

SOSLAND JOURNAL

A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS

WRITTEN FOR THE 2008-2009 ILUS W. DAVIS WRITING COMPETITION

BY

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI, KANSAS CITY

COMPETITION COORDINATOR AND EDITOR: KRISTIN HUSTON

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Editing a journal is not a solitary process. From collecting submissions to the final publication decisions, I am supported by a wonderful team here at UMKC. I would like to begin by thanking the fabulous writing teachers here at UMKC who encourage their students to write and to submit. A heartfelt thanks also goes out to the first round readers, Madaline Walter, Adam Thomas-Brashier, and Kelly Mathews, who so generously devoted their time and energy to reading through the pile of initial entries. Thanks goes out as well to our final judges, Dan Mahala, Jennifer Phegley, and Mindy Fiala, who made the final, and most difficult choices, deciding which writing would appear in this year's *Sosland Journal*.

Finally, I would like to thank our benefactors. The publication of this journal is possible due to the philanthropic activities of Rheta Sosland-Hurwitt and her family. For nearly three quarters of a century, she ardently promoted music and the arts in Kansas City. She is remembered as a kind and generous member of UMKC's community of learners, who leaves a legacy that encourages students to engage in discourse that celebrates our curious human nature and transforms our perceptions. The *Sosland Journal* motivates students and teachers to celebrate writing in meaningful ways, and Mrs. Sosland-Hurwitt's kind gift assures this tradition will continue.

INSPIRATION

“Nine-tenths of education is encouragement.” – Anatole France

Throughout the past year, I have been contemplating the purpose of a university. Sure, the university obviously serves to educate citizens for their future careers. But I believe, at the heart of it, that our university does, and should aspire to do, so much more. I believe it is among the most treasured obligations of the university to open up a world of possibilities to its students and to inspire them to reach farther and soar higher than they thought they could.

During my years (and years and years and years) as a university student, I have often been the kid looking for a path. As an undergraduate, I floated from major to major. Some might consider that a bad thing, especially parents or loved ones who are footing the bill, but I look back fondly now on that journey of discovery. Surely college is the place to try out roles and paths to see if they are a good fit for us. And surely college is the place where, when you find your niche, your instructors encourage you to stick with it and inspire you to achieve. It is this inspiration and encouragement that builds the dreams that we chase as we leave the university to pursue our goals.

It is my fondest wish that, for those many students who file through our composition classes every year, the *Sosland Journal* can be a tool of encouragement. Not only does it highlight exemplary student work from the past year and showcase what an amazing group of instructors make up the composition program, but it should also give students a goal to work toward. I hope that as students read the essays in the journal, it motivates them to write to their best ability in all of their classes and that they might even find themselves wanting to submit to the *Sosland Journal* at the end of the semester. The *Sosland Journal* should be a tool for teachers and students to use for inspiration as they make their way through their educational journey.

This year you might notice some changes to the *Sosland Journal*. We are always looking for opportunities to improve and to become bigger and better. This year, we have tried to make the journal more user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing. As always, we have also reaffirmed our continuing commitment to publish the best of student writing. I would like to take this moment to thank you all for your continued readership and to encourage you all to dream big . . . and submit your writing for next year's *Sosland Journal*!

Best,

Kristin Huston
Editor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductory-Level Winner

FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Gerard Donovan - pg.

Intermediate-Level Winner

THE GERMAN SYSTEM OF SECONDARY EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS AND DEFENSE

Lauren Wells - pg.

Advanced-Level Winner

ADOLPHE QUETELET: AN ANALYSIS OF HIS RESEARCH ON THE PROPENSITY FOR CRIME AT DIFFERENT AGES

Bradley Fulk - pg.

A JOURNEY OF SELF-AWARENESS

Austin Steelman - pg.

EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE: WHY TEACHING INTELLIGENT DESIGN AS SCIENCE IS DANGEROUS

Kim Podolski - pg.

THE FALLACIES OF AMERICAN TEEN COMEDIES

Corey Light - pg.

HOMESCHOOLING AND SOCIALIZATION: A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Kim Podolski - pg.

MINISTRONE

Alicia Probasco - pg.

LOST

Julie Thornton - pg.

LEADING THE WAY

Christopher Griffith - pg.

HOW DOES THE AMERICAN GENDER MYTHOS AFFECT TRANSGENDER STUDENTS?

Chrisity Webb - pg.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

PROFESSORS

BEGINNING-LEVEL WINNER

FOUND IN TRANSLATION GERARD DONOVAN

July 11, 2003, or shall I say *elfte Juli*, 2003, was the day I arrived in Berlin, Germany. It was my first day of 365. I had decided to be an exchange student for my junior year of high school. My foreign language experience was minimal - a few semesters of elementary school Spanish and high school French. My German language experience was less than that; it was non-existent.

I decided to embark on an adventure and see where I would end up. I landed in Klein Gottschow, a small village with about 100 older East German farmers. There were not any other Americans anywhere near my host family's home, and I did not see one tourist throughout the year. I knew not one word of German and my host family knew no English. That can be a very scary situation for an exchange student. As a result, some decide to spend their time by themselves – most likely due to shyness and fears. When this happens, one tends not to make any friends, even among host family members. Consequently, the student never fully grasps the language because doing so requires dialogue. Some students even return home early without ever fully experiencing the opportunity given to them. I was forced to choose between living in the shadows of my own fears or learning the language, expressing myself, and living life.

Upon meeting my host family and engaging in a back and forth of unintelligible English, Deutsch, and Denglish, I sat down to one of the most awkward lunches imaginable. One American, at the center of attention, sitting with eight Germans. It was at that very moment I realized how out-of-touch with everything I was. I had to just sit there, nod my head, and smile. There was only one way to fit in and it quickly became clear to me. I must be able to communicate coherently in order to interact with those around me.

I had been with other American exchange students for a few weeks prior to meeting my family – it was a big party; no one learned a word of the language during that time. I quickly came to realize that I should have spent my time learning, because after one month, I could not understand, speak, read, or write one word of the language.

Since I was completely illiterate in German, I felt stupid. Starting with the basics was my only option. “*Was heisst [das] ...?*”, a question meaning: “What is that [called]?” or “What does that mean?” was the first, and probably one of the most important, phrases I learned. My host Mother taught me that phrase right after our first lunch when she invited me to go *Apfel pflucken* (pluck apples) from their own trees. I will never forget the first word that phrase helped me to learn. I looked to the tree, pointed at an apple and asked, “*Was heisst das?*”. “*Apfel!*” she said. At that point I realized exactly how I would learn the language - phrase by phrase and word by word.

Fully realizing the language obstacles that one faces in an exchange situation is the breaking point for many an exchange student. Ignorance of the native language causes many mishaps, misunderstandings, and mistakes. Mom and dad cannot help from thousands of miles away and many exchange students have never left home for more than a week. They are about to spend the next year with strangers who do not even speak the same language. Homesickness starts to set in, excitement and expectations turn into angst and fears.

I was living with a new family who, through our first day's experience, showed me how much I really needed to learn. It was Saturday and school started on Monday – real German school. And the only word I knew how to say was apple.

I attended school at Gottfried Arnold Gymnasium which is the German equivalent of an American private high school. My first day, walking through the halls of the school, I felt like a lamb in a lion's den. I thought the first lunch with my family was hard but that unease was nothing compared to the apprehension I felt as I encountered my fellow students. I was all too familiar with the harsh ways youth the world over treat their own. To my surprise, I was accepted rather well. Maybe curiosity for the new American student had something to do with that. Overcoming my fears that day allowed me to make friends without whom I would not have been able to become fluent so quickly. They were always by my side to point out my mistakes and encourage me to do better.

Although I expected to make many grammatical errors and other language mistakes, one embarrassing moment really stands out. I normally chewed gum in class, so I decided to ask the girl sitting next to me for a piece. I already knew the phrase for 'Do you have. . .?', (*Hast du. . .?*) so I got out my dictionary and looked up 'gum'. The translation was '*Zahnfleisch*' so I turned around and asked, "*Hast du Zahnfleisch?*". She looked at me and started laughing hysterically. I was so embarrassed. My thoughts were racing all over the place. 'What have I asked this girl, oh this is terrible...'. After some contorted facial expressions and chewing motions as if in a game of charades, I got my gum. It turns out that I had asked if she had any gums – as in the tissue that holds the teeth to the jaw. Although my face turned every possible shade of red that day, I survived. I also decided to be more careful the next time I translated directly from a dictionary.

