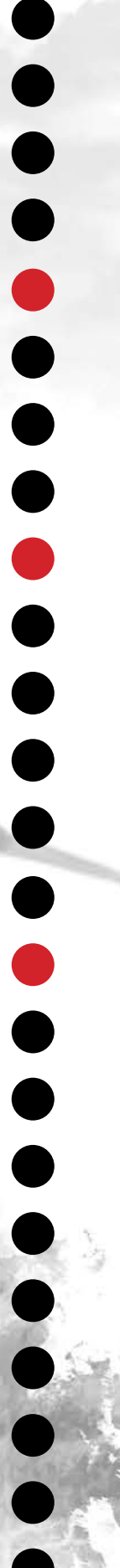


DISTINCTIONS

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DISTINCTIONS, the journal of the Honors Program of Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York, welcomes scholarly articles and creative works that explore important issues in all aspects of humanistic endeavor, not confined to a specific academic discipline. Our editorial staff is sympathetic to a broad range of theoretical and critical approaches; however, the views expressed in articles are solely those of the authors.

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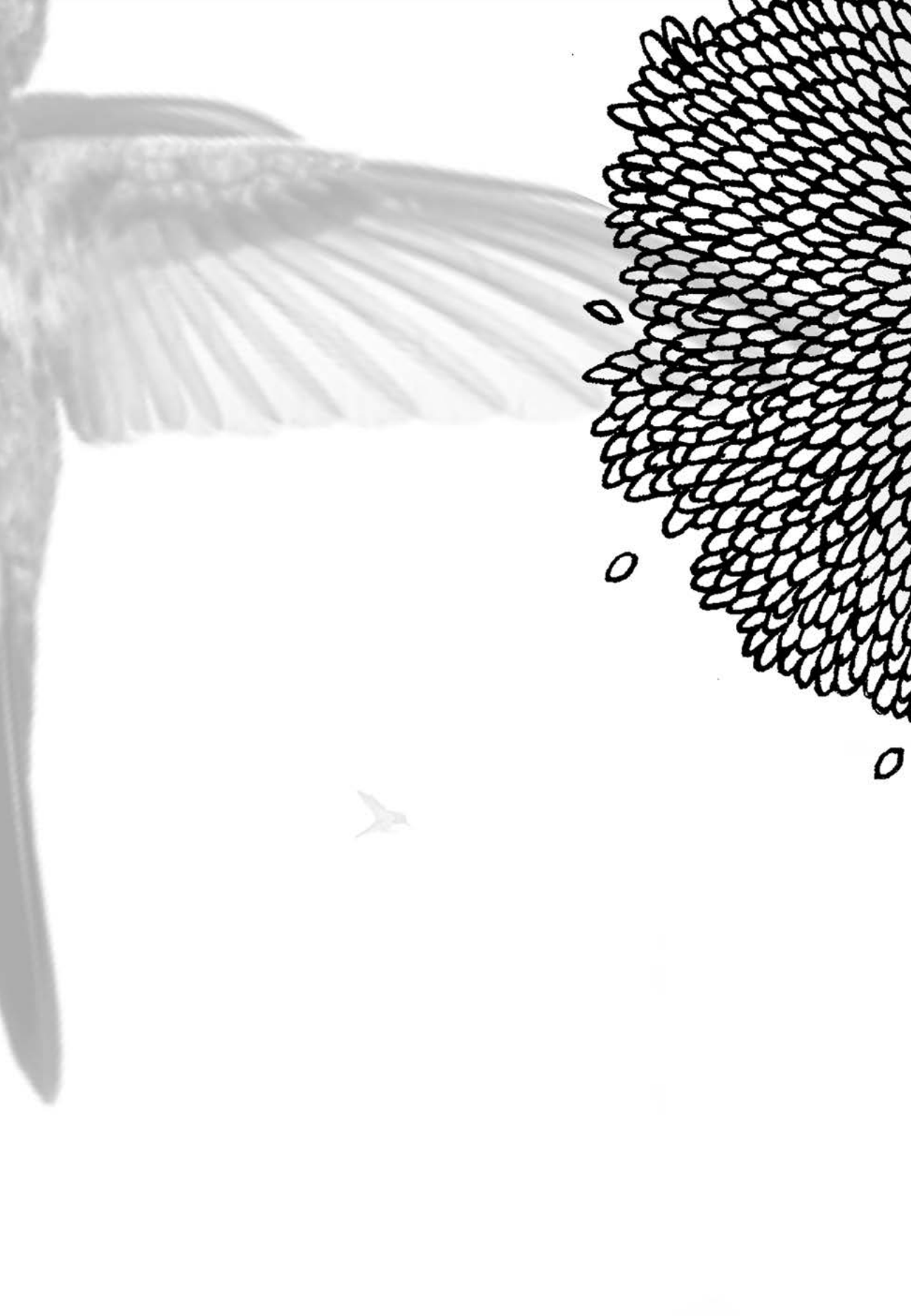
As I was reading submissions to *Distinctions*, one appreciation I gained was observing the quiet collaboration between the professors and the students. It reminded me that when I was an undergraduate (approximately 4,000 years ago), I did my best work, my most devoted work, for particular professors who encouraged me to take risks and try to figure out something I didn't already know or to create something that hadn't existed before. The risk was that what I made or wrote might just crumple up or do a belly-flop. How humiliating ... *at first*, and then how inspiring: *I could try again!* I remember those professors for whom I was willing to take exhilarating risks; I don't remember the professors for whom I only earned A's. What I admire about several of these pieces you'll find in this issue is that the students seem to have been motivated beyond aspirations for grades. They seem to have been caught up in the excitement and whirl of what the physicist Richard Feynman called "the pleasure of finding things out."

