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Foreword

Writing is not an activity that features social responsibility as an option. Writing *is* social responsibility. When you write, you are being responsible to some social entity even if that entity is yourself. You can be irresponsible as a writer, but you cannot be non-responsible. (Gilyard 21)

This quotation, from Keith Gilyard’s collection of articles, *Let’s Flip the Script*, has something valuable to say about the essays that appear in the 2008 *Prairie Lights* as well as about the values of the expository writing program at Kansas State University. The fourteen student writers whose work is showcased here—as well as the approximately 130 other students who submitted their work—demonstrate this “social responsibility”: feeling that they have something important to say, they show this commitment to their writing by carefully researching their ideas, building off of the conversations of experts and researchers, and reflecting upon the needs and values of their audiences. Writing is inherently a social process, and the qualities of writing that K-State’s expository writing program value most are those that are demonstrated in students’ awareness that their writing both precedes and proceeds them.

Gilyard’s quotation can also be important in a different sense: If students are responsible for their own writing—for the issues they are writing about and for the audiences to whom they are writing—then who is responsible for them? During the relatively brief history of formal education in the United States, the responsibility has largely been thought of as the students themselves, or their teachers or parents. When something goes wrong, if students are not writing and reading as well as we would hope, then these three groups become the usual targets for blame. Indeed, the legislation behind No Child Left Behind bases itself on this logic: the desire to hold students, teachers, and schools “accountable” to a persistent series of stringent standardized tests.

These notions of responsibility are expressed when people decide what duties belong to the public (e.g., the government or public and civic institutions) and which ones belong to the private sphere (e.g., the family). Our considerations about the public and the private are important when we reflect on how school systems across the United States are funded and how dire funding discrepancies are allowed to exist from one school district to the next, as well as from one state to the next. Jonathan Kozol’s *The Shame of the Nation* and Jean Anyon’s *Radical Possibilities* explore the educational consequences when the public becomes too weak to help all students in the United States. As Kansas represents the birthplace of desegregation, enshrined by Topeka’s Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, we are quite possibly more invested than others to insure that such ideals of educational parity and social equality are not threatened by attempts to weaken how we define the responsibilities of the public.

Talking about responsibilities, now much more locally, Robin Mosher has held many of them during her past twenty years as a teacher and advisor in the expository writing program. Although Robin will continue to teach and serve in the English Department in many ways, this *Prairie Lights* represents her final contribution to the program. We will miss her. We also have new people to welcome. Anna Goins Dodder and Abby Knoblauch are our two new advisors in the program. Anna’s contributions have already been felt, as she helped read for and proofread this *Prairie Lights*. Cynthia Debes, Stacia Gray, and Deborah Murray also helped to select essays, and Deborah assisted me in the editing process. As always, the support of Edward Seaton and *The Manhattan Mercury* make *Prairie Lights* possible.

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Analysis of M&M Candies Ad

Shannon Feehan

To: Mars Marketing Director
From: Shannon Feehan
Date: September 8, 2007
Subject: Analysis of M&M Candies Ad

As a skilled advertising consultant with a specific interest in gender awareness, I was glad to be able to evaluate one of your ads. I have analyzed an M&M advertisement that uses your green character. I believe the advertisement does a good job appealing to M&M candies eaters because a figure of the actual M&M is the focal point of the ad. This M&M advertisement, as well as all others, appeals to a wide range of consumers.

According to your website, the Mars Company sold the first M&M's Candies in 1941. It did not take long for these little chocolate candies to flourish into the worldwide business that they are today. You pride yourself in being one of the largest family businesses that customers have grown to "know and trust." Your website also states that your company bases itself on these five values: quality, responsibility, mutuality, efficiency, and freedom. The responsibility reflects on your company's "respect for the individual." The M&M's brand demonstrates this value by saying "there is an M&M in everyone." I have always loved little M&M candies and have even found myself laughing out loud to some of your commercials. The only flaw I can find in your advertisement is that your green M&M character does not reflect the image of the typical woman as an individual; instead, this sexy character seems to be giving women a misleading reputation.

The green M&M character's racy outfit and language suggest that women require a sexual appeal in order to stand out. Although the green M&M character is obviously not a human, this image can be seen as stereotyping women as primarily sexual beings. The green M&M has arms and legs with seductive eyes and lips. This character seems to be saying that if female consumers eat the green M&M, they will be seen as a stronger, more beautiful woman. Although she brings the point across of humor while showing the M&M brand, she seems to be representing all women as a model figure.

In this particular ad, she is walking into the water on a tropical island, her arms stretched up around her back and water dripping off her body. The quote on the advertisement says, "I melt for no

one." This phrase may appear a little provocative for younger children who see the ad. This candy appeals to people of all ages, whether young children or elder women, so the advertisements need to reach the same broad demographic. In the green M&M character's biography on the website, her attractiveness is suggested by the description that "beauty of this magnitude can't be described" and by the fact that she states her turn-offs are "men who stare." All of the focus in the ad is directed towards the character as an object rather than a woman of power. It also shows that she as a woman feels a need for attention from guys and cannot be independent. Although this can be found as comical, it is also a representation of the role that women play in our society. Even if from a comical M&M character, this advertisement gives women the idea that they are seen as a joke and need to base their lives upon their appearance.

This image of the green M&M female character may be more defensible if the advertisement included additional M&M female characters to represent different types of women. The advertisers do this for the male M&M characters. There is the cocky yet genius red M&M, the goofy but nice yellow M&M, the stressed out and crazy orange M&M, and the toned and confident blue M&M. Together, a total of four male M&M characters represent a wide variety of the different personalities of males. Yet, only one seductive green M&M represents the entirety of women. It seems a little unjust that each male character is completely unique. None of them, for example, represent men who base their appeal solely on their physical appearance, such as a male model or a body builder. The female character, again, represents this physical, superficial appearance. Although together the M&M characters help create a comical advertisement and seem to represent a large group of friends, it may be a little less stereotypical if more characters represent different types of women.

Advertisements can sometimes become boring and blank. I have never found an M&M advertisement to be either of these. You use many different colorful characters and appeal to viewers with both your commercials and ads. I only wish that along with your entertaining appeal, you could find a way to show women from different perspectives. Maybe bring along a new M&M color to represent a stronger women, something that is not seen in the

advertisement world. Maybe try to use this green M&M in a more empowering way to be a role model to girls and other ads around the world. As a family-based company, your strong values are clearly articulated on your website. I have always found M&Ms to be a tasty treat and their commercials to be entertaining. I can only hope that you could find a way to enhance your advertisements by changing these misconceptions about women.

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Shannon Feehan wrote this ad analysis in Stacia Gray’s Expos I class.

With and Against the Grain: Robert Jensen in Johnson County

Shelley Ruth Fritz

Summary

In the article, “Being Colorblind Does Not Offset Innate Advantages of White Privilege,” Robert Jensen makes the argument that being “colorblind” is a form of racism. Historically and currently, white people are not made aware of their skin color as other races are, which Jensen defines as white privilege. According to Jensen, white privilege should be confronted by embracing differences, including racial ones, between people and examining the differences in power these differences have created in society. Presently, many white people intend to be anti-racist by being colorblind, but in doing so are racist. In order to defeat this racism, Jensen argues that it first must be acknowledged that race, gender, and class privilege often override merit in our society. Ultimately, Jensen believes white people must understand the innate advantages that white privilege gives them, and, by being honest with themselves, they can all move forward to create a more inclusive, anti-racist society.

With the Grain

All of my life I have grown up in suburbia. Stereotypically, the suburbs consist of middle- to upper-class white people who are more concerned with how well manicured their lawn is than how to feed their family. In my experience, this is indeed the case. Growing up in Prairie Village, located in Johnson County, Kansas, there was never a problem with providing the necessities for life, or having a safe neighborhood, or even learning to live in a diverse ethnic and racial culture. To my knowledge, there have been very few non-white people who have lived on my street. In fact, once I reached high school, there existed even less diversity.

My high-school experience was an even whiter microcosm of Johnson County. Many students came

from one of the richest and whitest neighborhoods in the country. White privilege was evident on a daily basis. My U.S. Government AP class was a prime example of this. It is very revealing that there were only white students in my class. I was often appalled at the lack of respect for my teacher; students constantly talked on their phones, blatantly ignored assignments, and a few students often skipped class with no repercussions. Many of these students held leadership positions in student council, NHS, and other organizations, often not as a result of merit, but rather because of their race and class privileges. In contrast, a minor infraction by a student of another race was not so routinely tolerated. For instance, in my weights class, there were several minority students, and when any of them cussed or wore their clothes the wrong way, they were berated. Additionally, the white kids rarely, if ever, mingled with the few minority students, and most certainly did not try to get to know them like they had their fellow white classmates. At lunch there was a table of African Americans, another for Asians, and then all of the rest for the white kids in the cafeteria. Being in the majority, the white kids did not have to deal with race; that was the convenient option.

All of this shows that white privilege is prevalent, and it is not addressed because it is often an inconvenience. The white students at my high school undoubtedly had socio-economic privileges working in their favor. Many students did not work very hard in school, knowing that their parents could afford a private college regardless of their grades. This was most certainly the case in my government class, where many students had parents whose businesses would guarantee them financial security and a free pass. It was overtly evident that only a select few students in that class did any work at all or cared about what grade they got. I do not know of

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any minority student from my high school with that luxury. White privilege in this instance is all about not giving up an unearned advantage, and the white students had that luxury in not having to deal with racial differences that the minority students had to face every day.

Against the Grain

Taja and I have been great friends ever since we started playing basketball together in the fourth grade. We had the same schedules throughout middle school, so we were constantly together. We were teammates through freshman year of high school, had Spanish together sophomore year, and hung out on the weekends as upperclassmen. She has more energy than just about anyone I know, and she always makes me laugh. Taja is also African American. Throughout my life, I have not tried to avoid skin color, but at the same time I do not make a deliberate effort to bring up the topic. Taja and I have indeed discussed race before, but these discussions took place in the context of everyday conversation that I would have with anyone of my friends. According to some people, this constitutes being colorblind. Colorblindness in terms of race can be used for either good or bad, as Jensen illustrates, but it is not innately evil. Brazenly bringing up race would not improve my relationship with Taja but neither would it to disregard a part of who she is. Intentionally avoiding colorblindness can be equally harmful to being colorblind.

With Taja and every other person, I judge them based on their actions, not a single characteristic.

This colorblindness can allow every person to be seen as an individual, rather than pigeonholing people based on one aspect of their identity. Of course, race plays a part in everyone's identity, but it should define no one. Taja and I have many similarities, and fewer differences, but these distinctions almost assuredly have more to do with cultural differences than racial ones. In fact, Taja and I share similar opinions on many issues that I strongly differ on with many of my white friends, so explaining our differences by a racial rift just does not make sense. If our ultimate goal is to reduce racism and power differences associated with race, then colorblindness in a sense is the ultimate goal. Society will never move forward if we continue to insist all people of varying races are different, and there comes a certain point in time in which this method invokes racism instead of discouraging it. Existing disparities must be acknowledged, but we all must be careful not to create them, and then colorblindness can be used both for better or worse.

