a forest I previously barely realized existed. I grew to want to improve my knowledge and to remove my ignorance about this critical part of Earth’s ecosystem, and decided to examine the issue to see what was being done and what still needs to be addressed.

Theory Supported: Fair Trade

The theory of fair trade is designed to improve the status of economically developing countries in global commerce (Fairtrade International 2015). Instead of believing, as do neo-liberalist supporters of free trade, that no government interference is needed and that free trade is beneficial for all, fair trade asserts that the market has flaws that should be corrected through governance and the implementation of laws and policies to protect the rights of economically developing countries (Fairtrade 2015). In almost all cases, economically developed countries take advantage of economically developing countries, and benefit more from international trade (Fairtrade 2015). Because of this, there is a focus on protecting these economically developing countries through fair trade agreements. I support fair trade because I recognize how horrible the effects on the developing countries can be when there is no limitation on what may be done to the environment. If business ventures leading to deforestation remain unchecked as in the free trade theory, indigenous groups and other forest-dependent people may lose their livelihoods. Further, once the country loses its forests and climate, it will be in dire straits economically from having been exploited by foreign speculators. Therefore, government intervention to protect the interests and resources of economically developing countries is imperative for their well-being down the road. For this reason, I support the Fair Trade theory.

Fair trade looks at problems, including environmental ones, from the developing country's point of view, and seeks to benefit the developing country. In opposition to this view, the Neo-Liberal free trade theory supports freedom in the market. This freedom can be detrimental to the environment because lack of government intervention to prevent deforestation could result in indiscriminate exploitation of timber resources. While trade is important, fair trade seeks to enable small farmers and other poor workers in developing countries to earn a living wage and to demand fair trade practices as the norm. Additionally, consumers are informed and understand the importance of fair trade policies, and policy in the public and private sectors support and enable economic, social, and environmental sustainability in trade (Fairtrade International 2015). Fair trade also seeks to empower small farmers, this empowerment means "the expansion of assets and capabilities of people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable the institutions that affect their lives" (Fairtrade International 2015). Empowerment among small workers should be supported by helping them build democratic organizations and improving their position in negotiations with buyers and employers, and by helping those small workers achieve economic stability. Also, fair trade aims to help them gain sustainable livelihoods, or lives that contain the assets and capabilities for human living, while simultaneously able to recover from stresses and shocks, without undermining the natural resource base (Fairtrade International 2015). To address the problem of deforestation in the Congo Basin rainforest, fair trade's empowerment of small producers and developing countries will be crucial.

The Issue in Detail

This section will examine the factors that are increasing deforestation in the Congo Basin rainforest, and also the ramifications that may occur if deforestation continues unchecked. Environmental, economic, and social dynamics all may be effected by deforestation. Of note are the effects on small workers and ethnic minorities through deforestation. The global impact of the issue is not as readily apparent, but the regional impacts on climate and productivity overall are investigated. Deforestation has several deleterious effects that are examined as to the impact on the environment and the economic stability of small workers.

Logging Concessions and Deforestation

In the Congo Basin in Cameroon, many small producer's farms are intertwined with the forest, and they depend on the forest for livelihoods (Lescuyer et. al 2012). These groups consider the land in which they and the forest exist to be theirs by custom, but according to law, the legal rights are solely within the grasp of the government (Lescuyer et. al 2012). This government has a logging concession in place whereby a company may exploit the natural resources in return for taxes and the provision of goods to the government (Lescuyer et. al 2012). These logging concessions are made up of around 7,500 hectares of land, and necessarily overlap with lands traditionally understood as belonging to the ethnic groups who subsist in the forest (Lescuyer et. al 2012). These concessions not only lead to deforestation, a problem in itself, but more concerning, they exploit the small worker, a violation of the fair trade practices supported in this analysis.

The Issue of Artisanal Mining and Its Impact on the Environment

Artisanal mining is another activity in the Congo Basin rainforest that poses threats to the environment. Artisanal mining is small scale mining undertaken by families, and generally

involves little to no mechanization (Ingram et al. 2011). This form of mining in the Congo Basin is an important livelihood; it often yields such valuable resources as gold and diamonds (Ingram et al. 2011). Unfortunately, the miners often face social problems, they become beholden to middlemen, have little bargaining power, and children are often employed (Ingram et al. 2011). The use of chemicals and metals has been found to cause negative environmental impacts to the landscape such as air and water pollution; also, other effects have been caused by the artisanal mining including over-fishing, poaching, and deforestation (Ingram et al. 2011). It is predicted that if mining operations increase, deforestation will also increase with it, and the water and air pollution in the Congo Basin may increase to unstable levels (Ingram et al. 2011). Because miners depend on the resources found in the rainforest to supplement their income, an increase in mining operations would negatively effect biodiversity in the forest, which could negatively impact the livelihoods of indigenous populations such as the pygmy peoples who inhabit the rainforest (Ingram et al. 2011). Because the problem has the potential to negatively impact the life of small producers, and the environment upon which they depend, careful regulation and monitoring of the procedures must be carried out to prevent a disaster, and to halt yet another cause of deforestation in the Congo Basin.