This is my first semester editing *Distinctions* and I've learned a lot from those who've worked on it in its previous ten years. After the journal's successful launch by Professor Barbara Walters in 2005, Professor Rob Cowan edited and developed the journal's contents, scope and appearance ever since the Fall 2008 issue; I am indebted to Rob, who's working this year at Hunter College, for his suggestions and advice.

Muneeb Hassan and Jaime Berco at the office of the Honors Program have made my job and life easier with organizing and making electronically accessible the submissions and for their work in making contact with the student-authors and professor-mentors. Helen-Margaret Nasser, the Associate Director of the Honors Program, has been patient with me and helpful as has been Janine Palludan, the Executive Assistant to the Associate Provost. I am as always grateful to the director of the Honors Program, Rachelle Goldsmith, for her energy and spirit, and to Associate Provost Reza Fakhari for arranging the financial and academic support for the journal. I thank the chair of the English Department, Eileen Ferretti, for allowing me the time to do this work. At the Kingsborough Center for e-Learning (KCeL), Tsubasa Berg has been a calming and reassuring presence. We are all fortunate that Irina Pistsov committed many hours to designing and laying out the journal in all its attractiveness. Finally, Anna Lim, an Honors Program student hired by Director Goldsmith to assist me, has aided me with keeping deadlines, correcting proofreading, providing consistency in bibliographies and, most importantly, with her candid criticisms and suggestions for this and future issues of *Distinctions*.



Professor **Bob Blaisdell**
Department of English



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Joyce Ngo: "I am a Communication Design major seeking inspiration everywhere. I hope to become a renowned NYC-based artist and work as a senior designer."

JOYCE NGO

EXPERIMENTAL CALENDAR: CHINESE ZODIAC

The artwork was produced for Art 68, Professor Valerie Sokolova, Spring 2015







Muhammad Abdullah is a Graphic Design and Illustration major and has a serious love for the creative arts. He plans to go on to New York City College of Technology. He sees himself having a very busy successful career in the arts, doing children's book illustrations, and writing short stories and poems. Muhammad has many interests; he also wants to start an online clothing business for men and women. Muhammad is a natural born American Muslim and was raised in a single parent Muslim home. Before Kingsborough Muhammad went to an acting school in Manhattan, then took some time off before

arriving at Kingsborough to continue his education. Muhammad Abdullah was born in Culver City, Los Angeles County, California, and grew up in Alhambra, California. He moved to Louisville, Kentucky, when he was fifteen; after six years in Kentucky, he moved to New York City on his own. He has been an artist and poet ever since he was three years old.

MUHAMMAD ABDULLAH

THE SACRED BECOMES SECULAR: PRACTICING PRAYER IN FRONT OF RELIGIOUS OBJECTS IN NEW YORK CITY MUSEUMS

Being a graphic design and illustration art major, I was interested in taking an art history class during the fall semester of 2014 to further my knowledge of the subject and to have a greater visual knowledge that I could possibly reference in my own work. I found myself in the classroom of Professor Caterina Pierre, whom I met as a work-study student when I worked in the Art Department office at Kingsborough. On one occasion while working there, I expressed my interest in taking an art history class. Professor Pierre told me about one of the special art history classes that she teaches, called "ART 34 Hybrid," in which the class visits a different New York City Museum each Friday afternoon, with the exception of the first class, which takes place at KCC for orientation. She told me I would enjoy it because it met every week in a different museum in front of actual artworks, and had an online component. I agreed with her that it sounded interesting and I registered for it.