In order for society to progress, we must all make an effort to understand each other's perspectives on life, whether that means from the point of view of religion, ethnicity, culture, race, gender, socio-economic status, or just peoples' values. This applies no more to Taja than to any of my other friends, regardless of their race.

Shelley Ruth Fritz wrote this with and against the grain in Stacia Gray's Expos I class.

International and American Student Interaction

Jessica Heller

To: International Student Center
From: Jessica Heller
Date: April 3, 2008
Subject: International and American Student Interaction

Recently, I have conducted research on the cultural barriers between international students and American students and the programs K-State offers to these groups. Some of the barriers that international students face when coming to an American university are language barriers, cultural differences, and intimidation. I am directing this memo to the International Student Center because you provide essential immigration services for

nearly 1000 international students who are involved in educational programs at K-State ("About").

I became aware of this cultural barrier when I was asked the question, "How many times a week do you have a real conversation with an international student?" Unfortunately, my participants' answers indicated no interaction at all between themselves and international students. The interaction between an American student and an international student often boils down to a smile or a "hello" as they pass each other from one day to the next. One-on-one interaction or even mixed group interaction is rare. The sad truth is that many minority groups feel unwelcome on university campuses. They feel as though they are uninvited guests in a strange land (Heggins and Jackson).

As of September 2007, there were 1,200 international students enrolled at Kansas State. (“K-State Posts”). According to Eugene McCormack, the competition for foreign students has become heated and complex because they provide some of the strongest talent universities have, and the money they spend on tuition is extremely beneficial to each institution (A34). The desire for international students at universities is evident all around the nation. That is why making K-State a place where international students feel welcome and connected to the community and domestic students would be beneficial. Because you are the department that helps international students adjust to American culture and life at K-State, you could benefit from finding new ways to help the two student groups interact.

The problem K-State faces is not that either group does not want to relate to the other, it is that they just do not know how. Bradley Shaw, associate professor of modern languages at K-State admitted, “I think that we are sometimes a little hesitant or a little reticent when we’re dealing with things we don’t understand or don’t know” (qtd. in Campbell). The most common difficulty foreign and domestic students face is the language barrier. Both groups fail to communicate simply because they cannot understand each other. It is natural for people to be drawn to those who they can communicate with. Not only is language a problem but so are cultural differences. International students often do not understand or feel comfortable with American culture, so they try to find other people who are like them and can relate to them. American students are so used to American culture, so they find it hard to remove themselves from it and learn about another culture. Daniel Aguilar, a current K-State student, said, “The first reaction you have is to go look for the people who come from the same background as you” (qtd. in Campbell). The third barrier is intimidation. Both groups are intimidated by the other and most often are too scared to take the initiative to step out and try to build a relationship. Although language, cultures, and intimidation can be barriers, there are ways to overcome them.

The three barriers and the lack of interaction between foreign and international students are problems, but there are programs and ideas to increase interaction. The University of Missouri has a program called Email Partners. This program pairs incoming international students with current MU students before they arrive on campus (“Email Partners”). By adopting this program, the International Student Center could provide current

K-State students with the opportunity to answer foreign students’ questions about the university and Manhattan before they even arrive. This would not only allow the international students to have a smoother transition, but it would also give them a new friend before they came to K-State. It is a great way to get K-State students involved, too. Both groups would benefit from each other and enhance overall student interaction. This program could help reduce the cultural barriers because the international student would gain information about K-State and also about life in Manhattan. Intimidation could be reduced as well because a friendship is automatically being developed.

Iowa State University is another school that has an excellent program. Their program is called International Peer Assistants (“International Peer Assistants”). Similar to the MU program, these peers are available to answer any academic questions or questions about university life in general. If K-State would adopt this program, these peers would be an excellent source for international students to learn about activities and services at K-State. These peer assistants could be fellow international students who have been at K-State for a while and American Students. The peer assistants could be made up of volunteers or of students satisfying a requirement in a multicultural class. This program could be another way to break cultural barriers.

A third program could be one that focuses on language barriers. An international student and an American student could be paired up together based on what language they spoke and what language they are trying to learn. For example, if an international student from Columbia is studying here at K-State, she could be paired up with an American student who is learning Spanish. Both could help one another learn and progress in the other’s language. Not only would this help break down a language barrier, but it would also be another way to start a friendship. Again, this program could be a requirement for students in some foreign language courses or solely voluntary.

After doing research, it was obvious that domestic students and professors notice the lack of interaction. Aguilar states, “I think there is a disconnection between both communities unfortunately” (qtd. in Campbell). Aguilar also believes that “the disconnection is a lack of communication,” but he goes on to say that “both groups—international and domestic—can benefit by forming stronger connections.” Shaw, moreover, believes that “learning more thoroughly about people from different backgrounds is not something

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Americans or International students should be afraid of.” Shaw also states that by learning about other cultures, languages, and religions, many of those fears and concerns go away (qtd. in Campbell). Both Aguilar and Shaw recognize the problem here at K-State. While they both see the disconnection and the fear of interaction, they also go on to explain why it is important for domestic and foreign students to build relationships and benefit from one another. K-State can begin to break down these barriers and create a more diverse environment with your help.

K-State does offer multiple programs that are geared towards international students, but only one is focused on uniting domestic and foreign students. This program is called International Buddies (“Programs”). By making more programs available that are geared toward both domestic and international students together, it will increase the interest in getting involved. As a result, more interaction will develop and friendships will be built. Finally, by emphasizing the importance and benefits of building relationships with people of different backgrounds, it will reduce some of that initial fear and help create more diverse interaction at K-State.

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Society’s Influences

Madhuri Kulkarni

Born on November 15, 1940 and raised with four other siblings in the northern part of Maharashtra, India, my grandmother, Pushpalata Kulkarni, now stopped her work sorting out cumin seeds in my uncle’s home. I could only imagine her sitting on the smooth tiles of the floor in that morning, sun-filled room on the sixth floor with the window wide open, susceptible to the sounds of church bells and the fluttering and cooing of pigeons. Holding the phone, I closed my eyes as I saw her in a white sari, the traditional dress of Indian women, her black and white hair pulled back in a long braid. I quickly began to realize that phone interviews are harder to conduct than personal interviews, especially over long distances and in a native language, but I was determined to capture the

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Jessica Heller wrote this informative memo in Phillip Hamilton’s Expos I class.

unique spirit of my grandmother, who was greatly influenced not only by family and friends, but a society dominated by the prevailing caste system.

Her life had been that of a typical Indian girl, mainly learning how to behave and act by her parents, relatives, neighbors, and friends. “They have grown us up with so much love,” she stated, identifying all these influences. As I spoke with her about her parents, I realized that back then, not only did parents raise a child, but neighbors contributed as well. All the families, especially if set in a small community, talk, share ideas, and give suggestions on how to effectively rear children. Relatives were also a major part of her life. When all of the extended family is together, there is a much stronger bond, and thus, more love. Friends, too, influenced

my grandmother's studying and, of course, social life. One of the main responsibilities of parents, then, especially toward the oldest child such as my grandmother, was to teach them how to act. "I was expected to behave well," she said, because "how I behaved is how my brothers and sisters would behave." The oldest sibling had the most important role to play, and she was supposed to perform this specific duty so she could set an example for all her younger siblings, who would learn by her guidance. "So now you have to discipline Ashu so he will behave that way!" my grandmother laughed, as she advised me to be a better role model towards my younger brother.

As with most everybody, school plays a crucial role in a person's development. For my grandmother, schooling consisted of everything from basic concepts of many subjects to religious knowledge. Although her education stopped in the eleventh grade, she was satisfied with it. "I didn't feel like I should do anything more." With that idea in mind, she did not even go to college, which was a common practice, because in most cases, girls were married soon after the completion of their basic education. According to the norms of Indian society, my grandmother was married fairly quickly after her education. "I got married at 19," she stated. Laughing, I exclaimed, "19?" My grandmother then corrected herself, replying, "Okay, I was still 18." To me, it is very difficult to believe that I would be married right now if it were 1959, the year she got married.

After marriage, my grandmother inherited the new roles of a wife and daughter-in-law. As a young girl, she had aspired to be a writer, but after marriage, "everything stopped." Women during that time had to stay at home and be housewives. Housework was obligatory, and though some girls enjoyed it, when I asked her whether or not there were some who did not, she chuckled, "Yes, of course! There were plenty of those. Who likes to do work? But it was compulsory." As the years went by, however, there was gradual change as more women, including my grandmother's two sisters, obtained degrees, leaving the household to enter the work force.

Along with the influence of parents, relatives, neighbors, and friends, the caste system also played a big role in her life. A caste system is "a form of social stratification in which one's status is determined by birth and is lifelong" (Henslin). Specifically in India, where it has existed for more than 3,000 years, the caste system's divisions consist of four parts: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas

(warriors), Vaishyas (farmers), and Shuddras (laborers).

"Can everybody do everything?" my grandmother, a Brahmin herself, asked when questioned why the caste system was formed in the first place. The work was distributed among people according to what they did the best, and as time went on, that identity stuck to them. Everybody was considered equal at first because everybody had different specific jobs they had to do; thus, no job was better than the other. However, because of knowledge, Brahmins rose to the top, and because of providing protection, Kshatriyas were second, and so forth. Thus, inequality was created even though the main rationale was a simple distribution of tasks according to different skills.

I had initially thought that each caste would have its own freedoms and restrictions and that Brahmins, in particular, did. One major restriction for Brahmins was food, in which "high ranked Brahmin priests...were forbidden to share food, water, or even shadows with [lower castes]" (Baker). More specifically, even though other castes were lenient about the consumption of meat, Brahmins had to be strict vegetarians. A major freedom, on the other hand, was that by being Brahmins, they had the opportunity to learn Sanskrit, in which all Hindu scriptures are written. Thus, because of their knowledge of Sanskrit, Brahmins were free to acquire unlimited spiritual knowledge.

Over time, everything became a ritual. Therefore, people followed certain traditions because that's how "it should be done," such as the restriction on eating meat, and that notion carried on through many generations. In my grandmother's time, views on different castes, then, became "dry" and ritualistic such that people did certain things most of the time without even knowing the true reason. Particularly in childhood, even though children were allowed to play with other children of different castes, they were not allowed to eat with them. My grandmother explained, "Why this was was because back then they used to think that even by food, our intelligence would be tainted." My grandmother went on to say that if a Brahmin just ate food of a lower caste, it was as if he or she moved to that lower caste. The same logic was used in marriage. If Brahmins married into a lower caste, they were stained and were no longer considered a part of their original caste. People like that would be ostracized, and nobody would maintain relationships with them, including parents, who would even consider their own son or daughter dead if he or she moved into a lower caste. According to James

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Henslin, “Endogamy, or marriage within own group,” was thus expected, and it was carried forward because of the social fear, “What will people think of us?” Most of this thinking was due to the history of the caste system. As my grandmother affirmed, “We were told from a young age that this is a bad thing, bad thing, bad thing, so people actually thought that it really was bad.” It was hard to “go against society’s expectations.”

