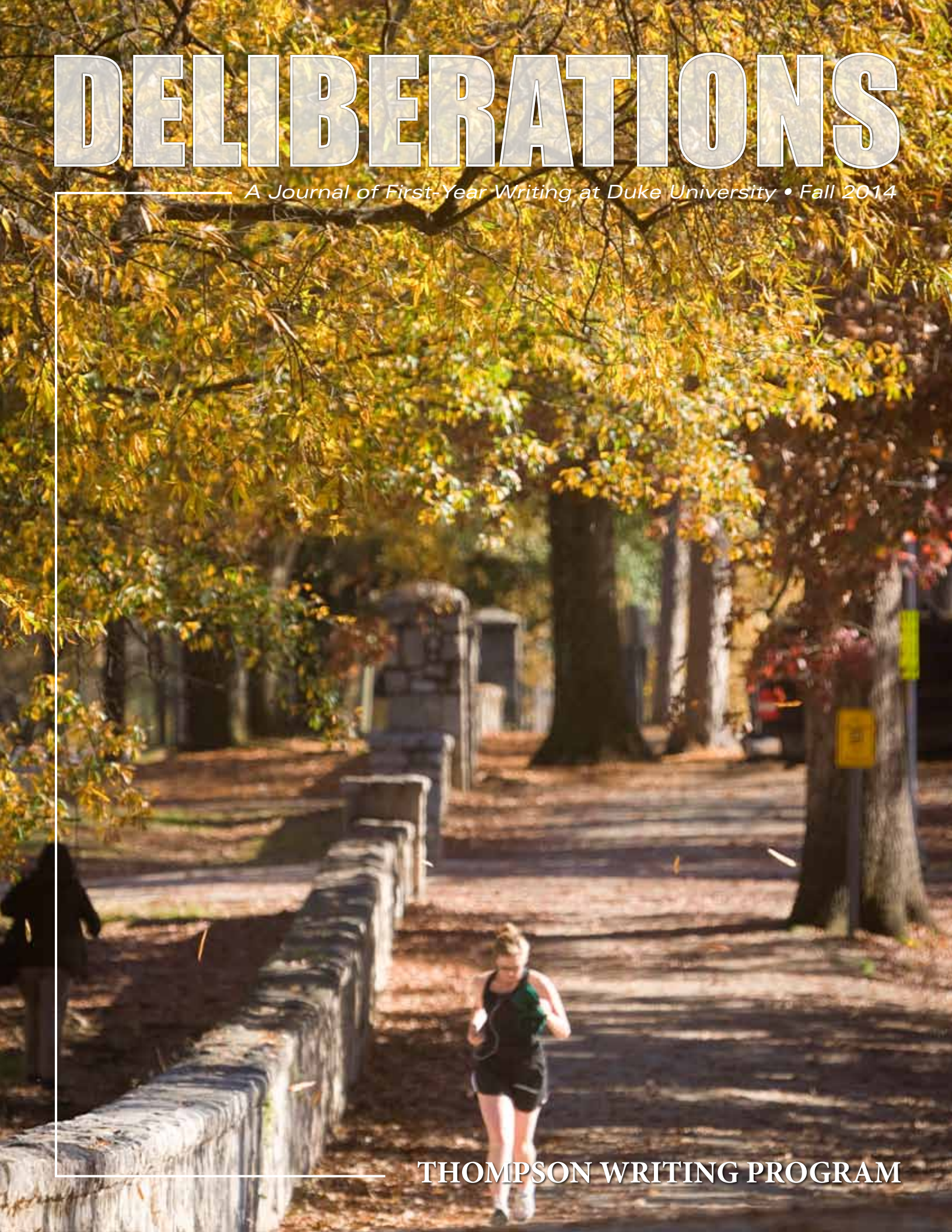


# DELIBERATIONS

*A Journal of First-Year Writing at Duke University • Fall 2014*



THOMPSON WRITING PROGRAM





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*Kristen Neuschel, Director  
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# Table of Contents

- 4     **The Paradox of Creativity**  
Danalaxshmi Shanen Ganapathee
- 8     **The Rhetoric of Slaveholders:  
The Intersection of Kindness and Subjugation**  
Sakura Takahashi
- 12    **A Fight For Identity:  
Eugenics As a Defining Aspect of the Abenaki Identity**  
Mark Cullen
- 18    **Finding Myself by Losing My Voice: An Autobiographical  
Case Study of the Impact of Vocal Dysphonia on My Identity**  
Katie M. Becker
- 29    **20,000 Words from Home: The Effect of Higher  
Education on Linguistic and Cultural Identity**  
Andrew Bartuska
- 33    **Influence of Conformity on the Propagation of Alternative  
Tool Use Traditions in Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*)**  
Henry Quach and Michael Shen
- 39    **Biopiracy in the Amazon: A Policy Perspective**  
Kayla Morton

## Thompson Writing Program

### *Deliberations:*

*A Journal of First-Year Writing at  
Duke University*

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# Foreword

Mark A. Ulett

Conflicts and confrontation saturate the world around us, both inside and beyond the academy. Politics, History, Art, Science, and Philosophy—in fact all disciplines—abound with differing interpretations of simple and complex issues. Even beautiful scenes like the cover image depicting the low wall on Duke University’s East Campus are rife with conflicting elements. Sunlight produces brightness in direct contrast to darkness in the shade. Trees and a running path evoke life and action while the fallen leaves and stone suggest death and immobility. The manicured lawn speaks to humanity’s attempt to subdue the natural world we depend on and are a part of. The wall itself, though largely decorative in this case, can evoke larger walls that demarcate geographic border conflicts around the world. The essays in this journal highlight the extent to which conflict and confrontation prevail across a wide range of topics and approaches to understanding the world in which we live.

Duke’s Writing 101 seminars challenge first-year students to think deeply and critically, conduct research, and then write about their findings. Clear prose and accurate description alone are insufficient to engage in the critical reflection and analysis required in these classes. Students carefully consider serious issues and propose novel interpretations, and because much of the writing is academic, they grapple with how to relate their ideas to the disparate and often conflicting interpretations of their intellectual predecessors. They write frequently about issues at the center of a conflict or confrontation; by posing new questions and finding potential solutions, they endeavor to make sense out of the noise or reconcile the seemingly unresolvable. From this challenging position they work and struggle to create, craft, draft, revise, edit, and polish essays that are intellectually rigorous and stylistically elegant. The essays produced in Writing 101 seminars reflect the type of intellectual projects and thinking that exemplify academic writing.

The seven articles in this 15th edition of *Deliberations* showcase how conflict and confrontation arise in a variety of disciplines and interdisciplinary contexts. From the fundamental nature of creativity to biopiracy in the Amazon, readers see young scholars engaging with the complexities and intricacies of conflict and confrontation at the heart of innovation, control, identity, behavior, and political policy.

This volume begins with the “Paradox of Creativity”, in which Danalaxshmi Shanen Ganapathee discusses the nature of creativity and its dependence on earlier ideas. Can there be any truly creative thought if it is merely a reimagining or twisting of other people’s ideas? She uses the case of Hellen Keller’s supposed plagiarism



to offer insights into the interdependence of ideas and constraints to the creative process. Asking us to consider the relationship between ideas over time is a great starting point for the essays that follow.

Sakura Takahashi's "The Rhetoric of Slaveholders" takes a head on look at conflict and confrontation in the use of kindness by American slaveholders to subjugate their slaves. While not belittling the role of suffering in slavery, she analyzes writings in several prominent journals to show that slaveholders cunningly used kindness to placate and control based on a mindset of paternalistic superiority.

The next three essays of this volume reveal the importance of conflict and confrontation when considering issues of identity, starting with "A Fight for Identity: Eugenics as a Defining Aspect of the Abenaki Identity". In this essay Mark Cullen shows how eugenics, the policy of sterilizing certain individuals deemed "unfit" to reproduce, has been central to the history of the Abenaki Native Americans over the past century. Not only were they targeted for sterilization in the early twentieth century, they have spent the past few decades using this history as central to the fight for their tribe's legitimacy in Vermont. In "Finding Myself by Losing my Voice" Katherine Becker explores her personal and painful journey of redefining her identity after a node on her vocal cord left her unable to sing. She integrates autobiography and academic analysis in an essay that both pulls at readers' heart strings and makes them think about the challenges of shaping and reshaping one's sense of self. "20,000 Words from Home", by Andrew Bartuska, challenges the traditional view of diversity in universities as universally good. He argues that the challenge of third generation immigrant children to identify with their linguistic and cultural heritages stems from the growing institutionalization of diversity at universities and organized cultural groups. While dealing with identity in various contexts, each of these essays reveals conflicting and contested ways in which identity forms and changes over time.

In an excellent example of writing from the natural sciences, Henry Quach and Michael Shen present a paper titled "Influence of Conformity on the Propagation of Alternative Tool Use Traditions in Chimpanzees". They develop a research proposal to assess whether or not conformity to a dominant individual in a group of chimpanzees allows for the transmission of an alternative behavioral technique. Their proposal suggests the potential downside of eschewing conformity in favor of conflict or independence.

Kayla Morton's "Biopiracy in the Amazon" rounds off the interdisciplinary papers in this journal by exploring the policy issues surrounding the exploitation of indigenous peoples' knowledge of the natural world by pharmaceutical companies. She shows how Brazilian and international political gridlock prevents the full implementation of existing laws designed to combat biopiracy.

As a whole, these essays on conflict and confrontation reveal the variety of academic disciplines, methodological approaches, and research and writing strategies that are the cornerstone of the Writing 101 curriculum and academic writing generally. This journal shows that first-year student work is importantly involved in Duke University's efforts to encourage students to contribute to a wide range of intellectual communities.



**Mark A. Ulett**

Mark Andrew Ulett is a Teaching Fellow and Associate Director of First-Year Writing in the Thompson Writing Program at Duke University. He earned his Masters in History and Philosophy of Science from University of Leeds and Ph.D. in Biology and Society from Arizona State University. His research focuses on theories of evolution in the 19th and 20th centuries.





**Shanen  
Ganapathee**

I had many Writing 101 classes to choose from, but I opted for “Uncreative Writing” just

because I thought it sounded cool. This impulsive decision led me to discover one of the best classes I have taken at Duke so far. Professor Spohrer led discussions about the contemporary art versus classical art debate, the value of interpretation versus Susan Sontag’s sensorial approach, the significance of art made by computers versus human-made art, and so on. It was all about conflicts, old and new, that animated the minds of scholars in the field. And the conflict that I became passionate about concerned the creative process. According to popular belief, an author is a solitary genius who generates ideas and turns them into pieces of creative fiction, but through Jonathan Lethem’s article “The Ecstasy of Influence”, our class discovered an important aspect of the creative process: *influence*. I remember reading about Helen Keller’s plagiarism case and deciding that I would use the tools that Lethem provided to analyze the accusation laid on her. Professor Spohrer encouraged me to trust my voice. We all had something meaningful to put forward, she said, and I felt like a researcher, looking for this important idea that I could contribute, and it culminated in the light bulb metaphor after weeks of mulling over the essay. I am immensely grateful to all the people who have believed in my writer’s voice—or plagiaristic utterances, as Twain might say—over the years: Mr. Jeewon, Mr. Appadoo, Leon, and of course my family.

# The Paradox of Creativity

**Danalaxshmi Shanen Ganapathee**  
Writing 101: “Uncreative Writing”  
Professor Lauren Spohrer



## The Paradox of Creativity

According to Jonathan Lethem, in his highly controversial article “The Ecstasy of Influence,” literature written by a single author must draw its inspiration from other authors or collections of writings. The “sublimated collaboration” of artists, a term introduced by Lethem in the article, is the subconscious drawing of ideas from humanity’s existing pool of creation in order for writers to spin their own tales. Creativity, a notion associated with a singular entity – the artist – could in fact be born out of a multitude of interactions with various works of art. A notable example of this process is Helen Keller’s infamous short story entitled “The Frost King.” As an 11-year-old, Keller, who would later become the first deafblind woman to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree, wrote “The Frost King,” a fantasy story about a kingdom of fairies whose king is a “generous, old monarch [who] endeavors to make a right use of his riches” (Keller 2). Michael Anagnos, the head of the Perkins School for the Blind, published Keller’s story in the school’s alumni magazine upon encountering it.

The story of the gifted little girl who could write creative fiction lasted only for a little while as it became apparent that passages from the “The Frost King” had been lifted from Margaret Canby’s *The Frost Fairies*. The plot, language and style all seemed to resemble Canby’s work. Canby’s king is described as “being a good-hearted old fellow, [who] does not keep his riches locked up all the time, but tries to do good and make others happy with them” (Canby 2). When the plagiarism was discovered, a furious Mr. Anagnos called the child a “living lie” (Kendrick 394). Although she claimed to be innocent, the people surrounding Keller would forever be suspicious of her. Keller recounts the tragic moment in *The Story of My Life*, her autobiography, and how she chose to give up pursuing creative fiction for fear of “contamination” (Lethem 69). Mr. Anagnos, “who loved [her] tenderly,” thought that she and her guardian Miss Sullivan had “deliberately stolen the bright thoughts of another and imposed them on him to win his admiration” (Ozick 3). Could Helen, as a child, grasp the complex concept of plagiarism of which she was accused? She was both aggrieved and confused when the people dear to her began doubting her innocence. In her autobiography, she writes, “As I lay in my bed that night, I wept as I hope few children have wept. I felt so cold, I imagined I should die



before morning, and the thought comforted me. I think if this sorrow had come to me when I was older, it would have broken my spirit beyond repairing” (Ozick 3). Keller, as a child, experienced the accusations in a fundamental way. As she grew older, she developed a sense of fear, which steered her away from creative writing. The only original story she could write was her own, and so afterwards she turned towards the form of the autobiography.

The childhood trauma Keller experienced morphed into what Lethem calls “contamination anxiety,” the notion of being scared at the prospect of one’s writings containing fragments of others’. This anxiety plagued her for the rest of her writing career. She feared being a plagiarist once again, without consciously being aware of it, and suffered the same consequences she had during her childhood. In *The Story of My Life*, she perfectly describes the concept of “cryptomnesia,” which suggests that the influence of earlier works is not dissociable from new works (Lethem 59).

I thought then that I was ‘making up a story,’ as children say, and I eagerly sat down to write it before the ideas should slip from me. My thoughts flowed easily; I felt a sense of joy in the composition. Words and images came tripping to my finger ends, and as I thought out sentence after sentence, I wrote them on my braille slate. (Keller 63)

The flow described by Keller above is one that many creative writers experience. In fact, many generations of writers legitimately worried that the words are not “flowing” enough on paper.

In Keller’s case, she learned through the hard lesson of her story’s demise that this process of “making up a story” should take effort. Only then would she be able to know the ideas were her own.

Now, if words and images come to me without effort, it is a pretty sure sign that they are not the offspring of my own mind, but stray waifs that I regretfully dismiss. At that time I eagerly absorbed everything I read without a thought of authorship, and even now I cannot be quite sure of the boundary line between my ideas and those I find in books. I suppose that is because so many of my impressions come to me through the medium of others’ eyes and ears. (Keller 63)

As a deafblind person, Keller had a special relationship with information, which was related to her through the “medium of others’ eyes and ears.” It was not hard for others’ ideas to get implanted and absorbed. This can partly explain the high level of similarity with Canby’s story. Huge







chunks of phrases are almost reproduced with the same wordings. In “The Frost King” Keller writes, “[I]t has been King Frost’s great delight to paint the leaves with the glowing colors we see in the autumn” (Keller 413). This is similar to Canby’s sentence, “[I]t has been part of Jack Frost’s work to paint the trees with the glowing colors we see in the autumn” (Keller 413).

For decades authors have been asked the age-old question, “Where do you get your ideas?” Perhaps unsurprisingly, they often provide the ambiguous answer: “inspiration.” In the aforementioned quotation Keller describes this “inspiration” as “stray waifs that [she] regretfully dismiss[es]” (64). The act of creation often associated with bright ideas that seemingly “flow” might, after all, just be plagiarism, the ideas coming “from the cotton fields” (Lethem 60). The compelling case of Keller forces us to consider the notion of plagiarism. As a child, Ms. Sullivan, Keller’s guardian, read her Canby’s story. Had she stored large sections of the fiction in some part of her consciousness, forgotten about it, and then later on trusted her creative process to be inspiration?

Plagiarism or not, the fact remains that Canby’s writing allowed for the blooming of a young talent. According to Lethem, “most artists are brought to their vocation when their own nascent gifts are awakened by the work of a master. That is to say, most artists are converted to art by art itself” (61). The “flow” experienced can be considered knowledge trickling from the past to the present, with old art being continually used for the purpose of creating new talent. In a letter to Keller, Mark Twain, Helen’s most ardent defender at that time, wrote: “Oh, dear me, how unspeakably funny and owlishly idiotic and grotesque was that ‘plagiarism’ farce! As if there was

much of anything in any human utterance, oral or written, except plagiarism!” (Twain).

Twain goes so far as saying that nothing else exists except plagiarism in the process of creation, and that plagiarism and creation are intertwined and are functions of each other. He highlights the already existing structures of human knowledge of a “million outside sources” that are irrevocably linked to the artist’s task.

The kernel, the soul—let us go farther and say the substance, the bulk, the actual and valuable material of all human utterances is plagiarism. For substantially all ideas are second hand, consciously or unconsciously drawn from a million outside sources and daily use by the garnerer with a pride and satisfaction born of the superstition that he originated them. (Twain)

Keller’s case illustrates human nature in creation. Appropriation, borrowing, and imitation are all part of the creative process and have existed for ages. No single piece of literary work can be said to have one author. Twain’s point is reinforced by contemporary scientific studies. The “Ecstasy of Influence” suggests that “neurological study has lately shown that memory, imagination, and consciousness itself is stitched, quilted, pastiched” (Lethem 68). Our minds, or soul in Twain’s case, are quilts, and our creations are patchworks since they are a reflection of ourselves.