During the course of the class, during one of our conversations, we were talking about the curriculum for her class and she informed me of a possible Honors "Action Project" assignment that some of her students literally dive into. Basically, the student is asked to make a bold step in the public eye and execute an action, with the possibility of being stopped or removed from the area where the action project takes place. I decided to try to do one of these "Action Projects," even though I was not sure exactly what I would do and I was a little concerned as to how it would all work out!

I am always interested in taking on Honors projects in all my classes so that I can elevate my education and increase my academic credibility. I think it also has lasting effects for one's future. I thought over and over what I could possibly do as an action project for this Honors credit. After some time had passed, and we had reached the mid point of the semester, I had come up with nothing.

On our first visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Professor Pierre gave us, her students, a tour of the galleries containing Islamic art. Before this visit to the Met, I was already impressed by this museum and its collection of art shown throughout the entire building. I enjoy the feeling I get when I walk through the galleries. They are all inspiring. When Professor Pierre gave us her tour along with her lecture of Islamic art in the museum, it only impressed me further by all of its history, respect for the culture and the religion, and the craftsmanship of the gallery spaces. The visit really did make me more aware to the possibilities that I could come up with, maybe for some Islamic-based art of my own. On this tour, she showed us a ceramic mosaic polychrome glazed Mihrab which I have only known to be called a qibla, that is from Isfahan, Iran, weighing 4,500 lbs. and dates back to A.H. 755/A.D. 1354-55. Each cut tile has been set into a hardened stone paste. It has two types of script, Kufic and muhaqqaq (Stokstad and Cothren, 194). I learned that the Mihrab is the niche in the qibla wall, which is always on the wall that faces Mecca. Professor Pierre told us that the qibla faced east, which is the direction we as Muslims face when we make our five daily prayers. So I was hit with the idea to pray in front of it as my action project, because I was so impressed by it on the whole, but also by its age and design and it would be an honor and a rare experience to pray in front of such an old qibla with so much history behind it. A qibla is the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays while performing the five daily prayers we call salat. It is the central direction of the Kaaba in Mecca in Saudi Arabia that all Muslims face while praying all over the earth. Each Masjid that a Muslim goes in to pray contains a wall niche that is the mihrab that tells the one praying which direction is the qibla to face Mecca.

I presented the idea to Professor Pierre and she was interested in how it would turn out. We both wondered: would I be stopped in the middle of my prayers by museum officials? Would I be stopped and asked to leave the museum altogether? Would the Met be respectful of my religion and my needing to pray at a specific hour and use this mihrab as it was meant to be used? Or would the Met feel disrespected that someone was actually trying to use it for its true purpose? It is its true purpose, to be prayed towards, and really what it was originally used for; it was not meant to be simply an art object. Does the Met only see it now as an art object and has its main purpose now been nullified, because now it is a purchased piece of art? We both pondered this and were both equally intrigued by these questions we came up with.

So the action project question became thus: Can people overtly pray in front of sacred objects in museums? Do museums still consider the sacred art objects they have on display to have a sacred function, and can they still be used for that purpose? How would a museum react to a person using a sacred object on display for the purpose it was really made for? I decided to find out.

We decided that it would be on our last visit to the Met that I was going to do my action project. I came prepared with my masala that I brought from home, which is a rug to pray on. When the moment came for me to go through with it, I had some very interesting internal feelings and external experiences that made me uncomfortable and my heart race with every step I took toward the mihrab. I wondered, am I doing this to understand something worthy of knowing?

It was near the end of our class, and our class was at the bottom of the staircase just behind the entrance and information desk. From the start, as I was grabbing my prayer rug out of my bag and handing my sack over to Professor Schlesinger who joined us on this trip, I remember Professor Pierre asking me, "Are you okay with this? Is Allah going to be upset with us if we have to stop you in the middle of your prayer, or if someone else stops you? I don't want you to get harassed by the guards either." I told her, "Only if I put up a fight or make a scene will I be removed, and Allah could be angry with me but not with

you or anyone else.” What a strange project this was turning out to be! I thought to myself, Allah would say to me, “Do not make your prayer about others.” I could have been thinking wrongly, but that is what I felt at the moment when Professor Pierre had asked me about Allah.

