

Gleanings

A JOURNAL OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENT WRITING
2011-2012



Preface

All of the work included in this journal was written by students who were enrolled in Siena College's First Year Seminar in 2011–2012. This required course prepares first-year students for the intellectual rigors of life in college and beyond by building critical thinking and communication skills as well as fostering creativity. Students are encouraged to reflect upon and discuss the vast amounts of reading and writing that they do both inside and outside the classroom, and Siena College wishes to showcase this intellectually engaging work. Thus, this journal is a celebration of exemplary first-year student writing, and the submission process, which includes faculty nominations, is competitive.

This publication is loosely organized by genre, and there is a brief introduction to each piece that describes the type of writing and the rhetorical strategies employed by the writers. While some minor editorial changes have been made, which is standard practice for this type of publication, they were kept to a minimum in order to preserve the authentic voices of the student authors and to underscore the guiding belief that such texts are considered works-in-progress.

Congratulations to the students whose work is represented here. The faculty and administration of Siena College are very proud of these writers, and hope that you, too, appreciate and enjoy the students' fine work included in this second volume of *Gleanings*.

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Cover: "Visions of Leadership" illustrated by Fabienne Theard '15.

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This is a reaction paper to the film *The Reluctant Saint: Francis of Assisi*. The writer selects one important Franciscan value, Truth, and succinctly explains how Francis embraced this value during his lifetime, as demonstrated in the film. Then the writer deftly moves to contemporary times and makes clear connections to modern society and his own personal life.

Breaking Down Barriers of Ignorance

Tyler Brennan

Sometimes we need to challenge the information given to us. We need to dare to step outside our cage of rumor and ignorance and find the world for ourselves. With that one bold step, we often are able to dispel the rumors and understand the truth. Saint Francis of Assisi was a man of truth, and his passion for truth is a value from which we could learn.

Francis's desire for truth in life led him to the Crusades and directly to the Sultan of Egypt. Francis lived during the time when Christian crusaders were blazing through the Middle East. Back in Italy, Francis was bombarded with news about the crusaders, who were portrayed as heroes doing holy Christian work and conversions. They were idols. It was only when Francis himself voyaged to the Middle East that he was able to see and understand the truth. The crusaders were thieves, violently slaughtering Middle-Eastern people and gravely misrepresenting Christianity. Seeing this shocked Francis, so he did the unthinkable by crossing enemy lines into Egypt and met with the Sultan, who was rumored to be barbaric, ignorant, and blood-thirsty. Francis met the Sultan and expected to either convert him or become a martyr trying to. In lieu of the ignorance he expected to meet, Francis found that the Sultan was a learned man who, like Francis, highly valued peace and respected other religions and nations.

The lessons that we could learn from how Francis embraced the truth are almost limitless in today's world. It goes without saying that unfortunately everyone makes judgements. But instead of making quick judgments about others, we should search for the truth, just as Francis did. Before we jump to conclusions and identify or label someone based on assumption or appearance, we should at least make an attempt to get to know him or her first. More often than not, we would find that the label we rashly applied was extremely inappropriate and unfitting. If we all lived like Francis and strove for the truth in life, I believe the world would become a better, safer, and happier place to live as a result of decreased prejudice and hatred. Most people aren't as bad as others make them out to be. All it takes is some initiative from the outside to break the ignorance. When you dare to break through the barrier of ignorance, which is built with false assumptions, just as Francis did, you may learn that your "enemy" could really be a misunderstood ally!

We make false assumptions all the time, whether we realize it or not. One specific example may be the prejudice that Americans hold against Middle-Eastern people. After ten years of suffering through the aftershock from the tragic events of September 11, 2001, it is now time for Americans to examine the world from Francis's perspective and embrace his emphasis on truth. Instead of labeling people of Middle-Eastern descent possible "terrorists," get to know them. I know that there's nothing more hurtful to my close Middle-Eastern friend than being branded with that label. In spite of his parents holding respectable jobs and being good people, he constantly notices people staring at his family or even spitting out derogatory comments. With these false assumptions made against him and his family

because they are Middle-Eastern, he often feels insecure and unsafe. There is no reason for this. He is no more of an extremist than any other American. Through my friend and through St. Francis, I have learned not to label or make assumptions. Knowing the truth can make you a better person.

I leave you with a challenge. The next time you see someone different from you, stop yourself before labeling him or her. Instead, introduce yourself and give him or her a chance. Take the initiative. Do what Francis did with the Sultan and get to know that person. Like Francis, I believe that this experience will change you and your outlook on life. Remember, truth is the key to the lock on the cage of ignorance.

After a class visit to the Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown, New York, this author summarizes what she observed and learned and then formulates excellent connections to her own personal and professional interests. She includes relevant outside sources that underscore her argument and relate to her museum experience as well.

1840s Rural America: The Role of Science and Technology in Medicine

Mariam Gawdat

The Farmers' Museum is an educational and interesting tourist site located in Cooperstown, New York. The history it reveals can teach any generation about public policy issues, such as "land as a resource," attitudes toward nature, human rights in different forms of societies, and the role of science and technology in 1840s America. All of these historical aspects reflected in the museum are amazingly informative. The role of science and technology in the 1840s was one that greatly caught my interest because, as Biology major, science is my passion. At the Farmers' Museum, for example, when I visited Dr. Jackson's Office and Dr. Thrall's Pharmacy, I felt as if I were back in time, witnessing the cornerstones of today's science and technology in medicine.

The study of medicine in the 1840s had both positive and negative impacts on life in rural America since the medical discoveries that became the foundation of today's medicine have risked many patients' health and lives. Although the medical profession existed during that era, anyone could easily become a physician without a great emphasis on skill or knowledge. For example, a person who was at least 21 years old could be an "official" physician, with no standardized testing, no practice on how to treat patients, and no license. This raises the questions about how these physicians diagnosed patients and described the right treatments.

As described at Dr. Jackson's Office, there were a variety of medical specialties and beliefs on how to treat patients in the 1840s. Here is a list of the different types of practices and practitioners: Home Meds (which is the passing down of "recipes" to generations of a family or community); Midwives (for childbirth); Homeopathics (physicians who believed in treating a disease with diluted doses of natural substances that in larger doses would produce symptoms of the disease itself); Thompsonians (physicians who believed in herbal medicine); Grahmisms (physicians who believed in bath exercises); Pherenologists (physicians who believed that the brain's size determined one's health); and Hydro-athies (physicians who believed in water cure, mineral water therapy, fresh air, and good diet). This variety of medical beliefs shows how medicine in the 1840s started through assumptions and trials and errors, thus lacking definite guidelines for the right procedures.

As I observed at the museum, in the era of the 1840s and 1850s, physicians acquired knowledge from early research and discovery. They believed in certain theories that allowed them to explain illnesses. For example, physicians argued that to have good health, one must maintain the natural balance of the four "bodily humors" (or fluids): black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. If a patient has dryness, then that patient has a malfunctioning black bile. Yellow bile is responsible for cold, blood is responsible for heat, and phlegm is responsible for moistness. Although these beliefs

may seem reasonable and became a mean for the discovery of medical treatments that are the basis of today's medicine, it is presently known that the balance of bodily humors does not accurately describe a patient's health.

In the mid-nineteenth century, patients usually called doctors only when they feared death or the continuity of pain. Upon arrival, the doctor would examine signs of "humoral imbalance," which is defined as an imbalance between the four bodily humors that causes diseases to arise ("Medical Humors"). Then, physicians may have used instruments (such as thermometers), applied leaches, written prescriptions, or performed open artery or vein surgeries (which allowed blood to drain out through venesections and bloodletting). They also may have prescribed powerful medicines, such as mercury and arsenics, to purge bad "humors." These medical procedures arose in the hope of restoring patients' humoral balance and helping them maintain a healthier life.

Physicians in the 1840s thought they had the key to helping patients by applying treatments based on the bodily humors. However, as described at the museum, it is now known that some of their practices greatly harmed patients. The most common illnesses in the 1840s, tuberculosis and cholera, were due to water pollution rather than the imbalance of bodily humors. Even though sometimes patients felt better after the doctor's visit, there were cases of patients losing blood, purging, having rapid pulse, headaches, fever, and intolerance to light and sound, fainting, and sometimes death. In addition, the use of mercury as a medicine led to tooth loss and bone deterioration. The outcome of surgery was rarely positive, and patients usually suffered from extreme pain, shock, infection, severe blood loss, and blood poisoning. Finally, physicians were not aware of the existence of germs at that time; therefore, they were not cautious enough about contamination. Even though medicine in the 1840s had negative impacts on patients' health, other science fields in that era excelled in improving patients' well-being.

For example, pharmaceutical sciences had positively impacted society in the 1840s, and a museum re-enactor at Dr. Thrall's Pharmacy explained the history of this. According to the museum staff member, since physicians were rare in that era, they had low incomes. Therefore, most physicians owned their own pharmacies in which they sold medicine as well as general store items. The most important factor in the pharmacy field was trial and error. Physicians made their own medicine from wholesale ingredients, a mixture of laxatives, and strong chemicals. Some physicians thought that medicines made from plants were better than those made in laboratories. Many of their herbal medicines, such as Digitalis and Asters, were actually beneficial to patients and are still used today. For example, Digitalis, which was sold in mid-nineteenth century pharmacies, is used to treat heart illnesses today. Another useful herbal medicine in the 1840s was made from willow bark, and this ingredient is currently used to treat headaches. In addition to using herbal medicine, giving infusions, and boiling water to treat disease symptoms, physicians also made pills. Some pills were more useful than others; however, one significant challenge that doctors faced was prescribing the right dosages. The museum re-enactor at Dr. Thrall's Pharmacy informed us of the advancements and the challenges that most mid-nineteenth century physicians experienced. We also learned that the health of those patients not only improved through advances in medications but also through advances in technology.

Technology had a very important effect on science and society in the 1840s. For example, physicians invented instruments that would help them in their medical practice, and it was very interesting to observe them on display at Dr. Jackson's Office. We also compared the 1840s instruments to today's medical technology. Some instruments from the mid-nineteenth century were used as bleeding implements, such as the spring lancet, the scarificator, and the veterinary fleam. Physicians also used dental tools, such as the tooth extractor and the dental forceps, invented vaccination tools, such as the syringe, and developed tools for minor surgery, such as the surgical kit, the surgical saw, and splints. These medical instruments helped physicians to treat the humoral imbalances spoken about above, yet they also are important models of the medical instruments used today.

Because of my own interest in medicine, I was struck by how politics also impacted science at this time and how the status of women improved within the medical field. During that era, society gave priority to men in most careers,

including medicine, but because there were so few physicians, there was a high demand for them as the population (and illnesses) grew. Gradually, this allowed for new opportunities for women. As I saw in the museum, Mary A. Bassett, for example, was one of the rare female physicians and was the first medical director in New York State in 1873. According to *Bassett Healthcare Network*, her daughter, Mary Imogene Bassett, also became an outstanding physician, and in their memory, the Bassett Medical Center still exists today in Cooperstown, New York (“History”).

The trip to the Farmers’ Museum prompted me to find out more about early American science and medicine. According to the *The Invention of Air: A Story of Science, Faith, Revolution, and the Birth of America*, early scientists were “hobbyists” and very similar to early physicians who practiced science as a “way of life” or a hobby, rather than as a career. There were neither required licenses nor special education to become a scientist or a physician during that era. Those scientists had time to experiment with ideas and share them with others in “intellectual conversations,” including reporting their successes and failures in medical journals. An idea could eventually become a discovery using the simplest technologies. For instance, the great invention of the steam engine came only by chance, as Steven Johnson describes: “Humans made the steam engine, but the steam engine ended up remaking humanity in ways that the original inventors never anticipated” (43). Those founding fathers of science had provided us with the stepping stones to our current scientific ideas. For example, they thought about the ecosystem, the discovery of oxygen, and the process of photosynthesis by plants (81-4). Although, today we may argue that early scientists and physicians did not have enough education or adequate technology to be effective in the field of science, we cannot overlook the fact that not only did they manage to have some successes, but they also played a vital role in the intellectual development of science by making scientific discoveries that contributed to today’s scientific knowledge.

As noted in *The Great Influenza*, early scientists and researchers have shaped modern medicine by discovering causes of diseases and striving to find the right treatments. In 1918, the influenza virus erupted. At this time, this was a new virus that killed millions of people worldwide. However, science and technology changed the effect of the influenza virus on humankind, not only in the 1900s but also for today and future generations. John Barry explains the influenza “war” and writes, “It was the first great collision between a natural force and a society that included individuals not willing to submit to that force . . . [but rather] were determined to confront this force directly, with a developing technology and with their minds” (5). Scientists, like Paul Lewis, had spent much of their lives trying to discover a mechanism for confronting the influenza virus. Their early discoveries are worthy of Nobel prizes, for they developed vaccines, antitoxins, and techniques that are still used today. As Barry describes, early scientific knowledge that arose from fighting the influenza virus “pointed directly - and still points - to much that lies in medicine’s future” (7).

The Farmers’ Museum keenly presents the significant scientific era of the 1840s. Scientific discoveries, technologies, and applications during this epoch became the foundation of today’s medical field. However, these great contributions were created through very simple processes. Unlicensed and self-educated hobbyists, pharmacists, and physicians made new discoveries through trial and error. Although the “errors” in these trials risked the patients’ lives, the ultimate discoveries saved many people’s lives, not only during the 1840s but also in many generations after. Thus, today’s complex scientific field is built on the shoulders of the “scientific staff” of the 1840s.

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For this two-page assignment, the students were told to respond to several class readings on science and religion, determine which authors presented the most convincing argument, and explain why. The author's voice is clear and contemplative as she deftly weaves among other writers' ideas while developing her own position.