What if the whole notion of the light bulb as a symbol of creativity was just a mere illusion? That the singular bulb that we all fantasize about is lighted only

through the complex wirings of millions of sources, each carrying electrons that will ultimately make the current flow—ideas murmured to us by the subliminal. What if the easy flow, this desired notion in the creative process, was just in fact an indication that the idea did not come from us? Instead, a more laborious process only would yield the works of solitary genius that the society admires and desires so much. In a way, it seems paradoxical—we desire the light bulb and expect it to be a work of solitary genius. But, “if words and images come to [us] without effort” the work cannot be expected to be “the offspring of [our] own mind” (Keller 64). However, as Twain notes, ideas are “unconsciously drawn from a million outside sources” and this seems to indicate that behind every creative process there is “flow” leading to the conclusion that the works of solitary genius, although consciously thought as so, are inherently not. All creation is ultimately brought about through the process of standing on the shoulders of giants.



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**Sakura  
Takahashi**

Our first  
assignment in  
my Writing  
101 class  
“Rhetoric of  
Slave Narratives”

was to write a blog post chronicling our goals for the class. My goals, to paraphrase, were to learn more about American slavery and further my academic writing skills, especially how to build on the work of others.

Not being American, I had little prior knowledge about slavery in the United States. I may have started with no idea who Frederick Douglass was, but I found the slave narratives we studied compelling, devastating, and occasionally uplifting. When we analyzed how these slaves’ stories were constructed, the most fascinating aspect for me was the portrayal of their masters. They were sometimes monsters, sometimes sympathetic, and sometimes both. This was the starting point for my topic “the rhetoric of slaveholders.” I thought that the worldview of slaveholders must be as complex as that of the slaves, and just as integral to understanding this period in American history.

In this class, the writing process was just as important as the content of our papers. Professor Piñuelas led us through every step of creating a “conference paper,” from the research proposal to the final presentation of our work. I learned that to build on the works of others requires more than just research. It also takes a lot of thinking outside the box, input from peers, and an understanding that your work is constructed just as the narratives we studied had been. Although I still have a lot to learn about both slavery and academic writing, developing this paper definitely pushed me towards fulfilling my initial goals.

# The Rhetoric of Slaveholders: The Intersection of Kindness and Subjugation

## **Sakura Takahashi**

Rhetoric of Slave Narratives (Spring 2014)  
Professor Edward Piñuelas

One question that plagues the minds of modern scholars of American history is exactly how slaveholders were able to control their slaves so effectively. Evidence such as the testimonies of slaveholders and slaves demonstrate that physical and psychological means were used to bend the will of the slaves. The slaveholders were creative; although the terror of the whip was important, so was the control of all elements of slaves’ lives, from what they ate and wore to the construction of their families. Furthermore, slaveholders shared information amongst themselves regarding the best methods of subjugating their “negroes.” Several prominent journals circulated in the south, and even occasionally the north, directly discussed this topic. Reading these journals does not reveal images of tyrannical and sadistic masters, but rather shows strategic slave managers who stressed the need of treating slaves well for a multitude of reasons. Other sources from non-slaveholders and even slaves such as Solomon Northup affirm the existence of genuinely sympathetic masters. This is not to say that cruel slaveholders were anomalously rare, as these slaveholders’ accounts cannot necessarily be taken as standard, complete, or even truthful. However, slavery was not a conceptually cruel system in the minds of the perpetrators. The idea that slavery was meant to be “kind” seems completely at odds with the systematic methods of control that slaveholders regularly used to subjugate their slaves. The intersection between kindness and subjugation becomes clearer when one examines slaveholders’ writings more closely. Their claims of generosity carry undertones of paternalistic superiority, and harsh treatment is glossed over or justified. Thus the proslavery perspective reveals that the concept of a “kind master” does not negate the traditional model of slavery as an inherently oppressive system. Superficially kind acts did not undermine the inherent cruelty of slavery as a whole. Furthermore, due to paternalism’s role as justification for the atrocities that occurred it may have been one factor that served to legitimize and perpetuate the institution.

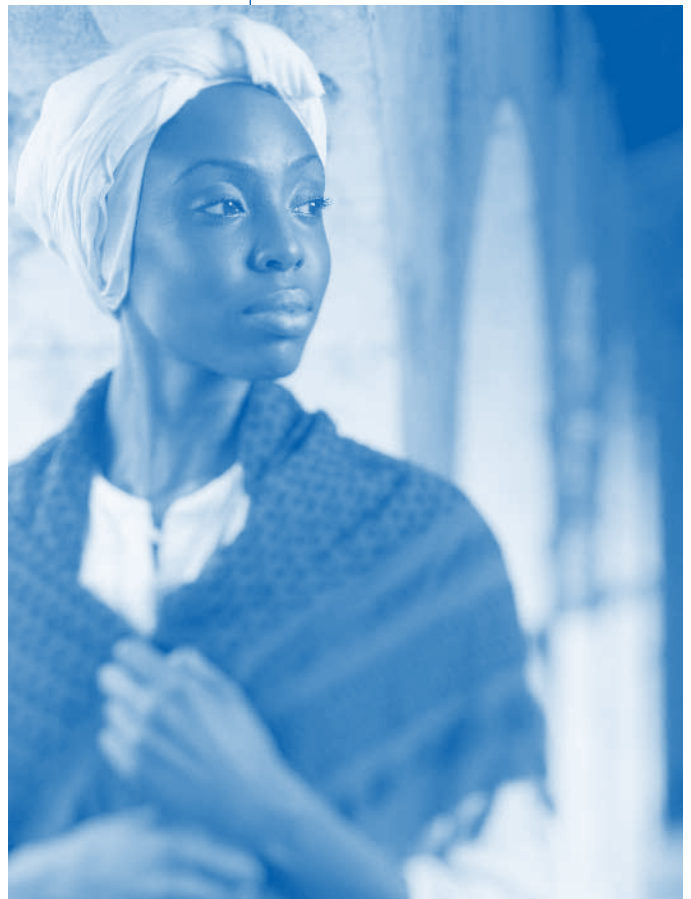
The types of slaveholder accounts that reveal their perspective include letters, diaries, and essays. The latter are particularly interesting because their authors meant for them to be consumed by a wide audience. For example, articles on slave management were published in periodicals such as the *Southern Agriculturalist* and the *Southern Cultivator*, which were occasionally circulated as far as the northern states. As historian James Breeden points out, the views printed in such articles may not accurately reflect the actions of slaveholders if the articles did not affect common slaveholding practices or if certain types of masters were overrepresented (Breeden xxi). However, it may be assumed that they are suggestive of generally accepted opinions concerning the ideals of slave management. These essays on slave management discussed topics such as how to feed and house slaves, and appropriate practices for health care, religious instruction, and discipline. Although there were variations in the specific advice given among masters, there is surprising unanimity

in the spirit of these essays. Relatively humane, generous, and mild treatment was greatly preferred, at least in theory.

The archetypal methods of control, if not necessarily the most effective or common, used by slaveholders were whipping and other physical forms of punishment. In *Born a Child of Freedom, Yet a Slave* historian Norrece T. Jones of Northwestern University argues for the need for multiple mechanisms of control, some of the most important of which were punishments (194). However, other scholars of slavery such as historian Nicolas Kinloch note that especially harsh punishments like whipping allegedly “risk[ed] public disapproval” (Kinloch 4). Essays on slave management, written by and for slaveholders, demonstrate similar views as most essays in the collection *Advice Among Masters* recommend that, “every mode of punishment should be devised in preference to [whipping]” (79). The discrepancy in these two views indicates that whipping was not a public mode of punishment, perhaps because it was so incompatible with the preferred image of a kind master.

Other modes of inducing obedience discussed in *Advice Among Masters* were much more humane and hence more likely to gain public acceptance. Nevertheless, they were still synonymous with subjugation. Rather than forcing compliance, such methods attempted to reduce insubordinate instincts or devise non-physical forms of bondage. One of these methods was allowing slaves to have festive Christmas celebrations, as seen in Frederick Douglass’ narrative. This was an allowance that he cynically attributed to the fact that “it would be unsafe to deprive them of it” (180). Occasional leniency would increase slaves’ contentment and thus, reduce their urge to rebel. Slaveholders could frame this act as a show of graciousness or Christian spirit despite its primary mechanism of pacifying rebellious slaves. Another tactic was encouraging or enforcing the creation of families within the slaves. A Tennessee minister wrote of the importance of “gratify[ing] the home feeling of the servant” such that there are “strong yet pleasing cords binding him to his master” (Breedon 58). Slaveholders clearly had the intention of reducing runaways when starting slave families. This minister framed his argument in an innocuous way that minimizes the shackles it creates, euphemizing the feeling of entrapment as “home feeling” and “pleasing cords.” His rhetoric also reduces the slaveholder’s responsibility by discussing the act as one that “gratifies” the slaves’ desires. In this way, any perceived benefits to the slaves were highlighted to support the view of slavery as a paternalistic institution.

Paternalism is the conceptualization of slaveholders as slaves’ surrogate father figures. According to American historians Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, slaveholders believed that the “racially inferior and general[ly] incompetent” slaves needed their masters’ protection and so slavery was the “most humane, compassionate and generous of social systems” (89, 1). Jones argues that this “remarkably persistent image of slavery as a patriarchal institution” averts attention from slaveholders’ harsh actions (194). Jones’ claim is legitimate as the ideals of slaveholders may not be as important as their actual behavior if the two are completely contradictory. However, the Genoveses claim that slaveholders “said what they meant and meant what they said” (1). In other words, slaveholders sincerely believed the paternalistic ideals of the master-slave relationship, meaning that their claims were not empty but likely connected to their real thoughts and experiences. Thus, such ideals may be more significant to the





actuality of the institution than Jones supposes.

The consistently pitying tone of the slaveholders' essays supports the Genoveses' controversial claim. One quotation by Breeden simply reads, "we should all remember that our slaves are human beings as well as ourselves" (45). Despite the outwardly sympathetic tone, the slaves are simultaneously presented as property, i.e. "our slaves," and as "human beings." How could such discrepant claims co-exist? It is likely that the interactions between the patriarchal model and the actions of slaveholders facilitated this contradiction. Patriarchal notions both influenced and retroactively legitimized the slaveholders' actions and beliefs. One planter wrote to his fellow slaveholders that each is the "guardian and protector" of his slaves, and that the character of each slave is "like the plastic clay, which may be molded into agreeable or disagreeable figures" (Breeden 35). He presents slaves as childlike beings with very little will of their own, whereas the masters are solely responsible for their moral and intellectual development. The paternalistic viewpoint is thus used as justification for enslavement as methods of control are reconstructed as ways of exerting positive influence on the moral character of the slaves. Regardless of whether such beliefs stemmed from internalized guilt, a desire for power, sincere righteousness, or any other reason, slaveholders thought slavery was the beneficial system for whites and blacks alike and incorporated this belief into their actions or statements thereof.

Paternalistic "kindness" also controls through its role as justification. Paternalistic justifications often centered on what George E. Boulukos, specialist in literature and race, calls the "sentimental argument for slavery." This is the claim that abolishing slavery would break the family-like bonds between masters and slaves. He disputes this by arguing that even good master-slave relationships "depend[ed] on systematic violence" or that the contrast between the kind and the cruel made the somewhat kind masters stand out to their slaves (Boulukos 22). Solomon Northup substantiated this in his narrative as he finds his labor for the kind Master Ford "a source of pleasure" simply because other slaveholders were much worse (98). However, Northup did not reflect much on the fact that Ford, despite his demeanor, contributed to Northup and others' enslavement. Thus Boulukos' observation implies that the cruelty of some slaveholders was obscured by their comparative kindness. For example, Master Ford bought Northup and another slave woman, Eliza, from a slave trader. Although he attempted to purchase her daughter, in the end he separated Eliza from her children, causing her mental breakdown (Northup 31). Consequently, the act of selling slaves and causing familial separation is an inevitable cruelty that Ford also partook in, but Northup still separated him from other slaveholders due to his compassionate intentions.

Walter Johnson, American historian, further demonstrates the simultaneous intersection and contradiction between kindness and the act of selling slaves in his book *Soul*

*by Soul*. He focuses on what he calls the "chattel principle," or the conceptualization of slaves as saleable property. Slaveholders used threats of sale as leverage to prevent slaves' undesirable behavior. Although Jones mentions the "threat of sale" in his analysis of methods of control used by South Carolinian planters, Johnson also analyzes the particular effort taken by slaveholders to twist their actions to conform to their idealistic worldview. Slaveholders recognized the sadism of separating family members and friends, and attempted to explain away sales as "circumstantial rather than structural" (27). Some even tried to scapegoat slave traders as the cause for this social disruption. This was obviously a nonsensical concept, since slaveholders had to agree to buy and sell slaves in order for the slave trade to exist in the first place. Despite the outlandishness



of some of these attempts, such justifications were imperative to maintain their paternalistic ideals. The forced justifications filled a gap within the slaveholder's worldview. This gap was the incompatibility of a system of caretakers and their children, as slaveholders framed the institution of slavery, and a system that treated people as property, as was the reality of the situation (Johnson 29). Slaveholders were determined to incorporate paternalistic justifications into their actions despite the contradictions it caused.

Moreover, legitimizing slavery as a whole required paternalistic ideals. An 1852 essay by the Georgian planter Robert Collins for the annual fair of the Southern Central Agricultural Society substantiates this claim. Although it is a treatise on the best way for slaveholders to handle various aspects of slave life such as housing and food, it starts with a declaration that "history teaches the existence of slavery" (Breeden 17). That an essay concerning slave management explains the merits of slavery with historical and religious examples suggests that one cannot begin to discuss slavery without first justifying its existence. The author then goes on

to justify his race's position within the institution, for white slaveholders came to own slaves "without any agency on [their] part," and were "endowed" with the ensuing responsibility (Breedon 18). The wording suggests that white Americans were bestowed the extra job of being slaveholders by an external, probably divine, source. Collins defers the responsibility for slavery away from slaveholders and its associated hardships towards them. This detracts attention from the slaves' suffering.

The concept that white men had not just the right but the responsibility to control other cultures or peoples – the "white man's burden" in Kipling's terms – is evoked again in a section of Collins' essay entitled "discipline." Here, the connection between paternalism and control becomes distinct; Collins states that punishing slaves "tends to win his attachment and promote his happiness and wellbeing" (Breedon 22). The phrase "win[ing] attachment" reflects the idea of childlike or pet-like slaves. For this and the other inherent characteristics of black people such as their naturally "tyrannical... dispositions," the discipline of slaves is implied to be for their own good (Breedon 22). In other words, Collins suggests that black slaves ought to be controlled for their own moral wellbeing. Furthermore, this idea justifies some of these more unpleasant aspects of slavery, which is a topic that cannot be entirely avoided for the purposes of writing a management manual.

The emphasis on the natural state of whites as dominant and blacks as subservient would not be necessary if the only readers of Collins' essay were southern slaveholders, for whom this document would be most useful. The last section of his essay makes it clear that one of Collins' intentions is to convince northern readers that slaveholders are not cruel tyrants as seen in works such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Collins patronizes Stowe by calling her book "a variety of *sketches of fancy*" (Breedon 24).

In order to substantively refute her depictions of slavery, he cites the opinion of a Scottish man who said that Africans' transportation to America was "the greatest blessing that could be bestowed up on them... they would emerge from darkness to light" (Breedon 26). This reiterates the idea that slaves benefit from their bondage. Collins chooses the paternalistic justification of slavery rather than "theology, history, political theory, law, science, and economics" ("Proslavery Thought"), which were other areas commonly implicated in pro-slavery thought. Collins appeals to ethos in his pro-slavery argument by invoking the beauty of master-slave relations obvious even to an outsider.

Despite the popular perception of slavery as an unambiguously tyrannical institution, kindness undeniably existed within the minds and acts of the perpetrators. Acts of subjugation and kindness by slaveholders existed simultaneously and alongside each other. Subjugation manifested in masters' outwardly kind acts such as helping start families in order to bind slaves to their plantation. Furthermore, paternalism was an essential justification of slavery. Slaveholders felt the need to emphasize that the relationship between slaveholder and slave was for the benefit of both parties and that specific acts of dominance or even cruelty were circumstantial rather than essential to the system. The pro-slavery perspective thus reveals that there were endless contradictions inherent to the creation of a model of slavery that did not defy basic moral principles. Simultaneously, it shows how humans participating in the most reprehensible of institutions felt the need to maintain some semblance of perceived humanity. Because so many otherwise normal people at this time were slaveholders, perhaps these attempts to uphold a fragile synthesis of subjugation and kindness were inevitable.

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**Mark Cullen**

“The Darwinian Revolution” taught by Professor Mark Ulett was an extraordinary opportunity to synthesize information

about evolutionary thought. Building our foundation by reading Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* and *Evolution and Ethics* by Thomas Huxley, we gained historical context to this landmark scientific discovery. We explored the reasons why the eugenic movement rose from an incomplete and problematic interpretation of Darwin’s discoveries. Our exploration of eugenic atrocities led me to the eugenic history of the Abenaki Native American Tribe.

The Native American connection to eugenics fascinates me because I live on a Native American Reservation in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and I am genuinely interested in their culture and wellbeing. Studying the impact of eugenics on the Abenaki of Vermont fit well with my prior interest in issues surrounding Native Americans. As I gained an understanding of the evil inflicted on people in the name of eugenic science, I became angry. Eugenacists distorted Darwin’s theories in the belief that, in order to preserve the human race, “undesirables” need to be eradicated. In the United States, eugenacists justified state-sanctioned, forced sterilizations on the premise it was necessary for the greater good. Subjective criteria for sterilization, like being poor, made this process more shocking and inhumane. Eugenics is a highly destructive process that killed many people and has caused pain and suffering for countless others. Ultimately, eugenics spawned some of the darkest movements in human history. As a hopeful future scientist, learning about eugenics made me vigilant to how scientific thought can be abused and misused.

When I entered this class, I didn’t view myself as a writer and had always found writing a struggle. However, Professor Ulett was an incredible mentor who patiently taught me skills that allow me to write effectively and meaningfully. He helped me grow tremendously as a student, and now author.

# A Fight For Identity:

## Eugenics As a Defining Aspect of the Abenaki Identity

**Mark Cullen**

The Darwinian Revolution (Spring 2014)

Professor: Mark A. Ulett



### Introduction

*It’s not good times that make a people strong, it’s bad ones. It’s tears that make us strong. I give thanks to the governor and the Legislature, for they saw us as a people with a heart and a soul and today they gave us a voice.*<sup>1</sup>– Trudy Ann Parker [2012],  
A member of the Abenaki Nation of Native American Indians

Following decades of frustration, disappointment, and tears, the Abenaki Nation of Native American Indians gained official Vermont state recognition in 2012.<sup>2</sup> The major barrier restricting the Abenaki’s recognition was an inability to prove their contiguous existence as a distinct cultural, ethnic, and racial entity. They addressed this challenge with an argument based in eugenics, which, in this case, was the systematic targeting and attempted extinction of the Abenaki people. Eugenics is the belief in the possibility of improving the qualities of the human species by discouraging reproduction by persons having undesirable traits or encouraging reproduction by persons presumed to have desirable traits. Eugenic persecution was and remains a central piece of Abenaki history in the past ninety years.