Impact of Deforestation on Climate Change

Here I will discuss the negative effects that unsustainable management of the Congo Basin rainforest will cause to the climate locally and globally. The deforestation in the Congo Basin is chiefly driven by the need for agricultural land; which may increase by 100% in the next 20 years (Akkermans et al. 2013). Studies that include the deforestation factor when considering climate change in the Congo Basin all show a regional surface warming, and most demonstrate a loss of rainfall in the area (Akkermans et al. 2013). Because deforestation removes shade and also increases greenhouse gas concentrations, it is projected that deforestation in the Congo Basin could raise temperatures by around 3 degrees Celsius by 2041 (Akkermans et al. 2013). Additionally, deforestation has been shown to decrease precipitation in the area by 2.6%, this lack of water could lead to the extinction of amphibious creatures such as frogs and aquatic species, fish in particular, and could also negatively impact agricultural efforts in the area (Akkermans et al. 2013). These impacts can severely influence biodiversity and quality of life in the Congo Basin, and also across the world. Care must be taken to protect the livelihoods of small producers who depend on the forest and its climate to survive.

Timber and Non-Timber Forest Products and Their Valuation

In recent years, the deforestation in the Congo Basin Rainforest has increased dramatically due to factors such as the increasing value put on timber products. 53% of the population of the Congo Basin lives in rural areas and depends upon non-timber products for survival and also on commercial products that are extracted and sold (Ndoye et al. 2004). On the other hand, timber companies gain money from timber extraction and sale, and governments benefit from the fees and taxes that the companies pay, which increase their revenues and foreign exchange earnings (Ndoye et al. 2004). Unfortunately, despite the perceived economic benefits that come with deforestation, the activity of timber companies has been found to be the chief threat to rainforest integrity and the livelihoods of forest dwellers in the Congo Basin rainforest (Ndoye et al. 2004).

The pressures put on the rainforest through the practices of timbering may result in the degradation of the Congo Basin rainforest as well as the livelihoods of rural peoples in the region

(Ndoye et al. 2004). Forest-dependent people use the naturally occurring resources of the forest, such as fruits, nuts, leaves, bushmeat, fuel-wood, and caterpillars, which are primarily gathered by women and minority ethnic groups (Ndoye et al. 2004). Notably, The timber companies will move to more profitable regions when the lack of timber becomes notable, but the rural people lack the same mobility and will be without a job from the timber companies and also without the natural resources that the rainforest previously provided that allowed them to survive off of the land (Ndoye et al. 2004). Since rural forest dependent-people get food, income, and medicine from the forest, its preservation is important for the continued economic well-being of those people, as well as being a safer environmental choice.

The Projected Extent of Deforestation in the Congo Basin Rainforest

Agricultural requirements, which are exacerbated by growing population, are one of the major factors influencing the spread of deforestation in the Congo Basin rainforest. Further, an increase in urban populations can impact forestation through the housing and fuel demands, and also through the agricultural demands of large population city life (Quanfa et al. 2006). Studies indicate that the continued operations of logging in the Congo Basin rainforest will result in fragmentation: the forest will be split apart into three major sections, and will no longer be a contiguous rainforest (Quanfa et al. 2006). Though forest patches will remain, the rainforest as a whole will greatly decrease in size and connectivity; it will be spread out and divided (Quanfa et al. 2006). The fragmentation of the rainforest means that “less than 50% of the total forests ... are interior forests in 2050 compared to over 70% of them in the 1990s” (Quanfa et al. 2006: 115). Farming continues to harm the rainforest because it intersects with more vulnerable tracts of the forest to gradually increase deforestation along the edge of the forest, thereby gradually shrinking the total forest covered land (Quanfa et al. 2006). Though agricultural factors are acknowledged as crucial in deforestation, other factors such as the demand for housing and fuel also play large roles in the continued process of deforestation. The consequences of unmitigated deforestation in the Congo Basin rainforest are extensive and dangerous. If action is not taken, the rainforest will no longer be contiguous, but rather fragmented. Part of the benefit of the Congo Basing rainforest is its contiguous nature that provides climate regulation and habitat for many diverse species in the forest. If it were separated, desertification could gain a foothold not just near the edges but from the center as well, and spread more rapidly.

Investigating the Environmental Policy

In this section, the environmental policy that is in place concerning the deforestation of the Congo Basin rainforest will be examined and analyzed. Specific regulatory issues will be looked at critically through a Fair Trade standpoint to determine whether or not the theory is being followed. It is important to understand what is already in place so that revisions and improvements can be made without redundancy to the policies designed to protect the rainforest and the rights of those who depend upon it for their livelihoods.

Policy in the Democratic Republic of Congo

In recent years, the Democratic Republic of Congo has been through several civil wars. Additionally, the agricultural sector has been liberalized, which has led to the expanding territory of agricultural impact causing deforestation (Mosnier et al. 2014). In the Congo Basin, most of the land is owned by the State (Mosnier et al. 2014). The Democratic Republic of Congo belongs to the group of countries labeled LDCs (Least Developed Countries), which have developed their