A few months later, after I started feeling comfortable with myself in Germany, I broke my ankle. The next thing I knew, I was in an old concrete building in East Germany that looked like a post world war II Russian Bunker; it's what they called a hospital - the best one in all the surrounding areas. That is probably the only time I've ever missed St. Luke's Hospital. It is a very daunting task trying to keep up with medical jargon in English; it was almost impossible in German. One valuable lesson my hospital visit taught me is that Umgangssprache (street German or slang that one would typically learn by living amongst Germans - especially teenagers) is not very helpful when trying to speak in medical and professional terms. I lay in the hospital for about a week and stumbled on crutches for about a month. I was unable to attend school and improve my spoken German. Instead, I occupied myself with learning the written language at home.

After I had finally become settled in and started feeling better about my language skills, I felt that something was holding me back. It was my English class. English is part of the normal course load for a German student, and I was the prized pupil. The teacher was delighted to be able to work with someone whose mother tongue is English. She was understandably disappointed when I told her that I thought I should drop her class. I felt that speaking English, even if just for one hour, was interfering with my ability to become more fluent in German. I did not drop the course a minute too soon, if anything, I was late. Any break from a language is detrimental to the emersion effect, an integral part of learning any new language.

As it happens, I made it through the year. I even passed my classes. I not only learned the language, but developed a passion for it that, otherwise, never would have existed. I am now a German language major and have recently completed an internship in

Ingolstadt, Germany. My advice to one planning such an experience is that he or she should embrace all of the differences of the foreign culture and leave all preconceived notions at home. When taking a chance, do so whole-heartedly and do not turn back until the goal is reached. Learning the language is just the beginning and will open many doors, not only throughout the exchange year but later in life as well.

INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL WINNER

THE GERMAN SYSTEM OF SECONDARY EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS AND DEFENSE LAUREN WELLS

American high school students are falling behind their international peers. According to 2006 test results from the PISA, or Programme for International Student Assessment, American students performed worse than the international average, particularly in science and math. The results point to the secondary schools as the culprit; American students in elementary and middle school tested at average or above average levels. In the same year in Germany, students fared quite well on the PISA compared to other countries, and they certainly outperformed the United States. Germany was among the top 20 countries in each PISA category tested: math, science and reading (PISA).

The education system in Germany differs in many respects from that of the United States. As opposed to the comprehensive high school that American students attend, secondary education in Germany is a tripartite system that divides students based on their abilities and career aspirations. While much has been criticized about the German system, and while there are many disadvantages to its format, it is effective in providing students practical education for their field of interest. Because the tripartite system in Germany recognizes that not every student wants or needs to attend a university after their secondary education is complete, students leave high school very well prepared to begin a career or succeed in the academic world.

The tripartite system consists of the *Hauptschule*, the *Realschule*, and the *Gymnasium*. Each type of school provides students with an education that is appropriate for the nature of their future career. The *Hauptschule* is mostly job training; it combines studies with apprenticeships in skilled labor fields, artisan trades and other non-academic vocations, which allows students to gain real-world experience while still in high school. The *Gymnasium* offers comprehensive academic education to high-achieving students, preparing them for entrance into a university. The *Realschule* fits somewhere in the middle and is similar to the American technical school; it offers instruction in academic subjects as well as classes in 'real-world' skills (Country Profile). This may sound like a biased system, designed to only provide quality education to the top third of the elementary school class; however, the truth is that many students have interests outside of those pursued by means of a university education, and many students are simply not cut out for and are not interested in the rigorous preparatory curriculum offered in the *Gymnasium*. It actually could be argued that the tripartite system offers more students a chance at success, as it does not fuel the common (and misled) American notion that everyone must go to a university if they have any hope of achieving financial security or a high standard of living; it instead provides free, practical training to give students of all abilities the experience and knowledge they need in order to become effective, respected members of the workforce.

There is a complex structure to the tripartite secondary education system. After mandatory attendance of a primary school, or *Grundschule*, (homeschooling is forbidden in Germany), students take an exam, the results of which suggest a track for the student to take. The parent and child, however, ultimately choose which school the student will enroll in, although there are minimum test score and recommendation requirements for entrance into

the *Gymnasium* and the *Realschule*. Once a student begins a track, there is an amount of mobility among the programs; however, most movement is to the next “lowest” school and due to poor performance (Ertl, 392).

The three programs vary in length; *Hauptschule* students usually graduate after 10th grade, while *Gymnasium* students remain until the age of 18 or 19. The government mandates school up to age 15, however, the vast majority of German students stay in school much longer. If graduates of non-*Gymnasium* schools are accepted, they may choose to transfer into a *Gymnasium* to pursue the *Abitur*, the most prestigious and difficult to obtain of the secondary school-leaving certificates. Students who pass the *Abitur* are guaranteed admission to a German university, all of which are state-run and free of cost (Ertl, 391-392). There is also a government grant/loan system in place to cover students’ cost of living while attending a university (which eliminates the common American necessity of part- or full-time work while in college). Because recipients of the *Abitur* received a well-rounded liberal arts education at their *Gymnasium*, most university programs are highly specified tracks and take only three years to complete.

The German system is based upon the fundamental notion that tertiary education in a university is simply not for everyone. Of course, for many professions, training at some level beyond secondary school is required, be it in the form of an apprenticeship, a vocational preparation program, or an on-the-job orientation system. The irrelevance of required advanced literature courses for students aspiring to be carpenters doesn’t take much to prove. On the same note, that is not to say that any student is left unable to read, write, or think critically. In the introduction to his book entitled *College is Not for Everyone*, Louis Rosen points out that many professions require training outside of a traditional university, and that students in America who choose not to attend college should not be looked down upon:

We need to be careful not to be guilty of devaluing those students who choose not to go to college. Not everyone wants or needs a college education. . . . Priorities based on elitism rather than what our youth want and need to prepare them for realities in the marketplace are not serving our nation well. The current emphasis on academics is providing a direction that is painfully wrong for at least a third of students now attending our nation’s schools (Rosen, 1).

Perhaps the “third of students” that Rosen discusses is the type that would choose vocational training as secondary education in Germany. On the same note, that is not to say that any student in the tripartite system is left unable to read, write, or think critically. The German university, more so than the American system, is simply oriented toward a more rigorous academic curriculum that is not necessary for many students.

Another significant cultural difference between America and Germany is the social status of educators. Teachers at all levels in Germany have consistently higher salaries than their American counterparts and are highly respected civil servants (NCES). In America, a high school football coach typically earns more than a high school teacher (SalaryExpert.com).

The tripartite system is an enduring legacy of the pre-World War II Weimar Republic. After the war, Germany had the opportunity to essentially start over, to reform its educational system along with the rest of its social and political infrastructure. Instead, they decided to

stay with their previous model for the secondary school system, even though most other countries had changed their programs to non-selective, comprehensive high schools.

While many have sought to change the tripartite structure to model the modern secondary school of so many other European and North American countries, this effort in Germany has actually been considered an ‘experimental’ approach to education. There is, however, a school format that reflects this approach; the *Gesamtschule* incorporates all three of the types of education found in the secondary system. These are only found in some parts of Germany and have not succeeded in replacing the three original types of schools; in fact, most *Gesamtschulen* are essentially the three traditional divisions of secondary education under one roof (Ertl, 395). In their 2000 study, Hubert Ertl and David Phillips explain the political reasons for the persistence of the tripartite system in Germany:

The strong and continuous tradition of the *Gymnasium* played a vital role in the educational debate in the late 1960s. After victory in the 1969 general election, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) favoured more strongly than hitherto the *Gesamtschule*... The alliance between the Christian Democratic Party and the Christian Social Party (CDU/CSU), on the other hand, was not willing to change a system which it saw as a stronghold of economic success and development. More than anything else, the *Gymnasium* was regarded as the best guarantee for high achievement... Various interest groups in favour of the traditional *Gymnasium* education played a contributing role, and, eventually, a nation-wide introduction of comprehensive schools became impossible (Ertl, 395-396).

Essentially, while a liberal push for reform existed, and while the effectiveness of the *Gesamtschule* had been established, the prestige and success of the *Gymnasium* made the old system difficult to discard.

The strongest and most frequent dissenting argument to the tripartite system is that of social inequality. It is certainly true that children of parents with a stronger educational background and a higher income are more frequently admitted to the *Gymnasium*, while children of working-class parents typically enter a *Hauptschule* or *Realschule*. As secondary education in Germany has a strong impact on a student’s vocational prospects and earning potential, it is a logical case to make against the tripartite system. However, in a 2007 report on the correlation between income and secondary school track choice, Marcus Tamm concludes:

In order to identify the causal effect we compare outcomes of siblings that experienced different income situations when switching to secondary school. These sibling comparisons suggest that income has no causal effect on choosing the highest track (*Gymnasium*). For lower tracks, there is even some indication of income having a negative effect, i.e. sibling raised during more affluent times are more likely to choose the lowest track (*Hauptschule*) than to choose the intermediate track (*Realschule*)... Overall, these findings suggest that income has no positive causal effect on school choice and that differences between high- and low-income households are predominantly driven by unobserved heterogeneity, e.g. differences in ability, motivation or

preferences (Tamm, 544). While there are correlations between income and school choice, the cause is most likely due to other factors in a given family dynamic and not a direct result of parent salary. In other words, it is not the influence of the wealthy that determines acceptance into one school or another.