An early history of the Abenaki people gives perspective for their identity and existence in Vermont, as well as providing a framework for the tremendous loss during the eugenic era. The Eugenics Survey in Vermont was a key factor in creating ambiguity in the history of the Abenaki tribe. In the early 1930s, many Abenaki renounced their identity or escaped into Canada to avoid terrible actions, such as sterilization, from affecting them or their family members. Official demographic records in the early twentieth century fail to identify the Abenaki population, which thwarted the initial political and legal attempts at state recognition. The devastation to the Abenaki people caused by the eugenic movement and their history before eugenic intervention establish the Abenaki Nation as an independent and culturally advanced tribe and emphasize the important impact of eugenics on their modern identity. A second contemporary phase of Abenaki history explores how the Abenaki gained recognition by the state of Vermont by highlighting their eugenic history. Further, eugenics forms the basis of their argument for federal

1. Galloway, “Vermont Formally Recognize Abenaki.”

2. Ibid.

recognition. The historical documentation of the eugenic movement in Vermont indicates eugenicists targeted Abenaki individuals and, by extension, proves the Abenaki existed in the area. The cultural examination of the impact of eugenics on the Abenaki demonstrates how the eugenic legacy still affects individuals today. The eugenic movement has been closely associated with policies and practices that seek to eliminate individual or group identities; the Abenaki historical account of eugenic persecution is unique because, in this case, eugenics is the key component of reinstating a rich cultural identity.

## Early History and Eugenics

Before the twentieth century, the Abenaki Native Americans enjoyed a vibrant, thriving, and distinct culture. The Abenaki “are the descendants of people who lived in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Western Maine ‘since time immemorial,’”<sup>3</sup> with written Abenaki history dating to when the Abenaki fought as allies of the French in the French and Indian War.<sup>4</sup> The Abenaki Nation was large, comprised of many different bands, each having their own unique identity. Four of these bands are located primarily in Vermont, the Koasek, Mississquoi, Nulhean and Elnu.<sup>5</sup> The traditional Abenaki social organization consisted of small, familial groups with two chiefs, one to run the group affairs and a second chief to lead in times of war.<sup>6</sup> They participated in the fur trade, and fishing and hunting provided their main source of food.<sup>7</sup> The Abenaki had their own unique, cultural lifestyle that the eugenic movement threatened to extinguish.

The French and Indian War, during the years of 1754-1763 in colonial North America, took a toll on the number of Abenaki living in the United States as many fled into Canada with their French allies and found refuge with their kin known as the Odanak.<sup>8</sup> During the war, some Abenaki “retreated inland to what is today northwestern and northeastern Vermont and ... assimilated into the frontier settlements there.”<sup>9</sup> These individuals retained their traditional heritage over the next two hundred years until the advent of the eugenics program in the early 1920s and 1930s in Vermont.

In the United States, during the early part of the twentieth century, individuals began to embrace the eugenics ideals of Sir Francis Galton. Galton described eugenics as “the science, which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage.”<sup>10</sup> As the full implications of Charles Darwin’s ideas of heredity became widely known, individuals applied “the concepts of scientific plant and animal breeding”<sup>11</sup> to humanity, believing this would “raise the average quality of [their] nation ... [and] domestic, social, and political life would be higher.”<sup>12</sup> A belief in racial and ethnic superiority by the white majority was prevalent in the United States during the early twentieth century. This belief provided fertile ground for the eugenics movement to germinate. Eugenics was a means of protecting white Americans from the possible dilution



3. Wiseman, *The Voice of the Dawn*, 9.

4. Vermont Historical Society, “Clash of Empires.”

5. Galloway, “Vermont Formally Recognize Abenaki.”

6. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Abenaki.”

7. Wiseman, *The Voice of the Dawn*, 247.

8. Vermont Historical Society, “Clash of Empires.”

9. Ibid.

10. Francis Galton, “Eugenics,” 1.

11. Wiseman, *The Voice of the Dawn*, 146.

12. Galton, “Eugenics,” 3.



of their superior traits and resulted in “more than 60,000 sterilizations of ... individuals.”<sup>13</sup> Most of these sterilizations were committed against those who were “mentally disabled or ill; or belonged to socially disadvantaged groups living on the margins of society.”<sup>14</sup> These attacks occurred in all states that enacted eugenics laws, including Vermont.

Eugenicists described Vermont as “the last ‘great white hope’ of New England [in the early 20th century]... this area seemed to be a New England without the increasing tide of ethnic ‘others’ that plagued the coastal urban zones.”<sup>15</sup> A study known as “The Commission on Country Life” highlighted the Vermont lifestyle for others to emulate. The study sought to eradicate the behaviors and ideas considered unfit for the people of Vermont.<sup>16</sup> The Commission on Country Life “den[ied] the existence of the Abenaki Indians, since they were seen as a flaw in Vermont’s lily-white image.”<sup>17</sup> In 1925, Henry F. Perkins, a professor at the University of Vermont, took over the leadership of the Vermont Eugenics Survey.<sup>18</sup> A major part of this survey was to gather family information and to generate hereditary charts with pedigrees. These pedigrees included highly subjective material like family reputation and community rejection.<sup>19</sup> The pedigrees served, in essence, as “hit lists” for Vermont eugenicists. Two of these extensive pedigrees were large families with Abenaki heritage.<sup>20</sup> The families chosen for the research faced social stigmatization and scrutiny for many years after scientists eugenically categorized them based on their “social worth.” These subjective standards resulted in racially stereotyping people with low socioeconomic status. The Vermont Eugenics Survey convinced elected officials to pass legislation to reduce the number of “inferior” individuals in Vermont.

In 1931, the Vermont government established “An Act for Human Betterment by Voluntary Sterilization,” which allowed the state to “prevent procreation of idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded or insane persons.”<sup>21</sup> With no definitive medical definition of *feeble-minded*, medical staff relied largely on subjective factors. This led to a biased system with

the operational definition of feeble-mindedness including social symptoms, such as “poverty, promiscuity, criminality, alcoholism, and illegitimacy.”<sup>22</sup> In addition, recipients of monetary state welfare became potential sterilization candidates.<sup>23</sup> Native American communities were “notable for... extreme poverty, a host of related social problems, and economies founded largely on transfer payments and governmental service.”<sup>24</sup> Governmental dependence and a plethora of social issues rendered Native Americans easy targets for eugenic sterilization. Men were initially sterilized more frequently than women were, but as the

eugenics program progressed women became the primary targets.<sup>25</sup> The exact number of Abenaki sterilized in Vermont is unavailable as “the box of materials containing the lists of people sterilized by the state of Vermont as a part of the Eugenics movement has gone ‘missing.’”<sup>26</sup> One source, Anne Galloway, claimed, “A University of Vermont eugenics survey in the 1920s and 1930s led to the subjection of more than 200 Abenaki to sterilization. As a result of this very difficult history, many Abenaki were reluctant to claim their heritage and maintain their traditions.”<sup>27</sup> Native American individuals on welfare feared sterilization

by the state and constantly worried about termination of their parental rights.<sup>28</sup> These factors created a great mistrust of and paranoia about the state of Vermont by the Abenaki. It was generally understood that if the Abenaki “remain[ed] unchanged ... [this would] quickly invite genocide.”<sup>29</sup> Fear of persecution led the Abenaki to attempt to change their identities, and these events are integral to the history of the Abenaki. The Abenaki eugenic history is the one defining aspect of their identity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The suffering caused by eugenics is central to their culture and defines their people today. Eugenic targeting disrupted the ability of the Abenaki to live culturally as Native Americans; however, this history of eugenic persecution provides the key to restoration of their cultural identity.



13. Kaelber, “Eugenics.”

14. Kaelber, “Eugenics.”

15. Wiseman, *The Voice of the Dawn* 146.

16. Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters*, 6.

17. Vendituoli, “The Vermont Eugenics Survey,” 7.

18. Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters*, 9.

19. *Ibid.*, 37.

20. Sorrell, “State of Vermont’s Response,” 76.

21. Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters*, 185.

22. Schoen, *Choice and Coercion*, 110.

23. Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters*, 170.

24. Cornell and Kalt, “Pathways from Poverty,” 89-125.

25. Vendituoli, “The Vermont Eugenics Survey,” 22.

26. *Ibid.*, 3.

27. Galloway, “Vermont Formally Recognize Abenaki.”

28. Wiseman, *The Voice of the Dawn*, 148.

29. *Ibid.*, 118.

## Modern Fight for Recognition and Reaffirmation of Identity

The eugenic policies and laws of Vermont caused modern Abenaki to disconnect from their ancestors. Historical records do not adequately display the presence of the Abenaki in the early- to mid-twentieth century because of the actions taken to protect themselves from eugenic policies. In 1976, the Abenaki began the process of trying to gain recognition by the state of Vermont as a sovereign Native American nation. That year, the outgoing governor of Vermont issued an executive order recognizing the Mississquoi tribe of Abenaki, only to have the new, incoming governor rescind that executive order the next year.<sup>30</sup> There was public concern in Vermont that granting state recognition would pave the way for federal recognition, and many Vermonters equated federal recognition with casino gambling.<sup>31</sup> Opponents of Abenaki recognition argue that gambling is contrary to the Vermont way of life and fear the societal problems typically associated with gambling. Culturally destroyed by eugenic bigotry nearly a century earlier, the Abenaki are again subject of fear-mongering and racially intolerant rhetoric in contemporary Vermont. The Abenaki turned to civil disobedience protests and fish-ins to gain publicity for their efforts, and they sought justice and restoration of their sovereign status in the courts.<sup>32</sup> A victory in the lower courts brought initial hope to the Abenaki, but this quickly turned to despair when the Vermont Supreme Court overturned their recognition in 1991.<sup>33</sup> Having exhausted the state court process, the Abenaki focused their efforts on a legislative solution. A bill passed by the Vermont legislature in 2006 formally recognized the Abenaki as Native Americans, but the recognition did not entitle them to any rights.<sup>34</sup> The establishment of the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs in 2010 was vital to the Abenaki gaining state recognition. The commission created nine criteria for recognition including “a well-documented historical connection with Vermont through archaeological, historical or ethnographic evidence.”<sup>35</sup> The well-documented historical connection to Vermont criterion allowed the Abenaki to garner support from an argument they had been making for years—that the history of eugenics supports their identity as people.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, after initial judicial and political failures, the Abenaki focused on eugenics as their main argument for gaining cultural identity. The characteristics that make a group of individuals distinct from one another form a groups’ cultural identity.<sup>36</sup> Historically, the Abenaki had a distinct and unique identity. However, in the early twentieth century, the Abenaki did not explicitly

appear in Vermont’s demographic records. Interestingly, this period of relative invisibility corresponds with the time of eugenic persecution in Vermont. This fact gives rise to the Abenaki’s ingenious and compelling eugenic argument. The Abenaki claim that the fear of eugenics caused their ancestors to take action to avoid persecution. For the Abenaki fleeing persecution “there were 5 options: (1) exile, (2) fade into the forests and marshes, (3) live the ‘Gypsy’/‘Pirate’/‘River Rat’ life between Native and European culture, (4) merge with the French community, (5) ‘pass’ into English-American society.”<sup>37</sup> To pass into English-American society was to relinquish one’s identity as Abenaki. In essence, these individuals renounced their beliefs. This option was limited to the few Abenaki who could physically fit into the “white” demographic and, additionally, had the social wherewithal and monetary means to make such a dramatic change to their lives.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, the French Canadian community was quite appealing to the Abenaki Indians. Familiarity and common ideologies paved the way for the Abenaki to join



“the French Canadian community, the descendants of [their] ancient allies, since they shared [their] religion, economic status, and other social and geographic traits.”<sup>39</sup> While French Canadian heritage did not elevate them to the eugenic equivalent of the “white” settlers in Vermont, the association with the French Canadians did allow the Abenaki to deflect some scrutiny at the time of the eugenic movement. The Abenaki’s ability to intermingle into a non-Native American culture and society ultimately caused them to “[blend] in so well that they do not show up in the records as a tribal entity until ... years later—1976.”<sup>40</sup>

The Abenaki argue these transient individuals, those that either hid or integrated into French Canadian culture, are their cultural ancestors, who feared systematic sterilization,

30. Galloway, “Vermont Formally Recognize Abenaki.”

31. Ullmann, “Vermont Finally Recognizes the Abenaki.”

32. Galloway, “Vermont Formally Recognize Abenaki.”

33. Ibid.

34. Erin Hale, “Abenaki Tribes Near State Recognition.”

35. State of Vermont, “Criteria for State Recognized.”

36. Vendituoli, “The Vermont Eugenics Survey,” 22.

37. Wiseman, *The Voice of the Dawn*, 115.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid, 149.





forcible removal of their children, and, ultimately, genetic extermination. Today's Abenaki argue that those ancestors targeted and sterilized were denied the basic human right of procreation. These individuals were not recognized as Abenaki by those around them, but were "in fact the caretakers of long-established Abenaki subsistence dwelling and sacred grounds."<sup>41</sup> Despite the ability of these ancestors to physically live in their native lands, much of their cultural identity and heritage was lost. Initially, this posed immense administrative issues for the Abenaki as the government requested documentation proving continuous presence of tribal members in Vermont. The Abenaki were unable, for example, to produce written lists of tribal members, by year, since the founding of the United States. Ultimately, their inability to produce this documentation became a compelling argument to justify their identity. To construct the argument, the Abenaki began with the premise that eugenicists could not target a group of people that did not exist. There is historical evidence that eugenicists targeted individuals of Abenaki heritage; therefore, the Abenaki must have existed at this time. Further, the Abenaki were able to claim that eugenics caused their ancestors to run away and integrate into society, which explains their lack of documentation. The argument that eugenic targeting resulted in a camouflaged or concealed heritage was paramount to all four bands of the Abenaki Nation gaining state recognition by 2012.<sup>42</sup>

As challenging as the battle for state recognition proved for the Abenaki, recognition by the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs has proven even more difficult. In the last four decades, the Abenaki made great strides in their efforts to rebuild their tribe by identifying people of Abenaki lineage. They are actively teaching Abenaki children their heritage and are producing traditional tribal crafts.<sup>43</sup> They have petitioned the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs for recognition, with the first petition penned in 1983 and subsequent amendments in 1986 and 1995.<sup>44</sup> Federal recognition as a Native American nation would provide significant benefits, including support for education of the Abenaki children.<sup>45</sup> The petition stresses that the Vermont Eugenics Survey was critical to the loss of tribal identity and highlighted the racism and degradation imposed upon the Abenaki.<sup>46</sup> As Abenaki Chief Homer St. Francis "reels off the names of childless family members who he assumes were sterilized[,] he sees sterilization as a part of a larger government conspiracy to eliminate his family."<sup>47</sup> The initial responses from the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs rubbed salt in the wounds of the Abenaki. The established guidelines to gain federal recognition create a more stringent set of criteria against Abenaki recognition, requiring the tribe prove a continuous presence in the same location.<sup>48</sup> The Abenaki argue that this federal requirement is impossible to meet because of the unique situation created by the impact of the Vermont Eugenics Survey. The federal response to the initial petition implied that the Abenaki are using eugenics as a matter of convenience to elicit public support and sympathy for their effort to gain federal recognition.<sup>49</sup> Further, the response to the petition implied that the Abenaki exaggerated the impacts of eugenics as a means to claim entitlements from the federal government. Ultimately, the state of Vermont altered their recognition criteria to pave the way for state recognition. For recognition on the federal level, the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs will need to soften their position or modify their criteria for the Abenaki to gain official federal recognition.

## Conclusion

Although Galton believed eugenics was a constructive and beneficial idea, it became highly destructive to many individuals in many different cultures. Ultimately,

40. Sorrell, "State of Vermont's Response," 28.

41. Wiseman, *The Voice of the Dawn*, 121.

42. State of Vermont, "Criteria for State Recognized."

43. Ullmann, "Vermont Finally Recognizes the Abenaki."

44. Sorrell, "State of Vermont's Response," 118.

45. U.S. Department of the Interior, "Benefits and Service."

46. Sorrell, "State of Vermont's Response," 69.

47. Barry, "Eugenic Victims Heard at Last"

48. Sorrell, "State of Vermont's Response," 121.

49. Ibid, 243.

his ideas affected the lives of millions of individuals over the past century. In the case of the Abenaki, it had an immense influence on their culture, and the eugenics movement is of paramount importance to Abenaki history in the last ninety years. The Abenaki provide a compelling example of the destructive influence of fear and eugenics because it caused an entire population to disappear from Vermont. Unlike many other victims of the horrific impacts of eugenics, the Abenaki ultimately were able to gain a positive benefit from this devastating history by using it to reestablish Abenaki cultural pride and, more importantly, an identity. This reestablishment of identity, like a phoenix rising from the ashes, is what makes this case unique and different from all other examinations of eugenics in history. Essentially, the history of eugenic persecution shaped the argument to gain recognition by the state of Vermont. Eugenics is the defining force behind the Abenaki's argument in state and federal courts, and eugenic history is a defining part of what it means to be Abenaki in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The story of the eugenic influence on the Abenaki presents an interesting chapter in eugenic history. Similar to most eugenic episodes, the Abenaki persecution had its roots in the intellectual, scientific community and morphed into a means of clandestine extermination of people that deviated from the majority. The Abenaki chapter of eugenic

history is not a history of a bygone era, but instead is relevant and actionable today. In the United States, people have sought monetary reparations for forced sterilizations during the eugenic era, but the Abenaki stand not as damaged individuals but as a damaged community. This case is unique in that the reparations sought involve recognition to share the rights and privileges afforded Native Americans under the treaties enacted by the government, not to benefit any specific individual damaged by eugenics. The legal challenges for status, while they certainly may result in economic and monetary improvement the lives of individuals, focus on increasing the welfare of Abenaki people as a community and culture. This history gives the Abenaki their right to a legal identity. Without their history of eugenics, the Abenaki tribe would be lost to the pages of history.