Today, Aryn Baker reminds us that “caste continues to haunt India,” although to a much lesser degree. In villages, the power of the caste system is still very strong because of smaller communities, but in cities, it has a weaker presence. My grandmother acknowledged this fact, saying, “Slowly after, it was getting better...Well, getting better or worse, say whatever. Next generations have to deal with it.”

During the whole interview, I could not see the expressions on my grandmother’s face. Her tone, however, would vary, and it would mostly be serious, as she genuinely did want to share the importance of society on her life. The room she was in was probably sunnier as almost an hour had passed in our conversation. The sounds of church bells and the coos of pigeons probably continued,

but our discussion stopped. The cumin seeds, perhaps, still lay on the floor, and my grandmother possibly let out a big sigh as she knew that my questions were over. “Have I given you enough information?” she wondered, unaware that not only had she given me a lot to write about, but a lot to think about, such as trying to understand my own religion and discovering my identity, which, in many ways, is similar to hers. After all, just as she was influenced by family, friends, and, most importantly, the caste system, so am I.

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Madhuri Kulkarni wrote this investigative report in Anna Goins Dodder’s Expos I class.

Mary’s Story

Sam Dodge

“Hey, Dollar General,” echoes from the back room as I enter my neighbor’s quaint Prairie Village home. I’ve earned this nickname from my years in the military. Andy and Mary Hoytal have lived in this house 46 years, and have been surrogate grandparents to me my entire life. Making my way to the sun room, I can see the squirrels nibbling on acorns in the backyard and hear the faint noise of wind chimes rustling just above the meticulously planted flowers. I am here to talk with Mary, and talking is one of her strong points.

Born in 1937, Mary Hoytal grew up in a Polish community in Kansas City, Kansas. This tight knit group of people kept to themselves and valued the blue collar working lifestyle. We talk about how the society of the 50’s was much different than today’s. “Everyone respected one another,” Mary says, “and now it seems like no one respects anything or anyone, not even themselves.” Mary goes on to speak of women and their roles in society. Mary talks about the naive, gentle, and polite demeanor that most women observed in that period. “Women didn’t address issues, we just accepted the way things were,” she says. Many women stayed at home

while their husbands worked, but Mary had other ambitions.

She attended Bishop Ward High School and moved on to a year of junior college upon graduation. “Most women at that time who attended college were working towards a nursing, teaching, or office type career,” Mary says. She mentions how the role of women in the workplace was much different in the 1950’s and 1960’s than it is today. According to Department of Labor statistics, in 1960, only 36% of women participated in the labor force compared to 60% in 2006. However, in November of 1957, Mary joined the labor force and started her career.

Mary always had ambitions to work. “I wanted to be out in the world,” she admits. Trans World Airlines (TWA) was hiring, and an old high-school classmate let Mary know. Retiring after 43 years, as an executive secretary, Mary looks back on her experience at TWA and some of the misconceptions she encountered working for such a glamorous airline. Mary would tell people she worked for TWA and the first thought that came across their mind was the image of the flight attendant. This bothered her

somewhat because, as she says, “It takes more than a flight attendant to make an airplane fly!” TWA provided Mary with a steady income at a time when her husband was considered the primary, if not only, source of earnings for a family. Emphasizing this point, Mary-Lane Kamberg, author of *Look How Far We’ve Come*, states that by the 1950’s, more women were working outside the home, yet their primary responsibilities were still seen as home and family, and their income was considered supplemental to that of their husbands. Contrary to this statement is the fact that Mary and Andy worked together as a team throughout their lives. “Andy was working at a meat packing plant and would periodically get laid off; I was right there though to pick up the slack due to my job.”

We flash forward to today and the powerful women holding positions both socially and politically all throughout the United States. Hillary Clinton is on CNN in the other room, and I can’t help but ask Mary about the strides women have made in the half century since she was my age. She points to the women who gave her and others inspiration. Eleanor Roosevelt and Kansas native Bess Truman pop into the conversation. As I look through history, I can pull the names of more influential women including Rosa Parks and Sandra Day O’Connor, not to mention the powerful women of today, including Oprah Winfrey, Condoleezza Rice, and Nancy Pelosi. Through technology and the media, Mary thinks women are more accepted now and have a more firm stance on issues. “We used to not challenge anything; now women challenge everything,” Mary says emphatically. As I prepare to

wrap up our wonderful session of coffee and conversation, I ask Mary a final question. What does she think about the progress of women in the workforce now as compared to 50 years ago? “I don’t think women are as widely received in top executive branches as men are, and I believe there is still a perception that they are not equal to men,” she concludes.

I proceed to wrap up our meeting and gather my notes, stop the tape recorder, and thank Mary for her time and hospitality. I leave that spring day with the understanding that in our society we are not merely male or female but human beings trying to exist in an ever changing and progressing world. However, our personal experiences in this struggle, many of which are gender specific, mold who we are and who we will become.

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Sam Dodge wrote this investigative report in Tulora Roecker’s Expos I class.

Who Am I?

Lleran Johnson

For me, high school was filled with ordinary days with the usual ups and downs. Each day brought me stress and aggravation as teachers bombarded my friends and me with more homework and projects. My high school was different from all of the other schools in the district because it was a magnet school that focused on preparing its students for college. The only thing we really ever looked forward to was going to our favorite teacher’s room. Tonya Schuckman, or “Schuckman,” as we called her, was the best teacher, and she would talk to us as if she were our parent, counselor, and friend. Her room was where you could always find me. On a typical day, I would be in her room for about half of the day. I spent the mornings before school, time

during lunch, time when I should have been in other classes, and the evenings after school let out. That room helped me to define who I am and where I fitted in at my school. It was where I went through a majority of my problems and where I changed.

During my junior year, I took one of Schuckman’s chemistry courses with other juniors and seniors. Within the course, there was a diverse mix of races and ethnicities. We all had differences and similarities that brought us together and made us friends. For instance, we all had the same type of values and morals about school and drinking, yet we had different groups of friends, and we had our own unique personalities that when brought together made a perfect combination. One day in particular,

my friends and I were sitting around in class making jokes and talking about music that we liked. We went around, one by one, saying what we usually listened to and liked to hear on the radio.

“I hate listening to rap. I like to listen to country music, like Brad Paisley, Montgomery Gentry, and Trace Adkins,” said my friend Kristine.

“I like alternative and Christian rock,” Amanda said with a grin on her face. As it came time for me to go, I wondered what my friends would think when I revealed to them my music preferences.

“Well, I like to listen to rap, hip-hop, pop, rock, and country. I still listen to Britney Spears and N’Sync,” I said with a smile and grin on my face. At that moment, I didn’t know what to think, as my friends felt the same way. They all looked at me with strange expressions and confusion on their faces, as if they were asking, “Are you serious?” It was as if they thought something was wrong with me. I told them that I basically listen to everything, except heavy metal rock.

“You’re an oreo!” exclaimed Nick. “You’re black on the outside, but white on the inside.”

By saying this, they then compared me to the other black students in the class who were always together and proceeded to make conclusions as to how I was not as black as them. They continued to the point that they even said that they consider me white like them. Normally, I had never paid that much attention to my “blackness” or the lack thereof. During my early and young childhood, I had been around black people in my neighborhood and school and paid no attention to how I acted or what I did, in terms of my race, because it wasn’t a concern of mine at the time. Even in middle school, I never noticed the difference between me and the stereotypical black male. I was just me and did the things that I always did.

Seeing as how my friends saw me like this, there were times when I found myself trying to make myself more black and trying to be more different than what I was. I would sit at home and try to watch channels that focused on black people and showcased African-American music and then tried to change the way I talked. I tried to make myself fit into the stereotype of a black man. My friends noticed the differences and, on several occasions, called me out on it and made a point as to how it wasn’t me. The thing is, I didn’t know who I was.

By my friends recognizing and telling me that this wasn’t me, I felt as if it impeded my ability to try and find myself and know who I was.

However, I think most of their thoughts on me being black came from where we went to school. Sumner Academy of Arts & Science is the pride and joy of a part of town that doesn’t offer many opportunities or successes. It’s in the heart of the ghetto where drug deals occur not even a block away and in a neighborhood where you’re bound to see the next murder on television. Passing by all of these sights and locations give people ideas about stereotypes and opportunities to generalize about people and race. The neighborhood consisted of a majority of black people and included a minority of other minorities as well as whites. My friends and I all came from a better surrounding and upbringing where this was not ordinary. Being exposed to this setting for the four years we had been there, I assumed that this is how they came up with the thought that I was not as black as I could be or how white I had become.

As time pressed on, I grasped the fact that I could never get rid of the connotation of being white, nor being an oreo. Fast forwarding, I assumed that I could make a better and more different perception of me and my blackness. As I made more and more friends, I still was unable to lose the connotation of an oreo because my new friends, all of whom were white, always tried to compare me to other black students. At times, my friend Mike, who was white, would even compare himself to me, asking if he was black like me.

I find that because of where I will always be, whether at work or in public, people will judge what others say and do. I have learned that no matter what others think, I will be me and let them accept me. There will be times where I may have to defend my stance as to what and where I come from, and I understand that. As for my high school, not much has changed. I went back last year to visit old teachers and friends and everyone was still in their own groups, separating themselves from all others. Being in college, I feel that my friends now know who I am and how everyone has their own personality.

Lleran Johnson wrote this personal ethnography in Cynthia Debes’s Expos I class.

Counseling the Glass Ceiling

Rebeka Scott

I was confused as I walked into the counseling office at the end of my sophomore year of high school. There was no reason for me to be in that florescent waiting room. As I sat in the plush yet still uncomfortable chair, my stomach fluttered uncontrollably. I casually fidgeted with a frayed rip in the red cushion. My eyes darted from the metal bookcase full of brightly colored books to a coffee table strewn with pamphlets for various colleges and finally down to the carpeted floor. The soft hum of the florescent lights mingled with normal office sounds, a ringing phone, a closing file, somehow making me even more nervous.

“Hey, Beka!” came a voice from behind me. Surprised by the sudden noise, I whipped my head around to see a tall boy walking out of one of the offices.

“Dan, what are you doing here?” I asked.

“I just added Chem II to my schedule next year,” Dan replied with a characteristic grin. “So, we’ll be in, like, four classes together, right?”

“Yeah, Physics, Calc, English, and Chem II. Should be fun,” I said, my mood growing lighter as I talked about something familiar and comfortable. Across the room a door creaked open and out walked a short woman with frizzy, red hair.