It can additionally be argued that the comprehensive high school format is no different in terms of income disparity. It is also true in America that children of parents with higher salaries and better degrees more frequently end up in universities and have more job opportunities. And, as there is opportunity for transfer to the Gymnasium for high-achieving students of the *Realschule* and *Hauptschule*, it could be argued that it is actually less difficult for a student with a low-income background to graduate from a university; there is, after all, no higher education tuition for the family to worry about.

The German system of secondary education is certainly very different from many other Western systems. While there are many opponents to its structure, it has proven to be a successful means of transitioning young adults from primary school to the vocational world. Students who choose the *Gymnasium* leave well prepared for the university, and students who graduate from the *Realschule* or *Hauptschule* are ready to enter a self-sustaining profession. Essentially, the German system is a good indicator of the success of diversified secondary schooling, and it proves well that, as opposed to the American educational/vocational structure, not everyone must attend a university in order to achieve a solid foundation for a successful career.

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ADVANCED-LEVEL WINNER

**ADOLPHE QUETELET: AN ANALYSIS OF HIS RESEARCH ON THE
PROPENSITY FOR CRIME AT DIFFERENT AGES
BRADLEY FULK**

A JOURNEY OF SELF-AWARENESS AUSTIN STEELMAN

Mr. Scofield strolled into class on the first day of seventh grade in 1999, clutching a copy of *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut. He was a scrawny man, one of those people who could blow away in the wind had some force not held him down. For those who didn't know him, he was a curiosity: a small man with a big imagination, a man whose humor was dry but still effective. He was a thinking-man's man and he would have a more profound impact on my life than I would know for some years to come. To this unadjusted adolescent, he would ultimately be a mentor and fellow modern-day philosopher.

His STRETCH class proved an exercise in self-gratification at times. It was meant to expand our knowledge, to increase our horizons beyond the usual spectrum provided in primary education, but often it simply over-inflated our egos. Those of us invited to take this call were the "elite" – at least when it came to measured IQ. But we were just as ugly and superficial as everyone else our age. The only real difference was that when I was put down by kids in this particular class, whom I respected more than anyone else in the school, the insults were even more damning. It seemed that teenagers could be as mean and hateful as a Rottweiler after a trespasser. To these kids, I was the trespasser. There was to be no mercy. As time went by, I found my own sense of self-worth and initiative was faltering, giving way to a more inward, self-doubting person. These bullies provided increasingly incisive commentary, and soon I was going to collapse under its weight.

Though the attacks were relentless, a simple book would soon provide a great measure of relief. Shortly after class had ended one day, I approached Mr. Scofield to talk about my problems with fellow students. Being the typical prideful teenager and dodging the subject of my torment, I asked him about the books he brought to class instead. The books were almost always by Kurt Vonnegut. On this particular day, it was *Slaughterhouse Five*. "Austin," he would say, "*Slaughterhouse Five* will change our life, and keep you entertained while doing it."

I like to think that even if Mr. Scofield had never shown me that book, I would have found it somehow later in life. Yet, I don't think it would have had the same impact. This novel, I like to think, was fated to me in order to begin a transition long overdue. I was doing well in school, but I hadn't found an outlet to get rid of much of my teenage angst. Vonnegut's world invited me in and provided an escape from the tyranny of middle school. Images filled my mind of a burning Dresden in turmoil being obliterated by allied firebombs. There were other images as well that piqued my interest- prisoners of war satirizing the very nature of war itself, even aliens explaining to humans that time did not exist. According to the Tralfamadorians, life was not based on some abstract notion of "time" where a moment could be lived only once. Instead, life was a series of snapshots – people just had to enjoy the most precious among them. Essentially, one should not look to a specific point in time, but rather re-live those moments that were most fulfilling.

The book made no sense, but the most sense of any book I had ever read. It was the epitome of ridiculous, and yet substantial beyond imagining. What formed the contradictions within the book also formed my new outlook on life. I now had a refreshing, comical world to retreat to – somewhere I could go and not be bothered for who I was or what I looked like. Better yet, I had a way to make sense of the anarchic world around me. In Vonnegut's world, nothing had to make sense. Nothing had to matter unless you want it to matter. To

this effect, whenever someone passed away in the book, Vonnegut would simply state: “so it goes.”

The phrase “so it goes” became my new motto. Instead of building up anger and loathing toward my classmates, I simply allowed myself to move on. Nothing was important anymore unless *I* thought it mattered. Further, nothing was beyond question – if Vonnegut could question war itself, couldn’t I question my teacher’s methods or my bullies’ insecurities? After all, I was beginning to build some self-esteem. I was beginning, in a way, to see myself for the first time. I was no longer a scared, defeated nerd. I was empowered.

Flash forward to Mrs. Trusty’s AP English class my senior year of high school. I had received my first summer reading assignment for a class. We were to select a number of those mystical novels many critics believe to be the greatest works of all time. Those we selected we had to read for the class. Having continued my exercise in cynicism that had begun with Vonnegut, I actually *read* very few of my selected books. To this day, a sense of apathy toward forced readings has remained with me, despite my attempts to shake it off. And while I look back and laugh at my use of Spark Notes in high school, I can see why I did it at the time. I was under pressure – I had four AP, college-level classes as a senior (even the other over-achieving kids had three at most), and was spending massive amounts of time on the weekend in debate. Due to this, my thorough studies were often neglected for Internet summaries.

Even so, I gave two novels a chance. In a way, one represented the expansion of my literacy into abstraction, the other entrancing my old satirical side.

Catch 22 was fodder for my darker side. In it, a world existed that was totally devoid of reason and logic. I still recall Yossarian walking through the streets of Rome with people fighting and yelling as if they were animals, groveling, killing, squandering. I am reminded of the ridiculous character names and contradictions present in the novel. Such depictions rekindled my notion of a world where nothing made sense – and it didn’t have to. All that made sense was the idea of a world gone mad, a world where no one was accountable, not even myself. I had grown restless and tired with such works, but another novel allowed me a departure from the norm.

It wasn’t the elaborate detailing of bullfights in *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway that perplexed me, although I did find it captivating – it was the loneliness and insecurity of the lost generation after World War I. The loneliness of Jake Barnes, and his inability to develop a relationship with Lady Brett Ashley, seemed to exhibit in the novel what was indicative of my own sense of isolation. I was in the top of my class, had been hugely successful at debate, but knew very few people with whom I could really connect. The few people I *had* connected with in my years of K-12 education – a kid named Brian who had moved to Missouri from Colorado and was planning on becoming a physicist, my friends Shawn and Matt who were going off to separate lives at different colleges or careers – were leaving me, whether I liked it or not.

But Hemingway dealt with the issue of loneliness in his novel much like I had in the past. As I had adopted the “so it goes” motto from Vonnegut, Hemingway ended his novel with the same kind of flippant carelessness that had developed in me:

“Oh, Jake,” Brett said, “we could have had such a damned good time together.”
Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton.

The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me. “Yes,” I said. “Isn’t it pretty to think so.”

These exact words epitomized my view of life that had developed throughout middle school and beyond. It was vindication, and it was glorious. I had finally found another author with whom I could really identify, and yet I did not feel satisfied. I could never feel satisfied with Hemingway, because no matter how many times one read a novel by him, one could never come up with a perfect definition of what he was trying to say in a particular passage. His short, lean sentences and pithy dialogue made for sometimes puzzling readings; yet, he expanded my writing and reading from Vonnegut and cynicism to a new area of *implication*. Everything Hemingway said implied something – nothing was devoid of meaning. Instead of a “so it goes” model, one had to ask: how could it have gone?

Thus, a more thoughtful, understanding person emerged from the shell of an isolated, cynical boy. While I retained much of my dark humor and inward nature, the art of implication has challenged me. I was forced into nuance – forced into an attempt to get to know people, ideas, and concepts more deeply. I couldn’t just move on from something without grasping it. I couldn’t judge those around me with the same kind of indifference to the details of their life stories. I simply would not allow myself to do so. In the end, I would like to think that I had gotten it right – that the world actually *does* make sense if one is just willing to do the work to find out what that sense is.