Eugenic thought continues to influence populations of the world. Like the eugenics movement in the United States that affected the Abenaki, contemporary eugenics finds its voice in racial, religious, and ethnic persecution, and it is as inhumane, ill conceived, and devastating today as it was to the Vermont Abenaki. It is important to continue to document and elevate the history of human persecution with the hope that someday humankind will embrace our differences instead of trying to extinguish those different from ourselves.

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**Katie Becker**

“Writing 101: Coming of Age at Duke” was one of the most personally enriching educational

experiences in my academic career. It was also an extraordinarily challenging class, not because of the workload, but because of the depth of thought and introspection required. In this class, I had the opportunity to develop both my analytic and descriptive writing skills through the exciting and daunting process of writing about myself. I worked past my fear of introspective writing, a valuable skill for my future. I’m grateful to Professor Sheryl Welte, who evolved in my mind from an authority figure to a mentor, confidante, and friend over the course of the semester.

When the final project was first assigned, I struggled to select a topic. The writing prompt required us to develop a case study about an event or experience that had been important to our coming of age process, drawing upon sources from adolescent and educational psychology for analysis. Much of our time in class had been devoted to discussing our voices as writers, but what my classmates didn’t know was that I was literally struggling to find my voice outside of class as well. Part of me knew from the start that I wanted to write about my vocal cord polyp, but I held back out of fear of opening up about what had become a major insecurity. Although I still saw myself in the process of re-constructing my self-image, I decided that exploring this vulnerability would be the most meaningful approach. Writing my case study thus became a deeply cathartic and healing process, and I poured my heart and soul into the piece of writing presented here.

# Finding Myself by Losing My Voice:

## An Autobiographical Case Study of the Impact of Vocal Dysphonia on My Identity

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### Abstract

This case study explores how the development of a pseudo-cyst on my vocal folds and subsequent loss of singing ability impacted my identity development. I explore how my self-esteem and self-expression changed and how this has impacted my transition to college. My analysis draws from research on identity development as it relates to both extracurricular participation and athletic injury.

### Prologue

My Journal, September 2012:

*The doctor withdraws the long black tube from my right nostril as the pressure shoots through my nasal cavity. I gingerly wipe the lubricant off my nose as he pulls up the video. I sit nervously in the chair, mom on one side, voice teacher of seven years on the other.*

*At first, the video is really cool. I see the inside of my nose, my throat, and then my vocal cords. I watch myself sing a few scales, and my voice teacher informs me that my vocal cords are vibrating at about 500 vibrations per second. But as the doctor zooms in (and as I mentally relive the sensation of him sticking the tube farther into my nose), we start to see something. He points it out first, but it quickly becomes clear to all of us. Where the vocal cords are supposed to line up perfectly, mine has a white bump on the left side. It’s small, but obviously imperfect. The four of us continue to watch the video, watching that little bump bang into my other vocal fold.*

*As the doctor explains the treatment procedure, I can’t tear my eyes away from the image. A hatred bubbles up inside me—a hatred for that little cyst, or polyp, as the doctor calls it. That little bump has been causing me so much trouble. Because of that little bump, notes that I could once glide over easily now become a challenge to sustain. Because of that little bump, my voice, once praised for its purity and clarity, has become obstructed by congestion and breathiness. Because of that bump, I’ve forgotten how to sing.*

*He goes on to describe the causes. He says it looks like I’ve been singing correctly, but the bump was probably formed by a capillary burst that caused inflammation. He continues to describe the possible treatments, though I’m not fully paying attention.*

*As soon as he mentions surgery, I tear my eyes from the screen and listen very carefully.*

*“Of course,” he says, “surgery would be a last resort.” For now, he prescribes a series of speech therapy sessions and encourages me to practice good vocal technique. “Oh,” he adds, “and you need vocal rest.”*

*“Vocal rest? What does that mean?” I think I already know the answer.*

*“It means, Katie, that you shouldn’t sing for at least the next two months.”*

*The room starts to spin around me. I feel tears welling up in my eyes, but I will myself not to burst out crying in the middle of the doctor’s office. It’s exactly what I was afraid of. No more singing. No more jazz choir at 6:45am. No more jamming to Taylor Swift while doing homework at midnight. No more college music supplement. No more competitions. No more of one of the greatest sources of happiness in my life.*

## **Autobiographical Discussion of Vocal Dysphonia**

### **Growing Up With Song**

*Singing is how I express myself. Singing is something that makes me happy when I’m sad, something that makes me excited to be alive. And singing is something I’m good at...well, something I was good at.*

—My Journal, September 2012

As far back as I can remember, I’ve always thought of myself as a singer. When I was five, my parents thought that it would be beneficial for me to learn to play an instrument. After several years of listening to me squeak my way through songs and fighting with me about practicing, my violin teacher noticed that I seemed much more content to sing my songs than attempt to screech them out on that instrument. He pulled my mom aside.

“Katie doesn’t want to play the violin,” he told her. “She wants to be a singer.” He was right.

I joined the church children’s choir when I was six. I sang my first solo in church when I was nine. I started weekly voice lessons at age 10. By the time I was in ninth grade, I was a member of multiple choirs and had performed in several local musicals. I won my first competition at age 15, after performing arias in Italian and French. In 11th grade, I toured Peru with my church choir, singing in Spanish with my church’s most accomplished adult musicians. When it came time for me to apply to college, I had pages of musical accolades and an extensive list of repertoire—classical, musical theater, jazz, folk.

I never experienced stage fright. My mom, my biggest fan always sitting in the first row, had more than enough stage fright for the both of us. I began singing in such a supportive community that the potential for judgment or ridicule never crossed my mind. I was little and eager for attention. I had a confidence in my singing ability that I didn’t possess in most other aspects of my life. I wanted to be the best, and I resented any challenge to my status as “the singer.” I looked for any chance to sing, both to better my craft and to demonstrate my skill to others. The technical and artistic skills I was developing came naturally. I sang





anything and everything. Gut-wrenching, emotional pieces about heartbreak or loss were my favorite. How appropriate that seems, looking back.

It is impossible for me to separate my musical development from my childhood and adolescence. Singing was so tied to my identity that it permeated most aspects of my life and served as a bridge connecting me to the communities I most valued. Singing was how I experienced religion, and it brought me closer to the people in my church. Singing tied me to my family members. Ever since I can remember, my mom and I have sung together—in the car, when doing chores, in the church choir. It brought us closer together, and I grew used to seeing her smiling in the front row at my performances, although she was too self-conscious to ever perform herself. My dad was equally supportive, if less experienced. My grandfather would proudly play recordings of my performances for his friends at the retirement home. Even my little sister was happy to come see my shows, and I could always count on her to give me an honest (maybe too honest) opinion. My teachers and peers thought of me as a singer, which was exactly what I wanted. Going through puberty, I was never particularly attractive, popular, or athletic. But I could sing, and that gave me the confidence I needed.

## A Little Bump

*Through all the tumult and the strife  
I hear the music ringing;  
It finds an echo in my soul—  
How can I keep from singing?*  
—Traditional Hymn

Then, in July before my senior year, I began planning a music supplement to send to the colleges where I was applying. Though I ultimately decided not to apply to music school, I couldn't wait to integrate myself into the college music scene. Opera! A cappella! The best voice teachers in the country! I selected my best pieces—arias and art songs that showed off my technique and range. I planned to record the pieces with my voice teacher and church pianist. In her house, I assembled my recording equipment and warmed up. I began to sing my first piece, a piece by Viardot that complemented my mezzo-soprano range and showcased my French language abilities. Except something was wrong. No matter how full a breath I took, I couldn't seem to muster up the support I needed to sustain the notes. Vocal runs that once came effortlessly to me now caused

me great strain. When I went to hit the E, a note normally falling well within my range, my voice cracked. It cracked! I couldn't recall my voice ever cracking in my life.

After struggling through the first half of the song, my teacher stopped me and turned off the recording. We both knew something was wrong. This piece was my staple. I'd won competitions with it.

"How bad is it?" I asked tentatively.

"Well," she replied, "you definitely don't want to send it to Yale." My face fell. "Maybe you're sick?" she asked. I wasn't sick. Even if I was, I'd competed while sick before, and it had never stopped me. "Out of practice?" I'd been practicing for weeks leading up to this. "Nervous?" I didn't get stage fright, and I wasn't about to start now.

"Let's try again in September."

By September, I knew that my condition and inability to sing correctly wasn't some passing fluke. My voice felt constantly congested, as though there was something blocking my ability to produce sound. My throat had never hurt after singing before. Now, after singing a hymn in church, I needed water and lozenges. In frustration, I compensated by pushing my voice harder, continuing the painful cycle.

I made an appointment with the leading otolaryngologist in the Pacific Northwest. Little did I know, he and I would be seeing a lot of each other over the next year. Dr. Merati is a large, friendly man who reminded me distinctly of a teddy bear. He tried his best to make me comfortable as he stuck that long tube down my nose. After he identified that God-forsaken bump, he compassionately explained to me what the next steps would be. He didn't judge me when I burst into tears in his office.

I wasn't supposed to sing for the next several months. The music supplement was out of the question. I had to forfeit my lead role in 42nd Street at the community theater. I tearfully told my choir teacher, who was and remains to this day one of my most valued supporters and adult role models. I told him that I still wanted to be involved in choir (I thought I would be back in a few months), so he appointed me to the position of classroom aide. While my friends and classmates



practiced concert pieces, I was constrained to the storeroom, where I sorted through old pieces of music and imputed data into a spreadsheet. Not only socially distanced, I was actually physically separated from my friends. Once the star and the soloist, I became the secretary.

My family and friends knew I was upset, and I could

tell that they were trying to understand how I felt. Anyone who knew me knew that singing was an essential part of my day-to-day life. Still, I don't think anyone fully comprehended the internal toll that my vocal health was having on me. A talent that had defined me for so long had been stripped away, and I found myself questioning my place in the communities that had once been so important to me. Singing made me feel worthy and accepted, and I craved the accolades and praise that I had begun to expect.

It was around this time that I stopped attending church. My church had introduced me to music, and religion and song were so intertwined in my mind that I couldn't conceive of one without the other. While I've never been particularly convinced of the idea of an omnipotent deity, I found myself questioning how the God that I barely believed in would do this to me.

## Struggling Through Silence

*The amount of lifestyle changes required is far more than I had expected. I had never realized how much I sing throughout my day. When I drive, I sing. When I walk around my house, I sing. When I do my homework, I sing. The quiet makes me uncomfortable; it's as though something important is missing. The doctor also said that I should speak more quietly, and less often, which is already proving very difficult for me. I like to talk. I like to talk loudly. I like to laugh, and yelp, and shout with joy. I don't like being quiet.*

—My Journal, September 2012

At Dr. Merati's suggestion, I went on full voice rest for the first time in late October 2012. I completely stopped talking for a week while taking high doses of steroids, in hopes that the rest would ease the inflammation in my vocal cords and decrease the size of the bump. I resented that silence so much. This was my senior year! I was supposed to be sharing my opinions in class and laughing with friends on the weekends. I'm a person with a lot to say, and the obnoxious computer voice app that I downloaded onto my smartphone to communicate simply didn't cut it. There is something heartbreaking about being surrounded by noise and laughter but unable to communicate. I was so frustrated, and even when I was surrounded by my friends, I felt painfully lonely.

At the doctor's visit following my first period of complete voice rest, we compared the pictures of my throat before and after. Some of the swelling that had emerged as a response to the bump vibrating against the opposite vocal fold had receded, but the bump was still there, intrusive as ever.

Around this time, I began finalizing my college applications. I had already ruled out the idea of going to music school, but I still wanted to study music in college and be actively involved in a music community. College admission officers

all seemed to want "passion and devotion to a special extracurricular activity," and music was that to me. My applications were full of pages of singing experience and essays about why I loved to sing. I didn't tell the colleges about my recently developed issues, but the nagging thought remained: if I couldn't sing anymore, what college would even want me? I pushed the thought from my head, refusing to even entertain the possibility that my singing problems would last for more than a



few months.

In December, I briefly returned to choir. I thought that singing again would be liberating and enriching. After all, I had missed it so much. In actuality, though, my return to singing was stressful and disheartening. Maybe it wasn't the actual act of singing that I missed so much, but the feeling of capability and competence. I once believed that, with enough work, I could be the best. Now, I was working harder than I ever had, and achieving far less. As I thought about my future singing, or even speaking efforts, I began to perceive a bizarre disconnect between my body and my mind. The loss of control over my voice occupied my thoughts. I so badly wanted to continue singing as I once had, but my body made that impossible. Ever the extrovert, I wanted to speak freely, but I found myself physically limited by my vocal folds.

## Surgery

*My voice went recently, never happened before, off like a tap. I had to sit in silence for nine days, chalkboard around my neck. Like an old-school mime. Like a kid in the naughty corner. Like a Victorian mute.*

—Adele

In February, Dr. Merati told my mom and me that he was fairly certain that the "pseudo-cyst" was firm enough that my voice would not get better without surgery. He sat us down and told us the risks associated with the surgery; there was a 30% chance of temporary complications, and a small but significant risk of permanent damage. Despite this, we decided to move forward. The success of the surgery, Dr. Merati explained, would be dependent mostly on my strict adherence to full vocal rest in the weeks and months after the surgery. I assured my mother and the doctor that I was fully committed. At that point, I was so frustrated that I would have agreed to anything.



In the weeks leading up to the surgery, I was nervous and shaky. Anytime a friend or teacher brought up the surgery, I felt myself on the verge of tears. On the morning of March 29, 2013, I went under the knife. My parents were by my side when the nurse wrapped me in a heated blanket, hooked me up to an IV, and made whatever other preparations were necessary prior to the surgery. I was wheeled into the surgery room, and someone placed a syringe into my IV. I saw Dr. Merati, still a comforting presence among the chaos. His face was the last one I saw before I slipped out of consciousness.

The surgery was deemed a success. Dr. Merati removed the cyst and injected steroids into both vocal folds. I woke up in a state of elation, due to the medication. Unfortunately, my relaxation and joy were short-lived. The medication wore off, and I grew more aware of the fatigue spreading throughout my body, the burning sensation in my throat, and the fact that I was expected to spend the next three weeks in total silence.

Those weeks proved to be some of the loneliest I can remember. Several of my friends stopped by to see me or deliver my homework, and we sat awkwardly in silence before I got too fatigued and had to go rest. A kind lady from my church stopped by to drop off a “prayer shawl” from members of the choir, which, though comforting, reminded me of my internal theological struggle. I communicated with others via a robotic voice on my smartphone. My friends and family found it amusing; I never knew a robot could be so annoying. I felt handicapped. While all of my classmates went on their senior trips, I lay in my bed doped up on painkillers, eating sorbet, and feeling sorry for myself.

## Stage Fright

*Crying is really bad for your vocal cords.*

—Adele

In spite of my loneliness, the recovery process seemed to go well at first. When I went back for the first post-operative appointment with Dr. Merati, I could clearly see a reduction in swelling. It wasn't perfect, but my vocal folds seemed to line up in a way they hadn't before. Still, Dr. Merati implored me not to get too excited, as the healing process was only just beginning. He instructed me to speak only an hour per day (30 minutes in the morning, 30 in the evening) for a week, then two hours the next week, and so on. He left me with the sobering thought that the healing process could last months or years, and I might never be able to use my voice the way I once had.

“I’ve done what I can. Now it’s up to you to make the

surgery a success,” he told me.

Unfortunately, once I had been taken off full voice rest, the temptation to talk was simply too great. My self-control was already depleted, so I started to make little allowances for myself: *I’ve already talked for well over an hour, but it would be rude for me not to greet this lady... Yeah, I know I’m three hours over my limit, but let me just tell my friends this one joke... Sure, I’ve been talking all day, but I really need to share my opinion in this debate...*

Despite my laziness with regard to the guidelines, I did find speaking inordinately stressful. I was scared to use my voice. When I talked, my protective instinct was to keep my voice quiet and breathy, something I later learned was actually less healthy than speaking normally. The speech therapists had inundated me with so many exercises focused on “relaxing my voice” that it had the opposite effect: relaxation became impossible.

In early April, my jazz choir went away for a competition. Needless to say, I was left behind. One night, I got a Snapchat from one of my friends. They’d won first place.

Everyone was excited and hugging each other—so excited for the future of the choir. A few weeks later, I went to see 42nd Street for which I’d given up my lead. The show was wonderful and looked like a lot of fun. The girl who played Dorothy was wonderful. I’d experienced competitive jealousy before, but this felt different. They didn’t miss me. They could do it without me. I wasn’t part of either of those communities

anymore. And no one, save for me, seemed to care.

I started to experience serious pain in early May—far worse than what I had grown accustomed to in the days after surgery. Panicked, I went back to the doctor’s office, where Dr. Merati determined that my throat had become infected. He put me on another course of voice rest and antibiotics, which halted the infection for a while. Still, I would repeat this process several more times throughout the next year. My susceptibility to illness and infection combined with my slow healing process created a particularly nasty combination. I’m sure my fixation on my injury and my freaking out at the slightest hint of pain didn’t help either.

I begged my mom and Dr. Merati to let me give my senior sermon at church, a tradition that involves giving a 10-minute speech thanking the church for its role in raising me. Despite my theological uncertainties, my church had still proven to be one of my most supportive communities, even though my role as the church singer was gone. I desperately wanted to be a part of this tradition, so I wrote a sermon and



prepared to give it. Still, when I walked up to the altar on Sunday morning, I found waves of nervousness and fear rippling through my body. Stage fright. This was an entirely new feeling to me, and I did not enjoy it. I used to love public speaking! Now, I couldn't shake the fear of my voice giving out or becoming injured again. I felt as though I had completely lost control over my voice, which used to be so reliable. I began experiencing this feeling again and again—at the speech I gave at my senior project closing ceremony and the few words I read at graduation—and I found myself thoroughly unequipped to deal with it.



## A New Song

*Those who wish to sing always find a song.*  
—Plato

I started university at Duke in the midst of this identity crisis. When new acquaintances asked me what I did in my free time, I drew a blank. What would I do in my free time if I couldn't sing? I went to the Activities Fair and assessed hundreds of student clubs, but I had no idea what to try, now that choir, a cappella, and even debate were out of the question.