NAPA (national adaptation plan of action), and will be required to “prepare and submit their National Alternatives for Mitigation Actions (NAMA)” (Sonwa et al. 2011: 443). Though the Democratic Republic of Congo is required to plan methods for reducing deforestation, the problem still exists. The Democratic Republic of Congo is ostensibly part of a number of countries working to implement policies in order to mitigate or reverse the growing trend of deforestation, degradation of forests, and the emission of greenhouse gases (Fobissie et al. 2014). These policy moves in general are labeled REDD+, and is expected to reduce poverty as well as promote good forest governance (Fobissie et al. 2014). The Democratic Republic of Congo has “a national forest monitoring system, national REDD+ trust fund, and has developed a national REDD+ standard” (Fobissie et al. 2014: 2403). The Democratic Republic of Congo is also implementing a forest investment program, and the stakeholders involved in the REDD+ process come from diverse places, government, business, and the private sector (Fobissie et al. 2014). The Democratic Republic of Congo nationally funds its participants to UNFCCC events, and is a member of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility of the World Bank, and they work with these institutions to fund and plan the development of environmental projects and policies (Fobissie et al. 2014). Indigenous communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo have “minimal rights to land and forest resources” and forest ownership is arrogated to the state (Fobissie et al. 2014: 2412). Notably, many of the proposals for the Democratic Republic of Congo were pioneered by experts from outside the country, which makes it less connected to the local government (Fobissie et al. 2014).

The Democratic Republic of Congo’s current status with the implementation of REDD+ policy modifications is fairly well along, and it is aimed to chiefly support the interests of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is in keeping with the purpose of the Fair Trade theory to benefit economically developing countries over countries with strong, developed economies. However, the lack of land rights given to small workers and ethnic minorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo is troubling. Not only does taking the power over the land they live on disempower them, there is significantly more chance of corrupt officials deciding to allow a large timber firm from outside the country to cause severe deforestation and exploit the small worker. This chance of exploitation is dangerous from a Fair Trade standpoint because fair trade seeks to benefit developing countries and the small worker. If a foreign company logs the forest, not only are valuable natural resources lost, most of the profit is gained by the foreign company, and the lasting effects on the environment can include desertification and loss of biodiversity. What is lacking in the Democratic Republic of Congo from a Fair Trade standpoint is the ability of small workers and producers to be positioned favorably in the market (Fairtrade International 2015). One of the components needed to make Fair Trade a success is “political leadership within national governments and regional and global institutions (Fairtrade International 2015: 10). In this aspect, while the government is making strides towards protecting the forested areas, and there are several international organizations assisting with various aspects of REDD+, including funding and idea formation, the formation of regional institutions is rather small and there is little involvement on the part of small workers or indigenous ethnic groups (Fobissie et al. 2014). Another key component needed for Fair Trade to work is good governance and fair representation of all stakeholders in decision making (Fairtrade International 2015). Unfortunately, the Democratic Republic of Congo falls woefully short; illegal operations by foreign companies remain a problem, and there is little to no participation in decision making by small workers or indigenous people. In fact, much of the planning for the environmental policy

of the Democratic Republic of Congo is done by outsiders, which is troubling because not even the departments in the national government always understand or are invested in the policies. Recommendation for Reducing Deforestation

Now that the reasons for the increasing problem of deforestation are understood, and the climactic issues that are caused by deforestation are understood, it is possible to make decisions about the implementation of policies for the prevention of furthered deforestation. Further, the importance of good governance and how that can be achieved and how the education and understanding of small workers and ethnic groups, as well as their participation can protect the environment. Indigenous people depend on the forest for their survival, and are continuously threatened by the spread of deforestation in the Congo Basin rainforest (Brown et al. 2014). They need to be able to make decisions about their lives.

Reduced Impact Logging and Sustainable Forestry

As we have seen, logging and timbering has some of the greatest negative effect on the Congo Basin rainforest. As time goes by, more and more of the rainforest falls prey to companies who are seeking to profit from wood products, and the implications for the livelihoods of rural small workers, ethnic groups, and other forest-dependent people look more and more frightening. Oftentimes, the policies promoted by the government do not take these people into account, or they disregard their cultural values (Nkem et al. 2004). Because logging incursions are both detrimental to the rainforest and disrupting to the forest peoples, the government should either set aside sections of the forest that are not to be disturbed at any time, or grant the people who are living on the forested land, and who have lived there for years, land rights so they can decide for themselves whether or not they desire to sell their land (Nkem et al. 2004). Though the second plan is more humanitarian because people should have the right to choose, it is also dangerous because large companies may threaten local people and force them to move. On the other hand, it is possible that if the land is under the power of the government, money will be enough motivation to disregard the people living in the forest and the eventual degradation of the country's climate and sustainable economy. Therefore, it is important that there is a system of checks and balances whereby the indigenous people have rights, but must confirm with the government before a final decision is made, or where the government is unable to sell logging rights to companies without first gaining the consent of a local committee (Fairtrade International 2015). If this plan of action were implemented, the difficulty of obtaining access to forested land by foreign companies would increase dramatically, and the economy could benefit through the development of alternative incomes such as small farming and fishing. It is crucial that the farming and fishing possibilities be maintained for the livelihood of the indigenous people, who rely on them for food and income (Nkem et al. 2004). In fact, logging in the Congo Basin rainforest is detrimental to fishing: "Unsustainable exploitation could destroy the water catchment areas, which could affect the running waters that support fishing" (Nkem et al. 2004: 525). In other words, logging can directly affect the livelihoods of small workers, and leave them with no method of survival; therefore, it is crucial that the government implement policies to help the people who depend upon the forest. The government must grant the indigenous peoples land rights, so they are not trapped under the whim of any corrupt official who decides to overlook illegal logging operations.