“Rebeka Scott,” she said in a sugary sweet voice.

“I’ll wait for you, and we can walk back to Precalc together,” Dan offered. I nodded as I followed the woman into her office. The cramped space was filled with papers and folders all neatly stacked on the large metal desk. Also on the desk was a nameplate with “Deborah Brown” etched across it and next to that, a large PC.

“Take a seat,” Mrs. Brown said gesturing toward a dingy green chair wedged between the desk and the wall. “Now, let’s bring up your schedule for next year, shall we?” she said, turning towards the computer. For about a minute, the only sound in the room was the pitter-patter of her fingers on the keyboard. “Here we are,” she sighed. Then, the pleasant smile she had been wearing since we met morphed into a tightlipped frown. Her voice became serious and stern as she began, “This is a very difficult schedule. I want to make sure that you know what you’re getting yourself into.”

“I know,” I replied, “but I’ve taken all honors classes in the past, and I’m willing to work hard.”

Mrs. Brown seemed startled by my response. Her eyes fluttered in a frustrated way, as she crafted her response. “You know you have to be in Precalculus before you take Calculus,” she said condescendingly.

“I’m in that now. It’s what you called me out of for this meeting,” I said, waving the hall pass.

“These classes will require quite a bit of homework,” she persisted. “You’re sure you don’t want to take some electives other than science courses? Maybe an art class?”

“No,” I said, a little more forcefully. “I really like science, and if I want to take Biology II and Physics II before I graduate, then this is the only way to have all the prerequisites in time.”

“All right,” she said with a tiny shake of her head. “But don’t say I didn’t warn you. Ms. Davis will sign your pass back to class on your way out.”

I stood and walked out of her office to find Dan waiting on one of the couches.

“Hannah Crooke,” I heard Mrs. Brown call from behind me.

“So, what was that about?” Dan asked.

“Mrs. Brown wanted to warn me what a tough schedule I’ll have next year,” I said as we walked to the front of the office and handed our passes to a young woman at the front desk. “She must have lectured you about taking science classes as your electives too,” I said with a small laugh, but Dan raised his eyebrows.

“She didn’t say anything about that. My meeting took, like, thirty seconds,” he said.

As Ms. Davis handed us our hall passes, I took one last look back at Mrs. Brown’s office. There was Hannah in her Dance Team uniform, sitting across from an all too familiar tightlipped frown.

Analysis

As a kid, I learned that I could do anything I wanted to do. My dad constantly told me that if I could read, I was unstoppable, and what I really loved to do in school was math and science. My teachers were always very encouraging. One even entered me in a Math Bee, a mental math contest, which I subsequently won. It felt good to be recognized by those people whom I respected. Now I realize that some of that acknowledgement came from the fact that I was a girl. Growing up in this generation, I was praised for doing well in math and science when many girls shied away from those

subjects. Later in life, I found that being a female in a male-dominated field even gave me some advantages over my male counterparts. As I was applying for summer research positions, I discovered that almost every program “strongly encourages women and minorities to apply,” meaning that should an equally qualified male and I both apply, the scales would probably tip in my direction. But, not everyone was raised in this generation, and being a woman interested in math and science has its difficulties.

Our culture expects women to be less analytical than men. Specifically, women are not expected to excel at math and science, and are therefore pressured into pursuing other interests. Sometimes that push is subtle; even a cursory glance through a math textbook will show dozens of theorems bearing the names of famous male mathematicians, but very few contain theorems named after women. And sometimes that push is blatant, like a counselor encouraging a girl to take art classes instead of science classes. But that push is certainly there, and it might be discouraging countless young, talented women from pursuing an interest in math and science.

Mrs. Brown gave me a push in the wrong direction that I, thankfully, overcame. She thought that she was helping me by trying to get me to take easier courses, that is, courses not related to math and science. This wasn't advice that she would give to just anyone. After all, Dan was taking just as many honors courses as I was, yet Mrs. Brown didn't warn him about how difficult they were or how much homework he would have. She signed him up without a fuss, and poor Hannah who had her meeting immediately after me had to spend fifteen

minutes convincing Mrs. Brown that she was prepared to take an advanced Biology class along with a Calculus course. It's easy to see that social constructions of gender played a key role in what courses Mrs. Brown thought Dan, Hannah, and I could each handle. Dan, the male, could have a rigorous schedule chock full of math and science courses. Hannah and I, on the other hand, were called out of class for individual meetings with Mrs. Brown so that she could warn each of us about the difficulty of our schedules.

Looking back on this experience, I realize that part of the reason that I work so hard in my math classes is to prove the societal assumptions about women being less inclined toward math and science wrong. I feel like every failure is a black mark not only against me but against my entire gender. Needless to say, this puts an enormous amount of pressure on me. Even though I love math, I sometimes feel burnt out on the subject simply because I feel compelled to succeed and, therefore, need to work longer and harder than I otherwise would.

Being a woman in this culture means being a little less than a man and being expected to do a little less than a man. I have seen first hand how this social construct can work to limit women and girls. Mrs. Brown's use of separate standards for what is expected of Dan and what is expected of Hannah and me illustrates one consequence of such social prescriptions. I hope that as I grow older, I will learn to disassociate my failures from my entire gender.

Rebeka Scott wrote this personal ethnography in Phillip Hamilton's Expos I class.

Evaluation of Robert Reich's "Don't Blame Wal-Mart"

Jessica Ulrich

With the increasing economic domination of large corporations in this postmodern age, it is only practical that Americans should question the benefits and drawbacks of such a mass-produced society. Such questioning is bound to produce a wide variety of different opinions, many of them ill conceived. In his article, "Don't Blame Wal-Mart," Robert B. Reich attempts to confront one of these possibly misinformed ideas by arguing that consumers, not big companies like Wal-Mart, are at fault for our problems with struggling small businesses and the declining salaries of the working class. Unfortunately, Reich undermines what could have been a successful argument with his poor organization, his lack of relevant and verifiable sources, and his vague, uncertain focus, all of which create confusion instead of making this important issue more clear for his readers.

Reich begins his essay well by using a story about a real-estate developer canceling plans for an incoming Wal-Mart in Queens due to protests from residents who believed the company would ruin their town. This is an excellent opening for the argument, for it hooks readers' interest while introducing a typically held belief about the negative effects of Wal-Mart. Unfortunately, from here on, Reich's organization is messy and erratic. Although he hints at it in paragraph 2, Reich does not actually state his thesis, that "the problem is, the choices we make in the market don't fully reflect our values as workers or as citizens," until paragraph 9, roughly halfway through the essay (563-564). Granted, an argument can be successful no matter where the thesis is located, but in most cases it is helpful to state the thesis as close to the beginning as possible so readers can locate it quickly and note pertinent information as they read. Should writers choose to introduce their thesis in the latter half of an essay, it is necessary to use very clear, structured information so that readers have a good idea what they need to know; however, the paragraphs leading up to Reich's thesis are confusing and inconsistent, flip-flopping back and forth from topic to topic. For instance, paragraph 3 talks about how Wal-Mart "lure[s]" consumers with low prices, paragraph 4 about how the company is able to offer these low prices (by using products from China and programmers in India), and paragraph 5 about how consumers demand cheap merchandise (563-564). So far so good, right? But then, in paragraph 6,

Reich takes us back to how Wal-Mart is able to offer low prices (this time by "hammer[ing] workers and communities"), and paragraph 7 speaks again about how consumers pressure companies for lower prices (564). These paragraphs contain statements which should have been included in paragraphs 4 and 5. Had Reich taken more time to combine and streamline some of his information, he would have been able to lead us to his thesis in a much more easily understandable fashion. A final problem with Reich's organization is that even should readers be able to wade through erratic information to find his thesis, they will still have to search fairly hard to locate his sub-claims, since he never clearly states them. It can be argued that the first sentence of paragraph 5, "many of us pressure companies to give us even better bargains," is one, and that another, the fact that Americans want better working conditions than Wal-Mart provides, is implied in paragraphs 6-8 (564). However, because Reich does not make the reasons behind his thesis clearer, he causes confusion for readers.

The second problem with Reich's argument is his lack of relevant and verifiable sources. While he does use a few excellent statistics, such as the average hourly wage of Wal-Mart employees in paragraph 1 or the spokeswoman's quote in paragraph 3, the relevance ends with these two facts (563). Other details Reich uses are much less factual and too personal to be used in this argument. For instance, in paragraph 9, as support for his statement that consumers' choices don't reflect their values, he gave details about his own personal experience, saying that he "bought lots of books from Amazon.com" despite the fact that he "didn't want [his] community bookstore to close" (564). Since he is a consumer, these details do apply, but more general facts about the number of Americans that use Amazon.com versus community bookstores would be much more convincing because they wouldn't only reflect Reich's individual choices. Reich also uses personal opinion, or what sounds like it, when he makes suggestions in paragraphs 10 and 11. When introducing his solutions, he uses phrases like "the worker in me thinks," or "I'd like...," or "I'd support" (564). This method of writing is ineffective because readers need the facts and the reasons behind them, not what Robert B. Reich "thinks" or "likes." By using more adamant, less personal statements and details, Reich could

have improved his credibility and strengthened his claims.

Finally, Reich's essay is unconvincing because it lacks a clear focus in its ideas, solutions, and intended audience. Partially because of his poor organization, Reich sounds rather vague and unclear throughout most of the essay. But a larger problem is that he contradicts himself when he tries to present solutions to the problems he has discovered. Reich has implied throughout the first part of his paper that the problems in the economy are the fault of the consumer, yet what he suggests in paragraph 10 is not that the *consumers'* behavior should change, but that "laws and regulations" should be imposed on the *companies*. Reich says we should require companies "with more than 50 employees [to] offer their workers affordable health insurance," "increase...the minimum wage," and "change...labor laws" (564). His thesis and his suggested course of action are in almost direct opposition to one another, which greatly reduces his credibility. If Reich wants to claim that the problems lie with the people, his solutions to these problems should involve the people as well. Also, while Reich begins his essay writing to a target audience of "us," the consumers, the solutions he proposes are directed more toward government officials than the average American. Most of his ideas involve changing or creating laws,

a feat no ordinary person can easily do, and in paragraph 11 he even states that he would like "the *government* to offer wage insurance to ease the pain of sudden losses of pay" (564, emphasis added). Because he starts out writing to consumers and finishes by appealing to the government, Reich confuses his readers even further.

Unfortunately for Americans searching for answers, "Don't Blame Wal-Mart" is not an essay capable of explaining our changing economy. While Reich may have had good intentions and ideas, his paper is ineffective as an argument because of poor organization, an excess of barely relevant personal details, and a lack of focus on both his original claim and his audience. With a little time and editing, this essay could be much more powerful, but right now it is a substandard example of argumentative writing.

Work Cited

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Jessica Ulrich wrote this evaluation argument in Callie Kostelich's Expos II class.