One blessing of my time at Duke was that I generally found myself too busy to dwell on my vocal cord problems. New friends, new classes, and new experiences all competed for my time and attention. I became more comfortable talking about my surgery and my experience, but I think that was the case only because I learned to see that part of my life as separate. Now, I no longer choke up every time I talk about it, not necessarily because I've made my peace with what happened, but because I don't really let myself care anymore. Sure, I still derive some pleasure from singing hymns in church or pretending to be Beyoncé in the shower, but I definitely don't seek affirmation for my talent the way I once did, largely because I see that talent as fallible.

I started taking voice lessons, but instead of finding them empowering like I once did, I walked away dejected and stressed. I stopped going. Just completely stopped. Even when I got sick or felt an infection coming on, I would rarely go to the doctor. I still wanted to be healthy, but the idea that I would be able to sing like I once had seemed more and more ludicrous. I gave up.

The loss of my singing voice served as a major catalyst for the identity change that has characterized the last year and a half of my life. I had to make some serious life changes, and

the way I fill my time now is not how I would have predicted it two years ago. Even so, I don't think that these developments were necessarily all bad. My singing had been a major source of competitiveness and jealousy in my life, and I was forced to

stop singing, I became more inclined to celebrate others' talents and creativity. This development was especially important coming to Duke, where it is impossible to be the best at everything. I like to believe that I learned to relax, push issues from my mind, and take things a day at a time. Logistically, not being able to sing opened up time in my schedule; I was able to try my hand at writing for the newspaper, working with the Women's

Center, and conducting psychology research. I'm more willing to try new things, even if I know I might fail. Beyond that, though, I was forced to begin to redefine myself with a focus on my character and opinions, not on my skills. I'm learning to see myself not in terms of what I can do, but more in terms of who I am. I'm not claiming that it's been easy or that I'm there yet, but I'm working on it.

I've begun to realize that there is some value in doing things just for the sake of doing them. I can derive pleasure from singing even if I don't get a standing ovation or a plaque for my wall. Outside of just singing, I'm growing more and more comfortable with the idea that there's value in reading for pleasure or taking a class just for fun, even if it won't get me an A or relate directly to what I want to do with my life. Expanding this realization, which largely originated in the loss of my singing voice, to other areas of my life has been difficult, but I think that it's been helpful and timely. I'm now convinced that I'll get more out of college by including some classes just for fun.

Without singing as a huge role in my life, there's definitely a part of me that is missing. I certainly like to think that I've come to terms with it, but if I'm being perfectly honest, I'm just not as sure of who I am. The girl who won regional singing awards? Who effortlessly hit high Bs and low Es? Who thought seriously about going to music school? She just isn't me anymore. As much as I miss her, I know she's not coming back.

## Text-Based Analysis Of Vocal Dysphonia's Impact On My Identity Pre-Injury

In order to understand why I would later be so impacted by my vocal cord injury, I must consider how singing became such an important and defining part of



my identity. Psychologists Lori-Ann Palen and J. Douglas Coatsworth identify participation in extracurricular activities as “an important context in which youth develop and display identities” (2006, p. 723), which was certainly the case for me. This connection, they theorize, is amplified in activities that have a high “attainment value,” meaning that the activity allows adolescents to demonstrate their identities to others. The performing arts, by their very nature, allow such demonstration to occur, so for me, singing had a high “attainment value.” My competitiveness and desire to demonstrate my talent to others were indicative of this. I wanted to be known as “the singer,” which implies that singing wasn’t merely something I did in my spare time; rather, it was how I saw myself. In her paper, “Extracurricular Activity Involvement and Adolescent Self-Esteem” (2012), sociologist Lisa A. Kort-Butler argues that extracurricular activities can facilitate the building of a sense of identity and, thus, self-esteem. Structured extracurricular activities—including singing—can promote “personal and social competence, character, and confidence in one’s self and abilities” (Kort-Butler, 2012, p. 13). All of these benefits were applicable to my experience, but confidence-building was particularly important. Like many adolescents, I struggled with fluctuations of self-esteem, but the external validation and feeling of self-efficacy that I got through singing kept my self-esteem relatively high. As I explained, I may not have been particularly athletic or popular, but singing afforded me avenues through which I fostered feelings of self-worth and value.

It’s important to note that, for me, singing wasn’t ever “just another activity.” Sure, I participated in pursuits like Student Government, French Club, and the National Honor Society, but singing was where I really found joy. In the readings I did about adolescents’ extracurricular activities and identities, I was surprised to find that one of the concepts that most resonated with me was that of “athletic identity.” While I am not an athlete, many of the concepts relating to identity and athletics are applicable to my identity as a singer. I do not expect all of the ideas to be transferrable, of course, as our society’s attitudes toward athletics may not align with those towards singing, but this notion of athletic identity remains relevant. Physical Education Professor Andrew C. Sparkes synthesized the literature on this topic to define athletic identity as “the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role” (1998, p. 645), which affects how athletes perform and perceive themselves. In a way, it is clear that I experienced a

heightened sense of a “singer identity,” and all of the risks and benefits that accompany that. Sparkes identifies the potential benefits as “the development of a salient self-identity or sense of self, positive effects on athletic performance, and a greater likelihood of long-term involvement” (p. 645). I experienced that salient self-identity related to singing, and I think that identity then positively impacted my performances and desire to perform well. That identity also led me to see myself involved in singing in the long-term, in college and beyond.

Developmental Psychologist Alan S. Waterman’s writings on personal expressiveness point to another compelling explanation for why singing was so fundamental to my identity. Feelings of personal expressiveness, a term that he uses to summarize six characteristics of participation in an activity, “are experienced when one is succeeding in finding someone to be” (Waterman, 1993, p. 152). This feeling is characterized first by (a) intense involvement and (b) feeling of fit with an activity “that is not characteristic of most daily tasks” (Waterman, 1993, p. 152). My involvement in singing was far more intense than my involvements in other activities, with the exception of my academics (which I put before everything). I’m sure this heavy involvement was due to this “feeling of fit;” looking back, it’s clear that singing was the activity

during which I felt most “me.” This leads into the next two characteristics of personal expressiveness: (c) feelings of being alive and (d) feelings of fulfillment and completeness (Waterman, 1993, p. 152). Even when I was very little, external observers like my voice teacher could tell that I enjoyed singing far more than anything else, which became even more clear as I trained and devoted more time to singing. My “feelings of fulfillment” were mediated by my competitiveness and my desire to always achieve

more. Of course, it seems to me that these feelings are likely tied to my intense involvement and fit, in that feeling alive and complete encouraged me to be more involved, and that involvement fed these feelings. The last two characteristics, (e) a feeling that “this is what the person was meant to do” and (f) that “this is who one really is,” relate most to my identity as a singer (Waterman, 1993, p. 152). There is a reason that singing mattered more to me than almost anything else I did. Singing was more than just something to do. When I sang, I felt like I was being true to myself and to my identity. There were occasions when I completely lost track of time because I was so wrapped up in the craft. True, I may not have felt a strong calling to be a professional singer, and I felt singing was not



what I was “meant to do” for a living. I perceived singing as a pastime that I was “meant to do” and would continue doing. In this way, singing encompassed all of the elements of personal expressiveness, albeit to varying degrees.

Waterman’s understanding of personal expressiveness is closely tied to the concept of “flow,” which he, Palen, and Coatsworth all address. Flow refers to complete involvement in an activity where there is an “optimal fit between the skills of the individual and the demands of the activity” (Palen & Coatsworth, 2006, p. 724). Singing was a “flow” activity for me. On the one hand, I felt constantly challenged, but I also felt capable of meeting those challenges through hard work. Flow is beneficial because it reduces the desire to engage in risky behaviors by providing alternative emotional rewards. Furthermore, and this seems particularly applicable to my experience, “flow may be central to the process of adolescent identity formation because it prompts self-reflection and...promote[s] construction and affirmation of their self-definitions” (Palen & Coatsworth, 2006, p. 724). Because singing is, more than my other activities, inherently expressive in that repertoire and performance choices often draw on personal experiences and emotions, this was a realm in which I felt particularly able to reflect on and express my identity and feelings. This may serve to explain why my injury was so devastating; not only was a major component of my identity gone, but an outlet through which I expressed that identity was also taken away.

## Sudden Identity Change

Exercise Science Professor Barbara D. Lockhart explains that identity and self-esteem become less stable the more one grounds identity in athletic achievements. This can be damaging, as “identity based on athletic performance is, by its very nature, unstable and prone to variability” (Lockhart, 2010, p. 27). While it initially seemed that my strong identification with singing carried with it many benefits—feelings of “personal expressiveness” and “flow” along with self-esteem and confidence—I think Lockhart identifies something that is just as, if not more, important for understanding my situation. Any sort of achievement-dependent identity is inherently unstable, and this instability is amplified when injury and loss of talent are possible, such as in practicing athletics or music. These findings fall in line with Sparkes’s claim that “strong and exclusive” athletic identity corresponds with “the individual’s depressive response to both hypothetical and actual injury”

(Sparkes, 1988, p. 645). I would certainly characterize my own reaction to injury as “depressive,” as indicated by my sadness, feelings of loneliness, and impressions of misunderstanding by others.

One area where psychologists have identified and studied the impact of sports injury is in feelings of self-efficacy. Sports Psychologists Wiese-Bjornstal, Smith, Shaffer, and Morrey theorize that the myriad of negative effects of sports injury may have a positive application. “The urgency to return to sport,” they state, “motivates the athlete during the long, arduous rehabilitation” (Wiese-Bjornstal, Smith, Shaffer, & Morrey, 1998, p. 53). I do think that my eagerness to return to singing motivated me initially to strictly adhere to voice rest and follow all of my doctor’s instructions. However, I became dejected as my efforts did not prove successful. Wiese-



Bjornstal and his colleagues note that injury often is accompanied by a decrease in physical self-efficacy, and that a person’s perceptions of “one’s self, capabilities, and worth” may also be harmed (1998, p. 51). As I describe in my profile, my injury left me with a horrifying loss of control over my own body, which is indicative of decreased self-efficacy. The more I did exactly what I was supposed to without getting better, the more frustrated and helpless I felt. I now realize that when I consistently broke my voice rest, stopped taking voice lessons, and avoided going to the doctor, my lack of self-efficacy

was manifesting itself. In “Injuries in Athletics: Causes and Consequences” (2008), Semyon M. Slobounov comments that recovery can be harmed by lack of self-efficacy, because an athlete begins to “sense that he or she will never be as good or at the same level as before” (p. 253). This, in turn, may cause a “lack of motivation, slow recovery, and even termination of a treatment program” (Slobounov, 2008, p. 253), which describes what happened in my case.

My feeling that I could not control my own voice was new, and I found it distressing. In “Elite athletes and retirement: Identity, choice, and agency” (2013), S. Cosh, S. Crabb, and A. Lecouteur point to an explanation for this reaction. In reviewing how athletes’ retirements are generally portrayed by others, they identify “a contrast between the athletes’ internal desire and their bodies’ limitations” (Cosh, Crabb, & LeCouteur, 2013, p. 96), minimizing their agency. After my injury, my own feelings of agency in the recovery process were greatly reduced, and they were further decreased as my early efforts failed. I badly wanted to sing and I felt mentally capable of singing, but it was my voice’s physical

condition that prevented me from doing so.

Two experiences that further minimized my feelings of efficacy and worth were watching my jazz choir win without me and watching the show in which I had intended to play the lead. Mayo Clinic Nurse Counselor Aynsley M. Smith describes this as a common experience among athletes, and once again, I find parallels between Smith's analysis and my experience. Smith found that because many athletes experienced thoughts like "the team is playing well even without me", indicative of alienation and lowered self-worth, "low self-esteem was most acute when the team won" (Smith, 1996, p. 397). When my compatriots were successful without me, it was particularly upsetting because I questioned not only whether my current physical state was handicapped, but also whether I had ever been valuable to the group. In essence, this retroactively harmed my memories of self-efficacy even before my injury.

## Identity Reconstruction

When I refer to the "identity reconstruction" phase of my identity change, I am referring to a process that is far from complete. Even so, I would like to consider literature suggesting how to make post-injury identity reconstruction successful both for the purpose of understanding how far I have come in this process, as demonstrated my profile, and determining what my goals should be.

A lot of the literature surrounding psychological

injury rehabilitation enhanced if athletes and their significant others valued and identified the athlete as separate from his or her athletic performance" (Lockhart, 2010, p. 27). She uses a two-path model of self-esteem to explain this phenomenon. Achievement self-esteem, she says, is externally reliant and "requires the individual to achieve something to earn a good sense of self" (Lockhart, 2010, p. 27). In high school prior to my injury, this was the form my self-esteem took. Like athletic identity, achievement self-esteem is "ego-bound, unstable, and based on being better than others" (Lockhart, 2010, p. 28), which is, of course, not optimal. My desire to prove myself to everyone over and over was a manifestation of this form of self-esteem. On the other hand, self-acceptance self-esteem, which Lockhart deems preferable to achievement self-esteem, draws from internal sources and holds achievement separate from identity. Self-acceptance self-esteem does not preclude awareness of one's talents or abilities, but it does keep the two separate. Lockhart notes that there are, indeed, elite athletes with low athlete identity, which she considers as more healthy, especially when injury is a concern.

I really like to think that my injury catalyzed a shift toward this form of self-esteem, as indicated by my ability to find pleasure in singing just for fun and in my more laid-back attitude in other areas of life. Even so, I recognize that there remains a lot of progress to be made in this arena of self-improvement.

## "My feeling that I could not control my own voice was new, and I found it distressing."

trauma, particularly as it relates to athletic injury, focuses on the importance of "meaning making" as a coping mechanism. Slobounov refers to this when he describes injury as "an opportunity to re-evaluate self worth, who you are, and what is the purpose and meaning of what you are doing" (Slobounov, 2008, p. 244). When I recognized that I became less competitive and that I was able to use my time for other pursuits, I was engaging in an attempt to make meaning of what had happened to me. Similarly, Wiese-Bjornstal and his colleagues emphasize "learning the lessons' of injury" (Wiese-Bjornstal, Smith, Shaffer, & Morrey, 1998, p. 47). I don't like to think of my injury as something that I needed to "teach me a lesson," because it was a traumatic event. That being said, now I am able and willing to recognize that I did reap some benefits from this experience. Discovering new activities, celebrating the achievements of other people, and learning to see myself in terms of who I am, not what I could do, were all important lessons.

As I've been working to rebuild my identity and sense of self, I've noticed that my newfound self-esteem takes a different form than it did before. B.D. Lockhart suggests that the negative effects of an injury "could be minimized and

The process of identity reconstruction has been challenging, and it's far from over, but I feel that I've been able to recognize and appreciate some developments that emerged as a result. Armed with an enhanced understanding of how my identity is constructed, knowledge of the importance of finding meaning, and Lockhart's principles of self-acceptance self-esteem, hopefully I will be able to facilitate positive and healthy identity development over the next period of my recovery process and my life.

## Epilogue: April 22, 2014

Last Monday, I finally got around to visiting the Duke Voice Care Center to check on some throat pain I had been recently experiencing. Once again, the doctor slipped the scope down my nose and throat. By now the procedure is so familiar that I barely need the numbing spray anymore. I watch the video as they take it. I've seen so many of these that I can practically analyze them myself. Singing and speech are now permanently intertwined in my mind with doctors' offices.

As I sat in the examination chair, I reflected on how my attitude had changed since that first doctor's visit almost two years ago. I knew while sitting there that there was nothing



he could say that would make me burst into tears. I just didn't care enough anymore. I also knew that I wouldn't be surprised if he did find something problematic. I hadn't exactly been following my treatment plan to a tee.

Neither the doctor nor the speech therapist found anything worrisome. In fact, they told me I was in "stable condition, the best they'd seen!" It was nice to hear good news from an otolaryngologist for once. They actually encouraged me to try out for some on-campus choirs and a cappella groups, which I'm considering, although my hopes aren't high. I'm painfully aware of the fact that I haven't sung seriously in years, and the physical structure of my vocal cords has significantly changed. All of my training and technique seems to have been lost. I used to love singing in front of large crowds; now, even singing a hymn in church makes me horribly nervous.

In spite of my dejection and pessimism, I think it's important to take a moment to share what I've learned over the past two years. In my case study, I reflected upon and analyzed very specific aspects of my identity change, but I think it's worth recognizing the more general appreciation I've developed since that day in July when my voice cracked.

First, I've learned how to ask for help, and I've found comfort in knowing that I have a support system to fall back on when it is needed. I've always prided myself on my independence, but when you have surgery or go through periods of not being able to speak, you learn that it's practically impossible to be entirely self-sufficient. Being willing to graciously accept help and understanding from people who care about your well-being is essential to staying sane. This realization that interpersonal support is critical has been just as important for

issues unrelated to my voice, as college seems to be full of ups and downs.

Second, I've realized that I really value self-expression. I'm an extrovert and an external processor—speaking and singing both help me express myself. When I was no longer able to do these I grew lonely and dispirited, but I also learned



something. While speech is still important to me, voice rest taught me both how to listen more carefully to others and encouraged me to identify modes of expression beyond the use of just the voice. For example, when I was unable to speak, I turned to writing and journaling. This may explain why writing this case study was cathartic. I thought it would be painful, and at

times it was, but I also found a lot of hope in both the sources I read and in my own reflection. I've always found something therapeutic about writing, and being able to seriously explore a continuing identity conflict was strangely empowering.

Third, I've learned the importance of gratitude. This sounds so cliché that I hesitate to write it, but I feel there's some truth in the notion that "you really don't appreciate what you have until you lose it." Singing ability was never something that I thought could be taken away from me, so I had kind of taken it for granted. I wasn't particularly grateful for it because it never occurred to me to imagine my life without it. My loss of this talent has highlighted that the skills I value in myself—academic ability, for example—could one day be taken away, perhaps rapidly and unexpectedly. What will always stay with me, however, are the intrinsic parts of my identity: my character, my values, and how I treat others. Just as much as my skills, these too are worth being grateful for.