Promoting Ecotourism

Another way that the Democratic Republic of Congo can preserve their Congo Basin rainforest while improving the economy is the development of national parks. Because the forest is home to many unique species of plants and animals, including gorillas, it is a naturally interesting place to visit if one is interested in nature. Some of the goals of ecotourism include the education of local peoples about the value of nature and the attraction of tourists from overseas. Ecotourism is a particularly beneficial method of preserving the environment because people pay to see the preserved and beautiful nature of a country (Butler, 2012). In other words, there is significant value in protecting the environment because it leads to the improvement of the economy and of the environment. Also, ecotourism can develop entrepreneurial opportunities for local people, such as the crafting of souvenirs, which most tourists desire to attain to remember their trip, or a job as a park ranger or forest guide (Yunis, 2003). The Congo Basin rainforest is advantageously positioned for promoting ecotourism because it has a wonderful and vast amount of biological diversity, and because it is relatively close to Europe, which has a large amount of people interested in touring to view natural landscapes (Yunis 2003). Another advantage is that up until now there has been little in the way of ecotourism in the Congo Basin rainforest, so it is possible to develop a sustainable system for ecotourism there (Yunis 2003). Moreover, local people can gain income by the development of lodging places, where they can put up tourists and employ other local people (Yunis 2003). Among the places that can be developed for ecotourism in the Congo Basin rainforest are “five World Heritage sites in the Democratic Republic of Congo” (Yunis 2003). Thus, there is an opportunity for the Democratic Republic of Congo to improve their economy and improve their environment. Ecotourism is one important way that the Congo Basin rainforest can be preserved. Ecotourism is not only important because it preserves the environment but also because it shows the local people and the government in developing countries that the environment is valuable and a thing of beauty worth preserving. While care must be taken in the development of sites for ecotourism, overall the Democratic Republic of Congo is well positioned to implement the methods that come with ecotourism. The development of local councils or groups on areas where ecotourism is implemented is important because in the case of tourists infringing on nature through poaching or other problematic avenues that lead to the degradation of the forest a response in the immediate is necessary.

Better Governance to Prevent Illegal Logging

The problem of illegal logging operations is among the chief problems causing deforestation in the Congo Basin rainforest today. To mitigate this issue, more importance on the problem must be stressed in policies and regulations. The regulatory sector must be stricter when infringement of laws is discovered. Furthermore, the disregard for the importance of the environment within the government must be checked and research done if the deforestation in the Congo Basin is to be mitigated (Anthony et al. 2015). Good governance is an important element of Fair Trade that must be developed and maintained if the economy and sustainable livelihoods of the small workers and producers of the Democratic Republic of Congo are to be established (Fairtrade International 2015). To preserve the rainforest there must be a serious investment on the part of the government, and the laws and regulations intended to protect the rainforest must be enforced by the government. Illegal operations must not continue with impunity.

Increasing Fees and Taxes, Reducing Size of Logging Concessions

Another step that can be taken to reduce the progression of deforestation in the Congo Basin is increasing the taxes that must be paid to use the wood for timber. Though I have not discovered the current rate, an increase from the current number by 10% would likely be enough to discourage a large number of interested companies. Moreover, a beginning and ending fee should be required from the company wishing to log, with the size of the fee being based on the amount of land they plan to log. In addition, the size of logging concessions should be dramatically decreased in the Congo Basin to prevent forest exploitation. Though the problem of timber extraction has lately been mitigated, it still continues to be a concern that could negatively impact the rainforest if measures are not taken quickly (Céline et al. 2013). I propose that logging for fuelwood, which in the Democratic Republic of Congo constitutes “more than 95% of wood production,” be included in the policy changes above (Céline et al. 2013: 1184). For this to work, another energy source will need to be obtained. The implementation of green energy such as solar power or geothermal energy, would be beneficial, the current use of wood for fuel in the Democratic Republic of Congo is unsustainable and dangerous for the environment. Burning wood releases greenhouse gases and the cutting of trees to burn removes the main system for conversion of carbon dioxide into breathable oxygen.

Conclusion

We have found that the Congo Basin rainforest is threatened by the general trend of industrialization taking hold in the area, in specific the Democratic Republic of Congo. Agricultural needs and artisanal mining contribute to the steady degradation of the forest, as does timber requirements. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, wood from the rainforest is used as fuel, there is a lack of alternative renewable energy in the country and continued use of wood for fuel could lead to great deforestation in the next few years. The climate change that is being caused by the deforestation trend could compromise the country’s climate and lead to lack of water for agriculture or flooding. Additionally, non-timber forest products are more important for the economy of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and benefit the environment more as well.

To mitigate the problems of deforestation and economic destitution, the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo should promote sustainable ecotourism. This ecotourism should involve local people in the roles of guides and park rangers. Ideally, sustainable production of local products can be sold as souvenirs to tourists to boost the local and national economy. Also, the problem of illegal timber extraction should be addresses through better regulations and stricter enforcement. The development of entrance and exit fees on companies seeking to log. In addition to this, I propose that the Democratic Republic of Congo increase the tax of timber extraction by 10% from its current rate of taxation of timber commodities. Further, I suggest that the Democratic Republic of Congo decrease the size of any logging concessions granted, especially when granted to foreign companies. It is also crucial that the Democratic Republic develop a system of checks and balances whereby the people living on the land and the government both must confirm with each other before granting anyone the right to operate in forested areas of the Congo Basin.