Evolution, Creationism, Intelligent Design, and the Meaning of Life

Kristen Ippolito

In sixth grade, when I decided I wanted to be a part of my church's youth group, something changed. My dad and I took a break from reading *Artemis Fowl* and instead began reading from the book *Great Trials*, a work that devoted each of its chapters to cases that affected the world in some way. In what I later learned was an attempt to keep the youth group from converting me to creationism, the first trial we looked at in the book was the Scopes Monkey Trial. It was this experience that first showed me how much controversy could arise over what I previously had thought was just a scientific theory. The case also planted me firmly on the Darwin-side of the debate.

Since then, I've learned that the debate is a lot more complex than simply evolution versus creationism. There's a spectrum of beliefs that surround the issue, and the most contradictory beliefs have nothing to do with whether or not evolution is a valid theory, but rather if a person can accept both evolution as fact and God as real. For me, the debate is not between evolution and creation, but between the scientific and spiritual sides of myself; a conflict that is, I believe, shared by many.

The scientist in me agrees with Dawkins, in that if life has a purpose, it is for the DNA to survive (Dawkins 186). That life would be intelligently created for this purpose seems absurd. Those years in the youth group, however, led me to hope (at the very least) that there is something more out there than uncaring DNA. This hope makes Behe's irreducible complexity rather attractive. Small, evolutionary changes cannot explain things like the clotting of blood, a process that cannot happen if a single step doesn't work (148). It would be so easy to stop with this theory and leave the complexity up to design. Indeed, that's something I would have done had I been exposed to these ideas in high school. This, however, is college, where I feel I must hold myself to a higher standard of learning, so I must agree with Dawkins, that to stop there would be a "cop-out" (Bjerklie et al. 53). It's true that currently Darwinian evolution cannot explain the irreducible complexities described by Behe yet, but that doesn't mean it never will be able to. To accept that it's intelligent design would also be to stop looking for a scientific explanation. And once we do that, we can bid adieu to any of the potential medical benefits that could come from understanding how blood clotting came into existence. It is not enough to say that because science can't explain it now that it means science never will be able to. Thus, the scientist in me denies the easy-way-out as an acceptable answer.

Meanwhile, though I fully accept the theories that Dawkins proposes, I cannot accept that I am unable to believe in both evolution and God. Maybe there is no designer, and maybe what we, as humans, think of as the creator is really just a higher dimensional being, whose influence can't be explained in our limited dimensional world, but fully ruling

out something higher seems about as ridiculous to me as ruling out life - improbable does not mean impossible. Due to this, I will accept both until one disproves the other.

But this doesn't mean that I will not keep searching. The question raised by evolution is one that will probably never be answered, and therefore it would be easy to give it up as futile. But to ignore the question now would be to ignore the precedent set for us by the philosophers, scientists, and theologians who have come before. If there's one thing that gives life meaning beyond DNA survival, it's being able to wonder exactly what it is. I don't need the answer because the question itself gives purpose.

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Dawkins, Richard. "God's Utility Function." Cunningham. 186-91. Print.

This essay is a response to the question: “What is the future of the American idea?”. After reading a collection of published essays on the topic, this writer articulately and persuasively outlines her own opinion while effectively integrating material from the selected readings.

Upholding America’s Foundation: A Prerequisite for a Successful Future

Natalia Murdock

America is the youngest major country in the world, yet it is fair to say that it also is the most highly-esteemed country in the world. Since the nineteenth century, it has been regarded as the “land of opportunity,” a place where everyone could become a “someone.” The country was, and still arguably is, the most sought after by people all over the globe. There is another possibly more predominant reason for that, however. Though not quite so true in the country’s earlier years, it has been known as a place where everyone has a chance to be heard.

Centuries later, this remains the central defining characteristic of America—the broadest “American idea” under which all of the other “American ideas” that have developed throughout the years fall. So it seems paradoxical that America has recently proven to have rather poor listening skills, both within its own borders and outside of them. America has lost the respect it once held as a result. The future of the American idea, then, is to earn back that respect. One sure way to accomplish this is by learning what Stephen R. Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, termed “empathetic listening.”

In summary, Covey explains that empathetic listening is “listening with the intent to understand” (240). Continuing, he claims that this requires the utmost consideration for the speaker and goes beyond simply being an “active listener.” Covey emphasizes that one must step out of his or her frame of reference and into the speaker’s, and he says that only through empathetic listening can the true meaning of the speaker be fully and deeply understood. Learning to be an empathetic listener is important to America on a national scale as well as on an international one. It is vital for a successful and respectable government, a body that serves to represent the country as a whole.

There is no doubt that America today is a place where everyone can voice their ideas, no matter how radical or conflicting they may seem. Within the *Atlantic Monthly*’s “The Future of the American Idea” issue, for example, are the responses from various intellectual Americans pertaining to what exactly that future is. All of the responses are different in some way, but two specifically are the polar opposites of each other. Sam Harris conveys the notion that there is too much religious faith in America (“God-Drunk Society”), while Tim Lahaye argues that there is not enough (“Godless Society”). The problem is, however, that not everyone is heard today despite that. The overwhelming majority of Americans are dissatisfied with the United States’ government for one main reason—their concerns are generally not heard, let alone responded to. America’s government was founded upon the basis of democracy and has always been portrayed as the ideal model. While it still remains true that the citizens vote for their fellow Americans to lead and represent their country, the Americans who are elected typically do not “seek to understand” many of the matters which are most important to those who have chosen them, as Covey might put it. The first step for the

future of the American idea must be to change this so America is once again a place where everyone has the chance to be heard.

The second step deals with America's approach to foreign matters and relations. It seems as if so many countries recently have grown to dislike this country and definitely feel no respect towards it. Overall, the major problem is the unwanted involvement of the United States in other countries. Although America usually has good intentions, the country often fails to stop and listen to the foreign nations and their people when it chooses to involve itself in the problem at hand. America assumes that it knows how to "fix" the issue, though it often doesn't even know the real problem. For America to begin earning back the respect of other nations, the country must listen to those other nations for the sole purpose of understanding. As Covey would say, America needs to "diagnose before it prescribes" (243).

The future of the American idea, to earn back the respect it had worked hard to attain, is absolutely vital for the success of the country and may be just as important for the success of the world on the whole. As T. D. Jakes points out in his response, America is "inextricably tied to a world of nations," and the country's "heartbeat affects the pulse of every nation" ("World's Pulse"). The United States was founded as a place where everyone's voice could be heard, and especially today at a time when the world is so interdependent, it is important that the country remains true to this base value.

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Diversity, a core theme in the first year seminar curriculum, is explored in various ways and through different time periods. Though its complexity makes it a rather broad topic, the writer was asked to choose a specific idea or a concept regarding diversity, formulate an original thesis, and use at least one of the readings assigned in this unit as evidence of the writer's position.

The Key to Diversity and Equal Opportunities: Practicing Acceptance, Not Tolerance

Ayesha Ropri

People's desire for absolute equality inhibits them from embracing diversity. While people share many characteristics in common as part of the human race, their differences make the world more exciting. Racial, ethnic, physical, religious, and cognitive diversity enrich daily experiences. Yet, these same differences stand in the way of equal opportunity for all human beings. Much of this inequality stems from people's upbringings because their environments have a tremendous impact on their attitudes towards others, and many of these attitudes are discretely molded into their character. While on the one hand society teaches people not to discriminate against others, on the other hand, it permits people to subconsciously stereotype. As a result of these two conflicting messages, tolerance is practiced. Yet, this tolerance does not do much in the fight to end inequality. There must be a median between the absolute equality that eliminates the richness from life, the absolute inequality that robs people from their inherent rights, and the tolerance that stands on the unstable ground of hypocrisy. This median is found with the practice of acceptance, which fosters diversity and equal opportunities for all regardless of their identities.

People's characters and personalities are constantly molded by subtle, underlying social messages. No one wants to be called racist or sexist or any other derogatory term. However, people do not realize that their environment can make them oblivious to the fact that they may be committing acts of racism, sexism, or another social injustice. In "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," Peggy McIntosh discusses the societal privileges given to whites just because of the color of their skin. She describes the obliviousness that is embedded in people's actions. McIntosh explains, "I did not see myself as a racist because I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my [white] group."¹ What McIntosh suggests here is that society sends conflicting messages to people. Children may be taught to not discriminate, but subtle discrimination is engrained into them early on when they see the power distribution among people in society. These perceptions also can be formed at school, where young children may see more white teachers than teachers of color, or they can be influenced by the media and how it portrays a specific group of people. This leads people to unconsciously label others, even if it is in a joking manner. Thus, it makes it more difficult for them to interact with others of different backgrounds because in order to respect others, as they were taught in school, they have to be aware of their language, actions, and thoughts. In the end, the actions and examples that take place in society speak much louder than any of the verbal messages taught in school, leading people to subconsciously stereotype others.

¹ Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," *Peace and Freedom* (July/August 1989): 12.

Social norms so deeply penetrate people's minds that stereotyping, in effect, becomes second nature. People do not think of stereotyping as inappropriate because they live in an environment in which it is regularly practiced. Yet, it does become inappropriate when one's race, religion, or ethnicity is used to explain his or her negative actions, lack of success, or discourse. Because of this, people automatically assume things about others as soon as they meet them. McIntosh gives an example of the subconscious discrimination that society creates by recognizing a list of things she can take for granted because of her race and the "white privilege" that comes with it. She states, for example, that "I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race."² This privilege, along with many others, is very much, in McIntosh's words, "invisible." Gradually, these subtle bricks of privilege create a looming tower of dominance of one group of people over another.

In order to break down the towers of dominance and end inequality, people must first seek to reevaluate the tolerance that is practiced. Tolerance results from the opposing messages of society. It is the more respectful form of ignorance. A tolerant person does not seek to understand that others have inherent rights, which are not limited by their race, religion, ethnicity, gender or other identity. Instead, through tolerance, differences of others are only temporarily ignored, and because of this temporary ignorance, people who are tolerant do not recognize others' inherent rights. In effect, they are more likely to judge and stereotype others. In place of tolerance, many people seek absolute equality. Yet this absolute equality is no better than tolerance. In seeking absolute equality, people strip others of their identities and invite them into the circle of privilege, regarding it as a favor. Not only are others being robbed of their identities, but also their right to express them. This attempt to create equality is, then, quite paradoxical. Perhaps the focus should not be on absolute equality, but rather on equal opportunities for all.

Equal opportunities can only result from true acceptance of others. Acceptance eliminates the stereotyping that takes place behind people's backs. It does not require someone to adopt the ideas or cultures of others, but it requires them to recognize that others have the right to such things. St. Francis of Assisi, a Catholic saint who gave up his wealth to live in poverty and help the poor, is a prime example of someone who believed in equal rights for all. In his encounter with a leper, he pushed aside his judgments and first impressions. In St. Bonaventure's account of the story, he writes, "This unforeseen encounter struck him with horror. But he recalled his resolution to be perfect and remembered that he must first conquer himself if he wanted to become a knight of Christ."³ Here, St. Francis does not merely tolerate the presence and existence of lepers, but he embraces and kisses them. His physical gestures indicate his acceptance of their inherent rights as human beings. In doing so, he overcomes the stereotypes that are commonly associated with lepers. Once people understand and practice acceptance, they no longer stereotype those with different backgrounds and identities.

Stereotyping is used on a daily basis in order to explain the behaviors of others from a different background. Much of this stereotyping is a direct result of social norms. People may unconsciously judge people before knowing them or assume something about them because of their race, religion, or ethnicity. This creates inequality that ultimately leads to unequal opportunities for people of different identities. Yet, absolute equality and complete uniformity can never be achieved. Even if this paradoxical utopian idea was practiced, it would create a world void of individualistic expression. A true utopian world, instead, rests on an intricate balance of equal opportunities, human rights, and the freedom of self-expression. The key to open the complex lock to this world is the acceptance — not tolerance — of other individuals.

² McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack", 11.

³ St. Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis* (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books & Publishing, Inc., 2009), 189.

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The writer of this short response essay connects a reading about being proactive and taking responsibility to the content presented by a local business professional. This is an excellent example of a student carefully weighing in-class material in relation to a real, out-of-class experience, while considering his own habits and future pursuits.

Using Social Media in the Job Search: The Importance and Dangers of Social Networking

Connor Rutherford

Stephen R. Covey, in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, believes that being proactive is the ideal personality trait and defines being proactive as taking control of one's own life since he or she is the only one responsible for it (71). This idea can be applied to the ever-growing world of social networking. Social networking is more a part of everyday life today than it has ever been in the past. This topic was extensively discussed during Siena's "Secrets to Using Social Media in the Job Search," which featured speaker Randi Blender from Enterprise Rent-A-Car. Today, people constantly have their smart phones attached at their hips with infinite connections to Twitter, facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms — all of which lie dormant in people's pockets, just waiting to be used for good or evil.

The use of social networking tools can open many doors if used correctly, or, on the other hand, it can slam every door shut. Luckily, individuals have full control over how social networking tools are used, and the successful or unsuccessful usage of them falls solely on the shoulders of the user.

As stated above, social networking can be used for extraordinarily good purposes if one knows how to maximize its benefits. It involves taking charge and being willing to take some extra steps in order to make useful connections while keeping one's virtual reputation clean. In order to do this successfully, at times it will be necessary to step outside one's comfort zone and really be determined to create new connections. This goes along with what Covey says about taking control of one's life (71). Chances are people will not make connections for others; people need to be willing to make them for themselves.