Of course, this insight helped prepare me for challenges in higher education that were to come. My freshman year of college, Barbara Price was an unstoppable force – someone so powerful that, whether we liked it or not, she wove herself into the minds of my classmates and myself. We were going to read, and read often. We were going to analyze the works of Henry David Thoreau, the letters of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and various other giants. In time, we were given a far greater prowess in our deductive and analytical abilities. However, as much as I flourished in this class, Hemingway was the rock my intellectual foundation had been built upon. The keen sense of meaning I had derived from that prose granted me the authority to begin dissecting the works of other great thinkers.

A personal transformation such as mine would be ill-served were there no constant effort to preserve and continue it today. Unfortunately, I fear that I have fallen into much of the same cynical mindset I possessed in my youth as I grow older. I fear that the spirit in me – the inner feeling of being able to make sense out of today’s mad world – has begun to waver. I haven’t read a Hemingway novel for several years. Although I occasionally enjoy parts of *Breakfast of Champions* by Kurt Vonnegut for their levity, I find myself in search of more insightful literature.

The Tralfamadorians would simply say “so it goes” after someone’s untimely demise. I’d like to think that we can all be so unaffected by such terrible happenings.

I haven’t talked to Mr. Scofield since his son committed suicide. I was too afraid to see him. I haven’t talked to Mrs. Trusty or anyone about Ernest Hemingway in an amount of time I’m ashamed to calculate. I barely keep in touch with Dr. Price, even though she provided me a stepping-stone to later college years.

So it goes.

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EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE: WHY TEACHING INTELLIGENT DESIGN AS SCIENCE IS DANGEROUS

KIM PODOLSKI

Although Darwin's theories of evolution are widely accepted in the scientific community, teaching of these theories in public schools continues to draw fire from various religious groups. The most recent addition to the debate is Intelligent Design, or ID. Proponents of Intelligent Design argue that it is a scientific theory that does not endorse a religious ideology, and should be taught alongside evolution in all science classes. Although the language of ID is careful to exclude any religious tones, it is a pseudo-science at best, and a rebranded form of Creationism at worst. This thinly veiled attempt to inject religious philosophy as science into public schooling is not only a dangerous first step in breaking the church-state barrier, but creates confusion in students on the very nature of science itself. Furthermore, teaching creationism as science discourages further scientific inquiry on the origin of the species.

To fully understand the consequences of teaching ID alongside evolution in public schools, it helps to understand the theories discussed. "Creationism" is the belief that a supernatural force is physically and directly responsible for life on Earth. People who subscribe to creationist ideas do not believe that biological complexities can be accounted for by scientific theory. (Science, Evolution and Creationism 37) Although proponents of Intelligent Design seek to separate themselves from creationist ideology, the theory of ID is distinctly unscientific in nature. Described as a "theory [that] holds that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection" (intelligentdesign.org) ID theory does not identify or explain this "intelligent cause," rather it seeks evidence of its existence in nature. Essentially, ID theory holds that while a creator may not be responsible for the origin of life, it is responsible for the various complexities present across all living organisms.

By comparison, "evolution" is based on the scientific concept of natural selection, which holds that life on earth developed over billions of years. During this development, species less fit for their environments perished, while those more fit survived and reproduced. (Science, Evolution and Creationism 4) Originally proposed by Charles Darwin in 1859, scientists continue to find evidence to strengthen this theory, and the general consensus in the scientific community is that Darwin's theory is all but fact.

Proponents of ID theory have strenuously denied accusations that ID is little more than a re-branded creationist theory, and is thus legally suitable for public schools biology classrooms. Yet even William Dembski, a co-founder the Intelligent Design movement and one of its most prolific advocates, defines ID as "...a way of understanding divine action," (qtd. in Scott and Matzke 8670), a statement which clearly reveals a religious slant to the theories. Though compelling, this quote only further cements the central idea of ID, which is that an unknown "designer" is responsible for the complexities present in life on earth. Teaching this deist view as science in an institution funded by taxpayer dollars violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which "forbids the enactment of any 'law respecting an establishment of religion.'" (Lofaso 221)

Furthermore, teaching the theory of evolution as science introduces students to fundamental tenets of the scientific method. Research on evolution is based on empirical data, the understanding of which is crucial to science education. The importance of evolution

in the teaching of biology has perhaps been stated most eloquently by renowned geneticist, Dr. Theodosius Dobzhanski : “Nothing in biology makes sense except in light of evolution.” (125) By contrast, ID theory is not supported by empirical data, therefore teaching it as a science presents unnecessary challenges to educators who are cast in the unenviable role of explaining how a creationist theory conforms to scientific standards. Presenting ID theory as fact only confuses students as to the very nature of science. According to evolutionary zoologist, Robert Sprackland, “ID criticizes biology but offers no new scientific model to replace Darwinism. Having no scientific alternative theory disqualifies ID from being a science.” (34)

Perhaps the most damaging aspect of teaching ID as science is not that it lacks scientific support, but that it discourages scientific inquiry. Whereas evolutionary theory “allows for the investigation of a broad spectrum of interesting bio-logical questions in a scientifically meaningful way” (Rutledge and Warden 23), the only research that ID can engender is, by nature, philosophical. By holding that a fundamentally unknowable entity is responsible for the diversity in life, ID merely offers an impetus to seek evidence of design in nature, but offers no reason for continued biological research. Acceptance of this type of reasoning is dangerous to an already struggling science curriculum, and has numerous implications on how American scientists are perceived in the world.

ID is not entirely without merit. It has certainly induced debate, not just amongst scientists and educators, but also amongst people of varying faiths. In fact, some may see it as an important step in unifying people of science and people of faith. However positive ID theory may be from a theological or sociological standpoint, its merit as a science is essentially flawed. Discussions of ID theory should be relegated to a theology, sociology or philosophy class. Presenting it alongside science is unconstitutional, inappropriate and overwhelmingly damaging to science education.

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THE FALLACIES OF AMERICAN TEEN COMEDIES COREY LIGHT

The cultural significance of cinema was unknown to me before I fell in love with the Criterion Collection. Movies seemed to be a way to pass the time, and I treated them as such. In middle school, my friends and I would go to the movies every Friday night. The theater provided a place where we could get together and occasionally make-out with the crush of the week. Obviously, the films being presented were not the reason we spent so much time at *Eastglen 16*.

As my high school years arrived, my interest in art took hold of me. Photography and cinematography were specifically engaging to me. I began to search for films that appealed to my senses. I was enamored with movies like *Fight Club* and *Requiem for a Dream*. At the time, I was attracted to the adult content and visceral images included. Violence and guttural dialog were the main selling points of these films – and I was enticed. I still enjoy these films for many of the same reasons, but now they also include a pang of nostalgia because they had such an impact.

By chance, I lucked into films by Wes Anderson. My first was *Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, a comedy inspired by Bill Murray's portrayal of a self-involved, sea-faring scientist / filmmaker. I was intrigued by the witty script, vibrant colors, and top-notch acting of Bill Murray, Owen Wilson, and Willem Defoe. Seeing such a great movie, I knew that my love for cinema was beginning to blossom. I felt that for years I had been shielded from masterpieces like those of Anderson. While *Life Aquatic* was a relatively new movie, I knew that I had been missing out on an entire art form. The teen comedies and predictable "chick flicks" that I had "seen" years before somehow didn't feel like movies at all. They were a farce, simply what I had taken them for – time wasters.

I was hungry for more. I wanted to delight myself in filmmaking of the highest order, but where was I to look for the best films produced? The retail movie stores only kept vast libraries of *Big Daddy* and yet another Eddie Murphy flick where he plays himself five different ways. Finally, I turned to the only place where a middle-class kid with a vague interest in movies could – the World Wide Web.

Yes, I am one of those "medi-pirates." I am a thief. I do not respect the livelihood of filmmakers and actors alike. I had no qualms spending many a night sniffing through the Internet and downloading whatever I could to satiate my appetite. I became a film addict. It was easy enough – in about 8 hours I could watch a low-resolution movie from the comfort of my own home, for free. Regardless of the illicit means I obtained these films, it was the only way I was able to feast my eyes upon such obscure films as *The Holy Mountain*, *Eraserhead*, and *Saló, or the 120 Days of Sodom*. I began to slowly build a cinematic vocabulary. Names like David Lynch and Akira Kurosawa crept in. I was able to tell you a few things about Spanish political satire and Film Noir.