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Writing in a Foreign Language

French 1st Place: Alex Marroquin, “L’année en Italie”

J’ai choisi de participer à un programme Erasmus dans les beaux arts à Florence, en Italie. La raison pour laquelle je veux y participer est qu’il y avait une grande culture des beaux arts, et de la Renaissance qui s’est passée là. Quand j’y suis passée de temps, j’ai appris beaucoup de choses.

Florence est une belle ville et les gens de la ville et du pays d’Italie sont très gentils, respectueux, et accueillants. Ils sont aussi charmants. L’université était grande, peuplée, et il y avait des gens de tous les pays de l’Union Européenne dans le programme Erasmus comme moi aussi.

Ma vie dans l’année passée, quand j’étais en Italie, était une vie amusante, mais j’ai bien réussi. J’ai suivi des cours de peinture, de sculpture, de céramique, et de ballet. Le ballet était mon cours préféré parce qu’il est une forme d’exercice. Quand je suis stressée, j’aime faire l’exercice comme une forme de relaxation. En plus, je travaillais au Musée des beaux arts, à la Galleria dell’Accademia de lundi à jeudi la nuit. Le week-end, je sortais avec mes amies aux boîtes de nuit, au centre historique, ou simplement pour faire de la promenade.

Un événement inoubliable était quand j’ai nagé dans la rivière Arno. Une nuit, je suis sortie avec mes amies comme chaque week-end. Cette nuit-là, je me suis enivrée quand je suis allée à la boîte de nuit. Il était trois heures et demie du matin quand j’ai décidé de nager dans la rivière Arno, ce qui me paraissait comme une bonne idée parce que je me sentais chaud. On oubliant que je me suis complètement habillée, j’ai sauté dans la rivière et j’ai commencé à me noyer. Mes amies avait tellement peur, qu’elles ont téléphoné à la police. Quelques minutes plus tard, le policier est arrivé et on m’a tirée de la rivière. J’ai juré de ne jamais nager dans une rivière. Je recommanderai que toutes les étudiantes de Cottey College participent dans le programme Erasmus. Ce programme a changé ma vie pour le meilleur. J’ai réussi et je n’ai aucun regret.

Spanish 2nd Place: Selica Piloy Panjoj, “La Pobreza en los Siglos XIV Y XV en España”

A finales del siglo XIII Europa había llegado a sus límites feudales por lo tanto le era más difícil alcanzar el balance entre la producción de los alimentos y la creciente población. En caso del pueblo Español el esfuerzo militar y la sobrepoblación de la conquista hicieron crecer su territorio rápidamente. Por lo tanto en el siglo XIV se rompe el equilibrio de estos elementos y como consecuencia se produce una crisis en el campo de la economía, social, cultural y político de su país (Columbia.edu).

La escasez de producción agrícola y agraria trajo a España una crisis económica o sea pobreza, que afectó a todos sin importar los estatus sociales. La pobreza como punto de partida se puede observar con dos perspectivas bien diferentes. Hay una pobreza que tiene una concepción muy honrosa por parte de los eclesiásticos se refiere entonces a la pobreza como virtud evangélica. Esa idea de pobreza, de raíces cristianas que sirve de marcha de las denominaciones mendicantes para las personas como salvación de su alma. La otra perspectiva de la pobreza es sumamente diferente a la del anterior. Se trata entonces de la pobreza material, esta pobreza es sinónimo de carencias objetivas de los elementos necesarios para subsistir dignamente durante los tiempos medievales (Valdeon Baruque). Como ejemplo de la pobreza espiritual tenemos el siguiente fragmento tomado del cuento X del Conde Lucanor “... Se bien que Dios me ha dado tantos vienes y mercedes que yo no puedo agradecerlos como debiera y sé también que mis propiedades son ricas y extensas; pero a veces me siento acosado por la pobreza” (pg. 51). En este párrafo resalta la pobreza espiritual ya que en la era medieval los hombres se preocupaban mucho por salvar su alma ya que le tenían miedo a la crisis que estaban experimentando, algunos hombres hasta pensaron que era el fin del mundo o la señal apocalíptica.

Para esa época como en la actualidad el perfil de los pobres en materiales se basaba de carencias objetivables, en pasar hambre, vestir harapos y mendigar. Como se lee en el libro (Miseria de Omme) “... El hombre empobrecido trae capa muy cativa” y tener unas viviendas miserables donde nadie se acerca a visitar. Desde el punto de vista subjetivo, la pobreza traía en general vergüenza al individuo al momento de pedir limosna y los pobres usualmente se encuentran solos sin compañía por el simple hecho de ser pobre. Como leemos en el libro del Buen Amor “... Apenas quel pobre viejo falla ningund amigo” e incluso los pobres estaban tristes y melancólicas ya que de la pobreza misma viene la melancolía y aflicción como dice en el párrafo tercero del cuento X del Conde Lucanor que el hombre se puso a llorar amargamente al acordarse se cuan rico había sido en el pasado y que no tenía nada más que comer sino solo los altramuces que tenían un sabor amargo (pg. 52).