Just having the courage to go up and talk to someone and explore similar interests and trade contact information can open up a tremendous number of doors in the career world. Another important suggestion made during Ms. Blender's presentation was that people must be proactive in taking the time to clean up their various virtual profiles. Having a professional page that highlights one's positive accomplishments as opposed to a page displaying one's negative behaviors can make a great deal of difference in how one is perceived by potential employers and peers. This requires people to keep their business and personal lives separate, which can never hurt one's chances. But over-emphasizing one's personal life on a social media page can be the downfall of even a perfect candidate. Building contacts using professional sites like LinkedIn can completely revolutionize one's career, for as of today, 85% of jobs are obtained through networking, according to the guest speaker.

Despite all the positive benefits of social networking sites, there is a much darker side, and if people are not proactive in how they utilize them, then they might suffer terribly negative effects. If people sit idly by and allow their peers to post photos from a night on the town or something of that nature, potential employers may see that and completely dismiss them as candidates. Also, if people are not watchful of the things that they post, such as statuses, tweets, and so on, there is a good chance these posts will be seen and result in negative repercussions. Mrs. Blender from Enterprise-Rent-A-Car noted that around 45% of employers search for their employees and potential employees online to see what type of person they are outside of the work place. This can be disastrous, as there are countless stories of people being fired for their conduct outside of work.

Social networking can be very beneficial if used correctly, but people in this day and age need to be very proactive in maintaining their virtual image and seeking useful contacts. In a world where there are thousands upon thousands of job applicants with similar qualifications, it is crucial to have a way to stand out in a positive manner. Similarly, social networking platforms can be useful to employers who want to reduce the number of candidates. A company can weed out those whom they believe would not be good representatives or employees because of what it finds during an online search. Only you have control over how you are perceived by the business world, and it is up to you, and only you, to maintain a positive image and create contacts that can benefit you in the long run.

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Referring to two readings from class, this writer demonstrates how consumerism and the preoccupation with social status permeate even the most sacred traditions and rituals.

The Role of Consumerism in the Funeral and Wedding Industries

Nicholas Stark

Today we work, shop, and live in the free market of the United States while always staring dead in the eyes of consumerism, which is defined as society's preoccupation with the acquisition of consumer goods. Americans' infatuation with spending money has even affected classic social events, such as weddings and funerals, leaving the planners of these events in awkward or impractical positions and being judged by their choices. These circumstances and social implications are highlighted in the books, *One Perfect Day* by Rebecca Mead and *The American Way of Death Revisited* by Jessica Mitford. By focusing on two very different social events, these two books show how consumerism is completely taking over and tarnishing even the most classic of social endeavors.

Today's "Bridezilla" culture involves the bride of a wedding running the show like the giant creature that would do anything to destroy a city. The bride becomes a Bridezilla who would do *anything* to have a perfect wedding, and to obtain this ideal day, a bride will spend sometimes absurd amounts of money for the perfect dress, invitations, flowers and reception. Rebecca Mead suggests that because of this Bridezilla culture, "weddings themselves were out of control ... a sense of proportion had been lost, not just individually but in the culture at large" (Mead 4). This valid statement shows that weddings have become more of a show of social status, rather than a showing of the couple's love for one another. Brides today may believe that if they do not spend a certain amount of money on the dress and wedding as a whole, they will be looked down upon by their peers. In a 2011 American wedding study, it was found that the average wedding dress cost \$1,289 ("*Brides*" 1). Only nine years earlier in 2002, the average wedding dress cost was \$799 ("*American*" 7). This spike in the price of wedding dresses exhibits how consumerism is detrimental to the true meaning of a wedding, which is supposed to be about two people who love each other professing their permanent and everlasting love for one another. Mead exclaims this perfectly when she states that marriage is no longer about producing a bride because the bride "becomes a new kind of consumer" (Mead 20).

Jessica Mitford's work conveys the same detrimental effects of consumerism on a different social event — the funeral. Although this is a sad occasion that must be treated with great respect and care, money plays a large role. The effects of consumerism on funerals started long ago. In 1961, the average cost for an adult funeral, including the casket and all of the "services" was just \$708. Just two years later, in 1963, the average cost sky-rocketed to \$1,450 (Mitford 17). Today's price is in the ball park of \$8,000. Not only does this break the bank for the grieving relatives and friends of the deceased, but it can cause very awkward social implications and harsh judgments of the deceased and his or her family by their peers. For example, if a family member of the deceased buys a cheap casket, does that mean this person is disrespecting the dead? If there is a cheap casket at the funeral, will the guests think less of the family? Questions such as these arise and make the situation much more stressful for everyone involved. The implications that consumerism places on purchasing an expensive funeral are what make the old saying about money being the "root of all evil" all the more valid. These are the sort of detrimental social effects that consumerism has on funerals today.

Consumerism is society's preoccupation with the acquisition of consumer goods. As we have seen, this preoccupation can cause awkward situations and have social implications, even with traditional events such as weddings and funerals. As inferred in the writings of Rebecca Mead and Jessica Mitford, many brides, grooms, and grieving family members feel pressure to pay top dollar for these events. This is simply because of the fact that nowadays the amount of money spent on weddings and funerals may determine one's all around social "status."

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After visiting the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, the students were asked to submit a written response about a specific exhibit, artifact, or athlete. This writer shows remarkable reflection on her own changing thoughts and experiences about the site itself and how they relate to the theme of her first-year seminar, the American Dream.

Baseball: The American Pastime, The American Dream

Regina Stracqualursi

When I was in eighth grade, my teacher took our history class to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Although I never had any major interest in baseball, I remember having a lot of fun at the museum. However, I was so young that I did not understand exactly why my teacher chose such a place for what was meant to be an educational field trip. I did not realize that a place dedicated solely to a sport could teach me anything. After revisiting the museum last weekend, I now recognize that baseball is more than just a sport to Americans. Baseball represents the American Dream because it embodies the American philosophies of opportunity and endless possibility.

One exhibit that captured my attention during this second visit was “Diamond Dreams: Women in Baseball.” This exhibit reflects the history of women’s baseball, the contributions women have made to baseball, and the impact this has had on society, which is very interesting and significant because it shows that success is possible for anyone. In the past, gender roles were very strict for women; they were not thought of as equals to men. However, women were always determined to be equal. When men were going off to war, they needed women to take their place in society. Females filled the men’s roles in every way possible, which included men’s athletics. Essentially, baseball “survived” because of women. By getting involved in baseball, women showed the world what they were capable of. Taking the field was just one example that proved women were equal to men. America is a place of opportunity; it is a place where hard work and determination can go a long way. The many success stories in baseball show how anyone, man or woman, rich or poor, white or black, has the opportunity to be successful in America.

Another exhibit that reflected the “dream” that many people in the United States strive for is “Hank Aaron: Chasing the Dream.” This part of the museum showed the remarkable story of Hank Aaron, who made it big even though he started out with nothing. Most versions of the America Dream have something to do with upward mobility or the idea that even in poverty one can become successful as long as he or she works hard. Hank Aaron proved this to all Americans. He came from a poor family and lived in a poverty-stricken neighborhood. He also lived during a time when African-Americans were facing the intensities of racism. Despite the obstacles that he faced, Aaron’s determination and hard work helped him succeed, and like the title of the exhibit states, he was constantly “chasing” his dream. Hank Aaron’s story exemplifies the American Dream because it shows that in this country, anything is possible with the right work ethic and motivation.

I have always wondered why the Baseball Hall of Fame mesmerized me as an eighth grader. Now I know that it was because this museum inspires people and gives them hope for their own dreams. Baseball’s history has to do with so many aspects of the American Dream that most people yearn for. The fact that our country has an entire museum dedicated to such a remarkable sport alone shows how big of an impact it has had on society.

For this assignment, the students were asked to compose an essay in response to this question: In Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, is the creature a human or a monster? The writers were directed to rely solely on textual evidence and to refrain from consulting outside sources. This author takes a staunch position and carefully builds her argument with specific details and careful analysis.

Human Monsters: Inside and Outside of *Frankenstein*

Kathryn Thomas

While Mary Shelley makes numerous derogatory references to Victor Frankenstein's creation, calling it a "wretch," "monster," and many other inhuman terms, it becomes inherently clear that the creature is a human being. He is not a typical human being. He is a disfigured human, a being of a physically eclectic origin, but a human nonetheless. Some argue that his inhuman characteristics, like his ability to survive extreme temperatures, his physical appearance, and his comfort in the wilderness (more so than in "civilized" human society), are more significant and make up more of his personality than his human qualities. However, there are humans with the uncanny ability to regulate their body temperatures in intense conditions and beyond the normal realm of human control; there are ugly, deformed victims of accidents or genetics; there are hermits who live in mountain ranges who thrive in their solitude, surrounded by nature. All of these people are still considered human.

Intelligence is often the first qualifier of what it means to be human; Victor's creature, as the author refers to him, certainly exhibits intelligence. He is described by Victor himself as "a creature of fine sensations," possessing an eloquence and articulate way of speaking, which he learned from observation alone (Shelley 105). What creatures other than humans can speak? Victor's first intentions were to "[begin] the creation of a human being" (32). The creature's faculties go beyond speech, as far as displays of intelligence; he is a reasonable, rational creature, who determines a course of action prior to its enactment. For example, he locates Victor and asks for a female companion, which is a self-reasoned solution to his loneliness. He is also subject to emotions. In fits of rage and disappointment, he exhibits the very human reaction of wrecking things and, later, regretting his actions. He also experiences rejection, which evolves into self-loathing and miserable loneliness. What creature other than the human being is capable of such depth of sensation, such complexity?

One objection to the creature's humanity is the fact that he has superhuman abilities; he is stronger than a man, faster than a man. The counterargument can be found in the recipients of prosthetics. While prosthetics are often considered meager mechanical replacements for a fully functioning human part made of flesh and tissue, they can also be an advantage. Some runners have found that their prosthetic limbs actually help to increase their speed and shave off time. Other examples in these types of surrogates include things like Lasik eye surgery, where an organ (in this case, the eye) is improved from its natural state in the individual and made into a perfect version of itself. This is what Victor tries to do with his creature. While his appearance is certainly less than perfect (quite hideous, in fact), he is still merely an improved version of the human species due to the surgery his whole creation was born from. While altered, enhanced, and superior to others, these altered people are still human beings.

Another objection to the creature being considered a human being stems from his origin. How can a monster made from other peoples' parts be human? How can "collected bones from charnel-houses" be strung together to form one

being (35)? One could ask the same thing about someone who received a heart or liver transplant. There are plenty of people walking around with organs and body parts that aren't their own; this does not make them inhuman or monstrous. In fact, deceased organ donors, those who offer their body parts to others once they have no further use for them, are considered noble and helpful. The organs from their dead bodies are implanted into the living, creating one whole being. There is nothing monstrous in this concept, so why is it hideous and grotesque in Shelley's *Frankenstein*? The only answer lies in the dreadful physical appearance of the creature.

It is exceedingly and clearly emphasized that the creature's appearance is repugnant; his creator says, "Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance . . . so hideous as that wretch" (36). From his very awakening, the creature is branded by Victor as "ugly . . . a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived" (36). In making this statement, Victor is implying that his creature belongs in hell due to his appearance alone. Throughout the novel, this type of aesthetic discrimination is highlighted as the sole reason for the creature's monstrous label. He could have, with guidance, become a functioning member of human society; many children have fallen astray in a similar manner. The creature displays enormous potential when he says, "Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding" (165). He has a sense of right and wrong, an innate desire to do and be good, but, as stated by the creature himself, humans "are prejudiced against me . . . [W]here they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster" (95). The creature laments the "fatal effects of this miserable deformity" (80) when he realizes that his isolation, rejection, and all other forms of misery are caused by his appearance. The terrible deeds he commits (which he is not alone in committing) are a result of the injustices he suffers at the hands of the discriminatory assumptions of a barbaric human society. Hunchbacks, those diagnosed with Elephantiasis, individuals with disfiguring tumors, and many other people with physical anomalies are still considered human beings because they are human beings, just as Frankenstein's creature is a human being.

His body is not monstrous. It is a conglomeration of different parts, just as the body of a donor organ recipient. It is a man-made vessel, just as the body with a prosthetic limb. It is disfigured and ugly, just as the body of the hunchback. His body is human. His mind is not monstrous, only miserable; his intentions are initially innocent and purely human. He wants his father figure, Victor, to accept him, but when that is acknowledged as impossible, he wants Victor to provide him with what he needs to survive. He suffers rejection, possesses an extraordinary intelligence, and commands language with a grace backed by logic and rationality. His mind is human. If the creature is human in body and in mind, then he is a human being in his entirety.

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In the short story collection *Krik? Krak!*, Edwidge Danticat writes about the severe hardships endured by the Haitian people. The assignment was to choose a minor character from one of Danticat's stories and using the same events, create a different version of the story from that character's perspective. In this creative exercise, the student writer imagines and effectively portrays the main themes of the original work, which are fear, loss, and resiliency, through careful character development.

Escape

Emily Bettis

I know the boy is getting paranoid because I keep looking over his shoulder at his journal. I don't mean to be nosy, but I'm curious what his story is — if he left someone back home. I left no one behind. Ever since my wife died, I've been on my own. Our boy would have been thirty-seven now if he hadn't drowned when he was eight years old. I don't think I've ever forgiven myself for that day. Maybe that's why I'm as bitter as they say I am. But that was never my intention — it's never anyone's intention to lose everything important to them, but it happens. And one day you find yourself on a rickety old boat trying to escape the only place you've ever known, living vicariously through a young boy and his leather journal. It's not like I have anything to live for when we reach wherever we're going. I feel almost guilty for taking up the room.