As soon as I began to climb back up the massive staircase inside the Metropolitan Museum of Art to make my way to the Islamic art galleries with my prayer rug under my arm, marching like a soldier, and with each step I climbed, my conscious voice inside of me began to speak. I could hear it asking me, Why you are doing this again? Who are you doing this for? Is this really for Allah? Or is this really for you to experiment and prove a point? What point is it again? In that moment, I had completely forgotten about finding out if sacred art objects are still considered sacred objects with a specific religious purpose, so I just kept right on climbing while listening to my consciousness continuing to ask me difficult and unanswerable questions.

With each step I took going back to Islamic Art to make my midday prayer, which turned out to be Asr, the third prayer of the day, I was hearing my conscious voice as it echoed through me, in my heart, in my mind, in my soul, and in my body, certainly in my feet, and my heart began to race. It was pounding! I had conflicting feelings and thoughts going on inside of me. One part of my consciousness was saying, Stop making your way over there, go back and tell Professor Pierre you changed your mind. Tell her that you don’t feel as comfortable as you thought you would. Another part of my consciousness was saying, No, you go, because you wanted to find out about sacred art objects in secular spaces, didn’t you? Don’t you want to find out still? Don’t chicken out now! What are you worried about? I was already up the stairs and through the first set of glass doors! GO! I had my prayer rug; I have my wudu, which is a purification of washing the hands, mouth and nose, face and arms, head, ears and feet with water. So I felt I should try and once I was there, try to focus correctly and just see how it went.

I started saying to myself under my breath, God, if this is not supposed to happen because it is not right and you don’t want it to, then please intervene and don’t let it happen.

With this entire episode taking place in my mind, I was still making my way through the museum galleries, toward Islamic Art. Even writing this now, many months later, alone in my room, my chest beats while thinking back to all of this. At the time it was so intense, vivid, and yet surreal while it was all happening. It feels surreal even still.

The thoughts and that voice in my head fell silent; my heart continued to race. I kept thinking that Allah would not let it happen if it was not supposed to. I started reciting the Ayatul Al Kursi low in Arabic to myself as I walked. The Ayatul Al Kursi is one of the most powerful dua’s, which is the Arabic word for prayer. The 2nd surah, which is an Arabic word for a chapter of the Quran, is named surah Al Baqarah, “the cow”. It is the 255th verse, the verse of the mighty throne. When translated into English, its meaning is *“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the most Merciful, there is no God but he, the living, the self-sustaining, the eternal. No slumber can seize him; no sleep can overtake him. All things in the heavens and in the earth are his. Who can intercede in his presence without his permission? He knows what appears in front of and behind his creatures, nor can they encompass any knowledge of him except what he wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and he feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them, for he is the highest and most exalted.”*

As I walked reciting this to myself with my pounding, worrisome heart, the galleries seemed to start whirling and filling up with people and becoming crowded all of a sudden, even though they were not like that when I was first passing through them with my whole class earlier. The museum galleries had people in them, but not as many now. It was like there was some work on display that everyone came to see. It felt like the people in the paintings

came out and decided to walk around in modern clothes. There were tall people, short people, people of all races, and backgrounds and religions and people with children pushing strollers and carriages. There were people in shape and people out of shape, and they were all blocking my way by talking to someone directly in the path that I was walking, or they would be in front of me walking very slowly. I was thinking, Seriously? Come on! These galleries are never like this, this many people have never walked this slow in front of me in all the times when I have been in the Met before. It felt like everyone saw me and saw my prayer rug under my right arm and knew where I was headed and decided to block my way, like they looked at me, looked at my prayer rug, and said, "Let's all prevent him from his mission."

Once I got through the herds of people, heart racing and feeling nervous and reciting my prayer, I walked up to the qibla, and as soon as I put down my prayer rug in front of the 1,300-year-old qibla, the last road block was put into place. A kind and professional security guard stopped me and said, "I'm sorry, you cannot do that here, you can't pray here in the gallery. You have to go downstairs." She continued, "There is a space downstairs where you can go, where it is quiet and has enough room for you. It is the family room where people go to pray. But you cannot pray in the middle of the gallery, sorry."

People around us were indeed looking and listening to her send me off. I told her that I never knew there was a family room in the Met. She told me it was on the basement level.