Better Enforcement of Fire-Safety Policies

Michelle Mansel

To: Dr. Chuck Werring
From: Michelle Mansel
Date: October 20, 2007
Subject: A Proposal for Better Enforcement of
Current Fire-Safety Policies

Introduction

In residence halls across the Kansas State University campus, students continue to be awakened in the middle of the night to an automated voice repeating the following announcement: "Attention! Attention! Attention! An emergency has been reported. All occupants walk to the nearest exit and vacate building." Students have to then walk down several flights of stairs and stand outside for half an hour or more before they can finally re-enter the building and return to their rooms. This scenario has become much too familiar for K-State dorm residents this past year. In fact, many times, these events occur multiple times in one night. Additionally, the weather is often adverse, and

residents are inadequately dressed for such conditions. In this proposal, after describing the problem in more detail, I will briefly describe and then justify what I feel to be an appropriate solution to this problem: video surveillance systems. I strongly believe that video surveillance systems should be installed in all residence halls because their presence will save Housing and Dining Services money; create more comfortable and pleasant living environments for residents; establish a higher level of safety for residents, emergency service personnel, and other Manhattan citizens; and better utilize Manhattan's emergency services.

Problem Description

False alarms are a serious problem at Kansas State University. They are defined by the City of Manhattan as "the activation of an alarm system resulting in a response by law enforcement or fire personnel when a situation requiring a response does not, in fact, exist" ("City"). The vast majority of

these false alarm situations occur in the residence halls. According to Derek A. Jackson, Assistant Director of Residence Life, Housing and Dining Services has documented three pulled alarms (meaning a student pulled the alarm as a prank) since July 1, 2007. Housing and Dining Services feels that “[f]ire safety in the residence halls is a very serious matter. [Residents] are expected to learn the fire-safety policies and guidelines” (*K-State*). The *K-State Residence Hall Handbook* for 2007-2008 states that “falsely setting off a fire alarm is a violation of the law and published university and residence hall expectations. Violators are reported to the university police, referred to the residence hall judicial board and may also be referred for university disciplinary action” (*K-State*). Because false alarms remain a problem, it is apparent that many of these violators are neither caught nor punished for their actions. I feel that something must be done to catch these criminals more often and provide better enforcement of the current fire-safety policies and guidelines.

Solution Description

Installing video surveillance systems in all residence halls provides the best solution for this problem. On the Kansas State University campus, there are ten residence halls with a total of 62 floors. Multiple cameras will be needed for each floor of every building. These cameras must capture the activities taking place at or near each fire pull station. In Ford Hall, for example, there are three pull stations on each floor: one at the end of each wing and one in the lobby area. Additionally, the content of the videos must be easily accessible by authorities so that the suspect(s) can be apprehended within a very short amount of time. This accessibility will allow better enforcement of the current policies and guidelines set forth by Housing and Dining Services. Ultimately, other residents will be deterred from pulling this prank.

Justification

In order to solve the continuing false alarm problem in K-State’s residence halls, video surveillance systems must be installed. These surveillance systems will ultimately save Housing and Dining Services money; create more comfortable and pleasant living environments for residents; establish a higher level of safety for residents, emergency service personnel, and other Manhattan citizens; and better utilize Manhattan’s emergency services.

One reason video surveillance systems should be installed is that their presence will save Housing and Dining Services money. For repeated false alarms, the Manhattan fire department fines Housing and Dining Services. According to Section 8-324 of Manhattan’s Code of Ordinances, “[t]he following fees shall be assessed to alarm users who have recorded false alarms within a calendar year at a given location:

(1) There shall be no fees assessed for the first, second, and third false alarms.

(2) There shall be a fee of \$50.00 assessed for the fourth false alarm.

(3) There shall be a fee of \$100.00 assessed for the fifth false alarm.

(4) There shall be a fee of \$150.00 assessed for the sixth false alarm.

(5) There shall be a fee of \$200.00 assessed for the seventh false alarm.

(6) There shall be a fee of \$250.00 assessed for the eighth and each subsequent false alarm” (“City”).

During the 2006-2007 school year, I recall having to evacuate Ford Hall approximately 20 times. Keep in mind that was just one residence hall; the other nine halls had their own incidents. This means that Housing and Dining Services paid \$3750 just for Ford Hall’s false alarms last year. It is obvious that the amount of money spent on false alarm fees is both outrageous and unnecessary. I believe that every organization, including this department, is always interested in saving money. By reducing expenses such as these, Housing and Dining Services will experience higher profits, and higher profits are always a goal no matter the type of business or organization.

A second reason video surveillance systems should be installed is that their presence will create more comfortable and pleasant living environments for residents. According to the *K-State Residence Hall Handbook* for 2007-2008, the mission of Housing and Dining Services is to “enhance the quality of life for each and every resident” (*K-State*). In addition, the department aims to “provide [residents] with an affordable, safe and pleasant living environment which supports [their] ability to succeed at the university” (*K-State*). I firmly believe that residents would consider their living environment more comfortable and pleasant if they were not awakened in the middle of the night (sometimes more than once each night) simply because someone else pulled a prank thinking he or she was being funny. One of these false fire alarms happened in Ford Hall during finals week of the Fall

2006 semester. Not only were the residents standing in mid-winter's sub-freezing temperature, but many had to get up unusually early the next morning to take final exams. Needless to say, the majority of the residents were upset and irritated. I feel that if Housing and Dining Services will install the video surveillance systems, more comfortable and pleasant living environments will be provided. This in turn will better attract incoming freshmen and other potential students. It is essential to this department's financial interests that students continue choosing to attend K-State and, more importantly, choosing to live on-campus.

A third reason video surveillance systems should be installed is that their presence will establish a higher level of safety for residents, emergency service personnel, and other Manhattan citizens. As a second-year resident of Ford Hall, I have dealt with between 20 and 30 false fire alarms. Consequently, I now take my time evacuating the building because I judge that there is probably no real emergency situation. Many other residents now respond to the alarm in much the same way. This creates many problems. For example, if there were to be a real fire, it is very possible that many residents would be unable to escape the building in time. These continued false alarms cause residents to become immune to or unaffected by the actual alarm. Therefore, it is almost as if there is no alarm at all. This is very serious because, according to one fire expert, "[i]f a home fire occurs, smoke alarms reduce the risk of death by 40-50%" (Fleming). Emergency service personnel will be safer because they will not be speeding along streets and running stoplights as often. Another emergency provider estimates that "vehicle accidents are the second leading cause of emergency responder deaths" ("Lights"). Other Manhattan citizens, particularly those traveling the same streets as emergency service personnel, will also be safer. There will be fewer incidents where drivers must quickly pull to the edge of the roadway in order to yield to emergency service vehicles. By installing video surveillance systems in Kansas State University's residence halls, virtually all of the citizens of Manhattan will become safer. I believe that an organization such as Housing and Dining Services should be interested in increasing the safety of anyone and everyone, especially students who live in the residence halls.

A final reason video surveillance systems should be installed is that their presence will better utilize Manhattan's emergency services. According to one police department, "[P]olice [and fire] resources are

limited and should never be wasted. False alarms take police and fire fighters away from real emergencies. This embarrassing situation endangers responding authorities and the whole community by needlessly diverting public safety resources" ("Residential"). The National Fire Protection Association emphasizes this point by reporting, "In 2005 U.S. fire departments responded to 2,134,000 false alarms. This means that one out of ten calls responded to by fire departments were false alarms. Malicious false calls account[ed] for 240,500 or 11.3% of all false calls" (Karter). Ultimately, "alarm users must be responsible for the use and maintenance of alarm systems to help ensure prompt police response when an emergency really does exist" ("Residential"). By installing video surveillance systems, Housing and Dining Services can fulfill this obligation. The fire department will waste less of its time with false alarms and have the opportunity to serve those citizens who really need emergency assistance.

Installing video surveillance systems in the residence halls is the best way to solve Kansas State University's false alarm problem. The presence of these surveillance systems will not only save Housing and Dining Services money both in the short term and in the long term but will also enhance the safety of all Manhattan citizens.

Rebuttal of Opposing Views

There will almost always be opposing views to any proposed solution. Likely opposing views to this proposal include the initial costs of installing multiple video surveillance systems. Some may also argue that because there will be more cameras, residents will have less privacy in common areas such as hallways and floor lobbies. I will address each of these concerns below.

First, I do agree that the initial costs of both purchasing and installing the many video surveillance systems will be somewhat expensive. For example, the University of Alabama recently spent approximately \$14,000 per dormitory for new security cameras as part of a new security management system. However, I believe these initial costs will eventually be greatly offset. With the addition of surveillance cameras, Housing and Dining Services will have fewer fines to pay due to false alarms and, because of more pleasant living environments, will continue to generate revenue from incoming students choosing to live on-campus. As mentioned above, an additional benefit of installing video surveillance systems in residence halls is an elevated level of safety for students.

Safety of students in residence halls is surely more important than the cost of video surveillance systems.

Next, it is possible that residents will feel they have somewhat less privacy in common areas, such as hallways and floor lobbies. However, activities occurring in these areas typically are not considered “private” activities. In other words, it will not matter if these activities are “caught on tape” or not. Actually, by having more area covered by video surveillance, criminal activity (such as vandalism) in the residence halls will likely be reduced.

Conclusion

It is imperative that something be done to solve the false alarm problem at Kansas State University. Installing video surveillance systems in all residence halls provides the best solution for this problem. These systems will save Housing and Dining Services money; create more comfortable and pleasant living environments for residents; establish a higher level of safety for residents, emergency service personnel, and other Manhattan citizens; and better utilize Manhattan’s emergency services. It is important that you speak with others in your department about this solution. The sooner a change is made, the better for everyone involved.

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A Matter of Survival

Cody Cooper

Since the horrific tragedy on September 11, 2001, people in the United States no longer feel comfortable walking the calm, sunny streets or sitting on their couches in front of their televisions. We are obsessed with the possibility of another terrorist attack. Life is fragile. I understand that, but we should not be willing to ruin relationships, offend racial and ethnic groups, and break valuable ties with other countries to make us feel more comfortable. In Michelle Malkin’s essay, “Racial Profiling: A Matter of Survival,” Malkin states that “any inconvenience is preferable to suffering a second mass terrorist attack on American soil” (495). Honestly, I agree with the statement, but stooping so low as to single out a religious group or race is too drastic—there must be a better solution than racial profiling. After pondering the positive and negative effects of racial profiling, I am

convinced that racial profiling should not be used as a tool to protect the United States against terrorist attacks because of several reasons. First, we should not be looking for people of a certain race or religion but searching for an organization. The amount of effort needed to allow racial profiling to function effectively exhausts our resources when there are many better investigative tools to help stop terrorism. Finally, blindly racial profiling damages important relationships with religious groups and countries.