* * * * *

Today, everyone is yelling at each other to throw as much as they can overboard. The young girl with the baby jumped in the water last night. If I weren't such a coward, maybe I'd jump into the water, too. But I'm scared, just like everyone else. This is no way to live — scared, I mean. But things wouldn't have been any better back home, not with people barging into your home during the night, forcing you to live out your worst nightmares. And don't even think about hesitating for a second, or they'll have you bleeding until there isn't anything left of you. I left mostly because I feared becoming one of them, hurting others, which I'm sure would have happened had I stayed. You know that saying, "If you can't beat them, join them!". No, I'd rather leave it up to the sea to decide how my life is going to go.

* * * * *

I finally asked the boy who he's been writing to. He told me it was a girl he loved. I told him that she'd never see it. He said, "I know". I half expected him to fight me on it, saying how we were going to make it and that she wouldn't be far behind him on the next boat. I guess he's too old for that kind of optimistic faith. Everyone started hounding him about throwing that old leather thing into the sea, so I asked him to write my name in it. "It's long," I warned. I guess I hoped the ocean might add something to it, give it some meaning, since I'd failed at that. But the kid doesn't know how meaningless the name is, so I said it real confident: "Justin Moise Andre Nozius Joseph Frank Osnac Maximilien". I added the "Joseph Frank" for my son. I watched the kid throw the notebook into the waves. Quite an arm that kid has. It's a shame; he really could have been somebody.

* * * * *

I watched the captain fill up another hole with tar today. He really had to scrape the jar empty. If I wasn't so old, I'd get down and help him, but I've worked too many days of my life. And the way I see it, I don't have many days left, and I'm not going to spend them on my hands and knees covered in tar.

* * * * *

Last night I had a dream that a Coast Guard ship was coming to save us. I woke up in a sweat. That's when I realized I was almost hoping we didn't make it. I'd stepped on this boat with the same plan as everyone else - to get away. But now I realize that going to another place won't get me away from what I've been running from. Maybe I got on the boat with the expectation of death. Of course I feel guilty because all of these other people have to go down with me, but I've been drowning in my thoughts for all these years, so I should be used to that feeling. Maybe when the boat goes down, I'll finally be free. All I've ever really wanted is to be reunited with my son and my wife. I know they're waiting out there for me.

* * * * *

The author of this personal narrative about nature successfully employs figurative language and imagery to convey her story, develop her message, and connect with her audience.

A Simple Life is the Best Life

Jessi Bugden

The sun beat down on my back, darkening my skin by the minute. I look up at the bright, baby blue sky filled with the perfect amount of pillow clouds that let the gleaming light shine through. In my hands is a basket full of blueberries, the sweetest, juiciest blueberries that anyone has ever tasted. To my left is a vast stretch of green land that serves as a home as well as dinner for the inhabiting cows. Right next to them, I observe a mother goat nursing her newly born kid, which is struggling to stand on his quivering, young legs. In the other direction, I notice the pigs in the very pen that my friends and I spent tireless hours repairing so that they would have a big palace to live in. The view takes my breath away as I gaze out ahead. Beautiful, old oak and maple trees cover the land and emit their wisdom through the passing breeze. A rainbow of blossoming flowers decorates the ground in between. In the distance, I can see the Nature Center as well as the clay oven. These are the two greatest accomplishments of my last three years. As I sit here snacking on the succulent blueberries, I cannot help but glow with happiness at the simple beauty that surrounds me.

The life I just described was the life I lived for the four summers that I spent working on my local organic farm. From the ages of twelve to sixteen, I spent my summer vacations working as a part of the Teen Work Crew, an eclectic group of thirteen young individuals who all had a passion for the earth, animals, and simple, natural living. Every morning we rose with the sun. In order to avoid the brutal heat of the day, we got an early start and broke for lunch when the sun was at its harshest. Each morning we gathered in the dew-soaked fields and discussed the tasks of the day. Assignments could range from feeding the animals to nurturing the vegetable rows. We harvested the aforementioned mouthwatering berries, split wood for the sugar shack, repaired pasture fence posts, worked on the clay oven, and continued to build the Nature Center, which is a building used for classes to educate young children about nature and farming. Our summer program was very task-driven, and we always had specific projects to work on.

But on the farm, there was always more to be done year round. I visited it in the winter as well, as one of many volunteers, and spent my afternoons working in the sugar shack. We drove around the town in search of the shiny aluminum buckets hanging off the old maple trees. The sap collected was brought right back to the farm and made into maple syrup. I have yet to find any scent that comes close to the rich, warm, and sweet aroma that overwhelms that sugar shack on a bitter winter's day.

Years later, as I recall my efforts on the farm, what sticks out most in my mind is working on the clay oven and on the Nature Center. The clay oven was my first assignment, and I put my heart into it. I, along with my crewmates, spent long, exhausting days mixing together an all-natural blend of clay, soil, and water that was used as cement. As the clay blend ran slowly through my fingers, the strong, earthy aroma hit my nostrils, and I felt myself holding on to that moment, savoring the raw connection with the natural world. The process was not easy and required some trial and error before we managed to form the dome-shaped oven without the clay collapsing. After a few weeks of hard work and continuous shaping and layering of the clay, the oven was complete. It had been challenging, yes, but I felt more accomplished than I ever had, and with that first bite of whole wheat pizza covered in freshly-picked vegetables, herbs,

and homemade goat cheese, the reward was even greater than I had imagined. It was the most delicious pizza that had ever touched my lips, and it was produced by using not only handmade and homegrown products, but also by using a homemade oven to cook it. Knowing this made us appreciate all that we had done, and we hoped that future farm visitors would be able to enjoy the same delectable pizza for years to come.

In the following weeks, we started constructing the Nature Center. The building was also assembled with natural materials - mainly a Daub, made of clay, hay, water, and soil, which replaced the more traditional, yet artificial drywall. We constructed it using our own hands and without power tools. We started by forming the foundation and slowly worked our way up the frame and the walls. With just our small crew of teenagers working without the aid of modern tools, the process was bound to take a long time. Two years and countless muscle aches later, the roof was raised, but it took an additional two years to finish the complete Nature Center. Looking at that spectacular structure after having put years of blood, sweat, and tears into it was incredibly rewarding. That building will stand for many years to come, serving as a place of education for young children, and I take great pride in knowing that I was a part of making it happen.

* * * * *

My days on the farm reminded me of a simpler time, a happier time when people did not need high-tech cell phones and elaborate runway-inspired outfits in order to be happy. I imagined a simple life when people grew their own food, built their own properties, and lived fulfilling lives with a sense of self-accomplishment. I found myself daydreaming about those times as I went about my exciting and meaningful daily routine on the farm. Every time I built something using all-natural materials and methods, every time I went out to the fields and picked fresh, organic vegetables for lunch, every time I sat down during a work break and felt the wind blow and heard only the sounds of nature, I reflected on my life and how different and more down-to-earth life must have been like in the past before all of the modern amenities existed.

Today, so much has changed. Many of the earth-related ethics found in the roots of this great nation, ethics that I came to embrace during my time on the farm, have been engulfed by the large acidic clouds that go with this materialistic, technology-focused society in which we live. This is not to say that I do not enjoy listening to my iPod or texting my friends, but I certainly believe there is something to be said about a world without all of the distractions - a world in which one can listen to the song of the birds singing and the wind blowing rather than the noise of blaring music all of the time. I desire a world where people have conversations without texting and other distractions, for then they would be fully focused on what is going on right in front of them.

But people are less concerned about where things come from and how they are made and tend to focus on being able to have them. They pass up the fresh, juicy berries that come from the local organic farm or even a backyard garden and instead choose the plastic box of half-ripened, chemically sprayed berries that do not even compare. People would rather take the easy way out and purchase a processed, greasy pizza that resembles an oily piece of cardboard more than it does food, than take the time to gather simple, fresh vegetables and cheeses and make an infinitely healthier and more appealing pizza that can actually be considered a nutritious meal. It is rare to find a house or even a barn that people built themselves with all-natural, earth-friendly materials and by using minimal tools and their own two hands. People have become too caught up in the hustle and bustle of their meaningless routines that they no longer stop and appreciate the simple things in life that exist without all of the distractions found on the technological and image-conscious forefronts of today's society.

If my days on the farm taught me nothing else, although believe me they did, they taught me the importance of staying grounded. By this I mean that I avoid moving through life too quickly and getting caught up in a superficial lifestyle. What does it matter who designed your handbag? Who cares where you purchased your makeup or how expensive

your haircut was? Why buy fruits and vegetables in the summertime that have been shipped thousands of miles from the chain grocery store when you can shop at a local market or grow your own organic garden in your backyard or neighborhood? Why distract yourself by bringing an iPod with you outside to run when you have the perfect chance to immerse yourself in the earth's sounds and connect your senses with your natural surroundings? We, as a culture, need to spend time away from technology and the fast pace of society. Slow down. Feel the breeze. Smell the flowers and the dew. Hear the birds. Listen to the flowing river and the crashing waterfall. Just be.

The days I spent working on the farm were some of the happiest of my life. I was surrounded by my closest friends, the farm animals, and all that nature had to offer. There was nothing false about it. Not only were there no pesticides or use of artificial products, but also, unlike society, nature does not lie. When the sky darkened, it likely rained. When the sun shined, it was a bright, happy day. While people can wear a mask and hide themselves behind their jobs or their fancy clothes, nature offers a source of connection and truth. I value my years at the community organic farm more than I value any experience. My time there helped to shape me as a person and allowed me to get in touch with my true values. If everyone had a chance to have an experience like mine, I believe society would be different. People would be more apt to appreciate the simple things and would be able to better connect with their natural surroundings. This connection creates a sense of peace and serenity and allows people to reflect on and get in better touch with their inner selves.

Though the themes of discord and disillusionment are apparent, the speaker of this poem ends with notes of hope and solidarity, thereby successfully connecting important first year seminar themes – diversity and social justice – in poetic form.

America The Ugly

Natalie Jersak

They say America is a place for dreams,
A safe haven from persecution and despair,
A country filled with opportunity.

They say America stands for equality and justice
Where no one is judged based on **Their** skin,
The place **They** call home, or **Their** money.

Others say America needs change
To become the place **They** say we are.
Free from poverty, isms, and injustice.

Others say America is an illusion,
A word with a false connotation
Spread to those who know no better.

I say America is broken.
Begging for a chance to be
What **They** say we can be.

I say America praises **Them**,
Degrades **Others**,
And needs to transform into **WE**.

For this assignment, the students were asked to take on the persona of a persecuted figure and to create a fictional narrative using documented historical references. This writer creates several journal entries for an imagined Irish-Catholic female who experiences the turbulent times in Northern Ireland toward the end of the twentieth century.

Life of a Roman Catholic in Northern Ireland, 1970–1990

Brianna St. Amour

I was born on August 12th, 1959, seven years before a Catholic store owner was shot in my hometown in Belfast and exactly ten years to the day before the outbreak of the Battle of Bogside in Derry, on the other side of the country. At ten years old, I witnessed the beginnings of the Troubles. When demonstrations of civil disobedience, such as sit-ins to protest unfair housing in the county of Tyrone failed, my people, the Irish Catholics from Belfast all the way to Derry and back, felt threatened enough to use violence. And thus, the Troubles erupted. There is still instability in Northern Ireland now, a decade into the 21st century.

In 1972, over 500 people lost their lives due to the violence throughout the country. The Protestants and Catholics all suffered substantial loss during this time. The Protestants blame the IRA for the rise of violence, but the IRA was simply protecting our faith and our rights that the government had taken away from us. The government did not respect our civil or political rights like they did for the Protestants. The Falls Curfew of 1970 is a perfect example. Incidents like this fueled all of the violence that has followed. The British Army came very near my home on Falls Road in Belfast. After going through extensive weapon searches, the Army imposed a curfew on the town. For thirty-six hours, the British Army enforced the curfew, and four civilians were killed and sixty injured by the two sides. The persecution of the Catholics in Belfast sparked the curfew and then the violence, with the IRA protecting our rights as Irish citizens, and as Catholics (“Provisional IRA,” 2007).

Throughout 1972, our right to own homes, have jobs, and participate as citizens in our country were all taken away, and violence was all too common. In January 1973, my next door neighbour and best friend, Claire, and her family were removed from their house. It was only about a week after Christmas, January 3rd. Claire and I were both thirteen years old. I was walking across the yard from Claire’s house, planning to get ready for bed, when a car drove through the puddle on the street, startling me. I ducked behind the bushes in our yard and watched from behind the hedge. My father came out, hid behind the bushes with me, and put his hand on my shoulder. We saw the men from the car break open Claire’s front door. One grabbed Claire’s father and pulled him outside yelling, “Get the rest of your family and get out. Another family needs this house.” Claire’s father said nothing and didn’t move. The man from the car got angry. “Go!” My father’s grip on my shoulder tightened, and I started to cry as it started to rain again. If my father was scared, then I knew this was bad. My father was never scared.

I watched as Claire’s father turned around and walked back into the house. The men from the car followed him. My father sat down in the grass, and I collapsed on his lap, silent tears running down my face. He wrapped his arms

around me, and we waited. Ten minutes later we heard them exiting the house. Claire's father led the way, and her mother was close behind with Claire's three younger sisters. Then Claire came out with her two older brothers. I gasped when I saw her. She was crying and carrying her favourite teddy bear and her brand new backpack. That was all she had. My father gently put his hand over my mouth and tried to stop my tears. Claire and her family got in the car with the two men and drove away. Once they were out of sight, my father lifted me up off the ground, and we walked into the house, his arm around my shoulders.