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**Andrew  
Bartuska**

The process for writing this paper started much earlier than the writing class even began. My previous

semester in the “Focus Program” along with another linguistics class framed the Multilingualism in the United States class around the importance of language in shaping our identities and its impact on our day-to-day interactions. The first day started with a series introductions that revealed a large language diversity even in such a small class. I began to think about the university environment and its bringing together of so many individuals with distinct backgrounds and the language interactions that it produced. I have had the pleasure of meeting bi-, tri-, and multilingual students from across the country and the world and have been exposed to more languages than ever before in my life. Language is an integral part of the way that each individual defines oneself and one’s interactions with other people, and it is greatly influenced by the people that one meets. This brought me to the following questions: how do the pressures of a college environment paired with other societal influences add to the struggle to find an individual identity through one’s language? How does the university improve or worsen the process? Why are many of my friends (self-professedly) unable to speak the languages that their parents and grandparents use as their primary means of communication? My paper explores these questions and several others, trying to discover what causes language change and how the university environment contributes to such changes.

# 20,000 Words from Home:

## The Effect of Higher Education on Linguistic and Cultural Identity

**Andrew Bartuska**

Multilingualism in the US (Spring 2014)

Professor: Nicolas Eilbaum

### Introduction

The average person has a working vocabulary of around 20,000 words, from the words they use to interact with their family and friends to the words they use in their public and working spaces. The situation is more complex when a person is bilingual. A simplified model would have it that their total number of words doubles, approximately 20,000 in both languages or—if one were to account for differences in age of acquisition, shortening the amount of time to increase vocabulary—a number still greater than 20,000. Yet, for the children of immigrants in the United States, the issue is far more complex. Children of immigrants struggle to find a balance between their public and private identities, and language becomes a huge factor for the choices that they make. The children are presented with a unique dichotomy. English is functionally the official language of the United States—a public language, used for business, education, and politics—while the immigrant language is considered a private language—for use in the home, with family and other members of their speech communities.

The public/private dichotomy becomes especially important as the children of immigrants enter into higher education. Their public language becomes a highly dominant factor in their lives as many move from home, enter dormitories or apartments, and surround themselves with education and social interactions that take place almost entirely in English. Their private language becomes relegated to the sideline, but the distance is not as physical as it is linguistic and cultural. They are, one might say, 20,000 words from home.

By the third generation after immigration, most use of the immigrant language has atrophied (Edwards, 2009). The third generation also tends to be the one that first enters higher education. This paper will propose that the subtle complexity inherent in the situation arises from two major factors: the growing institutionalization of diversity at universities and organized cultural groups. Both of these factors serve to reinforce boundaries between “mainstream” and immigrant groups. Furthermore, this paper will also show that these factors, though beneficial in many situations and intended for good, greatly contribute to the inability of immigrant children in higher education to identify with their language and cultural heritage.

### Diversity in Institutions: A Formal Context

#### Diversity Policies

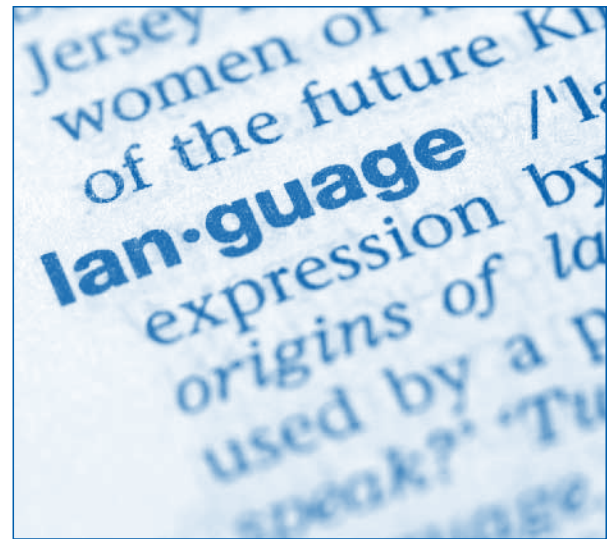
Diversity policies at the level of higher education create problems as they assign value. While intended to value the individual and the unique contributions that he or she can offer to the university, diversity policies can also be seen to value a

specific racial or cultural background without regard for the individual that represents the background. The placement of value is difficult to understand because it can be challenging to untie the intertwined lines of diversity as a positive phenomenon and the unforeseen negative outcomes of diversity policies.

For the sake of due justice to university administrators, it is necessary to address the intentions of diversity policies and the impact that they have had on universities over the past five decades. University administrators and government officials originally designed diversity policies, such as affirmative action and the quota system, to correct the imbalance that was present in racial diversity enrollment in universities as compared to the percentage of the general population. While the system has dramatically changed form within recent years, the purpose remains the same: to bring to the university underrepresented populations or, similarly, to provide the university with a multitude of backgrounds and perspectives that will give a greater breadth of experience to the student body.

Administrators convolute the intentions of the policies and cause unintended harm to the individuals involved when “diversity” becomes the goal of the policies instead of the byproduct. Statistics often cloud the issue by presenting numbers to aid the university in their quest for “diversity,” but administrators unintentionally use statistics to obfuscate more than reveal as “data becomes a technology for [hiding] the gap between official descriptions of diversity and what the organization is doing” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 55). Ahmed continued later to say “diversity offers practitioners a way of sounding ‘in tune’ and thus ‘in place’ by not sounding abrasive” (2012, p. 63), but the desire for including diversity is still not properly addressed. When administrators value diversity for the sake of diversity (that is to say, for the statistics that it provides or the image that it presents), and not for the value that differing backgrounds and opinions can bring to a school, “diversity becomes something to be managed and valued as a human resource” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 53). A kind of cultural tourism emerges where the university presents diversity in the student population as an inexpensive glimpse into another culture. This conveys the message to those with diverse backgrounds, like the immigrant children, that the culture that they have been a part of is valued for its intrinsic exoticness instead of its strengths. “Like tourists, students are invited to travel to foreign lands, learn about exotic places, and then return home to a place in which these people have no relevance in their daily lives” (Wills & Mehan, 2001, p. 31).

The top-down structure of policy change in universities further complicates the implementation of diversity policies. “If those with authority speak of diversity, then an institutional culture is generated around the word” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 59). Thus, when presidents, deans, and provosts encourage things such as “tolerance towards diversity” and “acceptance of different backgrounds,” they suggest that these are things of which it would be otherwise difficult to be tolerant and accepting. Nor is it just a question of rhetoric, as, historically, institutions of higher education have neither been tolerant nor accepting of diversity. It is a necessary and worthy goal to strive for the continued inclusion of diverse populations. However, when policy changes treat the pursuit of the goal as a game of numbers, instead of as human individuals with cultures, the result is a group of individuals marginalized by the policies designed for their benefit. The diversity initiatives designed to promote recognition unintentionally undermine the worth of diversity, and the recipients of tolerance and acceptance find themselves in a position of patronization instead of one of empowerment. Ahmed added, “the word ‘diversity’ invokes differences but does not necessarily evoke commitment to action or redistributive justice” (2012,





“Though their diversity is valued from a statistical perspective, the expectation from the university and its professors is that they are able to leave their language in their private life.”

p. 53). It is much simpler to discuss tolerance and commitment to the success of diverse populations than it is to work towards the completion of the same ideals while respecting and supporting the affected community.

## Language Policies

Language policies at universities mirror the difficult balance between acceptance and marginalization. Universities and colleges are almost exclusively run in “standard dialect English” with foreign languages relegated to a mandatory additional language instruction period. John Edwards, a Canadian social psychologist, defined standard dialect as “the one spoken by educated people, the one chosen in formal contexts, the one enshrined in print” (2009, p. 66). Though a common language is valuable for communication, and English is globally considered a language for academia, exclusive use of a single language within a community where multiple languages are spoken marginalizes those with linguistic and cultural diversity.

Language education policy in the United States has followed an English (and nothing but English) pattern for many years, supported by a dominance-based model of education, and consequently it is rare to find any use of other languages in a classroom environment. The pattern of English-only schooling reiterates the public/private dichotomy for children of immigrants. Though their diversity is valued from a statistical perspective, the expectation from the university and its professors is that they are able to leave their language in their private life. This allows them to more easily interact using the public self that they have chosen to adopt for education. The monolingual model places students at a disadvantage in the student-teacher relationship, and the problem becomes one of dominance. “If a teacher sincerely acknowledges that students already have language and culture...some students will always know more about some texts than teachers do” (Pérez, 2001, p. 76). When dominance is not ceded for the common goal of learning and education, a power struggle continues that the students will almost always lose. As a result, lessons, bulletins, emails, and research are expected and required to be in English.

## Cultural Groups: A Social Context

### The Complex Problem of Cultural Groups

One objection to the previous argument stems from the cultural groups that one may find on many college campuses (regarding the formal clubs or organizations centered around a specific cultural community). Paradoxically, these cultural groups can serve to distance an individual even more from their language and culture and disconnect them from positive public/private interaction for both languages that they speak. For clarification, this is not to say that cultural groups do not serve an important and significant point in teaching individuals about their culture and providing a common space for students of a similar cultural background to unite and share their experiences. Rather, this paper seeks to evaluate the overall influence of cultural groups within the context of an entire system.

The potentially negative consequences of organized cultural groups relate to the public/private split of language that many bilinguals experience in the United States. It is important to understand what Edwards refers to as “the distinction between language in its ordinarily understood sense as an instrumental tool, and language as an emblem of groupness, a symbol, a psychosocial rallying-point” (2009, p. 55). That



is to say, language is a method of communication that can also be viewed as a uniting cultural factor. Language is something people share through which they can connect, and it allows for a common ground on which members of a cultural group can operate. Edwards stated previously, “there are obvious and important connections between individual identity and ‘groupness’, and at the heart of these is continuity” (2009, p. 19). Continuity in such a situation would be the ability to transfer the interactions, both cultural and linguistic, of the cultural group into the broader social climate of the college or university. The previous discussion shows that the university environment does not provide continuity in this situation. Linguistic interaction in the immigrant language is almost entirely absent from the public arena.

### In-Group versus Out-Group

The lack of continuity in linguistic interactions provides a startling contrast to the diversity initiatives espoused by administrations and diversity practitioners. Cultural groups create an in-group/out-group phenomenon between the cultural groups and the public space provided by the school. In order for the children of immigrants to interact positively within the public space, they cannot simultaneously be heavily involved in the mutually-exclusive in-group of a cultural group at all times. Rather, the students make a choice—the public space becomes the dominant player through its larger scope and heavier implications, and the cultural group becomes an in-group that exists as a small subset to the larger context of the public persona. The public space prohibits the cultural group from occupying the normal and significant part of the individual’s life that culture is intended to occupy. A stripped version of the immigrant culture is preserved for select times and select individuals.

The counterargument would be that the two groups are not mutually exclusive and, therefore, can exist in a single person. Belonging to both groups simultaneously and participating in the activities and language of each creates many problems, though. For culture to be present and appreciable in an individual’s life, portions of the individual’s life cannot exclude the practice of the culture. The current model for higher education, as previously discussed, does not

allow for simultaneous participation because the student is required to adopt the public persona along with English and relocate the private persona to a time when it is acceptable. English-only universities tell the individuals that the private language and culture are not acceptable for public space. As a result, the continued success of multilingual children of immigrants within a community that does not integrate their language or culture necessitates that they distance themselves from their cultural and linguistic heritage.

### Conclusion

Identity and culture are inextricably linked, as are culture and language. As a result, the transition to college for children of immigrants can be particularly shocking due to the marginalization of their linguistic and cultural identities. The institutionalization of diversity in English-language universities and the boundaries that are formed as a result of cultural and linguistic groups contribute to the difficulty that many children of immigrants encounter upon entering higher

education. Both of these factors play a role in the continuing decline of language skill that is seen in the United States after several generations from immigration. These factors also contribute to the negative reception in the United States of individuals with distinct backgrounds.

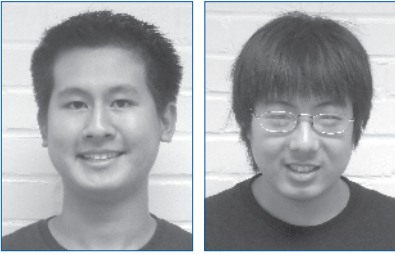
As it is, diversity presented in the context of institutions of higher education in the United States plays a direct role in disconnecting students from their own diversity, while the relationship is mirrored in the larger policies that are at work in the United States. The public/

private dichotomy is not a schism that begins at the collegiate level; rather, it is part of an entire education system that requires the detachment of individuals’ immigrant language and their public language. The policies and procedures at the university level serve to reinforce the system, and the perceived superiority of English in academic circles makes the detachment more difficult to avoid. As a result, the detachment can be seen as a single step in a process that runs throughout the United States’ policies in education. The negative consequences of diversity initiatives can facilitate the marginalization of individuals from their cultural and linguistic heritage, leaving them much more than 20,000 words from home.



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Henry Quach and Michael Shen

Looking back, the plunge was quick. Professor Lindsey Smith led us from simple characterizations of cultural traditions in nonhuman animals to much deeper analyses about how behaviors are individually learned and socially inherited.

To help us answer our question, “can chimps have culture?”, Professor Smith presented readings in clusters that would sway us in one direction and then the other. Works by Frans de Waal were anchored with strong anecdotes about primate learning, while those by Michael Tomasello methodically dismantled the notion that chimpanzees could learn and “ratchet up” culture as humans did. Our oscillating answer to the question served to calibrate us to the analytical mindfulness necessary to create a viable research proposal.

Though we initially struggled to find possible approach that could be studied clinically, we decided to investigate conformity between dominant and nondominant chimpanzees. In contrast to the linear transmission of behavior between two individuals (which we learned about in class), a conformity study would focus on interactions between multiple individuals with different hierarchical rankings. Such a challenging enterprise required us to separate our proposed experiment into multiple stages with interpretations for all outcomes. Because this research proposal was written as if it were to actually be done, another obstacle was finding a relatively homogenous sample of chimpanzees, which prompted extensive research on existing nature reserves and minor readjustment of our methods.

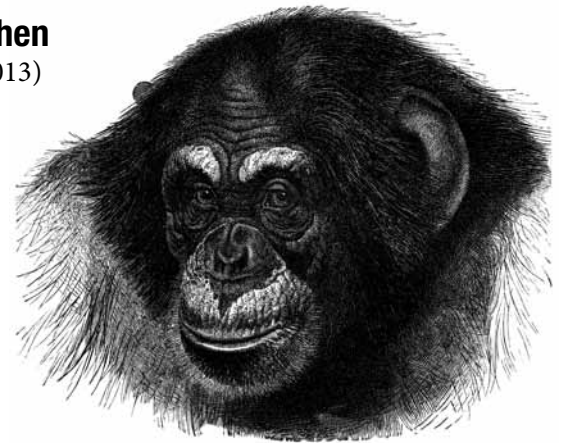
Much like how a journey can be more important than its destination, our strengthened research and scientific writing skills were a more meaningful result than our course’s central query. For that, we would like to thank Professor Smith for her guidance throughout the iterative editing process and our classmates for their immensely helpful peer reviews.

# Influence of Conformity on the Propagation of Alternative Tool Use Traditions in Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*)

**Henry Quach and Michael Shen**

Can Chimps Have Culture? (Fall 2013)

Professor: Lindsey Smith



## Abstract

Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) exhibit diverse tool use traditions, but evidence for a cumulative material culture remains controversial. This disparity can be attributed to the species’ behavioral conservatism when encountering new techniques. Chimpanzees using a sufficient technique for solving a particular task are unlikely to learn new techniques, even if alternatives are more efficient. However, chimpanzees are also highly normative and will conform to dominant conspecifics in both foraging and tool use techniques. The purpose of our study is to evaluate whether conformity to a dominant demonstrator can allow for the transmission of an alternative technique when there is already a sufficient behaviorally conserved technique. Our tool use tradition will be an experimental honey acquisition task with two solutions: a simple dipping method and a more complex probing method that yields a greater reward and builds upon the dipping technique. Each method will be seeded into a group through repeated human demonstrations to chimpanzees. The dominant individual of each group, however, will learn the method alternative to that of its group members. Should both groups converge upon the more cognitively demanding probing technique after each reconvening for a three-month observation period, our study will provide evidence for the possibility of overcoming behavioral conservatism with conformity driven social learning. Chimpanzees, like humans, may possess the potential to ratchet up complexity in their material cultures by propagating superior methods through social learning. Thus, it may be socioecological differences, not cognitive, that account for the technological gap between humans and wild chimpanzees.

**Keywords:** cultural accumulation, *Pan troglodytes*, conformity, behavioral conservatism, social learning



## **Influence of Conformity on the Propagation of Alternative Tool Use Traditions in Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*)**

### **Background**

Since the discovery of social learning in Japanese macaques (*Macaca fuscata*) and tool usage in Gombe chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), researchers have noted many similarities between human and nonhuman primate social behaviors. Both human and nonhuman primates demonstrate culture—behaviors acquired socially rather than genetically—such as tool usage and food choice. Despite such similarities, the absence of cumulative culture in primates is arguably what most sharply divides human and nonhuman culture. Broadly defined, cultural accumulation is the accrual of increasingly complex cultural traditions over generations within a population. Though cultural accumulation is evident in humans because behaviors are improved by future individuals, chimpanzees demonstrate a negligible propensity towards building on previous behaviors (Tomasello, 2001).

Behavioral conservatism provides one possible explanation for the lack of cumulative culture in chimpanzees. That is, chimpanzees may be cognitively averse to learning a new technique to complete a task when there is already a functional technique in place. In an experiment where chimpanzees were initially taught a simple dipping method to extract honey, Marshall-Pescini and Whiten (2008) found that individuals became unwilling to learn the more complex and rewarding probing method. After over 200 human demonstrations of the probing technique, chimpanzee subjects who initially learned the dipping technique failed to alter their operational method. Only chimpanzees that were first shown the probing technique without exposure to the dipping technique were able to successfully acquire the superior technique. The chimpanzees were fixed in the simpler dipping technique because they were not dissatisfied with the results and had no incentive to learn alternatives. It follows that behavioral conservatism may impede cultural accumulation by discouraging the learning of more efficient techniques or innovations once individuals have obtained a satisfactory solution. In other words, chimpanzee cognition follows the copy-if-dissatisfied model rather than the copy-if-better model when evaluating new techniques (Marshall-Pescini & Whiten, 2008).