Out of nowhere, the day arrived that I stumbled across the Criterion Collection website. Criterion is a company that specializes in re-releasing groundbreaking foreign films with added content such as director and actor interviews. Their motto, "The Criterion Collection, a continuing series of important classic and contemporary films on DVD," exemplifies their purpose. When I discovered Criterion, they had already amassed a comprehensive list of over 300 DVD's spanning multiple cultures. How in the world could I have missed this!? A quick look at the website reveals essays, commentary, and

advertisements for the best movies in the *world* – not just the United States. The Criterion conglomerate is concerned with film that cuts deep into your soul – film that obliterates any language and cultural barrier to infect your mind with its message.

My transition was gradual. I stuck to some familiar ground: *The Royal Tennenbaums*, *Rushmore*, and *This Is Spinal Tap* – American comedies. However, I soon broke out of my shell and dove into Japanese, German, and Russian cinema from as far back as the 30's. Of course there were films that did not appeal to me, or the message simply flew straight over my head, but the sole fact that I was *seeing* these films made a difference to me. Part of me was basking in elitist glory – the fact that no one I had talked to had seen these films. A larger part of me was absorbing the cultural truths at work in each film. I adored the spoken French of *La Haine*. I loved the use of Polish classical music in *The Double Life of Veronique*. As I was able to see the mastery within each feature, I quickly decided that I needed to see all films in the highest quality possible. Thus, I signed up for online movie rental services. Weekly, I was able to watch Criterion films delivered straight to my mailbox. I took complete advantage of the services and indulged in films constantly – sometimes a different movie each day. Plus, through the Criterion influence, I also rented other films I would never have dreamed of searching for – *Trois Colours*, *Amelie*, and *Waking Life*.

My cultural assumptions about film had fundamentally changed. I no longer saw film as trivial. I realized that film is the utmost form of cultural representation. Film delivers multiple art forms within a single project. Directing, writing, filming, acting, sound recording and more is infused throughout a two-hour creation that can prove timeless. Upon recognizing this fact, I became entranced by all of film's complexities. I pay special attention to how each scene is set up photographically. I linger on the pauses and lulls between dialog. I examine the use of color throughout the film. I ask myself technical questions concerning the movie. How grainy is the film that the director is shooting on? Do the performances seem to stick to a solid script, or are they improvised in any way? How do American actors differ from Czech actors? Most importantly I ask myself – why is this part of the Criterion Collection?

The answer to that question lies within the uniqueness of each film. Criterion Collection transcends a simple list of “movies we like.” Each film included in the collection has a specific purpose. In many cases, each film on the list serves as a marker for a breakthrough in cinema. The breakthrough could be Ingmar Bergman's use of editing in *Persona*, the use of narrative in George Orwell's *F for Fake*, or the concerns of the documented film crew in *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* that does not know if they are making a film, or if they are part of the film themselves. From the interpretations of Shakespeare through Lawrence Olivier's *Henry V* in 1944 to a homoerotic Keanu Reeves in *My Own Private Idaho* in 1991 – all the Criterion films are fresh as the day they were completed.

Although these masterpieces fulfill my aesthetic appetite, they may not appeal to everyone. In order to watch and enjoy many of the works, one must have an extremely open mind and willingness to challenge their cultural assumptions. Sometimes, the films are so obscure from the American way of life that Americans may be turned off completely to the message within. For example, Spanish director Luis Buñuel's film, *The Discrete Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, presents a political satire of the upper-middle class that lacks a cohesive plot. Dream-sequences and strange characters are intertwined and sometimes accompanied by an eerie omniscient voice-over. To an individual solely interested in a time-filler of a

movie, these challenges could prove aggravating. A comment left on the *Internet Movie Databases*'s message board details the frustrations experienced by one viewer's experience:

I must say I really did not like this film. I know it's supposed to be surreal and indifferent to other films and it succeeds in that since, but personally when I watch a film, I want it to be entertaining, I want to be gripped by what is on the screen, in many more ways than just one, not just having a decent storyline, which this film doesn't have, at least not a conventional one. When I watched this film I was willing something interesting to happen, but that never came, the ending did, to which I was both happy because it was over and disappointed, because I just watched the most pointless and unenjoyable film I have ever watched. I'm sure that it is a very unique idea and was directed adequately, but it isn't the sort of film that a majority of people will like, myself included. (imdb.com)

Understanding how the director is using certain cinematic devices is paramount in understanding the message and ultimately enjoying the film. Criterion discs include bonus material that is not simply comprised of "deleted scenes" or the "gag reel." Criterion discs include academic essays concerning the movie and its cultural significance. Occasionally, Criterion discs will include bonus short films from the same director to help the audience understand the breadth and development of the work. For the viewer struggling to enjoy a film, Criterion goes the distance in providing extra content to help the viewer along.

My transformation from an ignorant adolescent to a high-art cinema connoisseur has been lengthy. As a result of my metamorphosis, I can now consider a film from many different aspects to assess its relevance and mastery. The only way I refined my aesthetic expectations was with the aid of the Internet. I would not have had the means to explore film to the extent I was able to without my "criminal" behavior. The public has an idea of "media pirates" that is completely skewed. In the same way that the Criterion Collection attempts to share vastly important works of art, we do the same. We trade culture, and enable ourselves to further the creative community at large. If you ask any "pirate" who consistently downloads music and movies – you will find that they are the most dedicated consumers of art to be found. They are the people at live concerts, seeing films in theaters, and listening to lectures about their favorite directors. These people are committed to the production of *worthy* art. We feel that if a film is worthy of praise and admiration, the motivations behind the film are not strictly monetary. The directors attempted to push the boundaries of what cinema can mean to an audience. Their efforts are quickly dispersed to a worldwide audience regardless of social and financial factors. The days of private art are over. In an extremely competitive global arena the push to be innovative and make exceptional film should be even greater.

Frederico Fellin's *8 ½* made me feel light as a feather. A trio of French film amateurs was able to make *Man Bites Dog*, one of the most haunting experiences of my life. Any of Ingmar Bergman's films can restore my faith in humanity. At the time of my adolescent cinematic ignorance watching *Brown Sugar* in the *Eastlgen 16*, I was unable to fathom the cultural assumptions that I as preparing to challenge in the years to come. I can only guess how the new Criterion Collection releases will be able to challenge me even more than before. But somehow, I know it is inevitable, and I grin in delight.

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HOMESCHOOLING AND SOCIALIZATION: A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

KIM PODOLSKI

Abstract

In the past decade, homeschooling has risen in popularity and is now seen by many as a viable alternative to public schools. While most agree that homeschooled children excel in academics, concerns are still raised about the social implications of homeschooling. This review explores studies in this area and concludes that, although critics may voice concerns about socialization and homeschooling, most experts believe that there are no social disadvantages to being homeschooled.

Though homeschooling may be the oldest form of education, its increasing growth in popularity in America has spurred a storm of controversy and debate. Chief amongst these concerns is the socialization of home-schooled children. Are they, as critics argue, sheltered from prevalent social mores by exclusion from a formal classroom setting? Or, as advocates state, are they more socially adept than their traditionally schooled peers? The literature on this topic shows a clear majority of researchers have found that home-schooled children do not suffer adversely for their non-traditional education, and in fact, may be better equipped to manage social situations.

How is socialization defined? As Richard Medlin (2000) states in his essay, *Homeschooling and The Question of Socialization*, “different people mean different things by the word *socialization*.” (p. 107) Whereas one person may define socialization in terms of exposure to, and influence by, social values, another may see socialization strictly in terms of extracurricular activities and interaction with peers. Durkin’s definition of socialization (as cited in Medlin, 2000, p. 107) is generally accepted by researchers as the most accurate: “the process whereby people acquire the rules of behavior and the systems of beliefs and attitudes that equip a person to function effectively as a member of a particular society.”

To this end, Medlin surmises that socialization is a natural, organic process that occurs without a formal institution. In *Revisiting the Common Myths about Homeschooling*, author Romanowski (2006) cites Medlin’s and Durkin’s definitions of socialization, and goes on to explain that parents who homeschool are keenly aware of socialization, and thus make concerted efforts to expose their children to a larger community. In *Homeschooling Comes of Age* (1996), author Patricia Lines discusses some of the methods utilized by homeschooling parents to ensure adequate exposure to a larger society. Lines notes that homeschool children rarely learn only inside the home and that their education takes place in various institutions, such as churches, hospitals, museums, libraries and even some formal classrooms. These methods of exposure are also discussed in other homeschooling articles, such as Romanowski’s *Common Arguments About the Strengths and Limitations of Homeschooling* (2001) and Medlin’s *Homeschooling and the Question of Socialization* (2000.)

Looking at homeschooling in a broader framework, some articles caution that exposure to the community may not be enough to ensure a socially mature individual. In *The Civic Perils of Homeschooling*, author Rob Reich notes that “Parents serve as the only filter for a child’s education, the final arbiters of what gets included and what gets excluded.”