My mother ran to me from the kitchen table and hugged me, crying. My father walked over to my oldest brother Aidan and sat down next to him, nodding, like it was some unspoken language between them. My youngest sister was asleep in my older sister's arms. Aidan walked over to put on some tea for my father and me while my two younger sisters ran upstairs to get us some blankets. I had stopped crying by the time my mother let me go. I sat down at the table with the tea my brother had made. "When are Callie and Caitlin coming back?" asked my younger sister, Abigail. The twins, Claire's youngest siblings, were the same age as my sister. "They're not," I whispered as I looked at my mug. My father again put his hand on my shoulder. "It's time for bed," my father stated. I followed my older sister out of the kitchen and up the stairs. Aidan stayed behind in the kitchen. As we walked upstairs, I heard my father shut the door.

I couldn't sleep that night. I snuck out of the room I shared with my two younger sisters and tiptoed by my older sister's room where the baby was sleeping, too. I walked down the stairs and pressed my ear to the kitchen door. "We can't stay here. We need to go. Now." I heard my mother say this in a strained whisper. "This family is not going anywhere," my father said in his strong voice. No one dared to argue with him except my mother. "This isn't safe. What if we are next? The children already know there is something wrong. I don't care if we live in a shack, at least we will be safer and with the rest of our people." I didn't understand what that meant, "our people." The men in the car who drove away with Claire and her family, they weren't Irish? "They already know we are Catholic," Aidan said. What did that mean? That's why Claire couldn't live next door anymore? They are Catholic, too; we go to the same church. Then, I understood why my parents made me take off my Miraculous Medal, my symbol of strong Catholicism, when we went to the store. "We might as well do something about it," Aidan was talking again. "Let me go talk to some people. We can move and get together with everyone else. I'm not saying the IRA, but at least we would be able to do something about how unfair this is, instead of hiding our faith, and our family." Agreeing, my father stated strongly, "He's right. They won't let us live here much longer. We can't have this nice a house, especially in this neighborhood. Tomorrow, a Protestant family will move into the Fitzpatrick's house, and we will be the only ones left on the street. It's only a matter of time . . ." I whipped my head away from the door as I felt my sister's hand land on my shoulder. I looked at my feet and followed her up the stairs. "Get some sleep, everything will be okay," she told me as she lifted my blanket up to my chin. I fell asleep to the sound of rain on my window.

A week later, we moved into a small house on the other side of town. We were living like second class citizens, even though my father had a good job and made good money. He was respected in our community, yet we were forced to leave our home. We attended church in our new neighborhood, and it seemed that everyone was scared. Everyone was always scared.

My siblings and I had nightmares about the Shankill Butchers coming in and kidnapping us or our parents at night. We also had bad dreams about the bombings throughout our city of Belfast, especially the Catholic area we had moved to. The Butchers would break in and kidnap or even kill the Catholics who lived there. There was nothing anyone could do to protect themselves from the Butchers ("Murder," 2004). There were fights all the time. My father lost his job, and my mother kept us at home. We changed schools and went to a small, poor school just for Catholic children. Only eighteen, Aidan was always away, bringing back stories about fighting or protesting. My mother would

tell him, "Hush up. The children don't need to hear your stories." He would be gone again before we went to bed at night, and my mother would not put down her Rosary until he came home again. "The old IRA had been peaceful," I heard my father tell my mother one night when they thought we were all asleep. "The fighting has only increased, and it doesn't seem to be getting better. The protests I took part in when the children were young, those were safe, harmless. When I go out now, I come back fearing for my life." My father said that Aidan could be hurt if he was involved in one of the riots. "The Falls Curfew was only the beginning," my father said. The Curfew took place before we moved to Falls Road, but everyone else around us still remembers it. Four people were killed by the British troops. Now I understand why my mother prays. My sister and I pray with her, too, whenever Aidan leaves.

Many Irish Catholics like us have moved away. They cannot find work or keep their families safe in Belfast anymore. I'm always afraid that we might have to.

* * * * *

Bobby Sands, the former Commanding Officer of the IRA, has died. He was part of the Hunger Strike. I am twenty-one years old when we hear that he has died, and I am still living in Belfast with my husband, just next door to my parents. When we heard about the death of Bobby Sands, my mother and sisters all cried. My father, mother, brothers, and husband all attended his funeral. I stayed home with my sisters and my two children. The men came back home and said that over 100,000 people attended his funeral. It was a beautiful picture of the many people who are in our cause, living the same life we are (Biggart & Campbell, 2012).

We continue to live day-to-day. My husband often struggles to find a day's work; he is a construction worker, and very few people will hire him when he tells them where he lives. When they find out he is a Catholic, it is too risky for them to take a chance and hire him. But we get by.

It never gets much better. Everything the government tries seems to backfire or just makes our lives harder. The cease-fires don't last. The peace treaties don't last. The people who come in to try to help us are as corrupt as the British government that suppresses us because of our faith. We can't get jobs or live in nice houses, and our children cannot go to good schools - all because we are Catholics (Rossiter et al., 1998). My mother still never puts down her Rosary beads. I don't either. There is nothing else to do but pray for the safety of our own family.

* * * * *

The Belfast Agreement was signed on Good Friday in 1998. Things have been better since then. Less British army influence means less violence. We have our own government, so things are a bit more just for our people. But there is still prejudice, and still some violence. The prejudice is what affects my family the most ("IRA," 2005).

My children still cannot attend good schools. We still have to keep them safe. My husband still cannot keep a steady job, and he is getting too old to work in construction. When he has to retire, we don't know what we will be able to do. There is still an unspoken understanding throughout Belfast that it is dangerous to hire Catholics. It is bad for a business, people say. We try to take part. We try to be a part of Northern Ireland society. We have lived in this city for generations. We are a part of its history, but we are shut out of its present. We are still ostracized by society and contained in our Catholic community. We struggle, but we have managed to live safely together in the city we have always loved. That is more than many families like ours can say.

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This essay outlines two students' experiences as coordinators of an innovative international classroom. The authors passionately argue for this new learning model and include personal experience and scholarly research to support their position and their work. The writers' beliefs about social and collaborative learning are reinforced by the sharing of research and the co-authoring of the essay itself.

Technology and the Globalization of Education: An Approach to an International Classroom

By Kristin Devine and TaraMarie Crisafulli

If a large group of American people were asked to describe a classroom, it would most likely come up with the same answer. Most typical descriptions of classrooms include four walls, one teacher, many students, desks, tables, chairs, and books. When bringing technology into the globalization of education, the main obstacles include breaking away from this traditional classroom and creating a more universal, cross-cultural educational experience (Lindsay & Davis, 2012, p. 4-5, 14). In 2011-2012, Siena College's first year seminar course titled Technology and Social Change, paired with a Ghanaian-based non-profit organization called Teach on the Beach. We, the authors of this essay, worked as student coordinators to try and create an international classroom specifically between our Siena peers in first year seminar and the students of Teach on the Beach. Generating and sharing ideas came easily. The main concerns for us were figuring out and deciding what exactly our international classroom should look like and how we would create it. Through numerous meetings and constant exchanges of emails, texts, and Facebook messages, we created a list of goals and an ultimate plan for our international classroom. We aimed for a model that is potentially efficient, that will work for all classes, and that benefits the students of Siena College and the students in Ghana.

Teach on the Beach was officially founded in 2009 when originators Aaron Adler, Alison Hannon, Mike Wagner, and Aankit Patel began to teach in Habitat for Humanity houses on Busua Beach in Ghana. The leaders of this foundation believe that the solution to hardship and poverty is education and use several different approaches to underscore the importance of education, such as promoting education by sponsoring local children to go to school, encouraging the students to broaden their thoughts and perspectives through discussions on current events, and promoting the globalization of education through Skype sessions with other students around the world. The program began with approximately twenty students. All of them moved into houses, were educated on scholarships, and lived on funds that came from the founders' pockets. Teach on the Beach is currently seeing more successful days and hopes to provide the best learning opportunities. These opportunities come from collaboration with high school and college student volunteers from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The founders of Teach on the Beach strongly urge international and cross-cultural learning, a notion that is catching fire among many colleges and high schools.

As students of Professor Harden's first year seminar course at Siena College, we incorporated our work with Teach on the Beach into our curriculum. To take it a couple of steps further, we, Kristen Devine and TaraMarie Crisafulli, specifically worked on collaborations with Teach on the Beach and were the co-coordinators of the Siena side of this project. We did not know much of what we were getting into, but we quickly mapped out how to integrate the Ghanaian students into our curriculum through brainstorming and listing possibilities. After a few weeks of multiple

meetings, we set up a Skype session for the participating first year seminar sections and the Teach on the Beach students, and it lasted over four hours. During this time, we implemented some of the activities and exercises we had talked about the few weeks beforehand. Both groups of students discussed the novel *Unwind*, written by Neal Shusterman, which we had mailed to Ghana for the students to read. We, the Siena students, also participated in their News Hour program, which is an afterschool activity that most of the students willingly and fervently attend. For one hour, we watched Aljazeera network news, and then we discussed the current events addressed. It was very interesting to see how knowledgeable the Teach on the Beach students were about worldly events and how they were able to teach the Siena students, who were not as up to date. That moment alone exemplified what international classrooms should consist of and precisely why they are ideal.

According to the book *Flattening Classrooms, Engaging Minds: Move to Global Collaboration One Step at a Time* (2012), written by Julie Lindsay and Vicki Davis, in order to achieve such ideals, certain teaching styles and tools must be utilized and altered. International collaboration, the fueling force behind an international classroom, is a complete change to pedagogy and the traditional classroom. However, it caters to a generation of students who have a world of information at their fingertips and who are social learners. People learn from their peers, and an international classroom creates a learning environment that is peer-based. It brings many alterations to traditional forms of pedagogy, forcing educators to completely change their teaching techniques and styles. An international, peer-based learning facility is one that is based around projects that require students to collaborate with students all over the world. Project-based learning is the necessary step in a different direction from lesson plans and individual learning (Lindsay & Davis, 2012, p. 9-10, 23-24). Ultimately, an international classroom is one that does not limit students to their fellow classmates sitting in that same room; instead, it opens a door of opportunities by seeking collaborative help from students either a district away, or a country away. This alone goes beyond helping children complete projects. International classrooms allow different perspectives, widen paradigms, instill diversity, and prepare students for a morphing work force that is utilizing global collaboration.

Thus, the international classroom does not resemble a classroom of approximately twenty students, sitting in front of a teacher who lectures to them all day. It is a peer-based learning classroom consisting of collaborative projects rather than traditional lesson-plans. Such a model benefits Teach on the Beach students and Siena students because it caters to a generation of youth that learns socially and gives them the opportunity to learn in a hands-on environment (Webb & Mastergeorge, 2003, p. 362). The ethos of our generation is not accustomed to limits or restraints. As we can all see and understand, waiting and patience are things of the past. From Google and Facebook to tweeting and texting, it has become apparent that people want answers and information right away. This type of lifestyle is not limited to communication; it extends to education as well (Lindsay & Davis, 2012). Social media is the main staple of our communication. We already utilize Facebook and Skype as often as possible, so we in the first year seminar at Siena discussed using other tools in our educational collaboration with the students in Teach on the Beach, such as Twitter and Google+. After we researched the costs, the Teach on the Beach students created Twitter accounts. Students at Siena taught the students in Ghana how to use Twitter, thereby breaking down the walls between our classrooms through collaboration.

The idea of an international classroom parallels the Flat Classroom Project. A flat classroom is one with no walls and broadens its horizons by not limiting students to resources inside just one single, enclosed, classroom. Instead, a flat classroom utilizes an entire world of resources and encourages collaboration with students all over the globe. Our first year seminar's main goal was to deepen our relationship with Teach on the Beach by getting involved with other educational activities. We did this by creating a classroom in the broadest sense. We wanted the students of Siena and the students in the Teach on the Beach program to associate the word "classroom" with an image of a room the stretches around the world. Our collaborative program mirrored Lindsay & Davis' belief that someone two countries over

could be someone's teacher or classmate (2012, p. 4). We also worked to create an environment where more than one person holds all of the power within the classroom, where the students truly dictate education, and where there is less administration (Lindsay & Davis, 2012, p. 3). An international classroom is very much a "flat classroom," and it in no way limits a child to resources inside one small room with a select group of peers and one teacher.

As previously stated, we set up long and short term goals for our collaboration with Teach on the Beach. One important goal is to bring the Ghanaian students to Siena for a semester. We also plan to move past our class and utilize the model in other first year seminar classes and possibly even in other disciplinary core courses. But on a smaller scale, we mainly discussed and tested ways to integrate Teach on the Beach and global collaboration into our own course. For example, we placed the Teach on the Beach students into our own learning groups within first year seminar. Learning groups are groups of students who research a topic in which they are interested and report to the rest of the class the information obtained as well as any issues or problems they came across. The students learn about the different projects presented from one another. We also came up with an "on call" tutoring system, where one or two Siena students will be online during a certain time frame and offering help to the Ghana students in whatever subject is needed.

We, too, learned from the Teach on the Beach students and encouraged suggestions. During our Skype session when we were discussing the novel *Unwind*, the Ghanaian students recommended a different book to us, which made us consider beginning a book club. When collaborating with Teach on the Beach, we intend to instill certain principles with the students and administration involved. It is important that all of the students are motivated enough to take control of their education. In order to do well and get as much out of an experience as possible, people must take control of themselves and help those around them. Whatever we do accomplish in this collaboration, we want to make sure we practice and instill the principles of leadership, social justice, diversity, and global awareness.