When I was finished, I went back to Islamic Art to find Professor Pierre and one other classmate, Sam, and Professor Schlesinger. All three were waiting to hear my experience praying at the Met. Professor Pierre and I felt it would be good to tell the security guard who had referred me to the family room downstairs that I was writing a paper for my class and that I would like to understand more about why I was stopped. Considering what a qibla is and what it is normally used for, why can't someone pray in front of it, if the time is right and if they need to? Does the Met see this as a piece of art alone and not as a religious work of art that is specifically made and used for a specific purpose with its own specific symbolization? I also asked her if she was a Muslim, if she did not mind me asking, and she didn't mind. She was very polite and professional once again and told me she was not. She continued to say that this is a public place and a public space, and it is somewhat of a tight space for people to move and walk in around you while you are praying. That made logical sense, and even more sense as she continued to say people are busy walking around and observing works of art, and it was true that they may not be paying attention to you praying there and may bump into you and disturb you while you are praying or possibly knock you, or themselves, or a piece of art over.

This made sense to me. She told me that this was her own personal opinion at least, but if I would like she could call her supervisor who was working and he could give me a definite reason why the Met does not want people praying in front of this qibla. I told her yes, and she went to call him. When he came over, he seemed nice although a bit haughty. He left me thinking that he must not talk to a lot of the visiting public.

I asked him why someone cannot pray in front of this qibla the Met has here, knowing what it is, what it symbolizes and what it is used for. His answer was that for the one praying, they would not be able to concentrate and focus with people around them. This was actually something that my spirit had echoed in my head earlier. He said that whether you are Muslim or not, or whatever your religion may be, the restrictions are to respect the space of the gallery and the respect of the person praying or meditating.

I asked him if he has had people try and pray here or had he found people praying here before? Has he needed to stop many people from praying in front of this qibla? If

so, what is usually done? What is the museum's viewpoint on this? "People have prayed here before," he said, "but only because they had already started and there was no one to stop them before they began." But most people or himself would not interrupt them, he said, but let them finish first. "When they are done, I or the person on guard will tell them please do not pray here again and why, and that there is a family room downstairs where people can go to pray. Whether it is for meditating like Buddha, or to pray or meditate to Buddha, or to pray or worship as they do in the Hindu faith." In the gallery he told me, "People do often get inspired to pray or sit in the middle of the floor and meditate when they see some work of art that is affiliated with their faith. So it happens from time to time, and these are the rules and reasons why the Met puts these rules and regulations in place. We try our best to enforce them for everyone in the galleries here at the Met."

I shook his hand and thanked him for his time. I asked him his name, which turned out to be Abdullah. I asked him if he was Muslim because of his name, and he laughed and said, "No, but that doesn't mean that I don't know more than you about your religion," and then scurried off smiling, saying, "Salaam." I just smiled and immediately began speaking to Professor Pierre because I did not really feel the genuine sincerity of the peace he offered me, which is what Salaam means. For the most part, he did a good job of answering my questions and representing the security department and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and its Islamic art displays.

I was able, by the way, to pray in the Hispanic Society of America in their ceramics collection, even being invited to do so by the guard there. And Professor Pierre and I meditated at the Rubin Museum, right in front of the entrance to an exhibition about Buddhism, with not a single comment from any guard or museum official there. So, in the end, I do think that objects do lose their sacred meaning once they enter a museum. However, it does have a lot to do with the rules of the museum in question.

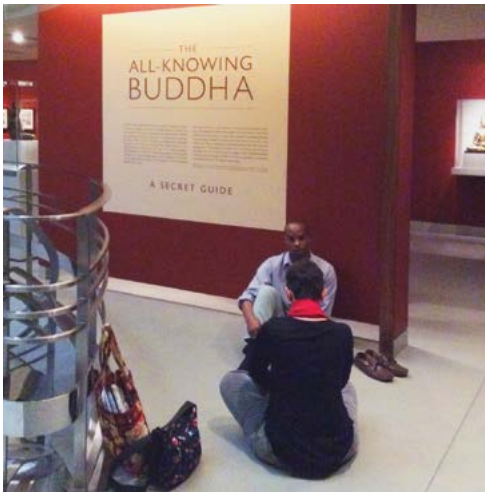
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Written for Art 34, Professor Caterina Pierre, Spring 2015



Mihrab (Prayer Niche), AD 1354-55, From Iran, Isfahan, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Accession number 39.20.



Discussing a meditation pose with Professor Pierre at the Rubin Museum of Art.



Praying at the Hispanic Society of America.