(Reich, 2001) A child's ability to be an active citizen is compromised, argues Reich, because they have not learned how to "engage and deliberate" with people who hold different beliefs and convictions. This idea is echoed and reinforced in David Blacker's essay *Fanaticism and Schooling in the Democratic State*, in which Blacker asserts that homeschooled children are conditioned to understand only a single viewpoint with little to no opposition. Blacker's argument hinges on his assumption that homeschooling is undertaken mainly by religious fanatics. (Blacker, 1998)

Reading further, one can see that Blacker's assessment is based on an assumption about who homeschools, rather than on reliable evidence. In *Homeschooling Comes of Age*, Patricia Lines notes that although homeschooling may have once been primarily the province of ideologues trying to protect their children from "false ideologies," this is no longer the case. Rather, homeschooling now attracts a wide array of people who are dissatisfied with public schooling. (Lines, 1996.) That homeschooling has attracted a diverse group of people is evident in further readings. *From Pedagogy to Ideology: Origins and Phases of Home Education in the United States, 1970-1990* (Knowles, Marlow, Muchmore, 1992) clearly shows that homeschooling is growing in popularity outside of religious communities, while *Participation and Perception: Looking at Homeschooling Through a Multicultural Lens* (McDowell, Sanchez, Jones, 2000) reveals that homeschooling's popularity is gaining attraction in racial and ethnic minority groups.

Further disproving Blacker's assessments are studies conducted on college students, and on adults who participated in homeschooling, which found no evidence of fanaticism in these individuals. In *Transitional Experiences of First Year College Students Who Were Homeschooled* (Bolle, Wessel, Mulvihill, 2007) we learn that all students, regardless of whether they were homeschooled, undergo the same transitional phases upon entering the college environment. Brian Ray also examines college students from a homeschooling background in *Homeschoolers on to College: What Research Shows Us* and finds that the large majority were active and contributing members and leaders of their communities. (Ray, 2004)

Though several authors' express a dissenting opinion, the majority of literature on homeschooling has finds no lack of socialization due to a non-traditional approach to education. The homeschooling movement is comprised of a diverse group of individuals who, on the whole, consistently strive to expose their children to different ideas and to the community at large.

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**MINISTRONE
ALICIA PROBASCO**

LOST JULIE THORNTON

I'm exhausted. "Are we ready to go?" I ask, looking around at my family. We all stood, tired and stinky, in shorts and matching gray and red Korea Nazarene University t-shirts. We had just finished walking through the indoor rainforest of the Omaha Zoo. Although our tour is over we can still hear the distant sound of the waterfall, accompanied by the hum of a vacuum cleaner running close by.

Mom and Dad lean in close to one another talking quietly about what to do for dinner. Dad stands tall with peppered hair, and tanned skin, hands behind his back and chin up looking like the proud leader of the pack. Mom, a good foot shorter than Dad, brushes her short brown hair out of her eyes and replaces her purple sun-visor on her head, looking just as sweaty and tired as the rest of us. *I hope they're enjoying the trip.* Baby Ashley in her white sundress printed with blue and green flowers and a matching sunhat, relaxes in her stroller next to Baby Braxton. He, too, is in a stroller but is making a mess of his shorts and t-shirt as half chewed up crackers fall out of his mouth when he opens it to shove more in.

My brother quietly stands tall with broad shoulders in front of me, his hazel eyes watching his wife and step-son converse about the upcoming evening activities. *Bitch.* She glances toward me, her bleach blond hair greasy looking from the heat of the day. We both curtly fake a smile at one another and I look at my boyfriend, Mike, standing beside me. He's experiencing his first Collins Family Vacation and appears to be handling it quite well. Black stubby hairs poke out of his chin, cheeks, and upper lip. He refuses to shave while on vacation, which is fine with me, I love a man with scruffies. He reaches up to check that his sunglasses are still resting on his navy blue fisherman's hat that he's been wearing all day. Although it's sweat stained from the day's activities, it looks good next to his black hair and dark Italian skin. As he lowers his arms he smiles at me and begins to gently massage my shoulders.

"So what are we waiting on?" my sister, Jenny, asks. Her dirty blond hair rests gently on her shoulders complimenting her dark brown eyes. Her face glows golden from the days sun but she does not seem as tired and irritated as the rest of us. She glances at her husband, Alan, and smiles down at her three-year-old son, Ben.

"Wait a second." I say out loud, suddenly realizing something's not right. *Ben, Alan, Jenny, Braxton, Ted, Dani, Ashley, Braden, Mom, Dad, Mike.* "Where's Payton?" I ask. No one's listening. "Jenny," I say louder. She looks at me questioningly. "Where's Payton?" I ask again.

She glances around. "I don't know, I thought he was with you."

"No," I say, slightly irritated. "He was riding on the stroller with Ben when we first came in so I left him with you guys."

My sister raises her eyebrows, bewildered. "He got off the stroller at the rope bridge. He went across it and didn't come back so I thought he ran ahead and caught up with you guys; you were just ahead of us."

"Great," I say, taking in a deep breath and started off the way we all just came. "Everybody stay here. I have to find Payton," my son.

"I'm sorry, Beth," my brother-in-law, Alan, says. "I'll go this way," he nods his bald head toward the front entrance, "You go that way and I'll meet you back here."

We quickly walk away, everyone behind us still taking in the situation. I glance back to find Jason following me, calmly, as if expecting Payton to be just around the bend.

I can't believe this is happening. My heart starts beating faster but I remain calm as I pick up the pace. *Where is he?* I strain to look up ahead but there's still no sign of him. Passing the hippos, I look over the edge of the railing. *What if he fell over; he can't swim.* Pictures of him falling into the murky water below and sinking to the bottom fill my mind. *What if he fell and hurt himself? What if he's unconscious and he can't yell for help?* Bravely, I walk across the trail from the hippos to where the monkeys are at play. My lungs tighten and my heart races harder. There he is; my son lies with arms and legs sprawled out, face down, thirty feet below on the mossy brush. *No, damn it, stop it.* Shaking the unthinkable out of my mind, I look over the railing to find moss and vines covering large rocks, and a small stream of water gently flowing away from the waterfall close by but no sign of my son. The small, black monkeys timidly walk across the tree branches, posing for onlookers, their beady black eyes watching me just as closely as I'm watching them. *Ok, he hasn't fallen over, he's OK. No one's pointing and screaming at the lower level... everything's OK.* I look up the narrow, rustic trail. "The caves," I say softly out loud.

Glancing back over my shoulder, I notice Mike still calmly walking in a steady but unrushed pace, his arms at his side, glancing left and right every few feet as if he's still taking in the tall trees and brush of the rainforest around him and not looking for a missing child. He meets my gaze and raises his eyebrows. *Is he questioning if I found Payton or telling me everything will be OK?* I can not tell. Although his coolness is reassuring it frustrates me. *Mike, damn it... that's it, I don't have time to wait.* I take off in a sprint leaving him behind. I run through the caves thinking surely he is looking at the reptiles caged in the walls, surely he's just around this corner or the next, but with every turn the cave is empty. I pass the waterfall on my right where Mike and I had our picture taken just twenty minutes earlier, the air around me misty now, damp and cold. *What if Payton was missing then and we didn't even know it.*

"Sorry," I say, bumping into someone entering the cave as I was exiting; it is Alan. "Oh my God," is all I can say as we stop and just look at one another. I stand there frozen, unable to breathe, suddenly realizing my son is gone. My gut turns and my heart sinks.

At that moment, the greens, browns, and reds of the rain forest surrounding me change to black and white, and everything happens in slow motion. Alan shakes his head, no. I see his lips moving but I hear nothing. My thoughts go wild... *someone took my baby... my baby is gone... Payton is gone... someone took my baby. Where's my baby? Who took my baby? Lord, please no, please no...* I turn my head and the world is suddenly alive with color again. Glancing down to the lower level I see my parents. My mom looks up at us and shakes her head no, both hands in the air, shrugging her shoulders. Tears begin filling my eyes and my blood rushes and crashes through my body.

"We have to find him," I tell Alan. Two hours, three max, the experts say. When a child's been kidnapped that's how long you have to find them alive and safe – two to three hours. After that, the odds are next to nothing and most parents will never see their child again.

Tears begin to stream down my face as Alan and I frantically ask passersby "Have you seen a little boy? He's three years old, with blond hair?"

One by one, they shake their heads "no" with concern in their eyes. As we get closer to the entrance I can no longer see the faces of the individuals we speak to; my tears take

over making it impossible see where I am walking. Out into the entrance we run, the humming of a vacuum cleaner penetrates the air.