Though behavioral conservatism presents an obstacle to cumulative modification in tool use techniques, evidence suggests that social influence can be overcome. To test whether chimpanzees practicing alternate techniques could learn from each other, Yamamoto, Humle, and Tanaka (2013) presented nine captive chimpanzees with the task of obtaining juice with a straw. Subjects developed two comparably mechanically demanding solutions: the dipping technique, which was very unsatisfactory, and the straw sucking technique, which was far more efficient. When dipping chimpanzees were paired with straw sucking conspecifics, dipping chimpanzees selectively adopted the superior technique. The authors speculated that subjects from Marshall-Pescini and Whiten (2008) failed to converge on a superior technique because the superior method was more cognitively demanding and subjects were already satisfied with the inferior method (Yamamoto et al., 2013). This experiment reinforces the copy-if-dissatisfied model, since a primary motivation of the dipping chimpanzees to learn was that they were not receiving enough juice. More importantly, it shows that behavioral conservatism can be overcome through social learning between conspecifics. The question remains as to whether a social condition can also overcome a conserved behavior like that in Marshall-Pescini and Whiten (2008), in which an inferior method already provides satisfactory results.



We contend that a key explanation for the disparity between Marshall-Pescini and Whiten (2008) and Yamamoto et al. (2013) is the lack of a social condition with conspecifics in the former. Claidiere and Sperber (2010) comment that social influence has a substantial effect on the convergence towards a single technique within a group. While social learning ostensibly enables the transmission of alternative techniques, this has only been proven in a case where there is an intrinsic motivation to learn socially—dissatisfaction with a known technique. If a conserved technique is satisfactory, there needs to be additional motivation to socially learn an alternative. A plethora of evidence suggests conformity can provide the incentive to socially learn and even reverse individual preference.

In fact, conformity heavily influences the foraging preferences of wild vervet monkeys (*Chlorocebus aethiops*). Researchers seeded preferences for blue or pink corn in groups of vervet monkeys by making one color unpalatable (Van de Waal, Borgeaud, & Whiten, 2013). In the course of the experiment, males migrated to other groups that were conditioned to prefer the alternatively colored corn. Interestingly, migrant males overwhelmingly conformed to the new group's preferences, with seven immediately approaching the colored corn they previously spurned. Only a single male maintained his original foraging preference due to his adoption of the dominant rank in the new group. This experiment is important in demonstrating that primates can reverse originally seeded preferences under the influence of social normativity.

Conformity-driven social learning can be further amplified by exploiting dominance relationships. The dominance of a demonstrator determines the attentiveness other primates show to the demonstrator. Thus, using a dominant demonstrator would best facilitate the social learning of an alternate tool-use technique within a group (Yamamoto et al., 2013). An experiment by Whiten, Horner, and de Waal (2005) highlights the power of this technique. Two dominant female chimpanzees each introduced a different tool-use technique to a naïve group of non-dominant individuals. Both techniques, “poking” and “lifting,” were similarly cognitively demanding and merited the same food reward. All members of the “poke” group adopted the introduced technique, while 73.3% of the “lift” group adopted the one they were introduced to (Whiten et al., 2005). Conformity to a dominant chimpanzee can also reverse individual preferences in a group context (Hopper, Schapiro, Lambeth, & Brosnan, 2011). When chimpanzees

were given the choice of exchanging one to two types of tokens for either grapes or carrots, researchers found that the choice of a trained-dominant model could dictate an entire group's preference. Fascinatingly, individuals heavily preferred grapes initially, but when the trained model used the carrot token, the rest of the group conformed readily. This experiment illustrates the capability of group normativity to reverse individual preferences, and suggests to us a possible mechanism for overcoming behavioral conservatism (Hopper et al., 2011).

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the transmission of an alternative technique under social conditions is possible when an operational technique has already been introduced, much like in Yamamoto et al. (2013). However, we will be incorporating the experimental task of Marshall-Pescini and Whiten (2008) as alternative techniques differ in difficulty. Since the probing technique builds upon the dipping technique, we believe that this



pair would constitute a good indicator of tool-use innovation. Importantly, the dipping technique is still a satisfactory solution, thus ruling out the copy-if-dissatisfied explanation that confounded the results of Yamamoto et al. (2013). Furthermore, rather than pairing individuals, we will be using an enclosed-group setting with only the dominant individual practicing the alternate technique because the powerful conformist influence of a dominant demonstrator maximizes the

possibility for social learning. This group setting also better simulates how innovation may propagate in the wild. We hypothesize that subjects will, over time, converge on the superior probing technique. This would indicate that even a satisfactory technique that is behaviorally conserved could be overcome under strong conformist pressure to a dominant demonstrator, thus making cumulative culture plausible for chimpanzees.

## Methods

### Study Subjects and Study Site

We will conduct this study in the summer of 2014 at the Yerkes National Primate Research Center. As our selected subjects from this site already live in captivity, conducting our study here minimizes invasiveness. Subjects will be placed in one of two groups and will inhabit a corresponding outdoor enclosure (Enclosure 1 [711 m<sup>2</sup>] or Enclosure 2 [528 m<sup>2</sup>]) (Horner, Proctor, Bonnie, Whiten, & de Waal, 2010). Groups were selected for an equal number of each sex and for a congruous mean age.

Table 1

*List of Individuals to be used in Experiment* (Modified from Figure 1 of Appendix attached to Horner et al. (2010))

Group	Name	Sex	Age	Group	Name	Sex	Age
A	Julianne	F	15	B	Tara	F	18
A	Steward	M	20	B	Missy	F	20
A	Chip	M	24	B	Katie	F	24
A	Reinette	F	26	B	Socrates	M	26
A	Cynthia	F	33	B	Amos	M	32
A	Georgia	F	33	B	Anja	F	33
A	Peony	F	55	B	Erica	F	50

## Experimental Design

**Task.** Our experiment will use a task similar and apparatus identical to that of Marshall-Pescini and Whiten (2008). Subjects will be presented with a honey-acquisition task with two possible approaches. One will be the more complex, “superior” probing method, which will allow access to both honey and peanuts. The other will be the “inferior,” less efficient, but still satisfactory, dipping technique, which allows only limited access to the honey.

**Demonstrations period (initial observation period).** Group A will be placed into Enclosure 1 and Group B into Enclosure 2. Both groups will inhabit their designated enclosures for three days for the establishment of a new dominance hierarchy. As submissive chimpanzees produce rapid “oh-oh” vocalizations towards dominant individuals, we will record the number of calls that each conspecific makes during daily one hour feeding periods (Klinkova, Hodges, Fuhrmann, de Jong, & Heistermann, 2005, p. 365). We will deem the individuals that make the fewest of these calls in each group as the two dominant conspecifics within our study.

**Demonstrations period (individual stage).** Baseline trials will be conducted to exclude any chimpanzees with a natural propensity to operate the device, as this would nullify their status of having been taught a new behavior.

Following this, we will train each individual beyond the sight of its group in thirty minute training sessions. While other chimpanzees temporarily inhabit sleeping areas, a human will show the designated conspecific 200 demonstrations of the inferior dipping or superior probing technique. In Group A, we will demonstrate the superior technique to the emergent dominant conspecific and inferior technique to the rest of the group. Conversely, in Group B, we will demonstrate the inferior technique to the dominant conspecific and superior technique to the rest of the group. Chimpanzees that do not acquire their intended behavior will be removed from the groups. Should a dominant conspecific be unable to acquire its assigned method, we will remove it and reinitiate the observation period for its group to determine a new dominant conspecific.

**Demonstrations period (group stage).** In the group stage, we will observe subjects using the honey acquisition apparatus in the presence of its group. Each group’s enclosure will be modified to include a centrally placed transparent acrylic cage containing the honey-acquisition device. Consecutive rotations of 15-minute trials will take place, in which each chimpanzee will have an opportunity to operate the apparatus and be observed by other individuals in the group environment, as shown in Figure 1. The dominant chimpanzee will operate the apparatus first each day. The technique employed will be recorded for each individual at each trial and long-term changes will be evaluated.



“If a conserved technique is satisfactory, there needs to be additional motivation to socially learn an alternative. A plethora of evidence suggests conformity can provide the incentive to socially learn and even reverse individual preference.”



“Apes are highly evolved from a social-cognitive perspective—with both the abilities to innovate and learn socially.”

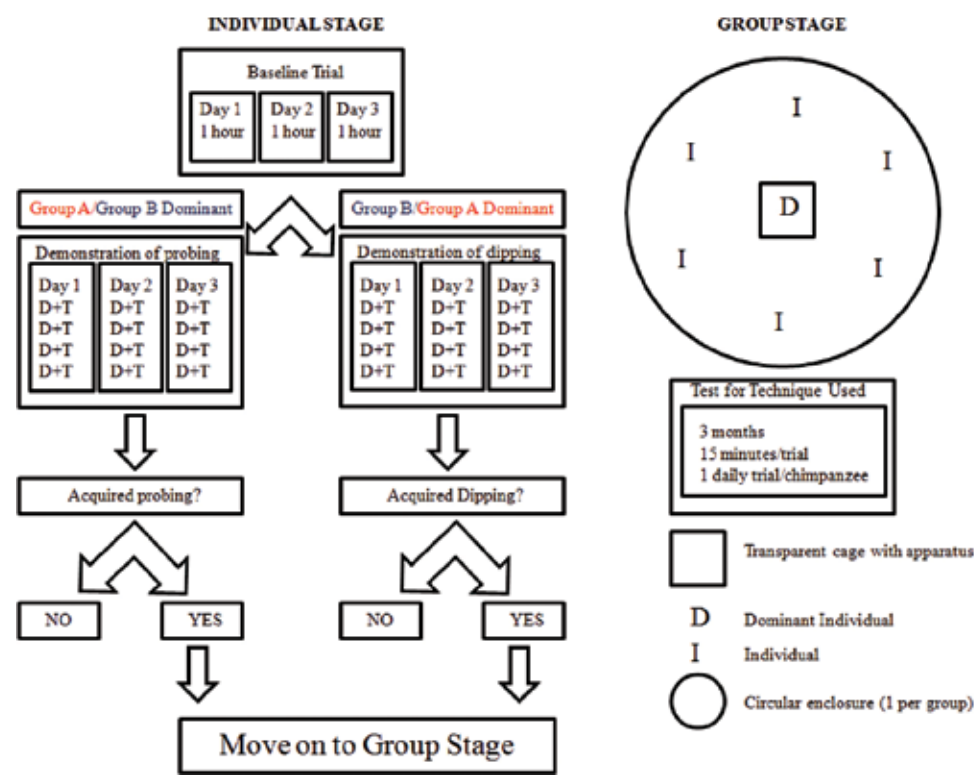


Figure 1. Experimental protocol showing the individual and group stages. Note that D+T means demonstration and test. An example of the first trial (the dominant will go first) is shown.

**Data collection.** Data will be collected over the three-month period by videotaping each chimpanzee as they interact with the apparatus, and we will record which technique they used. Each chimpanzee will be given a 15-minute test trial daily in the transparent apparatus chamber at the center of the enclosure. We will analyze how the practiced techniques change over time and use the resultant data to produce a conclusion. We will be using Marshall-Pescini and Whiten’s (2008) ethogram to categorize observed actions.

Table 2.  
*Ethogram of Probing and Dipping*

	Open trap door with finger and insert tool
Dipping Technique	Open trap door with tool and insert tool
	Open trap door with tool and insert another tool
Probing Technique	Poke bolt followed by levering the lid open using the appropriate tool
	Poke bolt followed by levering the lid with a finger

Note. Taken from Marshall-Pescini and Whiten (2008, p. 452).

Broader Implications

If our hypothesis is supported, then conformity to the dominant demonstrator will take place in group A, but not in group B. That is, members of the group will conform to an alternative technique only if that new technique is superior to the current technique and will otherwise preserve the status quo. This would support the hypothesis that conformity to an innovator can act as a mechanism to accelerate cultural accumulation by the selective transmission of superior techniques. It would also show that conformity-driven social learning has

the potential to overcome the copy-if-dissatisfied scheme, since dipping was a satisfactory solution. However, if both groups A and B conform to their respective dominant models, conformity would not act selectively and may impede cultural accumulation since inferior techniques are equally likely to be transmitted as superior techniques. Finally, if neither group conforms to the technique of their dominant demonstrator, it would reveal that not even a strong conformist pressure can reverse behavioral conservatism in cases where there is already a satisfactory technique.

Our experimental design simulates how innovation might take place in wild populations—one individual presents an alternative method to a group with an established method. Sociability is a primary factor in determining the rate of propagation of innovations through primate populations. As Pradhan, Tennie, and van Schaik (2012) concluded with a computer simulation of technological ratcheting, chimpanzees and other great apes are capable of reaching a relatively high level of technology only under conditions of high sociability. It is not a cognitive deficit, as the authors mention, but the different socioecological factors surrounding apes and hominids that confer the advantage in cultural accumulation of the latter (Pradhan et al., 2012). Our hypothesis, if confirmed, would directly support this conclusion. However, the prerequisite for cumulative culture to occur is strong normative social pressure, which might be lacking in the wild.

Apes are highly evolved from a social-cognitive perspective—with both the abilities to innovate and learn socially. However, humans are unique in that they are “ultra social.” Human infants were found to have comparable cognitive skills as apes for dealing with the physical world but have a significantly more advanced social dimension

(Herrmann, Call, Hernández-Lloreda, Hare, & Tomasello, 2007). Along with their more advanced social skills, human infants are also more conformist than apes (Tomasello, 2001). Unsurprisingly, conformity in humans has been suggested as one of the key reasons for the greater extent of human cumulative culture (Tennie, Call, & Tomasello, 2009), providing an incentive for social learning, the primary vessel for cultural information. Based on our study, the technological gap between apes and humans may be attributed to evolved differences in sociability and conformist tendencies even though apes possess the necessary cognitive machinery. Because there is less of an impetus for social learning in the chimpanzee's relatively stable tropical forest niche, behavioral conservatism would likely predominate because of the limited environmental challenges. In contrast, increased sociability and normative social influence in humans was necessitated through evolution to allow for greater innovation as a response to the wide array of environmental challenges humans encountered as our ancestor migrated across the Earth. Nevertheless, our experiment would be significant in demonstrating that alternate techniques in chimpanzees may be transmuted despite behavioral conservatism.

A potential limitation of this experiment is that a dominant individual was purposely chosen as the demonstrator in order to best promote conformity-driven social learning. In the wild, innovations may be made by any individual, regardless of social status, and in fact innovations are quite frequent in juveniles (Boesch, 2003). In the future, a study could extend our results to determine whether transmission of an alternative tool-use technique is possible when the demonstrator is not dominant. Behavioral conservatism might prevail in such cases.

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**Kayla Morton**

I signed up for Professor Baletti's "Decolonizing Amazonia" course with a slight amount of

trepidation, since I had no idea what "decolonizing" even meant. What I learned was that after the dreaded colonial period was over, there was an entire host of problems that the decolonized world, including Brazil, had to endure and continues to struggle with today. By looking at the Amazon, we explored the Edenic narrative and how it affects the images evoked by nature; many people view the Amazon as a place of perfect, untouched beauty, but the reality is far less romantic.

Our final project in Professor Baletti's class was to choose a modern topic in Amazonia and create a comprehensive group report on it, which included individual papers from each member and a collective group paper. My group chose biopiracy as our issue because of the significant impacts it has on the Amazon and the American pharmaceutical industry. The exploitation of Amazonian indigenous populations can be directly linked to the decolonized images people have of them, and very little is being done to stop this. Because of my interest in policy and international relations, I chose to analyze what is being done in Brazil domestically and internationally to stop biopiracy. There was an extensive amount of literature on this topic, but what really stood out to me was the fact that many of the problems Brazil experiences with its policy are the same problems we have in the United States.

# Biopiracy in the Amazon:

## A Policy Perspective



### Kayla Morton

Decolonizing Amazonia (Fall 2013)

Professor: Brenda Baletti

The Amazon's wealth is contained not just in its biodiversity but also in the wide scope of "traditional knowledge" accumulated from the indigenous Amazonian people over thousands of years. Amazonian cultures wield a large body of traditional knowledge from their experience and extensive interaction with nature (Ebermann 2012). However, international pharmaceutical companies frequently exploit indigenous knowledge from the Amazon to expedite the production of new drugs and products. Material incentives lead to widespread abuse of the Amazon's indigenous knowledge as demonstrated by the ineffective enforcement of biopiracy and intellectual property laws. Although these laws should defend personal innovation, effectual protection of indigenous knowledge proves difficult because this type of knowledge cannot be characterized as a novelty or individual invention. In response to this problem, Brazil passed laws and ratified international agreements in an effort to protect native knowledge and allow for appropriate compensation in exchange for the use of indigenous knowledge in patentable products. The Convention on Biological Diversity (1993) and The Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (1995) include regulations that, in theory, should allow for improved dialogue between corporations, the Brazilian government, and indigenous groups. However, no international or Brazilian organization proves powerful or willing enough to maintain these regulations (Sampath, 2005). Both political and regional problems subsequently hamper the effectiveness of these measures.

Disagreement between different facets of Brazilian society and the fragmentation of policy impeded the immediate implementation of biopiracy legislation (Garrafa 2010; Finetti 2011). Due to extensive pharmaceutical research in the Brazilian Amazon, these legal issues are a major concern. Biopiracy in Brazil by companies from the Global North prevents Brazil from holding patents on major pharmaceutical advancements—many of which would help Brazil's own research. Furthermore, pharmaceutical products are frequently too expensive for use by the very indigenous people who produced the knowledge and resources (Staral 2012). In an effort to rectify this, Brazil signed international agreements and passed numerous intellectual property and patent laws pertaining to biopiracy (Sampath 2005). In this paper, I argue that international and political bureaucracy blocks the full implementation and enforcement of international property policy designed to subvert biopiracy in the Amazon. I will primarily address the mechanics of patent policy and why it is needed, followed by an evaluation of Brazilian policy and its shortcomings.