Candy-Lynn Best: "My major is Biology, and I plan to pursue a bachelor's in neuroscience. From there, I hope to receive at least a master's in neuropsychology. I want to work with those with severe cognitive impairment and their families."

CANDY-LYNN BEST

MEMORIES OF GRAY

On the surface, W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* seems to be just a surreal story that spans the lifetime of the titular main character, who is describing the trials of his life through several meetings with a narrator whom we never learn about in any appreciable depth. However, a closer examination of the purpose of the mysterious narrator reveals a deeper psychological dimension to the story than is initially apparent. His relationship to Austerlitz is similar to that of a therapist in classical psychoanalysis; he serves as a blank slate for his patient, or the analysand, to carve a story upon in the hopes that the analysand grows as a person with the telling. The emotional trauma that Austerlitz suffered at learning he was a foster child isolated from his birth culture and his biological parents sent him into a life-long spiral of depression that permeates throughout his whole story. Austerlitz's depression sabotages his ability to connect with other people, resonating with the experiences of people who suffer from the condition out in the real world.

The psychological elements to Austerlitz's story are not limited in just the therapeutic relationship he seems to have with the narrator, however. To better understand Austerlitz's depression we must break it down into its components and follow in the footsteps of Dr. Aaron Beck, a disillusioned psychoanalyst who went on to found cognitive psychology. According to Beck's model of depression, people who suffer from depression are under the effects of the three types of negative thinking that form the cognitive triad, which are negative thoughts about the self, the world, and the future (Corey 293). Those who are under the spell of this unholy trinity find that their very memories become suspect, because their negative expectations influence the brain to selectively filter information in order to maintain the depression. Throughout the narrator's retellings of events in Austerlitz's life, the cognitive triad shows itself in the form of three recurring symbols: the stars in the sky, the color gray, and finally eyes and the sight that they bestow. Austerlitz makes reference to and ultimately surrounds himself with these symbols, tainting his memories with them and as a result never escaping from the grip of depression. The lesson his experiences ultimately teach us is that our memories, both past and present, are defined by and nearly impossible to separate from our current perspectives and ways of thinking.

In order to more fully understand the roles that the three symbols play in Austerlitz's

life, we must first learn about his personal background. We do this through the narrator, who presents us with a series of highly coincidental meetings he has with Austerlitz throughout the world. These meetings let us peer into the life of a well-traveled man who, according to the narrator, lived a solitary existence (Sebald 8). Up until the age of four, Austerlitz was a Jewish boy who lived in Nazi Germany. In order to escape the increasing persecution of Jews, he had to be spirited away to the United States on the Kindertransport rescue mission. Austerlitz spent his childhood in an expansive mansion under the unknown-to-him assumed identity of Dayfdd Elias, child of Emyr and Gwendolyn Elias. His foster father Emyr was a Calvinist preacher, while his foster mother Gwendolyn was a timid housewife. We are given the strong impression that Austerlitz's childhood was not a happy one, because while his foster parents provided him with shelter and food, they were cold, unfeeling people who failed to provide him with the nourishment he needed most, namely love. Their shows of affection were so rare that one of Austerlitz's most powerful memories of his foster family was of the only time Gwendolyn ran her fingers through his hair (Sebald 46).

We encounter the first symbol, stars, during the part of the novel where Gwendolyn's health takes a drastic turn for the worse. This event leads to Austerlitz being sent to a private school named Stower Grange, something he speaks of with great resentment, citing tyranny and despotism present in the school, to the point where the boys had to fend for themselves (Sebald 59). In other words, Austerlitz had to grow up early, a circumstance that would take a significant toll on any human being's mental health. Austerlitz periodically visits Gwendolyn as her illness becomes terminal, each visit feeling that he is trapped underneath "the unlucky star" (Sebald 61).

Austerlitz's concept of "the unlucky star" has several meanings that can only be derived from some real-world background information that the novel does not explicitly provide. The first piece of critical information is knowledge of how the stars have traditionally been ascribed dominion over human fate throughout recorded history. The human tendency to believe in the power of the stars to control fate continues today with beliefs in astrology in the form of horoscopes printed in newspapers, which my own mother frequently makes use of. Systems of astrology like horoscopes purport to be able to predict events in a person's life based upon the positions of celestial objects deemed prominent during a person's time of their birth. All such beliefs require at least a partial denial of human free will.