“That lady works here; let’s ask her,” Alan says. “Have you seen a little boy about three years old?”

“No,” she says.

My heart rips in half and it takes all I have to stay standing.

“But I just heard over the radio that a little boy was found and taken to the front entrance,” she finishes. “What’s your little boy’s name?”

“Payton,” Alan and I say simultaneously.

“Yes, Payton is his name,” she responds, smiling.

“He’s up front? Is he OK?” I ask.

“Yes, he’s fine.” The lady smiles at me again reassuringly and a wave of relief overcomes me. My breathing returns quickly and I feel as if I may have forgotten to breathe for the last five minutes.

“Come with me,” she says. “I will take you to him.”

Alan and I follow as she exits the rainforest and begins walking toward the front entrance.

“Where was he?” Alan asks. “Where did they find him?”

“Another worker saw him leave the rainforest and wander into the building next door. They watched and waited for someone to come out after him and when no one did after a few minutes they went in to check on him,” she explained. “They found him playing on the jeep by himself; no one else in the building.”

As we walk up a steep incline and turn left toward the entrance I glimpse Payton standing with three women around him, his back to me. There he stands in Madagascar-themed overalls and a white t-shirt underneath, his blond hair gleaming in the sunlight. When I think the tears have stopped they come pouring out again. As I start running towards him I hear one of the women ask, “Hey, who is that?” Payton turns around and sees me.

“Mommy!” he exclaims and runs to greet me.

“Payton,” I say sobbing uncontrollably. I grab him up and hug him long and hard. “Don’t ever do that again,” I say. “Don’t ever run off; do you understand?”

“Yes, mommy,” he says smiling at me, clearly not understanding the turmoil I have just been through. “I told them my name,” he says.

“Yes, he told us his name,” one of the young women says. “We asked him if he knew where his mommy or daddy was, and he pointed and said you were in the big building. He even told us your name, Beth Collins. He’s a very smart kid and was very good.”

“Thank you,” I say. “How long has he been up here?” I ask.

“It’s been about twenty minutes,” one woman responds.

Twenty minutes? We haven’t been in the rainforest but about 30 minutes.

“Thank you,” I say again to the women and they smile and say, “You’re welcome.” “Let’s get back; everyone will want to know we’ve found you,” I say to Payton, and three of us walk back to the rainforest; Payton and I holding hands.

“We found him!” I say as we enter the rainforest again. I recap what has just happened and what Alan and I have been told. We all agree it’s time to call it a day and do a quick recount making sure everyone is still there and none of our other curious kids have wandered off.

As we walk through the zoo exit, Payton sits high on Mike's shoulders. One of the young ladies that I had just met moments earlier stands next to the exit.

"Bye, Payton," she says, as if she sees him all the time.

"Bye!" Payton exclaims, smiling down at her, giving a little wave.

LEADING THE WAY

CHRISTOPHER GRIFFITH

The morning was crisp and quiet as the sunlight barely peaked through the trees on the hill behind me. My boots slogged through the damp, dew-laden grass that covered the hillside. Birds chirped and woodpeckers hammered in the forest ahead. The cold air bit at my hands and face. Our breath could be seen as my father and I exhaled heavily on our hike up the hill. He walked just a few steps ahead of me, wearing camouflaged pants, a camo jacket and a camo hat.

It was hard to keep up with him at eleven years old. *Walk lightly and quickly, but keep your eyes ahead of you on the lookout.* I consciously kept my barrel pointed away from him and down towards the left, but it was heavy and I had to keep switching the gun from left to right as I walked. The sleep finally cleared from my eyes and I looked up into the blue sky to see the ducks flying high above and the wispy white clouds floating even higher. I followed my Dad around the green thorn bushes spread throughout the grassy hillside on my great uncle's farm and came to the edge of the woods. We pushed back the low-hanging branches of the small trees and walked into the forest.

The light from the sun didn't penetrate into the forest as well as it had in the field. Though the trees were budding, they did not have the branches full of leaves that they would gain in the summer time. The forest was still young for the year and the brush on the ground was rather sparse. The short green thorn bushes, spread throughout the woods, came up to my waist. Trees of various sizes stood close to one another cutting the visibility in forest down to only forty yards. My Dad and I walked under the low-hanging branches of the small saplings for just a little ways, maybe twenty yards from the field, to the spot we had picked out the afternoon before. The fallen brown and orange leaves crunched with every light step as we made our way to the large three-foot wide oak tree ahead of us. *Put your heel down first to keep your steps quiet.*

The roots of the oak tree extended out a foot from the trunk of the tree and made a place for us to sit down and blend in with the tree. Dad set down a camo cushion filled with beads at the base of the tree for me to sit on. Sitting down kind of hurt because the knobby bark on the tree dug into my back. I set the youth-model shotgun that I had borrowed, on my knees propped up in front of me. *Always have your gun ready.* I reached for my camo gloves and head net slowly so as not to make much noise. *Cover as much exposed skin as you can. Turkeys can see you before you see them.* Dad sat down next to me and laid his gun in his lap. He quietly pulled out the small wooden box call and began to rub blue chalk on the paddle.

The box call was about six inches long and hollow. The paddle on top was connected to the box by a swivel. Dad slowly moved the paddle across the edge of the box in a rhythmic pattern. "Chirp, chirp chirp chirp," rang out among the other bird calls into the morning. *You shouldn't call too much, just a few times.* I held my breath in excitement, straining to hear the slightest answer. Then, "Gobble, gobble gobble," like thunder the turkey returned the call. My muscles tensed and my teeth were clenched. I shot a glance at my dad with the slightest movement of my head. He was as still as a stone statue with his eyes fixed straight ahead of us in the direction of the gobble. *Hold still,* I told myself. I looked back in the same direction, but couldn't see anything except the trees and brush and a little sky that came through the canopy.

The sound of fluttering wings traveled through the woods in our direction followed by another gobble. *He must've just flown down from the tree roost.* I clicked the safety button off on the gun. My eyes scanned the view in front of me searching for the hidden source of these sounds. The terrain in front of me sloped gradually downward. I couldn't see it, but I knew that after 100 yards the slope dropped off into a gully. *Good, I thought, gobblers travel uphill in mating season.* I looked past the knee high bushes in front of me, over the fallen log on my left and through the saplings to my right. My eyes became dry as I barely blinked, fearing I would miss a glimpse of the bird.

All of a sudden, and to my surprise, my senses picked up another sound. A cluck, followed by another cluck and the crunch of leaves, sounded from behind the oak tree where we were sitting. I froze solid, and from the very left corner of my eye, I saw a gobbler walk out just ten feet in front of my dad.

My stomach turned at the sight. *This is too close!* The turkey stood three feet tall with his neck extended towards the sky. He stood on two pink featherless legs and feet with three toes each. A large, black thorn-like spur stuck out an inch from the back of each leg just above the ankles. His wide, brown, feathery tail pointed downward in alignment with his back and neck. The breast was covered in shorter fatter feathers that had a glossy shine in the sunlight. From the center of the breast hung a tuft of black wiry hair nearly eleven inches long. *That's the beard.* His wings were held flush with the rest of his body and consisted of long skinny brown feathers striped white on the ends. His neck was bright red and featherless. Towards the top of his head, the fatty skin turned a pale white and blue. His beak was short, only an inch long, with a red flap of fatty skin hanging over it. With each steady and deliberate step he took, he bobbed his head.

I resisted the urge to swing my gun barrel in his direction and clenched my muscles to keep from shaking. *He would see me move before I got my finger on the trigger.* There was nothing I could do. My only hope of killing this animal was the chance that he stepped where I needed him to. Then, all of a sudden, he changed his course and walked to his right, just in front of me and Dad, but directly behind a tree. I took a deep breath and leaned down on the gun barrel. *Keep your head down on the gun.* The worn wood of the shotgun stock rested against my cheek. My finger felt for the cold metal of the trigger and curled around it gently. The numbness from the chilling cold quickly left as my heart pounded warm blood to all my extremities again. He stepped out just a second later, just where I thought he would, just where my gun was aimed. *Aim at the base of the neck. Wait till his head is up.*

Pow! The sound of the gun blast rocked the early April morning, though I could barely hear it over the pounding of my heart and the rushing of blood through my ears. Before I could react, my Dad jumped up and ran for the bird. I quickly followed him to my prize. With a few final wing flaps, the turkey lay at our feet.

My father laughed with excitement and grabbed me for a hug. "Let's go get breakfast," he said, his first words since we had left the farmhouse that morning. "Wait till everyone sees this."

I picked up the fifteen-pound bird, slung him over my shoulders, and walked out of the woods. This time I led the way.