La pobreza en la edad medieval se le asociaba al deshonor, en contraste con la riqueza que es compañera inseparable del honor y poder. A lo largo de la edad media a los pobres se les aislaban de los ricos, para no contagiar el resto de la sociedad en esta etapa se llegó a pensarse de lo que los pobres eran seres criminales en potencia, ladrones, sucios, desagradables y malolientes. Se dijo también que los pobres estaban asociados con el pecado y que tenían muy grandes posibilidades de perder el alma (Ayala Canon).

La sociedad española tenía cierta ambigüedad en sus actitudes ante los pobres. Por un lado, la compasiva hace referencia de la caridad de los cristianos hacia los más desfavorecidos, ya que

era un modo eficaz para alcanzar el cielo a través de actividades caritativas. Entonces la caridad es vista como una obligación, que no solo puede llevar a la salvación eterna, sino también puede verse recompensada por Dios con multiplicar la riqueza del quien la ejerce. A mediados del siglo catorce el pobre aparece como una imagen de Dios en la tierra y que a través de ellos los ricos podían buscar una pase como para entrar al cielo a través de brindar a los pobres favores, caridades y acogerlos en lugares agradables. En ningún momento, la caridad se plantea como una forma de reparar ciertas injusticias cometidas en contra de la gente pobre. Porque la justicia misma no podía resolver los malos tratos cometidos hacia los pobres en algún momento (Garcilla Guillermina).

La limosna dada a los pobres era la principal fuente de caridad. Por lo tanto todo cristiano tenía la obligación de darla, aunque es cierto que sobre todo aquellos que ocupaban los puestos más elevados en la sociedad debían darlo. La limosna se convierte entonces en un instrumento para la redención de los pecados y la salvación del espíritu humano. También la caridad dada por la gente adinerada para los pobres se convierte en una muestra de poder, riqueza y dinero (Rodríguez Molina). Esta situación social de los pobres es resaltada por Don Juan Manuel en su cuento X donde dice lo siguiente "... Aunque, Dios ha hecho el mundo según su voluntad y ha querido que todo esté bien, no ha permitido que nadie lo posea todo" (pg. 53). En este párrafo está haciendo énfasis que los pobres marginados de este mundo no tengan las mismas riquezas como los nobles y reyes de la época medieval, porque a través de los pobres los ricos y reyes podrían salvar sus almas del castigo eterno.

A lo largo de la historia los campesinos y personas que vivían al filo de la pobreza de cada día, empezaron a obsesionarse con el pan cotidiano para no perecer de la hambruna y de las debilidades físicas y emocionales. Algunos empleos como la agricultura, sastrería, artesanos y zapateros también experimentaron una gran crisis en la venta de sus productos al punto de llegar al endeudamiento como consecuencia de este se aumentó la mendicidad y el vagabundeo. Y la gente quienes lo padecían ya les daba igual la vida o la muerte (García Guillermina). Como ejemplo de esta congoja encontramos las palabras del Conde Lucanor en su Cuento número diez que dice de la siguiente manera "... Pero a veces me siento tan acosado por la pobreza que me da igual la muerte que la vida" (pg. 52). La gente estaba tan preocupados por la pobreza espiritual y material que ya no disfrutaban lo poco o mucho que les quedaba. Además la gente de la clase alta tenían miedo de ser sorprendidos por la pobreza, sufrir de hambre, enfermarse, el desamparo, y la infelicidad de perder sus bienes materiales y porque no decir en perecer en la pobreza espiritual.

Como consecuencia de tanta pobreza la gente ya no podía proveer alimentación a su familia y ni a ellos mismos por lo tanto empezaron a padecer de la hambruna que tuvo lugar entre los años 1315 y 1317. La agricultura como base de la economía española sufrió una disminución severa ya que las tierras producían con escasez por el cambio climático como la sequía, lluvias a destiempo, agotamiento de los terrenos, y la crisis de subsistencia. Por el cual, a partir de ese entonces la gente Española empezó a padecer de hambre por escasez de alimentos como el cereal (Columbia.edu). Como prueba y ejemplo de este hecho Don Juan Manuel o el Conde Lucanor nos narra en el cuento decimo lo siguiente; "... Uno de estos hombres llego a tal extremo de pobreza que no tenía nada que comer. Después de mucho esforzarse para encontrar algo con que alimentarse, no hallo sino una escudilla llena de altramuces" (pg. 52). En este fragmento vemos

claramente como la escasez de alimento y falta de cosecha afecto a la sociedad en general porque la tierra ya no produjo alimentos de calidad ni siquiera alimentos tradicionales.

En el siglo XIV en España durante la crisis medieval, la comida era escasa algunas hierbas, granos y caza pequeña, y una hogaza de pan que se atesoraba en la casa era sumamente cuidado y no desperdiciaban ni una migaja de los mismos. Los trabajadores están aplastados por el peso enorme de un pequeño sector de explotadores, guerreros eclesiásticos que se quedaban con casi toda la producción agrícola. El pueblo vivía temiendo el mañana. La posibilidad de padecer hambrunas era común nadie se escaba de ese desastre debido a la mala cosecha. Los pobres de la edad media temían mucho al hambre. Este miedo permanente está en la raíz de la sacralización del pan, de ahí viene la súplica a Dios en la oración cristiana donde dice: Danos el pan de cada día.