The sense of a lack of personal agency factors into several parts of Austerlitz's life from beginning to end. To begin with, he was raised by a Calvinist preacher without any knowledge of his original birth culture, due to a situation in which he had no control. According to popular conceptions of Calvinism under which this novel was no doubt written, one of the central tenets of Calvinism that Austerlitz would have been exposed to is the absolute power of God over all things (Palmer 9). God, by virtue of His omniscience, already knows every choice a human being makes and therefore has already pre-selected who will be given salvation and who will be damned for their sins. Those poor pre-damned souls could be said to have been born under an "unlucky star," as Austerlitz asserts he was, because whether it is described as the power of the stars or the will of God, the idea being put forward is that human beings have no ability to change their destiny.

By saying that he felt trapped by "the unlucky star," what Austerlitz is really saying is that he does not believe he has the ability to improve his future through his own efforts. Lack of hope for the future is one of the components of Beck's cognitive triad which fuels depression (Corey 294). This lack of hope primes human beings who suffer from it to certain errors in thinking called cognitive distortions (Corey 288).

While under the influence of such distortions, a person behaves in such a way that they inevitably confirm the belief in their own inefficacy, even going so far as to modify their own memories by eliminating positive events from conscious thought. Surely good things have happened to Austerlitz, but throughout the novel he rarely talks about them except to mention how he ruined them in some way. In short, he engages in selectively negative remembrance, showing the power of human hopelessness to influence memory.

For Austerlitz, the stars represent a feeling of insignificance, lack of control over his fate, and how far away he feels that he is from salvation. However, there is a second aspect to the “unlucky star” that ties into Austerlitz’s history specifically. During the time of the Nazis whose persecution drove Austerlitz away from his birth parents, Jewish people were required to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothes at all times as an identifying mark of shame (Rupprecht 17). So, while Austerlitz escaped being marked by a literal “unlucky star,” he was still a Jewish man whose life course was ultimately determined by the machinations of the Nazis, and thus fell under the power of that star just as surely as those less lucky people did. Nowhere is the possible influence of that star more obvious than his adopted name Dafydd, a version of David.

The barrage of grey, dismal objects and accoutrements that just so happen to surround Austerlitz solidify our knowledge of his utter loneliness, with the prominence of the color gray itself serving as the second symbol of his depression in the novel. His foster father Emyr was institutionalized soon after Gwendolyn’s death for illness, and most people who Austerlitz becomes close to suffers a tragic fate. This sense of loneliness solidifies in the wake of the death of Austerlitz’s school friend Gerald, who joined the Air Cadet Corps and crashed into the Savoy Alps, an event which Austerlitz claims started his personal melancholy (Sebald 117).

Nowhere is the prominence of gray and its meaning in Austerlitz’s life more obvious than in the interior of his home. Human beings often attribute certain characteristics to a person based on the state of their living space; for example, it would not be seen as unreasonable to assume that a person does not take good care of themselves if you notice that their bedroom is regularly cluttered. In Austerlitz’s case, the dismal state of his home reflected the negative feelings about himself that he regularly expresses throughout the book. In Aaron Beck’s cognitive theory, which talks about the precursors and maintainers of depression, the second member of the cognitive triad is negative beliefs about the self, particularly low self-worth (Corey 288).

Austerlitz’s home was spacious, but full of nondescript furniture that one would not notice on first glance. This is probably not unlike a description that Austerlitz would give about himself. As someone who suffers from depression, I often feel as if I am more or less empty inside with few outstanding characteristics, not unlike Austerlitz’s home. Further strengthening this similarity is that Austerlitz’s home only had a stark gray floorboard with gray walls, and a gray table, with very little color. The only appealing objects in the room were photographs (Sebald 118), yet these photographs were black and white, another form of gray (Sebald 293). Human beings tend to associate the color gray with a feeling of lifelessness, which is the origin of the phrase “dull and gray.” As I know very well, when you are depressed there is often a sense that you are surrounded by a gray fog that will never leave, just as it never left Austerlitz. His possessions, and even the people he encountered, were always coated in the same grey ash in his eyes. He truly believed that he could not connect with people, which led to him making little effort to do so, which in turn made it so that he actually could not connect with people. Fiction becomes fact, and fact becomes fiction when memory wants to maintain a distorted narrative, as it does with Austerlitz’s depression.