Working hands-on with such a project has resulted in a couple of pitfalls and issues that are constantly being worked through and accommodated. For starters, Oscar Mayorga of the Damietta Cross-Cultural Center at Siena College wanted to be sure that the first year seminar students treated all of the Ghanaian students like friends and equals. Mr. Mayorga showed us how to avoid behaviors that could make the Ghana students feel like outsiders or even zoo animals. This requires complete understanding of each other and an understanding of the situation. Another issue we continue to work through concerns our differences. We are discovering ways to level the playing fields of our two differing curriculums and ways of learning. We also are always working on how to better collaborate with one another. For example, the students in our first year seminar section have experienced the importance of personal wiki pages. In our collaboration with Teach on a Beach, the wiki pages could work as a dumping ground for research information, allowing all students to share their findings. However, a major pitfall we have encountered is faulty internet service. Some days our Skype sessions to Ghana have worked perfectly, and other days we could not understand each other at all. Keeping these technical difficulties in mind, how do we integrate Siena students into the Teach on the Beach News Hour? We have been discussing ways to accommodate the time difference and to find a steady way of discussing the events in the news. Yet because the Ghanaians access social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter through their cell phones, funding their internet access has been a challenge.

Through the utilization of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wiki pages, Sykpe, blogs, and Google tools, our curriculum models will provide a foundation for students to learn collaboratively and efficiently. We want to keep in tandem with our own learning objectives, which ultimately include students understanding their roles within the global community, students being able to demonstrate leadership, and students having an understanding of social justice and diversity. Due to technology, the educational field is rapidly changing, and these changes are being made in order to accommodate a new way of learning demonstrated by a new generation of digitally-involved

individuals. Without an essential shift toward international and cross-cultural collaboration in the schooling system, students who spend years studying and learning to prepare themselves for the work force will hardly be able to compete without these essential skills. Technology is altering every aspect of life in monumental, phenomenal ways. If the educational system does not provide the necessary skills and proficiencies for people to survive and develop in this advanced world, what will become of its integrity and importance?

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The writer of this research essay elucidates the challenges of being fit and healthy as a first-year college student. She meticulously outlines the various factors and includes excellent scholarly research to substantiate her claims. The writer also inserts her own relevant observations and experiences, demonstrating genuine concern and interest in the topic itself.

Physical Fitness and Well-Being in College Students: A Review of Challenges to Staying Fit in College

By Kristina Igoe

College students today constantly throw around the phrase “the freshmen fifteen,” and numerous first year college students come home on break and have to face the criticism of relatives and family about their obvious weight gain. The all-you-can-eat buffet every single meal, every single day, has an effect on a number of students. Some credit the lack of physical fitness to a failure of the colleges themselves for not making an effort to provide students with adequate resources or awareness regarding wellness. For instance, many institutions, including Siena College, do not provide any type of gym orientation to educate students who have never before exercised on their own in a gym facility. The students possibly have little knowledge of how to use the equipment and machines properly. Although college campuses should make improvements concerning the health of their students, I believe that the main factor for changes in fitness in college is a product of the various changes in living environment and social influences such as peers, lack of sleep and stress on college students.

Physical fitness and wellness have complex definitions. These two concepts embody not only the physical aspect of health, but numerous dimensions such as social, emotional and intellectual wellness. According to physical culture instructors J. K. Pavan and N. Ramesh (2011), “physical fitness comprises two related concepts: general fitness (a state of health and well-being) and specific fitness (a task-oriented definition based on the ability to perform specific aspects of sports or occupations)” (p. 37). In other words, physical fitness encompasses both exercise/ physical activity and health/well-being. For example, a physically fit individual may work out by running three miles a day yet also considers other areas of his or her life significant like spirituality, for which he or she goes to a daily mass. In terms of wellness, Pavan and Ramesh (2011) define this concept as “a healthy balance of the mind, body and spirit that results in an overall feeling of well-being” (p. 37). The well-known proverb, “a sound mind, a sound body,” or the delicate balance between spirit, body and mind, defines wellness. Prior to entering college, many students have never received suggestions on how to implement these definitions of physical fitness and wellness into their lives, and oftentimes, the schools don’t help.

Colleges have not carried out their responsibility in terms of assisting students and helping them stay fit. Colleges do not provide adequate education to raise awareness and emphasize the importance of staying physically fit. An article by psychologists Jennifer Waldron and Rodney Dieser (2010) provides statistical evidence for this case, declaring that “only 37.5% of college students stated they had received information about physical fitness and 31.3% obtained information about nutrition by their college or university” (p. 66). These low percentages indicate how colleges do a poor job at educating and assisting students as they strive to have healthy lifestyles, ultimately playing a negative role in their physical fitness.

Many sources confirm the need for college educational programs that address health concerns. According to psychologists Waldron and Dieser (2010), “colleges and universities can do a better job in education and promoting healthy lifestyles in students” (p. 77). These authors echo the argument that colleges should take a more active role in helping students stay fit and providing them with the means to do so. They also believe “campuses should create meaningful opportunities to become involved in student organizations focused on health and wellness” (p. 77). It is not enough to simply throw the facts and information at the students; the colleges must take a proactive role and take their actions one step further. Holly Anne Haring, Kara Montgomery and James Hardin (2010) suggest one way for schools to take their actions to the next level, stating, “we suggest that college health professionals continue their work on body image and weight management programming while incorporating both exercise and nutrition components” (p. 48). Colleges can become more proactive by implementing body image and weight management programs through avenues such as lecture series, information sessions or semester courses. These programs would go beyond simply presenting the facts to the students and would suggest specific areas and ways to implement the information. It is imperative for colleges to take action in order to reduce weight gain and create healthier youth. Professors Xiafen Deng Keating and Jianmin Guan (2005) reiterate this idea stating that “health professionals in higher education urgently need to act on this issue” (p. 117). Poor physical fitness and wellness will remain a problem amongst college students unless a conscious and proactive effort is made to do something.

In addition to not providing adequate resources and programs to assist students in their understanding of the importance of health and physical fitness, colleges do not stress the importance of nutrition and maintaining a healthy diet. Waldron and Dieser (2010) say “only 6.7% of college students eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day” (p. 66). Such research helps to illustrate students’ poor nutritional habits and colleges’ poor effort in placing emphasis on nutrition and healthy habits. However, despite the need for colleges themselves to execute alternate methods of helping students to be physically healthy, the main factors influencing students’ health are social and environmental changes.

The living arrangements, college atmosphere and social influences on college students cause them to experience change in physical and emotional fitness. As students enter college, few of them have encountered the new environmental and social realities. For example, they now have to live in close quarters with other people and share their space with one or more roommates who may have completely different habits or tendencies. “Researchers found that the living environment had an influence on student physical activity” (Keating and Guan, 2005, p. 121). The change in living arrangements plays a role in students’ change in physical and emotional fitness. Assistant professor of Nutritional Science Daniel Hoffman and Registered Dietician Peggy Policastro (2006) also detail the effects of this social atmospheric change:

College students face a number of health issues, such as the common cold, sexually transmitted diseases, alcohol abuse, and chronic diseases, on a daily basis. Many environmental and social forces act on students and cause them to behave in specific manners, especially when it comes to food, drinking and exercise choices. These influences can have lasting effects on body weight and health. (p. 41)

Not only do college students need to adjust to the different tendencies of their roommates, but they also need to establish their own opinions and views on social activities such as drinking. The environmental and social influences on students cause changes in priorities and behaviors which could eventually lead to serious effects on health. Frequently, due to the feeling of uncertainty in a new place, students allow environmental and social forces to affect their behaviors. Peer pressure becomes a glaring reality within the college campus setting and can alter students’ perceptions on physical fitness and health.

The transition into college and change in daily routine presents another challenge to remaining physically fit. Authors Harring et. al (2010) point out that “the college years are a time of transition for many young adults, since this is the first time that most are living away from home” (p. 43). The shock of the newness of college can impact students’ motivation for, and attention to, physical fitness. According to a *TIME* magazine article, “life changes provide an occasion to blow up the old rules and not create new ones in their place; this is especially true when it comes to staying fit” (Gupta, 2008, p. 1). A new college environment provides the challenge of re-creating and re-establishing old habits. The transition can delay the formation of healthy habits such as exercising and eating well.

Friends and other means of support can also affect students’ attitude concerning health and wellness. Peers can greatly influence as well as justify the decisions and choices of one another. For example, if two friends had planned to work out after dinner, but one of them backs out saying that he or she is too tired, the other friend is likely to follow his or her example and choose not to go to the gym. I have seen this occur on numerous occasions with my friends. It is easy to come up with an excuse for not going to the gym, and excuses tend to catch and spread like wildfire amongst peers. Professors Keating and Guan (2005) comment on this issue, stating, “researchers reported that social support was a significant contributor to physical activity for both male and female students” (p. 120). In order to accomplish many tasks, especially those relative to physical activity and exercise, support and encouragement serve as necessary resources. If handled appropriately, positive peer pressure can result from peer influence. For instance, when one student focuses on eating healthy and watching his or her weight, this behavior could translate to the lives of those around him or her. Harring et. al (2010) detail the effects of positive peer influence and open communication:

These findings suggest that close friends may have an influence on weight control behavior. Thus, an effective strategy for college health professionals to diversify their weight management programming may be to openly communicate with students in their peer groups . . . [T]hrough this targeted communication, students can learn appropriate weight management strategies and also become aware of health consequences with unhealthy dieting behaviors. (p. 47)

These researchers recommend college programs that encourage students to talk amongst themselves in order to gain a better understanding of strategies and ways to stay physically fit. Friends and peers within the campus environment can influence one another’s attitudes regarding wellness and physical fitness.

Another living environment and social factor that affects student health and energy to exercise includes lack of sleep. Before the midpoint of the semester, the majority of college students would admit to exhaustion and lack of sleep. Silence fills many early morning classrooms as students attempt to keep their eyelids open. According to “Facts about Sleep” (2010) from the National Institute of Health, “college students are one of the most sleep-deprived populations” (para.1). The college environment encourages student involvement in endless activities and events from clubs and intramurals to fundraisers and service. However, this involvement frequently results in busyness and lack of time to do school work, to rest and to sleep. Lack of sleep negatively impacts many areas of health: “Sleep deprivation hinders your ability to perform complex cognitive tasks like those required on exams. And it is unlikely that you will retain much information that you study while sleep-deprived” (“Facts about Sleep,” 2010). Students believe that mental exhaustion and physical exhaustion are the same because they feel similar. If students are mentally tired, they think they have no physical energy to work out. What they do not realize is that they would actually feel less tired after going to the gym. Not only does sleep deprivation drain energy, it reduces concentration and ability to retain information. Sleep helps students achieve healthy bodies and stay physically fit. “Regular and restful sleep is essential for good health. Sleep helps you feel less stressed and even helps you to maintain a healthy diet” (“Facts about Sleep,” 2010). In order to accomplish healthy nutrition and exercise habits, a key factor includes prioritizing sleep. Because of the environmental and social factors on a college campus, lack of sleep negatively affects students’ well being and physical fitness.

The increase in stress levels due to new academic responsibilities and workloads is an additional factor that affects college students' health and well being. College presents a different kind of schoolwork, which oftentimes feels overwhelming and unfamiliar to new students, causing them to feel stressed out. Physical therapist Cynthia Ferrara (2009) argues that one way to handle stress involves staying physically fit, explaining that "adopting a healthy lifestyle may help college students to deal more effectively and positively with daily stresses and reduce their risk of obesity-related disorders" (p. 25-26). Ferrara outlines the benefits of a healthy lifestyle which include reducing stress and lowering risks of obesity. Harring et. al (2010) outline the correlation between stress and unhealthy eating habits:

Research on stress and food consumption suggests that continual work stress is associated with greater energy consumption, specifically increased saturated fat and sugar intake and weight gain among restrained eaters. Furthermore, social situations perceived to be stressful lead to increased consumption of foods that are higher in fat, sugar and overall more energy dense. (p. 44)

Stressors contribute to overeating, which in turn affects students' nutrition and health. Thus, the factor of stress associated with the college workload and change in the environment also plays a part in the physical fitness of students.

Students have to choose their own meals and decide for themselves what to eat from the dining hall, which frequently impacts their nutrition and health. In my own personal experience at Siena, I was not even aware that the dining services provided a nutrition fact sheet with a calorie count and other nutritional information until I looked very closely at the fine print on the displays. Colleges need to take fitness and nutrition education to a higher level. Instead of simply providing the information, they need to make these facts more prominent so students don't have to search for them. Unless the colleges make a drastic and dramatic effort and acts in a more proactive way, this will remain an issue. Authors Waldron and Dieser (2010) provide the response of one student on how university life interferes with eating healthily. The student comments, "How healthy can college kids be? I try to eat healthy. I mean the best that I can . . . college kids do not go to a grocery store and pick healthy foods out. They're going to grab pizza, macaroni that's easy to make and can eat right away" (p. 73). The fact that students have the power to easily access unhealthy foods every day from an all-you-can-eat buffet impacts their ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Harring et. al (2010) address the issue, detailing, "independent meal planning is a challenge with which young adults are faced in college, and eating habits formed in college often continue into adulthood" (p. 47). Many students have never had to decide for themselves what to eat for meals before coming to college. Psychologist Laura P. Womble (2001) emphasizes the problem:

Nutrition is also a problem with college students. Students may have difficulty finding the time to cook adequate meals. Most students are just learning to live on their own, and learning to cook can prove to be a challenge. Finding time to go to the grocery store once every couple of weeks can be a demanding task. Little storage space is available in the average dorm room, and food storage may not be possible at all. (p. 8)

Womble sheds light on the issue and explains challenges students face in eating healthily that relate to environmental factors on the college campus. Again, the environmental factors of college life as well as the newness of independent meal planning impact the health and nutrition of students.