La hambruna medieval ataco a pobres y ricos, campesinos y reyes. En el cuento Lo que ocurrió a un hombre que por pobreza y falta de otro alimento comía altramuces nos cuenta como un hombre “al acordarse cuan rico había sido y ahora hambriento, con una escudilla de altramuces como única fuente de alimento se puso a llorar amargamente; pero como tenía tanta hambre empezó a comérselos” (pg. 52). En este párrafo claramente habla como los reyes y los nobles tuvieron que comer las comidas de baja calidad como los campesinos. Ya que los reyes estaban tan acostumbrados de comer las comidas de primera calidad. Como por ejemplo las piezas de cazas salvajes presentes en las mesas de los hombres superiores, la mayoría procedente de las cacerías en las que ellos mismos participaban. Más que un alimento era un símbolo de poder y control sobre los dominios y las tierras ya que la caza era prohibido para los campesinos y a los siervos. Por otro lado podemos encontrar que la alimentación campesina se consideraba como monótona porque ellos repetían los mismos alimentos todos los días. El principal alimento era el pan que se acompañaba de otro tipo de productos denominados como “companagium” pero para esa época ni los campesinos y artesanos conseguían sus alimentos (Ríos López).

También aparecen una serie de consecuencias de carácter cultural e ideológico a la crisis del siglo XIV. La muerte como consecuencia de la hambruna y pobreza se convierte en un espectáculo cotidiano. Por lo tanto adquiere un importante protagonismo y aparece un grupo denominado de los “flagelantes”, que eran individuos procedentes de varios lugares que iban en procesión con una cruz delante. Rezando y azotándose hasta sangrar. Este movimiento sería la manifestación de la histeria colectiva provocada por la angustia causada por el hambre, la pobreza y la muerte sin control. Así mismo como respuesta negativa a la organización eclesiástica.

Tanto eran sus pesares que la gente española empezó a rezar día y noche implorando compasión y solución a la crisis que estaban afrontando. Pero al no obtener resultado alguno, empezaron a revelarse en contra de la iglesia. Después de una época de pobreza, muerte, hambre y angustias España recobro sus energías y dio un giro diferente a su historia económica, social, cultural, y política cuando fue descubierto el continente de América en el siglo XV por Cristóbal Colon. Este acontecimiento es reflejado nuevamente en el cuento de “lo que le ocurrió a un hombre que por pobreza y falta de alimento comía altramuces”. Y el párrafo dice de la siguiente forma: “... con este consuelo, luchó por salir de su pobreza y, ayudado por Dios, salió de ella y otra vez volvió a ser rico” (pg. 54). Para esa época España después de sufrir tanta crisis tuvo la oportunidad de recuperar sus vienes a través de la conquista de un nuevo mundo y la explotación de la misma.

En conclusión, el cuento del Conde Lucanor se refleja la realidad española durante esos siglos y como la gente pobre fueron marginalizados y tratados como personas de menor calidad. Proyectando la realidad del pasado con el presente podemos darnos cuenta que la gente poderosa o ricos siguen dominando el mundo y o presionando al pobre. Vemos también como el cambio climático nos sigue afectando y que en ciertos lugares del mundo están sufriendo por la escases de alimento y agua.

Spanish 1st Place: Kalina Jurkowski, “Una carta al presidente”

28 de octubre de 2016

Una carta al presidente

Distinguido Señor Presidente de los Estados Unidos:

Espero que al recibir esta carta lo encuentre muy bien. Para comenzar, quisiera agradecerle por todo lo que ha hecho por nuestro país. Le admiro a usted y creo que ha sido un presidente excelente. Sin embargo, me doy cuenta de que nuestro país todavía tiene algunos problemas muy graves. En esta carta, voy a escribirle sobre un tema muy importante para mí: la educación. Primero, quisiera contarle sobre lo que es bueno de nuestro sistema educativo en los Estados Unidos. En nuestro país, todos los niños pueden recibir una educación generosa por trece años. No importa si la familia del niño tenga dinero o no. Cada niño puede asistir a la escuela y creo que esto es magnífico. Además, en muchos lugares, las escuelas pueden proveer un almuerzo y a veces un desayuno gratis para sus estudiantes más pobres. Esto también es bueno porque los niños tienen que comer para poder prestar atención en las clases. En general, las escuelas públicas de los Estados Unidos son buenas.

A pesar de esto, hay mucho que mejorar en nuestro sistema educativo. De verdad, hay mucho que mejorar en todo nuestro país, pero creo que unas mejoras en el sistema educativo pueden arreglar muchos de los problemas que tenemos ahora. La primera mejora que recomiendo es que los maestros les enseñen más de las ciencias sociales a sus estudiantes. Específicamente, recomiendo que les enseñen más de la geografía, la historia, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos y la política doméstica e internacional. Por lo general, he visto que los estadounidenses no saben mucho de estos temas en comparación con las personas de países diferentes. De verdad, esto me da vergüenza. Me da vergüenza cuando mis amigas no saben que África es un continente, no un país, cuando no saben que tenemos el sistema del colegio electoral para elegir al presidente, y cuando no saben quien fue el presidente de los Estados Unidos antes de usted. Creo que esta falta de educación es muy grave. Además, creo que la falta de educación de estos temas es peligrosa y la causa de algunos problemas que tenemos hoy.