HOW DOES THE AMERICAN GENDER MYTHOS AFFECT TRANSGENDER STUDENTS? CHRISITY WEBB

Introduction

Transgender persons (or trans persons) are people who have been born with contradictory sex and gender (Campos, 35). For the purposes of this paper, the word ‘sex’ will refer to the physical phenotypes associated with being either male or female. The word ‘gender’ will refer to the set of psychological beliefs and behaviors associated with being masculine or feminine. The term ‘sexuality’ will refer to desires in the sexually mature adult associated with intercourse. Trans persons are included in the term “Queer” as in “Queer community” and constitute the last segment of the acronym LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender). Preference for pronouns is to use the gender, not the sex. After reaching adulthood and legal maturity, many trans persons opt for gender realignment thru dress, behavior, hormones, and surgery. This paper specifically seeks to look at the prepubescent age sector, to avoid the complications physiological maturity creates in the study of gender myth. The paper will be divided into four sections:

What are American myths of gender?

How is the term transgendered defined?

What are the current points of view on the subject?

What conclusions have I drawn from this information?

As the research stands there is really no one work that provides an answer to the main question. This is a topic that requires more study. For a very long time sexual diversity was viewed as a taboo subject, and only recently has begun to be an option for research. The work on how gender myths affect homosexuals can be used as ‘gateway studies’, to give direction for future study, and stories from recently “out”, or openly Queer, trans persons can provide possible overlap. The current myths of gender identity in American culture passively persecute transgender youth, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and ‘wrongness’.

What are American myths of gender?

In The Gender Question in Education, (Diller, et all.) the authors use both statistical and anecdotal evidence to conclude that gender is a key factor in how children learn. Mindy Blaise, in her book Playing it Straight: Uncovering Gender Discourses in the Early Childhood Classroom, confronts the mythos of masculine boys and feminine girls, as well as the concept of gender identity being a biological construct. These two conflicting views model the bipolar way Americans look at gender, especially in children. On one hand, we *know*, on a deep internal level, that girls and boys are different, that they behave differently, that they learn differently. On the other hand the women’s rights movement and the massive upwelling of feminist sympathy that accompanied it tell us that our children are equals. It tells us that this equality means they need the same things, girl or boy. We, as Americans, feel very strongly about the word equality, so we don’t want to see the inherent conflict there, to question the validity of the inferences drawn by these movements. This leads to some very confusing contradictions in the lives of small children. We tell our little boys, ‘big boys don’t cry’ *and* ‘it’s OK to have feelings’. We tell our little girls ‘you can do anything you put your mind to’ *and* ‘don’t do that, it’s not ladylike!’. Then add to that that a trans child may not want to be a big boy, or may completely detest the idea of being ladylike.

American gender myths are very entrenched. We start myths of gender in picking baby colors: pink for girls and blue for boys. We separate “girl toys” (Barbies and dress-up) from “boy toys” (trucks and sticks and sports). The ubiquitousness of the American mythos of gender is very obvious in how trans children describe themselves. One parent tells the story in Trans Forming Families of a child who abhorred the ‘girl’ clothing given to her finally resorting to saying: “just tell Grandma I’m a boy!” (Boenke, 25). This was the only way the child could find of describing the internal state that resisted pink dresses with ruffles and bows. When studying the American mythos of gender, a critical thinker must ask the question: Is gender necessary? Do we really need to classify our desires and preferences as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’?

How do we define the term Transgender?

To understand how our current gender mythos affects trans persons, it is important to look at changes over the recent past in how the phenomena of transgenderism is discussed. One of the early works on the subject, Transvestites and Transsexuals: Toward a Theory of Cross-Gender Behavior, takes a very scientific approach. It looks at Transgenderism as a puzzle to be figured out (Docter). The ‘bug-under-glass’ approach is slightly abrasive to members of the Queer community. It is, however, one of the very first reputable sources to put forward a genetic theory that excludes personal choice as a reason for being transgendered. Because this is an older work, some of the language is outdated to the point it seems offensive, but it was politically correct at the time it was written. For example, the meaning of the term Transsexual is now covered under the definition of Transgender. This change was viewed as an important step by trans persons, because it moved away from the perception of trans people as ‘sexually deviant’ and was better suited to the true meaning, which has nothing to do with sexuality. The term Transvestite is now somewhat insulting, although it was originally the accepted term for a person who self identifies their gender as being the same as their sex, but enjoys dressing and behaving as the opposite sex and gender. The current terms for this are Cross Dresser, for everyday wearers, and Drag Queen, for professional performers who cross dress to entertain.

What are the current points of view on the subject?

The great depth of feeling on the issue of Queer rights has clouded many sources in pathos and ethos, leaving the true logos of factual information behind. This paper is not even going to attempt to answer questions of emotion and ethics. These feelings and opinions affect how the people involved in relevant research approach the topic, however, and must be addressed. This segment will address all points of view and give an overview of the relevant facts.

The pro-Queer experts cite genetic research to support their thesis that being transgendered is a genetic phenotype, not a personal choice (Docter, 42). On the surface, they appear to be the most factual and the least influenced by emotion and ethics. They do, however, tend to use old statistics, but this may be because there are no studies of this nature more recent than the 1980s. They have developed the definitions of the various diversities of transgenderism and have produced several sub-definitions (Campos). There are also several pro trans ‘guidebooks’ written for parents of trans children. One of these, The Transgender Child gives detailed accounts of what to expect from transgender children during various stages of growing up, and how to make sure they remain happy and healthy every step of the way.

Techniques include allowing grade school children to cross dress when at home, but explaining that school may be easier if the child wears sex appropriate clothing, but allowing a shift to full time at the change to middle or high school (Brill, 39).

The experts who stand opposed to the Queer community tend to talk more about the moral implications of the trans persons life. While it would be easy to dismiss the anti-Queer viewpoint as wildly irrational, the fact of the matter is that this sentiment is widely held, and the feelings created by it affect the trans community. Conservative religion, in general, has a harder time accepting trans persons than it does gay persons, because the underlying feeling is that trans people are claiming that God made a mistake. This is, I am informed by trans friends of mine, an inaccurate assumption. Because of this popular belief, however, many trans persons in conservative locales opt for gender realignment through surgery much younger than is medically advised, so they may 'fit in' better.

The views of the trans community and its non-expert allies must also be considered here. The common feelings experienced by parents upon hearing that their child is transgendered range from horror to enlightenment and acceptance. Some parents remain afraid and prejudiced against their children, but many accept the revelation in their own time. The discoveries made by the second group of parents tell us that prepubescent to pubescent transgender youth truly blossom when allowed to be the way they want to be (Boenke, 5-6). Many books that illustrate this are written by parents, like Robert Bernstein, author of Straight Parents Gay Children: Keeping Families Together. Some books are written by adults remembering their childhoods, such as the authors of the articles in Thinking Queer: Sexuality, Culture, and Education (Talbert and Stienburg, eds). This begs the question of how reliable secondhand and remembered accounts are, and whether or not anecdotal evidence can be counted as solid research. For this paper, I have included them in my body of research. From reading these works, the conclusion can be drawn that when transgender students enter a school environment there are some very drastic changes that take place as they are affected by exposure to a broader spectrum of ideals and opinions about gender. In many cases they show marked depression and abnormally introverted behavior when suddenly exposed to repressive social norms (Boenke, 6). In support of this theory are the anecdotes of Trans Forming Families which tell how feelings of wrongness and inadequacy come from being forced to behave contrary to ones true gender. Straight Parents Gay Children: Keeping Families Together, is written in first person by the father of a trans child, and focuses on the difficulties faced by transgender youth in our society, such as what bathroom to use in school after behavior, dress, and hormones have been realigned, but sex has not (Bernstein, 58).

Conclusions

Although there are many different works that answer peripheral questions, there is no single answer to the question of how American gender mythos affect trans students. This may be because the question is too subjective to be addressed by a scientific study, while being too controversial for a good sample of anecdotal evidence. This subject requires more study for the question to be answered. It will be difficult to start research of this nature, however, until we as a society move on from our socially squeamish tendencies, and are capable of being unbiased by emotion and perceived ethical qualms. This may be happening faster than we realize, because of the current atmosphere of acceptance for other minorities, racial, gender and sexual. Since the most recent statistics on the number, distribution, and variety of trans

persons are from the 1980's that seems like a good place to start. The research on how lesbians and gays are affected by gender myths can be a jumping off point for directions of future study, and the first person stories can confirm ideas. The one abiding truth found in my research is that perception is everything. Our definitions of what it is to be male and female are shaped in large part by our perceptions. To be transgendered is to perceive a disparity between sex and gender. This is a science of studying human reactions and perceptions.

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