The campus activities and social events serve as a last factor that affects the physical fitness and wellness of students. Drinking is a reality and to some students, an essential part of college life. According to a survey conducted and posted under "Alcohol and College Students Drinking Fact Sheet" (2012), "Seventy-two percent of college students report that they used alcohol at least once within the past 30 days" (para.1). Siena's social atmosphere encourages drinking as a social activity just like the majority of colleges. However, Siena incorporates a permissive attitude towards drinking as seen at faculty events where wine plays a role any time after 4pm. Drinking can negatively impact the health and well-being of students. However, many fail to recognize the impact that drinking and other social behaviors have on

their ability to have a healthy lifestyle. One of the most prominent factors that affect the physical fitness and well-being of students is the social life on campus.

Social events, living accommodations, transition into new routines, lack of sleep, stress, independent meal planning and peer groups serve as environmental and social factors that have an impact on the wellness, health, physical activity and fitness of college students. Some responsibility falls onto colleges for not taking a stance and acting in a proactive manner to address this problem. For example, many colleges do not provide adequate education that raises awareness and emphasizes the importance of staying physically fit. However, the environmental and social influences play the largest role in fitness of college students. Keating and Guan (2005) emphasize the significance and gravity of this topic: “[F]irst, the prevalence of physical inactivity among college students calls for immediate action. *Healthy Campus 2010* identifies physical inactivity as 1 of the 6 priority health risk behaviors for college populations” (p. 117). The future of this country rests on young students; therefore, we must take urgent action to better their physical fitness and wellness.

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Using MLA format for this annotated bibliography, the writer summarizes each source and carefully considers how and why he might use it to promote or to dispute his thesis for a research project on an infamous financial scandal.

Annotated Bibliography (for research project on Bernie Madoff)

By Greg Laubenstein

Henriques, Diana B. "The Lasting Shadow of Bernie Madoff." *Nytimes.com*. The New York Times, 10 Dec. 2011. Web. 19 Feb. 2012.

I) In this article, Henriques describes the lasting impact that the Madoff scheme had on investors. She explains multiple situations in which attempts were made to recover damages that the victims had suffered. The article distinguishes the differences between direct investors and people who put their money in the hands of intermediate funds, who in turn, invested that money into the Madoff fund. Although both groups suffered losses, Henriques describes how the indirect investors were faced with the greatest disadvantage, for they were not labeled as clients of Madoff because they worked through another source. As a result of this, they could not recover the immense losses that they suffered.

II) This newspaper article fits in well with my research topic, for it provides a number of different perspectives on the situations that clients, investors, and fund organizers all faced. I will use it in my paper by assessing the varying viewpoints of victims and how their views relate to the effects of the scheme. For example, the people who came out with net profits believed that they were entitled to their money. People who suffered millions of dollars in losses, however, held the idea that these people who came out on top should not be allowed to claim their "fictional profits." The controversy of the awarding of fraudulent profits is one that fits in well with my topic.

Kirtzman, Andrew. *Betrayal: The Life and Lies of Bernie Madoff*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010. *Books.google.com*. Web. 22 Feb. 2012.

I) Andrew Kirtzman's book offers great insight into the planning, creation, execution, and the eventual downfall of Bernie Madoff's historic Ponzi scheme. The story explains how Madoff remained so anonymous, regardless of the fact that he ran one of the most extensive, lucrative hedge funds in the world. Kirtzman also goes into detail on the drastic effects that the scheme had on the members involved, whether it be for immense gains or devastating losses of entire life savings. He describes the involvement of close friends and family members, whether their actions were intentional or they were simply unknowingly lured into the trap that was defrauding thousands of people.

II) The book includes a number of examples displaying and explaining the anonymity of Bernie Madoff and his grand investment scheme. A portion of the book that I will most frequently refer to includes a chapter that specifically addresses Madoff's anonymity. For example, the author describes a scene in which one of the leading hedge fund investigators, Michael Ocrant, meets Frank Casey (who was, at the time, one of the few people who knew of Madoff). Casey made a bet with Ocrant that he did not even know of the "biggest hedge fund in the world" (145). When asked about

Madoff, Ocrant was completely unaware that he had been running a hedge fund. This scene, similar to many others described in the story, helps to portray exactly how secretly and anonymously Madoff conducted his business.

Lewis, Lionel S. "How Madoff Did It: Victims' Accounts." *Society* 48.1 (2011): 70-76. Web. 16 Feb. 2012.

I) The author of this scholarly journal article talks about the elusiveness and mystique that surrounded Bernie Madoff. The author ties in personal accounts of victims, which help to portray the deceitfulness and confidence that Madoff maintained. The accounts describe in great detail how and why they were persuaded to follow Madoff's revolutionary financing methodology. He convinced thousands of competent clients that he provided the safest and most lucrative source of investment. One of the victims mentions that the great deal of confidence that Madoff possessed actually transferred to him as an investor.

II) I specifically chose this article because it contains a section dedicated to the American Dream, "In Pursuit of the American Dream." This is extremely relevant to our main class topic as well as to my personal research topic. It discusses how Madoff relates to the character Jay Gatsby (from *The Great Gatsby*) and how both of them obsessively pursued the "American Dream." I believe that this is a perfect scholarly article to tie into my paper, for it will help me to explain what the main goal of Madoff was and how that goal was tied to his (any many others') version of the American Dream.

"The Madoff Affair." *PBS*. WGBH, Boston. 12 May. 2009. Television.

I) This documentary provides insight into some of the behind the scene activities that occurred throughout Madoff's career. It includes a multitude of interviews that help viewers to understand exactly what occurred in the scandal and how Madoff operated his securities firm. His former colleagues help to display Madoff's elusiveness by explaining how unaware they were of the situation and how secretive he remained throughout the entirety of the scheme.

II) The alternative perspectives included in this documentary will definitely be useful for my research paper. It offers multiple perspectives from primary sources - some who were actually involved in the scheme themselves. I will use a number of different quotations from Michael Bienes, who was one of the original accountants at the Madoff securities firm. His insight will provide evidence of how good Madoff was at remaining anonymous to basically everyone.

Madoff, Bernie. "The Madoff Tapes." *New York Magazine*. 27 Feb. 2011. Web. 16 Feb. 2012.

I) In this interview, Bernie Madoff discusses a number of different topics, including the response of the public to his actions, his feelings on the matter, and his family members' perceptions. Madoff offers his wide range of opinions, as well as his thoughts on the banks that were used. He mentions that he assumes all responsibility for the scheme, although this is highly unlikely due to the amount of investors involved.

II) This interview will fit in well with my research paper. It is the first of my sources that give direct insight into Bernie Madoff's personal feelings and thoughts on various matters related to my topic. I will definitely use Madoff's views as a reference point and compare them to that of accountants, family members, and victims of the scandal. This will provide an alternative view, and one that will help to develop a paper that incorporates many diverse opinions.

Picard, Irving H. *The Madoff Recovery Initiative*. SIPA Liquidation, 15 Feb. 2012. Web. 22 Feb. 2012.

I) The “Madoff Recovery Initiative” website contains very recently updated statistics and facts relevant to the claims and recovery of money lost through the scheme. It includes numerical figures that represent the ongoing process of reimbursing victims of the Madoff crimes. The website also includes statements, actions, and court filings in relation to the monetary losses that thousands of people suffered.

II) This website provides a great deal of statistical data that relates to the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme. I will use the information to help accurately and effectively discuss exactly how much money was poured into the fraudulent investment scheme. I believe that the figures will provide the reader with a clearer idea of just how devastating and costly this scheme actually was.

Stanks, Edward. Personal Interview. 25 Feb. 2012.

I) My interview with Edward Stanks (CPA) revealed information about ethical business practices related to Madoff’s Ponzi scheme. He emphasized the fact that he found it hard to believe that out of all the accountants involved with the scheme, not one of them realized that something illicit was going on. As a CPA, he understands that the heads of companies and funds, typically remain “under the radar,” but the fact that it went on for over a decade, with hundreds of different accountants, he does not understand how the numbers that they were provided with were believable in any scenario.

II) I will definitely be using the opinion given during this interview. I agree one hundred percent that there is no way that a decade-plus long scheme would go unnoticed by every single one of the accountants involved. Although Madoff claims sole responsibility for the scandal, I do not think it could have been accomplished on such a large a scale if it were only Madoff involved. The difference between Madoff’s view and that of Bienes’ will provide a good source of contrasting ideas for my research paper.

Inspired by a lecture on campus, this writer pursued additional research on the topic of LGBTQ homelessness for his final project. The problem is clearly identified and substantiated with a variety of credible sources. The student author also draws rational conclusions and alludes to plausible solutions.

LGBTQ Homelessness: An Unknown Epidemic

By Justin R. Rose

A variety of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Queer community (LGBTQ) concerns have entered public awareness within the last few decades. One of the most recent issues, bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity, has received great media attention. Several campaigns and policies have been implemented in order to address the problem of bullying, but harassment due to sexual orientation and gender identity is but one issue faced by the LGBTQ community. One important related issue has received an unacceptable amount of attention: many LGBTQ youth are homeless as a result of being forcibly ejected from their own homes by family members who refuse to accept them. With such little awareness and support, policies addressing the issue are outrageously low. It is vital to bring attention to this problem, for it affects an unexpectedly high number of LGBTQ youth and can lead to other serious issues such as drug abuse and even death.

The statistics pertaining to LGBTQ homelessness are staggering. Nearly 26% of LGBTQ children are forced from their homes upon revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity to their families (Ray, 2006). According to The Center for American Progress (2010), on average, children are forced from their homes at the age of 13.4 due to sexual orientation, and 12.5 years due to gender identity. In some instances, these children are removed by state intervention, or they must leave their homes due to physical, sexual, or verbal abuse stemming from unaccepting family environments. In 2010, it was estimated that 1.6 to 2.8 million homeless youth existed in the United States. Of these children, 20 to 40% consider themselves part of the LGBTQ community. This equates to roughly 0.32 to 1.12 million homeless LGBTQ youth. For many of these children, they have no choice but to turn to the streets because even extended family will not offer a hand. 78% of these children are again turned away from or are abused at foster care centers, forcing their return to the streets (Quintana, Rosenthal, Krehely, 2010). This lack of consistent support leads to dire consequences for these youth.

With nowhere to turn and without the support of a parent or legal guardian, homeless LGBTQ youth are likely to discontinue their education. Statistically, an LGBTQ homeless youth is twice as likely to drop out of school when compared to a heterosexual homeless youth (“Safe Horizon,” 2012). Without an educational background, steady, well-paid careers are practically out of reach for many of these children. Thus, many will be forced to continue through their entire lives without a proper home. Sadly, for some of these children, they will not live to reach adulthood.

Drug and alcohol abuse are commonplace among homeless LGBTQ youth. In five state-wide surveys held in Michigan, results indicated that 10 to 20% of homeless LGBTQ youth are identified as drug dependent, a much higher percentage than that of heterosexual youth (Ray, 2006). Many of the drugs used are illegal, highly potent drugs, such as heroin and cocaine. In 2007, 38,871 drug-induced deaths occurred in the U.S. alone (Paulozzi, 2011). No child should ever be exposed to any drug with such a high lethality rate, but it is an all-too common reality. Drug abuse is but one danger present within the homeless LGBTQ community. Other concerns can pose additional threats to these kids’ well-being.

When compared to a heterosexual peer, LGBTQ children are three times more likely to participate in sexual activity as a means of survival. In other words, these children exchange sexual favors in order to receive food, shelter, or money often because they feel there is no alternative if they wish to survive. Prostitution amongst displaced LGBTQ children is hardly rare. In fact, 44% of displaced LGBTQ children have reported being approached for sexual favors, compared to only 26% of heterosexual peers having similar experiences (Kulwicksi, 2010). Having multiple sexual partners occurs more frequently with LGBTQ youth, compared to heterosexual homeless youth (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, Cauce, 2002), and unsafe sex and multiple sex partners will lead to the rapid transmission of sexually transmitted diseases throughout not only the LGBTQ community, but society as a whole. An LGBTQ youth is at a much higher risk for physical, verbal, and/or sexual abuse (“Safe Horizon,” 2012). A correlation may exist between abuse and self-destructive sexual behavior, with each impacting one another. This cycle of unsafe sexual activity and abuse may contribute to the development of depression or mental disorders in certain individuals and is certainly detrimental to the health of these children. The picture painted for homeless LGBTQ youth is grim, as survival on the streets poses a significantly more difficult obstacle for LGBTQ youth than for heterosexual children. With this information, an obvious concern is presented. What, then, prevents the issue from being thoroughly recognized and addressed?

In order to tackle this question, several underlying issues must first be examined. The primary concern is how one would raise awareness and educate the masses on the issue. This is of utmost concern as the issue truly is unknown to most people. I, along with close family and family-friends, were not aware of such an epidemic facing LGBTQ youth. It wasn't until speaker and activist Sassafra Lowrey addressed Siena College that I was introduced to the problem and began to research this issue. When asked if they have heard of this epidemic, not one family member or friend could recall ever hearing anything about it, which is quite troubling. Knowing that the issue remains invisible to so many people, a vital first step is to raise awareness. One way to do this is to analyze a similar concern that has recently entered public awareness, LGBTQ bullying in schools. The spread of awareness led to the creation and revision of multiple support programs and laws aimed at combating that issue (Patton, 2010). Groups and programs, including the “It Gets Better” Project and the Trevor Project, offer support for LGBTQ kids who seek information or who just want someone to talk with.