Take a moment and imagine that the Central Intelligence Agency has finally figured out how to stop al-Qaeda. After several years it has been made known to the world that every terrorist is a Muslim of Arab decent. Perfect, finally redemption has been found! In reality, life is not such a simple utopia. Today, we know that many terrorists are not Arabs

and, although some may think that Islamic extremists are Muslims, Muslims are not Islamic extremists. In her essay, Malkin states that “12 Muslim chaplains were trained by a radical Wahhabi school and were certified by a Muslim group founded by Aburahman Alamoudi” (Malkin 494). She goes on to say Aburahman Alamoudi “was charged in September 2003 with accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars from Libya, a U.S.-designated sponsor of terrorism” (494). Malkin never explains whether or not the 12 chaplains were found guilty of terrorist acts, leaving us to assume that they were innocent. Her concern sounds far fetched and almost like a connect-the-dots-in-the-shape-of-a-terrorist game. Malkin goes on to say that “the more extensive screening of 12 military officers is a far cry from the evacuation of 112,000 individuals on the West Coast,” referring to the Japanese imprisonment during WWII (494). I strongly disagree. Segregation and the isolation of an entire race starts with only one incident. Think about the segregation that occurred in the mid 1900s or the confinement of the Japanese during WWII. History shows that the screening of only a few select individuals will stimulate a nation’s appetite just enough that we will desire to use racial profiling on all Arabs and Muslims. After time we will create a concentration camp for every Arab and Muslim who lives in the United States because of our rash judgment that every dark skinned human is a terrorist. I live in a generation that still lives with the consequences of isolating different races or people groups in the past. I do not want to be a part of the generation plagued by the guilt that comes from creating more consequences for future generations because we offended a race or people group without a valid reason.

Not one place in the essay does Malkin share an example of how racial profiling prevented a terrorist attack. However, at the end of the essay she states “that al-Qaeda is using some non-Arab recruits” (Malkin 495). I fear that if we exclusively use racial profiling to locate the Arab terrorists currently in the United States, we will lack the personnel to stop the attacks created by non-Arabs. Terrorist organizations are not stupid. They have figured us out before, and I am confident they can do it again. Once al-Qaeda realizes that we are pouring our resources into the screening of Arabs, they will send another group of people to attack us. If we continue to single out Arabs I fear that we, once again, will be caught helplessly on our backs.

I trust that our government is doing their very best to protect us from the constant threat of

terrorism, but I doubt that racial profiling is our only, or best, investigative tool. The citizens of the United States would be disgusted if they write their checks on April 15 to a government that cannot find a better way to spend each citizen’s hard-earned money than to fund racial profiling. Malkin begs us to “consider what happened in the summer of 2001, when Phoenix FBI agent Kenneth Williams urged his superiors to investigate militant Muslim men whom he suspected of training in U.S. flight schools as a part of al-Qaeda missions” (494). Needless to say, the FBI did nothing for fear of being labeled as racist. The FBI may have lost the opportunity to prevent the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but if the common reader looks just slightly below the surface, they find that racial profiling was not used to obtain any information initially found. Rather, cracks in the thick shell of al-Qaeda leaked the FBI their precious information that, in the end, was wasted. Obviously, the FBI made a grave mistake. It is hard to fathom that the tragedies on that day could have been prevented, but I would urge the government to wait to use racial profiling only after they have received hints of questionable activity. At that point, racial profiling is no longer offensive, but it is a tool the FBI has the freedom to use.

As the common citizen reads the essay written by Malkin, I pray that they will not overlook only the consequences of damaging relationships with those who live within our own communities but also the consequences of damaging important relations with leaders outside of the United States. In the conclusion of the essay, Malkin shares a little secret. She says that racial profiling “damages relations with ethnic and religious minorities, thereby hampering intelligence-gathering” (495). The United States could not function properly without the loyal support of other countries. Our government can only see so far, only fight so many wars, and the United States only contains so many resources. We need other countries to fight alongside of us. Without the intelligence we have received from other countries, we would not have half the information we have today. It would be foolish to risk all of this information and support so that we can employ an investigative tool that is not an effective use of our time.

There are several reasons why racial profiling should never be used. First, terrorists cannot be lumped into a certain racial or religious group, but must be associated with an organization. Racial profiling is so demanding that it exhausts our limited resources when there are other more effective investigative tools that can be used. Lastly, racial

profiling damages precious relations with other countries that could warn us of future terrorist attacks. I hope and pray that our country is never forced to wake up in the dawn of another terrorist attack, but I am confident that al-Qaeda will strike sooner than later if the FBI continues to rely upon racial profiling. We must carefully consider the drastic consequences of utilizing what, from initial observation, may seem to be a great tactic. Racial profiling is a small, innocent crack in the side of a dam, and if not fixed, the whole dam will collapse, washing out everything in its path.

Weird Science or Life Saver?

Megan Brown

Average health-conscious subscribers to *Better Nutrition* who read Lisa Turner's June 2000 article, "Playing with Our Food," are warned of the dangerous effects of the "weird science" of genetically engineering crops. Turner's readers learn about the odd combinations genetic engineers are putting together: flounder genes added into tomato plants, and startling statistics about deaths from these biotech foods are revealed (25). The article details further consequences of these combinations, such as the production of new allergens and unintentional crosspollination. Turner examines the potential risks, expected growth, and labeling requirements of the irradiation process. Finally, Turner advocates either completely banning bioengineered food or applying a strict labeling system, one similar to that of irradiated foods, for genetically enhanced foods in order to promote consumer awareness.

Turner's article, using scare tactics and horror stories, fails to mention any benefits to genetically enhanced crops that may outweigh the unknown factors Turner warns against. In fact, these advantages may benefit more than just food production. Genetically engineered crops can also be ecosystem-friendly. While Turner does have her facts straight about the potential dangers of these engineered crops, her plan for a strict labeling structure is an adequate response to protect consumers. Unlike Turner, we must consider the positive aspects of genetically engineered food before we simply toss the idea to the side.

Throughout her article, Turner implies genetically engineered foods have absolutely no benefits and should be banned. While describing the genetic combinations to her readers, Turner calls this engineering a "weird science"; but, this weird yet

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Cody Cooper wrote this rebuttal argument in Carol Russell's Expos II class.

innovative science could just save our world. In his article, "Will Frankenfood Save the Planet?" Jonathan Rauch explains that our world is rapidly growing—maybe too rapidly for us to feed each individual. The predicted human population in 2050 is expected to increase by at least 40 percent (Rauch 586). Rauch also argues that to feed this many hungry mouths, the world's food production will need to double, if not triple (586). How can we produce enough food for 8.9 billion people? The answer lies within the valuable science of genetic engineered crops.

Through engineering crops, we can increase the productivity of the land and protect the nearby environment by ceasing to use herbicides and pesticides. For weed control, farmers have two options: herbicides or tilling the land. Herbicides, according to Rauch, are expensive and, because they kill both good and bad plant growth, unintentionally decrease crop output (588). Tilling also has its downsides because it rids the land of its nutrients. Since the advancements of biotech crops, there is a third option, however, that could actually increase the productivity of the land and feed more people. The answer is no-till farming, and it is made possible through genetically engineered crops. Rauch provides one excellent example. In the 1990s, a variety of soybean was produced that could tolerate herbicides (Rauch 588). No-till farming allows land to stay in production without robbing it of its nutrients. These enhanced crops provide an excellent way to boost crop production to provide for our doubling or tripling population. According to Rauch, another example is the transgenic cotton plant, which "reduced pesticide use by more than two million pounds in the United States from 1996 to 2000" (589). The cotton plant was engineered to

produce its own pesticide that protects farmers, consumers, and the nearby plants and animals in the ecosystem from strong chemical insecticides that would otherwise be used (588). Like herbicides, pesticides also harm more organisms than just pests. Crops, like a “genetically modified corn that resists a beetle larva known as rootworm...corn’s most voracious enemy,” drastically reduce the amount of pesticides used “by more than 14 million pounds” (Rauch 589). Using a specialized crop instead of pesticides benefits the surrounding ecosystem and protects nearby water sources from harmful runoff. Genetically engineered crops can benefit both the human population and the environment.

We cannot ignore these vital benefits of enhanced crops; but, as Turner mentioned, we cannot overlook the dangers of meddling with genetics. Safety testing and labeling requirements should be enforced to protect the safety and freedom of the consumer. If a consumer knows the benefits and risks of biotech food and wants to support those geneticists and farmers, package labeling should aid them in purchasing those particular products. Similarly, consumers against scientists “playing with [his or her] food” will be able to avoid purchasing such items. Labeling would enhance consumers’

freedom and warn of potential dangers. In the long-run, however, Turner’s article ignores the benefits of genetically engineering crops.

Yes, the risks are not fully researched; that being said, our planet’s growing needs for more food are becoming urgent. Turner chooses to disregard any possible benefits—those for both humans and the environment. Using genetics to engineer crops will reduce the use of herbicides and pesticides, increase output, and decrease the negative effects on the environment. Supporting the “weird science” of genetically engineering crops today will produce more crops for Earth’s booming population of tomorrow.

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Expanded Gambling in Kansas

Patrick Jarchow

On April 11, 2007, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius signed a bill to allow expanded gambling in four areas of Kansas (Corcoran 1). The four areas that were chosen for destination casinos were Sumner, Ford, Wyandotte, and Cherokee or Crawford counties (“Kansas Casinos”). While the process for selecting operators and designs is still ongoing in each county, the citizens of Kansas who do gamble are doing so in Missouri and Oklahoma. Since I live in Wichita and the legal gambling age is eighteen in Oklahoma, I take an annual trip to the casinos on the Kansas/Oklahoma border. Because I am one who visits casinos for the entertainment and fun that gambling creates, I support the expanded gambling that will be coming to the state of Kansas. However, one group of citizens from my area, Voices of the Heartland, is a coalition of citizens from South Central Kansas that believes “casino development or other gambling expansion is detrimental to the social and economic condition of our community” (“About Us/Mission Statement”). While I agree that gambling expansion could be detrimental to the social condition, I disagree with

the economic assertion. Citizens belonging to opposition groups like Voice of the Heartland should reconsider their stance on expanded gambling because it will help the state of Kansas economically by keeping money that would otherwise go out of state and because the social and economic problems they assert are unfounded.