Por ejemplo, los ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos, después de terminar la escuela secundaria, todavía no saben cómo funciona su gobierno. Por eso, cuando el gobierno hace algo malo, la gente en general no sabe. Porque no sabe, no puede organizar manifestaciones ni votar por candidatos mejores ni tomar otras acciones para crear los cambios positivos. Es decir, la falta de educación de los ciudadanos es la razón por qué todavía tenemos ciertos problemas. Si la gente entendiera sobre su país y el mundo, entonces exigiría que el gobierno hiciera unos cambios. También, votaría por candidatos con ideas buenas, en vez de votar por los candidatos sólo porque son carismáticos.

La segunda mejora que recomiendo para el sistema educativo es que los maestros les enseñen más a sus estudiantes sobre el medio ambiente. De verdad, en mi escuela primaria todavía se enseña que el cambio climático es un mito. En mi opinión, esto es horrible. Los votantes del futuro están aprendiendo que el medio ambiente no es importante. Recomiendo que el gobierno federal cree una ley que requiera que todas las escuelas públicas les enseñen a sus estudiantes sobre el estado verdadero del medio ambiente. Las escuelas deben enseñar los hechos científicos

y mostrarles a sus estudiantes cómo usar los recursos prudentemente y con respeto hacia la Tierra. Si no hacemos esto, la situación medioambiental empeorará y amenazará toda la vida en el planeta.

Como la falta de educación en los temas de la geografía, la historia, el gobierno y la política, la falta de educación medioambiental en nuestro país me da vergüenza. Sólo los ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos creen que el cambio climático es una mentira. Las personas en casi cada otro país del mundo entienden la realidad del estado del medio ambiente y me frustra que las personas aquí no saben y a ellos no les importa. Por ejemplo, muchas personas en los Estados Unidos gastan mucha la comida, la energía y el agua sin pensar en los efectos de sus acciones. También, muchas personas apoyan a las empresas multinacionales, las cuales hacen daño al medio ambiente. Si la gente tuviera una educación mejor sobre el medio ambiente, entonces haría decisiones mejores para el medio ambiente. La falta de educación sí puede ser la causa de muchos problemas diversos.

La tercera mejora que recomiendo para el sistema educativo es que las escuelas se enfoquen menos en las matemáticas y en las ciencias “duras” como la química, la física y la biología. Aunque estos temas son importantes, la mayoría de la población de los Estados Unidos no necesita un entendimiento profundo de ellos. Por ejemplo, en mi experiencia en la escuela secundaria, tuve que tomar clases del cálculo y de la química al nivel bastante alto. Para algunas personas, estas clases son beneficiosas, pero para mí y la mayoría de los estudiantes no son útiles. No hay muchas personas que escogen hacerse ingenieros y científicos. Por eso, creo que la escuela debe requerir sólo unas clases básicas de las ciencias y las matemáticas en vez de todas las clases al nivel alto. Entonces, las escuelas pueden usar el tiempo que usaba para estas clases para nuevas clases de la geografía, la historia, el gobierno, la política, y el medio ambiente. Esto sería un sistema mejor para los estudiantes y para el país.

La cuarta mejora que recomiendo para el sistema educativo es que las escuelas se enfoquen menos en los exámenes estandarizados y en las calificaciones. De verdad, estos no ayudan a nadie. En vez de enseñarles algo a los estudiantes, los muchos exámenes y la preocupación con las calificaciones perjudican a los estudiantes. Hay muchos estudiantes que odian tanto los exámenes estandarizados que físicamente se enferman. Muchas veces realmente se devuelven en los exámenes. De modo parecido, la importancia que damos a las calificaciones causa tanto estrés para los estudiantes que no pueden pensar ni aprender lo que necesitan. Recomiendo que las escuelas y sus maestros enfoquen más en el aprendizaje de sus estudiantes en vez del sistema actual de enfocar en la preparación para los exámenes. Creo que los exámenes no van a ser importantes cuando el mundo haya sido destruido por una gente sin educación. Necesitamos pensar en los efectos a largo plazo de nuestras decisiones sobre la educación.

En resumen, Señor Presidente, agradezco mucho nuestro sistema de la educación pública. Sin embargo, esto tiene algunos problemas que no podemos olvidar. De mi experiencia como una estudiante en este sistema, he pensado en cuatro recomendaciones para mejorar el sistema. Creo que debemos enseñarles más a nuestros estudiantes sobre los sujetos de la geografía, la historia, el gobierno, la política doméstica e internacional, y el medio ambiente. Creo que debemos enfocar menos en las matemáticas y las ciencias bien avanzadas y en los exámenes

estandarizados y las calificaciones. Con estos cambios, creo que podemos tener una población bastante educada para ser ciudadanos responsables, quienes pueden crear un futuro mejor. Para concluir, Señor, siento mucho que tenga que salir de la oficina del Presidente. Sé que está de acuerdo conmigo en pensar que la educación es muy importante. Verdaderamente, creo que le escribo porque me siento nerviosa por el futuro.

Con todo respeto,
Anónima