Washington State passed legislation specifically targeting anti-gay bullying as early as 2002, and revisions have been made in recent years (Equal Rights Washington, 2012). LGBTQ bullying entered the media spotlight as a result of a string of deaths and suicides of young people. As a nation, changes began as the deaths and their surrounding stories were brought to light, such as that of Tyler Clementi (Lloyd, 2012). Clementi was a freshman attending Rutgers University and had recently revealed his sexual orientation. Within his first month at Rutgers, Clementi's roommate videotaped his private interactions with another male and uploaded the video to the Internet. As a result, Clementi committed suicide. His roommate was recently found guilty on multiple charges for invasion of privacy, but his imprisonment will not bring Clementi back. Clementi was but one of the children to commit suicide as a result of harassment. His and other children's stories offered the motivation needed for change to occur concerning LGBTQ bullying.

Suicide and death are epidemics in the LGBTQ community, but they are not caused solely by LGBTQ bullying. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, 62% of homeless LGBTQ youth commit suicide (2009). These suicides are the result of severe, untreated and unchecked depression. These children experience horrors in their everyday struggle to survive, such as the previously mentioned abuse they suffer through. In the case of homeless youth, however, far less attention is placed on the issue, which is a possible result of social stigma and common phobia.

Social stigmas aimed at homelessness may explain people's lack of concern or awareness. One such stigma, that homeless people have brought such conditions onto themselves and are therefore undeserving of assistance, offers support for this idea (Phelan, 1997, p. 324). This stigma stirs thoughts such as “Why help when they don't try to

help themselves?” and “I’ve worked for my money, they can work for theirs.” People often don’t consider the story behind each individual. Being members of the LGBTQ community, many children are also victims of homophobia or transphobia. These phobias can stem from religious beliefs or unfamiliarity with individuals of the LGBTQ community (Davies, 2010, p. 260). With stigma and fear held against homeless LGBTQ youth, they are dehumanized and disregarded. Dehumanization allows for a person to look past the issue and feel no guilt in doing so. If stigma and fear are overturned, however, those people affected by the issue regain their humanity, and homelessness becomes a pressing concern once again.

Overtuning fear and stigma takes great effort, as each tend to be ingrained in a person’s mind. The best method for reversing each, then, lies in the education and explanation of homeless LGBTQ children’s positions. In this way, society can gain an understanding of why these children face such hardships. It is this realization that these children are, in most cases, not responsible for their predicament that will help to end popular stigmas. Sassafra Lowrey’s *Kicked Out*, an anthology collecting the personal stories of various LGBTQ youth, is a perfect illustration of how this can be achieved. In Lowrey’s anthology, the reader is introduced to a handful of primary sources on the issue — children who have faced the hardships presented from living on the streets. Their stories are written in their own words and each reflects the struggles faced by many homeless LGBTQ children. Such stories include that of L. Wolf, a victim of physical and verbal abuse from his family, which forced him to run away from two separate homes, and Taylor L., who bounced from foster home to foster home from the age of nine. In this anthology, the gloomy and disheartening truths of the lives of homeless youth are depicted, and the reader is given a look into the horrible conditions that the kids face. The publication of their stories allows for people to better understand the lives that LGBTQ youth have experienced and the struggles they attempt to overcome. These stories re-establish the humanity of homeless LGBTQ youth, for they illustrate the deep emotion and drive to survive, two intrinsically human traits, despite present conditions.

People need to become aware of this issue; people cannot begin to address it unless they know about it. Teaching students about LGBTQ homelessness will bring some support, but introducing the issue to society as a whole will raise interest and garner far more support. Looking back at LGBTQ anti-bullying campaigns, social media and news coverage acted as the largest educators of the issue while simultaneously spreading awareness. Newspaper articles, Facebook pages, and broadcasts shared the relevant stories in an effort to raise awareness. Using this strategy, it is very possible to spread social consciousness about LGBTQ youth homelessness. The social media campaign “It Gets Better” used simple, yet thoughtful phrases and celebrity involvement to increase support of anti-LGBTQ bullying, and news of the project spread to many popular social media sites, such as YouTube and Facebook, attracting an even larger audience of supporters. The same type of campaign aimed specifically at creating awareness for homeless LGBTQ youth could spread the necessary information quickly, too.

There are support organizations, such as The Ali Forney Center and The Trinity Place Shelter, which help to spread LGBTQ homelessness awareness and provide shelter for homeless youths. These projects still need to be expanded upon, however. In the case of The Trinity Place Shelter, only ten beds are available on any given night, not nearly enough for the staggering amount of homeless LGBTQ youth in New York City. The effectiveness present in the social media campaigns for LGBTQ bullying offers a conceivable answer to assisting the growth of homeless projects and shelters. Yet to improve the effectiveness of these campaigns, the use of prevalent social media sites should be expanded upon. For example, the Ali Forney Center has a YouTube page, a Facebook page, and a Twitter account, but none are regularly updated. For example, the latest video released by the organization’s channel on YouTube was 11 months ago. In order to keep this societal problem relevant and hold the attention of supporters, constant updates are required across all social media outlets. Changing the content of posts and including more information, from simple statistics concerning the issue to incorporating more stories from those impacted from LGBTQ homelessness, would

promote further awareness, and is a simple way to keep new meaningful posts constantly flowing across websites. If this is not done, attention and support for the issue could begin to fall rapidly, and progress towards positive change comes to a standstill.

Finally, the organizations supporting LGBTQ homeless youth could contact social media sites and ask for promotions of their pages. The “It Gets Better” Project appeared in advertising panels on Facebook for a time during autumn in 2010, when the issue of LGBTQ bullying and suicide seemed to reach a peak. This effectively brings the topic to people who normally would not search for or stumble upon such content during their normal web-browsing rituals. Each of these suggestions is rather easy to achieve and brings better results and further support for the campaigns online. Offline news broadcasting also should improve coverage. The importance of television and newspaper coverage is just as essential to achieving change as online coverage. On average, the average U.S. citizen will watch 21 hours of television a week (Reisinger, 2010), whereas the average person will only spend 7 to 13 hours on the internet a week (Whitney, 2009). Television, then, reaches the audience far more often than the internet and is an important tool in relaying information and raising awareness.

Through the combination of online and offline broadcasting, the issues concerning LGBTQ youth homelessness can be extended to a vast population of U.S. citizens. By educating the masses, phobic tendencies and stigmas held against homeless LGBTQ youth will hopefully be reversed. The goal is to raise support for those affected by this epidemic and to expand existing support while creating new programs and laws aimed at combating the problem.

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In this expository essay, the writer documents the benefits of a local community writing partnership between first-year Siena College students and adult learners from Albany's South End.

A Community-Engaged Writing Partnership

By Adderlin Taveras

Writing is a powerful tool used to convey messages and reach across many in hopes of influencing and empowering people. Whether it is used to write simple messages or long elaborate ones, it is a process of the heart and mind. It gives power to many and influences others to fight for a cause or to write story. As the author Mary Pipher (2006) states: [Y]ou can write in order to change the world, knowing perfectly well that you probably can't, but also knowing that literature is indispensable to the world. The world changes according to the way people see it and if you alter, even a millisecond, the way people look at reality, then you can change it (p. 24). Many have taken the opportunity to write and to make that small change. One effective way to produce writing within a community is an engaged community writing program between adult learners and college students. The Writing Partnership in the South End of Albany believes that writing can cultivate a solidarity experience, flourish greater writing proficiency, and empower civic engagement among community writers.

In July of 2011, plans were developed to form a community-engaged writing partnership in the heart of the South End of Albany, which is the city capital and one of the most economically-challenged neighborhoods in New York State. Thirty percent of African Americans in New York reside in Albany (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and many live in this part of town. Without the resources to develop skills such as writing, people were discouraged from enrolling in higher education. Thus, a model was developed to bring together first-year college students and GED graduate adult learners to meet the goals of a cross-cultural solidarity experience while developing greater writing proficiency. First-year college students would engage with adult learners from the South End of Albany, and they would work to develop their writing skills. As collaborative partners, students and adult learners would share their personal and socioeconomic paradigms through their writing. The adult learners would teach students about a different culture and background with which many students have never been in contact. The result of this engagement would be not only the sharing of their personal journeys but also the adult learners finding empowerment and a voice through the medium of writing, which previously had been hidden and limited. Thus, the Writing Partnership's mission as a diverse, connected community is to inspire, engage, and create higher learning through creative writing.

The Writing Partnership encourages the individuals to engage themselves with the world that surrounds them and to explore the paradigm that aids in composing decisions in their daily lives. Several learning excursions were taken during the year where the individuals explored different social lives for people in the 1800s. Participants travelled to Sturbridge Village and Hancock Village, experiencing the paradigms many of the adult learners had confronted throughout their own lives. During the Sturbridge Village trip, the individuals and the college students both attended a town meeting regarding a decision affecting the "poor people" of the village. The debate was on whether the "poor people" of the village should have a small farm bought for them by the village, or if they should remain living in people's homes until they could take care of their own needs. It was a law that the "poor people" had to be taken care of; however, they paid a price because they could no longer vote or make any decisions for themselves. While some college students did not see anything wrong with buying a farm for the disadvantaged people, the adult learners had a complete differ-

ent view, for they understood, coming from their neighborhood, that this would be an attempt at making a “ghetto” neighborhood - one for all of the individuals who lived at the poverty line or just below it. Both groups, the college students and the adult learners, had come from two very unlike backgrounds yet investigated one another’s paradigm and attained a new view. This set the stage for the Writing Partnership between them.

This Writing Partnership stimulates what Mary Pipher (2006) speaks about in her book, *Writing to Change the World: “openheartedness, thinking, talking and action”* (p. 7). To comprehend why a writer writes a story, or an essay, or an article, one needs to know how to analyze other paradigms. According to Ellen Lavelle and Nancy Zuercher (2001), college students “elaborated that paradigms do incorporate motivational factors” (p. 314) in their own writing. Lavelle and Zuercher found in their study that there are four factors in college students’ writing: “elaborative, low self-efficacy, reflective-revision and spontaneous impulse” (p. 376-377) and that students who score high on the elaborative factor are marked by a “search for personal meaning, self-investment . . . viewing writing as symbolic, a deep personal meaning” (p. 376). These students used writing as a tool to learn and to understand. The Writing Partnership between the college students and the adult learners from Albany’s South End implements this type of writing: a writing that the participants can use to understand the world inside and around them. They use the act of creative writing to connect to others outside of their own world, and as Mary Pipher (2006) explains, “A writer’s job is to tell stories that connect to all the people on earth, to show these people as the complicated human being they really are, with histories, families, emotions, and legitimate needs” (p. 5).

Cultivating, Developing, and Empowering

This Writing Partnership between Siena College students and adult learners in Albany’s South End engages its participants in a cultural solidarity experience. The program brings two very unlike communities to participate in a writing experience and to build relationships with people they are unlikely to meet on their own. A college community, filled with young adults, is a place known to build knowledge and preparedness for the outside world. A neighborhood like the South End of Albany is a place known as one of the toughest economically-challenged neighborhoods where many people living there are minorities. This community writing program brings together two different worlds and creates a place where everyone can learn from one another. The college students bring advice and ways to improve the tool of writing, whereas the adult learners bring experience and culture that many were willing to share in their writing. It is inspiring to see students and adults, people who had never met each other, come together and explore their skills in writing while learning from one another. Although the majority of the people coming together are from two different worlds, there is common interest. As a result, all of the participants discover that they are not that different after all, and they become a support group for one another.

One of the main goals of the writing partnership, once both communities join together to make an even greater one, is to develop and improve writing proficiency. The college students start at the level of the individuals and help the adult learners to develop and polish their writing. Each adult student had at one point in time attended school; some never finished and decided to pursue their GED certificate and move forward to college. Using creative writing as an anchor, the writing partnership helps these individuals learn how to engage, persuade and elaborate on their topics. Creative writing gives a person the chance to investigate one’s self, and the partnership emphasizes strengthening a person’s writing without losing the freedom to write about what the individual is passionate about.

The Writing Partnership empowers civic engagement among the adults because they are given the chance to explore topics related to their community and engage in a mini-research project. Communities like the South End of Albany are silenced all across the country. They are known as statistics, numbers, and just another community in need of aid. However, what these communities need is a voice to influence decisions that are made by people who do not live in these communities. Daniel S. Brisson and Charles L. Usher (2005) emphasize that “programs that promote com-

munity participation and indigenous leadership and empower decision-making processes provide more sustainable outcomes for families living in low income neighborhoods” (p. 644). The fact is, people need to be able to engage their civic duty for themselves, their families, and for their communities. This writing partnership encourages the adult learner to find an issue in their community that they are passionate about and ring some bells by publishing pieces in local newspapers. The only people who best know the community’s needs are the people who reside there, and if they do not stand up and voice the concerns of the community, then nothing will change. Together, the adult learners and college student research a cause in the community so that they can advocate and use the medium of writing to grab the attention of people who do have the power to change things in the community.

The community writing partnership is a cross-cultural experience that builds relationships and brings attention to how writing can be used in the community. It also improves writing proficiency and empowers civic engagement. The students, both college and adult learners alike, have developed an unbreakable relationship and have learned a substantial amount of information that will be helpful to their futures. At the beginning of the program in September 2011, the adult learners started as timid writers who were not sure of their writing and who believed that they could not write more than a page or two. They were wary of college students looking over the pieces of writing that they did not want to share. However, by the end of March 2012, the community writers became a confident group who learned of their potential, which was hidden behind self-doubts. The individuals are now willing to share their writing with whoever walks through the door of St. Ann and St. John’s Outreach Center in Albany’s South End. In fact, many of these individuals have published articles in the local newspaper, and all of them have improved their writing capabilities. In turn, the college students who volunteered at the program learned about issues and backgrounds from the adult learners. They were excited to attend the program meeting and unravel the stories that the adults discovered inside themselves. Overall, the community writing partnership encouraged people from different backgrounds to explore writing as a means to find empowerment and a voice that was previously hidden.

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