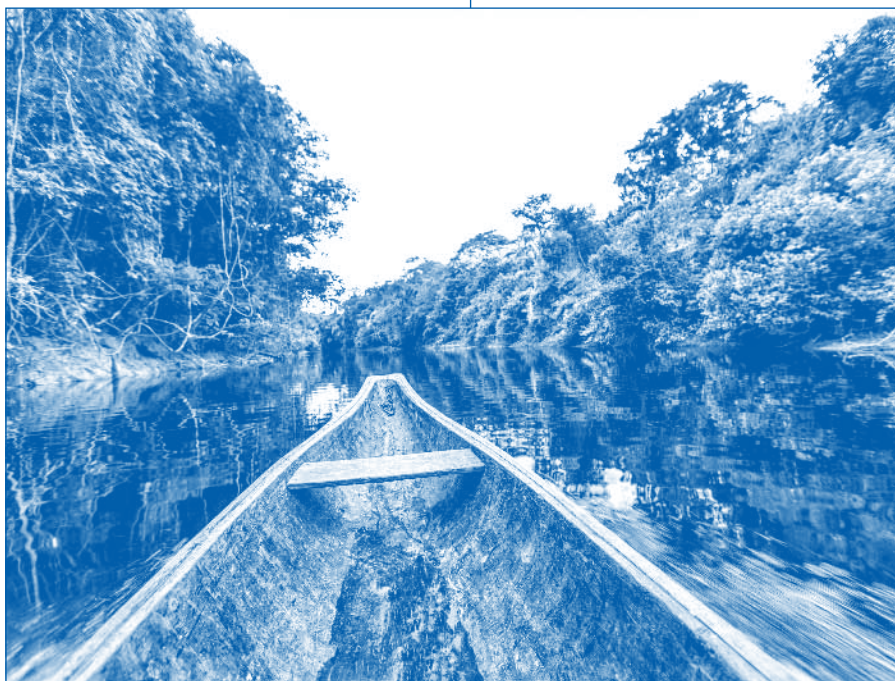
Countries regulate the use of resources and traditional knowledge, as well as



address benefit-sharing issues between a company and a group of indigenous people, through Intellectual Property Law (IP). A patent system allows the government to register and protect new ideas. Patent law comes from a combination of a country's constitution, federal statutes, and case laws regarding IP rights (Mgbeoji 2006). A functioning IP system leads to intellectual innovation and encourages investment by the local people in maintaining their traditional lifestyles while preserving indigenous culture (Ebermann 2012). Indigenous cultures rely on small communities finding original ways to use natural resources. Local communities dependent on natural resources have developed ways to sustainably manage them and can provide that information to other users. In this way, traditional knowledge significantly lowers the costs of pharmaceutical research and development projects. However, the difficulty in protecting inventiveness in biotechnology patenting is the one of the core problems that leads to biopiracy.

Discoveries in biotechnology often result from cumulative research, and traditional knowledge contributes to this type of research in different ways. Patent laws only protect natural substances if they constitute an “invention,” meaning that they are significantly altered by humans. The product of the invention must also be defined as “novel” by the patent system, so traditional knowledge often does not qualify (Finetti 2010). Governments implement several strategies to circumvent this problem. The property rights approach addresses the problem of knowledge that is not innovative enough to fall under contemporary patent law, but requires definitions of “innovation” too broad in scope to actually protect indigenous knowledge from exploitation. The liability-based approach assigns specific compensation for the use of resources and does not allow the owner to exclude others from using the resource. Should someone outside of the agreement want to use the resource, the owner receives compensation (Ebermann 2012). The third approach, which involves mandatory benefit-sharing, requires a company to negotiate benefits given to indigenous people before beginning research. This approach can raise the cost of research, as well as research products, and places an undue burden on the legal system. Used on a global scale, mandatory benefit-sharing is currently considered the most attractive approach because it guarantees some degree of just compensation (Ebermann 2012; Mgbeoji 2006). All of these strategies have positive and negative aspects on IP protection, but they attempt to provide some degree of protection to the indigenous people.

The growing need for an international system of patents developed as a result of globalization and the increasing prominence of international trade. The lack of an international patent system can actually work as a type of non-tariff trade barrier. When companies unfairly copy technology, including biotechnology, they can flood the market with cheap replicas of a product and reduce the competitiveness of the market (Ebermann 2012). As soon as an item trades globally, it needs international protection accomplished through the international patent system. Ikechi Mgbeoji, a professor of law at York University, explains internationalization of the patent as having three stages of evolution: “the primitive era of patents,” followed by “the development of multilateral treaties on patents,” and finally, “the linkage of trade and intellectual property rights” in the 1990s that



pushed patent rights over biocultural resources into full globalization. However, even the third stage only provides a framework for regulatory systems. Regional, domestic, and local laws need to be put in place to enforce those regulations (Mgbeoji 2006, 39). In the global economy today, protecting intellectual property only on the domestic level will not be sufficient; international agreements need to be made and enforced on the international level for innovation to be truly protected.

Brazil's current IP system severely under-regulates the protection of indigenous knowledge, leading to a particularly high number of instances of biopiracy in the Amazon. One of the most serious deficiencies is that Brazil allows patents for only transgenic microorganisms, which does not include plants. Brazil also makes no provisions for the use of biological material removed from the country. This oversight leads to companies using "virtual patents" on biological products; if a researcher discovers a process with a specific product, then they patent the process. This entails that the researcher has a virtual patent on the product as well, even if it has no application relevant to the process (Hathaway 2004). Brazil designed its patent system to favor industry and placed no legal measures to protect community knowledge rights (Hathaway 2004). Exploitation of the Amazon's biodiversity of life and indigenous knowledge is fairly common. Pharmaceutical companies often take plants from the Amazon, process them in a nearby rudimentary facility, and then export the product to the US or other countries. Deforestation occurs when companies cut down trees to plant specific species, leading to a loss of biodiversity (Hathaway 2004). In addition, pharmaceutical companies take bacteria from the Amazon, transport it into the United States, then patent and reproduce the product themselves (Adejoke 2013). It is estimated that biopiracy in the Amazon costs Brazil \$16 million USD per day, mostly due to a lack of policy and poor enforcement of the protections they do have (Danley 2011). Instead of lost revenue, this money could become a boon to indigenous communities in the form of benefit-sharing compensation, which would stimulate local economies. Effective policy implementation could mitigate the problems caused by biopiracy, but the combination of weak international agreements and insufficient domestic policy prevents Brazil from adequately protecting its natural resources.

Brazil and other countries wrote the Convention

on Biological Diversity (CBD) in June 1992 with the aim of conserving biodiversity on an international scale by promoting sustainable use and benefit sharing (Finetti 2010). The CBD became a landmark agreement because it recognizes that conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity can only be handled within the economic context of biodiversity. Profit drives companies and policies should reflect that markets drive research and development (Sampath 2005). Policies also attempt to accomplish this through a system of regulated benefit sharing. Article 15 of the CBD mandates that access to a genetic resource be divided on mutually agreed-upon terms and be subject to prior, informed consent of the group providing access to the resource. The main flaws in Article 15 are that it does not explain the relationship between generating revenue and conserving biodiversity directly, and it does not define appropriate compensation for the use of genetic resources (Finetti 2010). The CBD also purposely left specific regulations to the decision of the countries

that ratified it. This was a deliberate decision because policies vary from country to country. In order for the CBD to have solvency, each country needs to pass and enforce legislation relating to its regulations.

Unfortunately, Brazil has been unable to pass any legislation that directly enforces CBD goals because of domestic, political gridlock, rendering the CBD largely ineffective in preventing biopiracy in Brazil. A 1995 legislation approved unanimously by the Federal Senate was never

considered by the Chamber of Deputies and was shortly abandoned (Hathaway 2004). Brazil does not implement the regulations on a national or local scale that are outlined in the CBD. Additionally, Brazil does not participate in the international information exchanges initiated by the CBD and maintained by most countries. These exchanges led to debate and revisions of international rules, including attention to indigenous knowledge and holding governments responsible for the implementation of the CBD. Today Brazil is still unable, or perhaps unwilling, to participate in these talks. The final problem with the CBD involves the United States. Although the United States participated in the convention, the US Congress never agreed to ratify the CBD. Because most of the major pharmaceutical companies in the Amazon are American, this means that many of the benefit-sharing regulations would still be extremely difficult to enforce (Danley 2011). The CBD's groundbreaking objectives have had few positive effects for Brazil, largely due



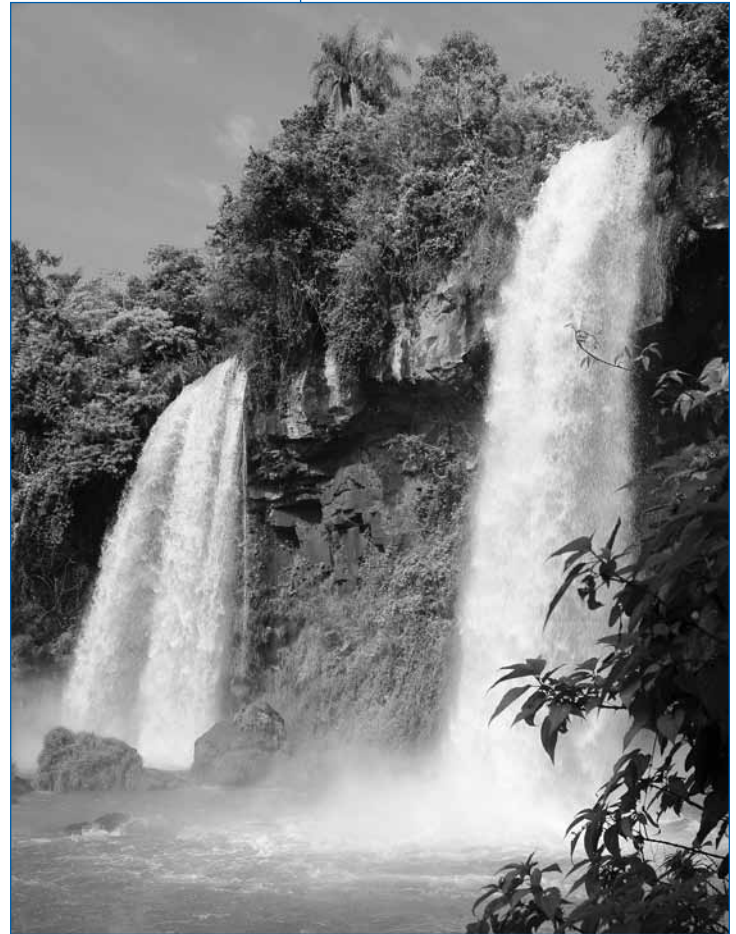


to the government's lack of participation. Without international cooperation and enforcement legislation, the CBD will never be effective in Brazil.

The Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), the second main international agreement passed in 1995, was negotiated at the end of the last World Trade Organization (WTO) round (Finetti 2010). TRIPS aims to ensure protection and enforcement of IP rights and to protect technological innovation. The original intent was to partially amend, add to, and change the CBD. Some of the new rules include expanded scope of trade-related IP rights, more means for enforcement, multilateral dispute settlements between governments, and measures to get more international participation. Overall, TRIPS successfully strengthened patent protection in WTO countries—an important accomplishment considering the number of developing countries who are members. IP law is particularly significant in the developing world because many of their governments have little to no patent protection or enforcement, despite the fact that these countries contain a substantial amount of the world's biodiversity (Sampath 2005).

Many of the problems Brazil encounters with the CBD also apply to TRIPS. There are very few ways the government actually enforces its mandates, and TRIPS itself contains major loopholes. The agreement handles all biopiracy cases on an international level within WTO courts, but treating these cases on this international scale is usually unsuccessful and it is extremely difficult to find agreement within the current WTO round of negotiations (Sampath 2005). Brazil specifically takes issue with Article 27 of TRIPS, an article that allows for plant varieties to be patented without benefit-sharing or compensation to indigenous users. This provision is in direct conflict with the CBD, and Brazil along with several other WTO countries are working to amend Article 27 (Danley 2011). TRIPS also made very little progress in dealing with the definition of traditional knowledge. Despite this being one of the main issues with biopiracy, there is no explicit mention of traditional knowledge in TRIPS. As a result, traditional knowledge receives the same treatment as all other types of innovation (Ebermann 2012). TRIPS was designed to improve IP protection and prevention of biopiracy, but it can actually be considered a setback because of the international disagreements and gridlock surrounding some of its measures.

While international agreements have not eliminated biopiracy in Brazil, some of Brazil's domestic measures could be considered effective IP policy. Despite the fact that they were considered achievements when passed, even these policies have proven fairly ineffective over the long-term. University of New Hampshire law professor Oyewunmi Adejoke considers the sui generis system, a policy that focuses on flexibility rather than one defining characteristic, to be the greatest strength of the Brazilian patent and IP system. The text of Brazilian law code encourages research and analysis of indigenous knowledge, supposedly leading to more protection. However, the report states it is almost impossible to enforce Brazil's system. Therefore, the article advocates for a combination of the Brazilian flexibility with South African methods of enforcement (Adejoke 2013). There are two main efforts in Brazil to enforce biopiracy legislation, as described by economist David Hathaway. In 2000, the Brazilian legislature passed a provisional law that regulates access to genetic assets. According to this law, foreigners could only bioprospect, or work





“Biopiracy is not a new issue in Brazil, and it will continue to be a problem if its policy solutions remain unenforced and mired down in political conflict.”

with indigenous people to carry out research and development in a healthy way, when associated with a Brazilian research institution. However, the legislation did not include penal sanctions for companies not in accordance with the regulations and avoids specificity against the act of biopiracy itself. The Novartis Act passed in 2002, but the National Congress never voted on the act and anyone who disobeyed its rules were never punished. The President passed a provisional measure in an attempt to legitimize the act, but this measure contains limited validity until Congress approves it to become law. The Novartis Act allows communities to decide how scientists or companies can use traditional knowledge. This would be an important protection for indigenous communities in the Amazon, but since it is never enforced, there is little effect (Hathaway 2004). These domestic policies have been just as ineffective as Brazil's international agreements and have taken just as much political capital to pass through the government.

Biopiracy is not a new issue in Brazil, and it will continue to be a problem if its policy solutions remain unenforced and mired down in political conflict. Indigenous groups who have used natural resources for years will not see benefits from their contribution and large corporations will continue to abuse the Amazon to succeed in the global market. Nevertheless, Brazil has the tools necessary to effectively regulate biopiracy. Brazil could properly enforce the CBD or TRIPS regulations. Perhaps the recognition of community rights would help the indigenous significantly in protecting their traditional knowledge. A movement in Brazil toward community rights would have widespread repercussions on the international scale as well because major pharmaceutical and research companies would be forced to work with and recognize the contributions to research from the indigenous people. This could help indigenous communities across the globe effectively commercialize and market their traditional knowledge, which would benefit all global consumers.

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## First-Year Writing at Duke

Writing 101, Duke's one-semester, first-year course in academic writing, is the only course taken by all Duke undergraduates and offers a seminar environment with no more than 12 students per section. Writing 101 faculty have doctorates in a variety of disciplines—including biology, English, history, literature, anthropology, ecology, and philosophy—and have expertise in the teaching of writing. From gothic literature to religious mysticism, militia movements to bioethics, students have a rich array of courses from which to choose. While specific reading and writing projects vary, students in all sections learn how to engage with the work of others, articulate a position, situate writing for specific audiences, and transfer writing knowledge into situations beyond Writing 101. All sections offer students practice in researching, workshopping, revising, and editing. In 2006, the TWP received a Writing Program Certificate of Excellence from the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

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## Call for Submissions

*Deliberations* is dedicated to publishing the writing of first-year students in Duke University's Writing 101 courses in order to make it available to a broader audience. We invite writers enrolled in Writing 101 during the 2014-15 academic year to submit written work to be considered for publication in the 2015 issue. We seek exemplary writing of any length, and we encourage submissions from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. For instructions on how to submit writing for consideration, please visit our website at <http://twp.duke.edu/deliberations/submission-information>



## Colophon

The text of *Deliberations* is composed in Minion Pro with the display set in Myriad Pro and Helvetica. Riverside Printing printed 1500 copies. We would like to thank Denise Sharpe at Riverside Printing, who is primarily responsible for the layout and graphic character of *Deliberations*.

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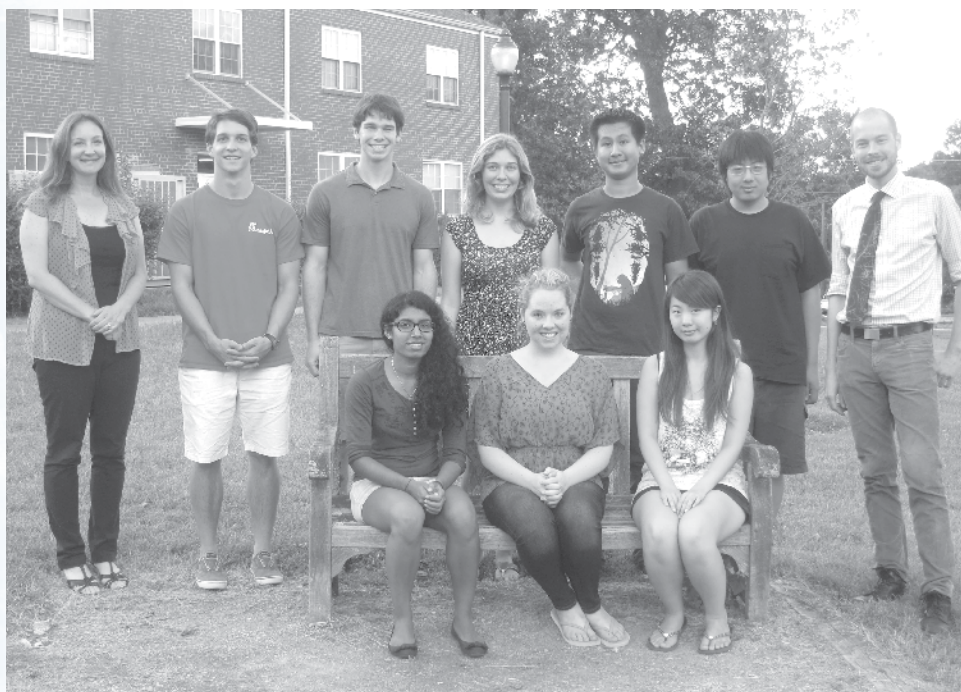
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## The Thompson Writing Program (TWP)

Writing and research are the cornerstones of the Duke undergraduate curriculum. The TWP helps students advance as writers from their first through senior years, and supports faculty who teach writing in a wide range of courses across the curriculum. We do so in three main ways:

- Writing 101: Academic Writing, an intense introduction to critical thinking and writing;
- Writing in the Disciplines (WID), writing-designated courses designed and taught by faculty across all departments; and
- Writing Studio, which offers undergraduate and graduate students an opportunity to meet with trained writing tutors to discuss works-in-progress.

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