According to the Whistler Symposium on gambling, most opposition of gambling points out the costs to society, including increased crime in the form of fraud, theft, and domestic violence (Wynne 112). I recognize that these are serious problems; however, other cities with casinos do not see these problems with their destination casinos. For instance, a 1985 study by Jay Albanese on Atlantic City, New Jersey, a major casino destination, concluded that “casinos have no direct effect on the serious crime in Atlantic City, and that crime has risen due to factors other than casinos themselves” (Stitt 257-258). Additionally, a 1991 study conducted by Daniel Curran and Frank Scarpitti on Atlantic City drew similar conclusions to Albanese, stating that the “legalization of casinos did not result

in a significant increase in index offense in Atlantic City” (Stitt 258). Along with studies that show no increase in crime in Atlantic City, studies have been conducted in Biloxi, Mississippi, another major gambling destination. Like the cases of Atlantic City, studies by David Giacomassi and Grant Stitt and Chang showed that there was no increase in Part I or Part II crime after casinos were allowed in Biloxi (Stitt 258). While the article by Stitt did not go into detail about these types of crime, Part I crime includes homicide, burglary, robbery, rape, vehicle theft, aggravated assault, and larceny while Part II crime consists of forgery, counterfeiting, embezzlement, and stolen property (“U.C. Los Angeles” 1-3). If the gambling opposition wants to point at increased crime as a reason to ban expanded gambling, they must reconsider their stance based on the results of the Biloxi and Atlantic City research.

Groups such as Voices of the Heartland oppose expanded gambling because of the addiction that gambling can create. According to a piece by Andrew Pasternak, “most recent studies conclude that pathological gambling is at 1.4 to 2.8 percent with a lifetime prevalence of 3.5 to 5.1 percent of the general population.” It should also be noted that in this article it states 75 to 90 percent of the population gambles (Pasternak). Even though pathological gambling is not as large a problem as opponents seem to think it is, it is a problem. That is why the state of Kansas has not ignored it and is implementing a fund to counter problem gambling and other addictions. A Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services press release notes that “two percent of the revenue generated in the state from gaming will be allocated to address problem gambling and other addictions.” Furthermore, it estimates “fourteen million dollars per year will be dedicated to the fund” (“Kansas SRS Press Release”). So as opposition states that gambling addiction will hurt the social welfare of communities, it is a very small number compared to the population who gambles, and the state of Kansas has already implemented a problem fund. Anti-gambling organizations like Voices of the Heartland need to take these facts into consideration.

Contrary to Voices of the Heartland’s mission statement, the economic benefits of gambling are substantial. Referring back to the Biloxi, Mississippi example, and including Gulfport, Mississippi as well, both of these cities’ casinos created over 18,000 jobs over a five-year span and paid nearly 81 million dollars in taxes (Eadington 7). My question to opposition groups is how do they believe gambling is detrimental to the economy? If these

opposing groups mentioned that casinos and gambling take money away from other businesses, I could believe that. In other words, I could see money that people would use for other entertainment, such as a night at the movies, or other things that satisfy themselves, to be taken away from businesses to be used as gambling money. However, for anti-casino groups to claim casinos are completely detrimental to the community is inappropriate. Another example comes from a study that was conducted for a proposed Wichita casino. This study found that there would be an increase in tourism by over 1,500,000 people. There is also an estimate of 1,100 new jobs at the casino and over 600 new construction jobs. Lastly, this study stated that over 190 million dollars would be outputted directly to the state (“Wichita Casino Economic Impact” 11). While Wichita will not house a casino, one will be built in nearby Sumner County, which will likely produce the same numbers due to its close proximity to Wichita. Just take into consideration the previous examples. Both created, or would have, many jobs and generated tax money that otherwise would not have been there. How does lowering the unemployment rate and creating money for city projects “harm” not only the economy but also the community as a whole?

The final point as to why opposition should be supportive of expanded gambling in Kansas is how money goes to out-of-state casinos. While there are five Native American casinos in Kansas (“Kansas Casinos”), it makes sense that prospective gamblers will go to the closest casino. The five Native American casinos are not near major cities such as Wichita and Kansas City. Therefore, I suspect many gamblers like me, who do not live close to Native American casinos, go to the closest casinos across the borders in Missouri or Oklahoma. Along with these gamblers goes all the money that would be spent in Kansas and also the economic benefits that a casino can bring. Consider one last example: The Windsor Casino is located in Ontario, Canada. Detroit, Michigan, a major U.S. city, is across the Detroit River from the Windsor Casino. The casino has been very productive, bringing in over 500 million dollars a year. It has been estimated that 80 percent of this comes from Michigan citizens. Two years later, Detroit citizens voted on having casinos in the city. It passed because the local money was going across the borders, out of the state, much like what I identified is happening in Kansas (Eadington 8).

Like it or not, expanded gambling is coming to Kansas. Opposition groups, such as Voices in the Heartland, portray gambling as detrimental to the

economy and social welfare of the community. However, they are misinformed. Opponents should reconsider their stance on the issue with the research given. Gambling does not bring increased crime like the opposition groups claim it does. While there is a problem with people getting addicted to gambling, it is a very small percentage compared to those who do gamble, and the state of Kansas has already taken the initiative to set up a fund for problem gamblers. As far as the economy goes, casinos spur it onward by bringing in new jobs and generating money that otherwise would not have been there. Also, citizens who live in Kansas City and Wichita who gamble go across the state borders and spend money that needs to stay in Kansas. These are all reasons why opposition groups should support expanded gambling. Expanded gambling is coming. Why not support it?

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Patrick Jarchow wrote this persuasive research essay in Chelsea Brimer's Expos II class.

The SUV Wars: Weapons of Mass Destruction?

Samantha Bathie

Note: This article analyzes the political cartoon on page 559 in *Writing Arguments*.

The Sports Utility Vehicle: a safe, reliable family car with an element of adventure? Or, an evil, gas guzzling polluter that is slowly ruining our environment? Love it or loath it, one thing is for sure, if recent sales are anything to go by, the SUV is here to stay. The recent rise in the SUV's popularity has helped to make it a firm favorite among the American car-buying public. From its very modest sales of 6% of all light-duty vehicles in 1987 to the impressive rise to 26% in 2004 (Plotkin), the SUV's popularity continues to grow and shows

no signs of waning. To many Americans, the SUV is a powerful status symbol, representing the safety, security, and freedom that many Americans associate with the core values of society. Many recent light truck commercials have used patriotic themes to reinforce this ideal, linking the American way of life with freedom of choice. Chevrolet recently used the song, John Mellencamp's "Our Country," in an advertisement campaign for the Silverado with the byline, "Our Country, Our Truck" (Baar). But not everybody is as enthralled with the security and freedom that SUVs can provide. Many critics argue that as light trucks and cars are treated differently in the EPA's emissions standards, SUVs

are allowed higher emissions compared to passenger cars and are, therefore, higher polluters. Environmentalists have labeled them “gas guzzlers” as the fuel economy of SUVs is around 70-75% compared to that of passenger cars (Plotkin). With rising gas prices and our reliance on foreign oil sources steadily growing, many people are questioning whether the SUV should be one of America’s favorite vehicle choices. This complex issue does not appear to have any easy answers, but it has certainly posed a lot of questions and sparked many debates.

The political cartoon, “SUV Wars” by Kahlil Bendib, tackles the issue of SUV ownership head on and looks at the surrounding issues such as environmental impact and the growing need for foreign oil sources, and questions whether our desire to protect these sources is leading us to war. Bendib, an Arab Muslim, was born and raised in Morocco but moved to the U.S. at the age of 20 to study for his master’s at Southern California University. Bendib has lived and worked in California ever since and currently resides in Berkley, where he has an art studio (“Biography”; “Khalil Bendib”). Berkley, California is well known for its sympathetic stance on environmental issues and Bendib himself is an advocate for the Green party and feels very strongly about environmental issues. Bendib originally drew his political cartoons for the *San Bernardino Sun* but felt that his cartoons were being heavily censored, so he chose the Internet as the medium to express his views (“Khalil Bendib”). The “SUV Wars” cartoon appears on his website, *Studiobendib.com*, along with many other environmental and political cartoons.

At first glance, the cartoon appears to be chaotic and has a crowded feel. The use of many graphics and words gives the impression that every inch of space has been used; indeed, there is very little white space left within the single frame. The most prominent feature within the frame is a huge and imposing vehicle with massive tires and a cannon extending from the front of the hood. The massive tires of the vehicle appear to be crushing the very small and insignificant earth, which is positioned directly beneath the tires. Small traction marks can be seen, giving the impression that the tires are screeching over the earth and that the vehicle cannot quite keep its grip on the tiny planet earth. Choking black smoke spews forth from the tailpipe and billows around, filling up all the available space. This gives the impression of thick impenetrable smoke choking the environment. Inside the vehicle appears to be a woman, and she looks like she is

gripping the steering wheel in an aggressive manner and bearing down on other drivers. Two children peer out the back window, looking small and insignificant. The sheer size of the vehicle means that the children are barely visible and just their noses and eyes can be seen peering over the top of the door. There is a camp roll placed on top of the vehicle, and this appears to be alluding to the outdoor lifestyle to which SUVs are often linked. Embossed on the side of the vehicle is the inscription “GEGM,” which cleverly links the huge corporations General Electric and General Motors to the environmental debate. The layout and style of the cartoon is that of a car advertisement, and it uses text to mimic many aspects of a car advertisement, such as making claims about size and performance, detailing car specifications, and using bold lettering, boxed texts, and exclamation marks to make it appear to be an exciting, “must have” vehicle. Finally, Bendib uses arrows to draw the viewers’ attention to the text and how it relates to the graphics. These arrows give clarity to the cartoon and lets viewers know specifically what Bendib is relating to.

Bendib’s satirical cartoon is an effective visual argument as its use of image and graphics, the use of type, and its choice of words manage effortlessly to blend together the argument that SUVs cause damage to the environment and that our growing dependency on oil is leading us to war in order to protect supplies.

The most prominent element that makes Bendib’s visual argument so effective is his use of image and graphics. The most noticeable and eye catching graphic within the cartoon is the huge and imposing SUV placed in the center of the frame. On closer inspection, the vehicle is not a standard SUV but some sort of modified vehicle that resembles a tank. There appears to be a cannon protruding from the front of the hood, and the huge tires are more reminiscent of a war vehicle than that of a family car. By using this graphic, Bendib makes a firm link in the viewers’ mind between SUV ownership and war. By giving the impression that the SUV is in fact a war vehicle, he is making a political statement that by owning a “gas guzzling” car, American consumers are contributing to the depletion of oil supplies. This could subsequently lead to war to protect foreign oil supplies, upon which we are becoming more dependent. According to the *Transport Energy Data Book* produced by the US Energy Department, the National Defense Council Foundation estimated in 2003 that the military expenditure for defending oil supplies in the Middle

East was around \$49.1 billion dollars (Davis and Diegel). This amount of money indicates that the military is already significantly involved in the protection of foreign oil supplies and that vast sums of money have been invested to ensure that this supply continues. Additionally, the huge SUV is driving over a small, insignificant earth and appears to be almost crushing it. Bendib seems to be indicating that other issues, such as global warming, are linked to the ownership of SUVs and that consumers seem to be far more concerned with their choice of vehicle rather than with the environment. The contrast of the huge SUV compared to the small earth seems to indicate that consumer choice is important and significant, while the earth and environmental issues are not. Bendib's choice of scale reiterates this point to the viewer. Another major element of the graphic is the choking black smoke pouring from the exhaust pipe, which occupies a large portion of the graphic. This image again seems to be indicating that our choice to drive these vehicles is at a substantial cost to the environment. Bendib makes a far more subtle point by using the image of a typical "Soccer Mom" and her kids inside the car. Instead of using a character that conveys the essence of the outdoor lifestyle, he has chosen a suburban image of a soccer mom with her kids. Although the SUV was originally marketed as an outdoor activity vehicle with the ability to drive off road and in all conditions, it is mostly driven in a more mundane urban setting. According to the Sports Utility Vehicle Study of 2002, 76% of SUV owners aged 30-35 use their vehicles to drop their children off at various activities, and only 15% of SUV owners have used them to go "off roading" (Polk & Co). By using the image of a soccer mom, Bendib is highlighting that these vehicles are actually more of a status symbol, as it is not necessary to own an SUV for everyday suburban driving. It also points to the fact that most SUV drivers are not using their vehicles in the conditions or environments they were designed for. Bendib's use of graphics pulls together several ideas cohesively into one still frame. By carefully selecting the graphics used, he manages to convey two very important and complex messages into a visual form that the viewer can interpret quickly and clearly.

Although the use of image and graphics has an immediate impact on the viewer, it is Bendib's subtle use of type that helps accentuate many of his important points. The words that seem to leap off the page are "Oil" and "War." Bendib accomplishes this effect by using a dark bold type that is larger than

the other words placed in the same sentence. This technique catches the viewers' eye and causes them to hone in on those words. Although these words are embedded in a paragraph, viewers can quickly glean the point without actually having to read all the text. Once the link between oil and war has been established, Bendib reinforces this by using a large black box with white lettering, the reverse of all other text within the cartoon, so viewers can clearly see the word "Tank," which is used twice. Viewers are left in no doubt that Bendib intends to link SUV ownership and war together. Another part of the text that Bendib has accentuated is the term, "Be Prepared." It appears in very bold type and a slightly different font from the rest of the sentence it is embedded in. Initially, viewers would assume that this term is referring to the idea that because an SUV is an outdoor vehicle, it prepares drivers for all conditions, but this term has a double meaning. Once viewers' eyes are drawn in by the bold text of "Be Prepared," they will notice that the rest of the sentence refers to dangers at the gas pump. This again is referring to Bendib's insinuation that oil and conflict are linked. Bendib has also underlined certain pieces of text within the cartoon to give particular words more prominence. The word "No" is in bold, and the word "Compromise" is underlined. This makes the two words stand out from the sentence so from a distance it reads simply as "no compromise." This phrase seems to be referring to Bendib's impression that consumers will not compromise on the luxury and safety of an SUV in order to help preserve the environment or prevent war. Using bold type for the word "Your" within the same paragraph compounds this meaning. The emphasis on the word "Your" gives the impression of selfishness and indicates that consumers are concerned with their own issues and not the bigger picture. Bendib cleverly uses type to draw attention to certain ideas and direct the viewer to certain conclusions, but it also aids viewers to see the cartoon in a different light from how they may have initially seen it.

The images and graphic and use of type help to create an effective visual argument, but it is Bendib's choice of words that clearly defines the argument and draws all the elements together. One particular word that stands out from Bendib's cartoon is his choice of word "intifada." At first glance this seems to be a very strange choice of word, as most ordinary Americans would be unfamiliar with this word and would possibly never have heard the term before. But Bendib's logic becomes clear once "intifada" is defined. Intifada is

actually an Arabic word that means “rebellion” or “uprising.” By using this unfamiliar word, Bendib makes viewers curious, possibly even causing them to research the word. This would add far deeper meaning to the sentence “intifada-style contingences at the gas pump.” Bendib is clearly linking rebellious uprisings within the Middle East and the supply of oil. This link points to our reliance on foreign oil supplies and to how we are becoming embroiled in foreign issues in order to safe guard these supplies. According to the *Transport Energy Data Book*, in 2006, almost 60% of the US oil supply came from foreign sources (Davis and Diegel). This fact demonstrates our growing dependency on outside sources to fulfill our current oil needs. The phrase in the cartoon, “Oil and war being so inseparable,” seems to be more of a comment than a question and is written as if it were obvious to everyone. This particular choice of wording makes viewers feel that this is not a point being debated but a conclusion that has been drawn, leaving them in no doubt about Bendib’s viewpoint on the issue. Another interesting word choice that Bendib uses is “Your family’s safety.” This phrase appears to be alluding to one of the main reasons given as to why the average consumer chooses an SUV, especially among the family market. In 2001, a survey of new car buyers found that 29% of those questioned said safety was the most important vehicle attribute in purchasing decisions (Plotkin). But Bendib’s wording could have a deeper meaning. It could also indicate how consumers are concerned for their own safety and environment without regard for others whose lives may be impacted by these issues that Bendib is portraying. With Bendib’s choice of words, he manages to get across many complex issues in a simple way. These word choices have a multilayered feel, and many words and phrases appear to have more than one meaning. Bendib manages to convey many different ideas within a very limited space and with just a few words that can be read several different ways.

With his use of image and graphics, use of type, and choice of words, Bendib manages to make a very persuasive and effective visual argument. The

cartoon raises two major issues: the environmental impact of SUVs and our dependency on foreign oil sources that is leading us to war. Although the cartoon is humorous and aimed at making people laugh, it is also meant to provoke the audience into thinking about these issues seriously. The humor used is quite cutting and forces viewers to look at the relationship between our dependency on oil and war and the environmental damage these huge vehicles may cause. Only the future will tell if Bendib’s predictions are correct and our love of the SUV will lead us straight down the road to mass destruction.

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Samantha Bathie wrote this analysis of a visual argument in Brenda Martin’s Expos II class. This essay also won first place in the 2008 Expository Writing Program Essay Award.

An Application Letter to the Disney Company

Lindsay Cox

Dear Walt Disney Human Resources:

At this moment in my life, I have the opportunity to stop and reflect on my future. I am taking the time to consider everything that I may want or need in my life and to figure out how I may fulfill these goals. I find myself sorting through dreams that I have hidden deep inside myself as well as unconscious dreams that may change my future aspirations. Growing up, I was your average perfect child with high grades and even higher goals for myself. I strove for excellence in everything I encountered and never looked back. In my late grade school years, I fell in love with something that at the time I did not even consider a career: the Walt Disney World. My family took many vacations there, and something inside me became enchanted. I know that what I felt every time I visited was more than what a normal visitor felt, but being as young as I was, I did not know any different. The years passed, but the captivating feelings I held did not.

Throughout high school, when people would ask me what I wanted to do in life, I never looked too deep inside myself: I just knew that engineering was a career that everyone seemed to believe I would excel at. I became interested in the engineering career path and the challenging coursework that I had heard about. After high school graduation, before entering college, I really thought about my aspirations and dreams, and, while I knew I wanted to major in engineering, something inside of me said that I would meet the demands of college, follow my heart, and someday become a part of the magic I felt. Someday, I would become a part of Disney.

I am currently in my final semester as a sophomore majoring in Architectural Engineering and am doing very well in the program. I am contacting the Walt Disney Company at this time because I have completed an important course in my college career and feel that the skills I have acquired from this course, among many others I possess, make me an excellent candidate for the Summer 2008 Quality Assurance Engineering Intern in the Walt Disney Architecture and Engineering Department.

When I discovered this opportunity, I analyzed the criteria that you require for this position: the pursuit of a bachelor's degree in engineering, the ability to work well in a team environment, the ability to demonstrate verbal and written

communication skills, and the willingness to take direction and follow a task to completion. I possess all of these abilities, and I would like to help you gain insight as to what kind of person I am. I would like to do this by explaining to you how my experiences in my Expository Writing II course at Kansas State University qualify me as an excellent candidate for this position with the Walt Disney Company. Because of this course, I developed my process writing strategies, including organization, drafting, analyzing other's drafts, and editing; I learned how to construct an argumentative claim and effectively enter it; and I learned how to identify and apply the core concepts of an argument in terms of audience-based reasoning; these were the course objectives that I strongly fulfilled.

When I was given the assignment of writing an evaluation of an argumentative essay over an essay about America's drug use, I quickly discovered that I would need to have complete organization in my paper if I wanted it to be understandable. I used chronological order with a clean introduction and thesis statement, then three reasons to support my thesis, and finally a conclusion. From this assignment, I gained confidence in my writing by producing multiple drafts about why I believed this essay was a good piece of argumentative writing and correcting any errors that I came across. I mostly only found minor punctuation errors, but there were several instances when I had to rethink what I was saying and explain it differently to my audience. I also enhanced my confidence through analyzing my classmates' writing and helping them during their drafting process. By exploring how others write, I not only learned how to discuss editing strategies in a rational way that would help them, but I also learned how to effectively listen to my peers' suggestions and take them into consideration. I feel that these skills are marketable in a team environment, such as yours at Disney, where my organization and people skills could contribute to a team of people in doing the best job and generating the best new ideas possible.

For another assignment during this semester, I wrote a rebuttal essay, in which I effectively constructed an argumentative claim and refuted an article written in our college newspaper. I learned in this essay how to enter the argument without it being a fight, proving why the article was wrong in a way that would appeal to my audience. A great deal of

my rhetorical efforts dealt with choosing the right tone for my paper and using the appropriate words to express the points that I wanted to get across. In this prestigious opportunity with the Disney Company, I feel that I can apply these skills in many ways that would enhance my job performance. Not only am I able to effectively enter an argument with my excellent writing skills, but with what I learned about rebutting an argument, I feel that my verbal communication skills are effective. These skills closely meet one of your main requirements, but also show you that I will be a strong but approachable and caring contributor to the Disney team.

Finally, during this semester, I was given the assignment of writing a proposal pertaining to an issue in the campus community and explaining all aspects of my proposal. From this paper, I learned about proposing an idea to a specific audience and choosing the appropriate reasoning to best support my proposal for this audience. I proposed that Kansas State University should build a new tutoring center for its students, and I backed it up with both audience-based reasoning and careful research. While choosing audience-based reasoning was tricky in the beginning, I feel that overall I did an

outstanding job in this area and also in explaining my proposal from start to finish, detailing the project description, project solution, and justification. I left my audience fulfilled and with no question about how my proposal would work and benefit the campus community. The skills that I gained from this assignment definitely match up to your requirement of being able to take direction and follow a task to completion, and this is what I will bring to your company.

Overall, I feel that my background, the skills I have described to you, and my fulfillment of the Expository Writing II course objectives have proven that I am an extremely well-qualified candidate who could make an important contribution to the Disney Company this summer. I know that my abilities are well suited for this position, so I hope that you will consider me for this opportunity as a Quality Assurance Engineering Intern. With this chance, I could take a major step toward reaching my lifelong aspiration.

Lindsay Cox wrote this reflection essay in Ashley Ortiz's Expos II class.