Just as Austerlitz failed to shake the yoke of the “unlucky star,” the use of gray is another way to show that he had never truly escaped the effects of Nazi German persecution and the Holocaust. As anyone who has taken a history course about World War II or has seen pictures of the concentration camps is no doubt familiar with, the people who suffered in the camps had all of their clothing stripped from them, and they were forced to wear gray-and-blue striped uniforms. Each color on the uniform was of such a shade that that they blended together to appear entirely gray. Everyone who wore them became part of the nondescript mass at the camps, with their only identifying markers being a serial number and a symbol showing what persecuted group they belonged to. In the case of the Jewish people, they were marked by a Star of David. Thus, Austerlitz surrounds himself with the trappings of the concentration camp that is depression, marking himself with the gray uniform that was his home touched by the unlucky star.

The third and final symbol of Austerlitz’s depression is the frequent references to eyes, sight, and perspective. At one point near the end of the novel, Austerlitz is hospitalized due to injury sustained as a result of anxiety attacks. He is given a telescope, which he uses to peer out into the world. Not only does he look at animals, but also at the faces of people who have come to visit the nearby cemetery (Sebald 230). This experience leads to something of a revelation for the reader regarding how Austerlitz has been conducting himself. Throughout the novel, he has been observing objects from a detached eyewitness perspective, unable or unwilling to immerse himself physically and interact with the world. This is most likely in reference to the fact that Austerlitz can never physically experience his parents, and can only view them in retrospect from a long distance of time, through worn photographs that may not even represent them properly. Due to this loss, a deep chasm opened up in Austerlitz’s self that severed his sense of attachment to the world he lived in and the people he knew, to the point where he refers to Emyr, his foster father, as nothing but “Elias the minister” (Sebald 231).

Eyes are said to be windows into the soul. Austerlitz peers into the eyes and faces of others, but sees nothing to connect to due to the void that has opened up within himself and clouded his perspective. This is the third member of the cognitive triad as described by Aaron Beck, who states that someone who is in the throes of depression despairs about the state of the world and the people around them. Austerlitz, on some level, feels that the world is fundamentally terrible and has nothing worthwhile to offer him as a result of the loss inflicted on him and others like him by the Holocaust. As we can see, he is fully under the influence of the cognitive triad of depression, which means it is fair to say that he is a depressed character. As previously stated, depression has heavily deleterious effects on memory, causing people to filter information in such a way that they tend to notice mainly negative experiences and store negative memories. What Austerlitz the character and *Austerlitz* the novel teaches us is that, to a certain extent, we choose what we want to remember based on our personal biases and perspective, what we think about the events that unfold around us. If we are happy, we remember positive things. If we are depressed, we remember things that lead us into depression. Human memory is heavily characterized by personal inertia.

As the two symbols before it, Austerlitz’s detached perspective born of depression ties into the Holocaust, showing us both the cause and the ultimate effect of it. Detachment is emblematic of the attitude that the German people adopted towards the Holocaust while it was being carried out. The average German citizen, by and large, knew something terrible was going on in the concentration camps, because it was widely reported in newspapers according to a 2001 article written for *The Guardian* by

John Ezard. They simply did not care very much, since it did not directly affect them.

The German people's detachment was only one of their two major sins, however, and it could be argued to be the minor one. It is understandable that they would rationalize the enormity of what happened away as it was occurring, because of the risk to themselves and their families if they spoke out against the Nazi regime. When they were defeated and they saw the judgment in the eyes of the world for what they had done, the German people realized the consequences of having such a detached perspective. However, the second sin that followed that realization was far more dire than the first: driving home *Austerlitz's* general point about the impermanence and malleability of memory, the general German adult populace subconsciously altered their memories to destroy their feelings of self-guilt, by and large claiming that they did not really know anything. They claimed to have been "apolitical," blind to the truth of what was happening, despite newspaper reports and photographs of the concentration camps brought home by their soldiers (Rupprecht 13). They may have been blind, but this blindness was self-inflicted to assuage their guilty conscience, and yet there is no doubt many of them actually believed what they were saying. Such is the power of human beings to bend memory to their will when it suits them and detach themselves from reality.

The enormity of what the German adults had allowed to happen weighed enormously on their younger people going through school, Sebald among them. In some small way, *Austerlitz* is an aspect of Sebald himself. Would not the whole world look gray if the people who you had surrounded yourself with and admired your whole life as role models were complicit in mass death? Would you not become detached from your fellow man, once you realized that they had the ability to so completely modify their own memories in a self-serving attempt to soothe their guilty conscience? The guiding star of the German people was Hitler and Nazism, which no doubt soured them on the whole concept of guiding stars for a while. The fictional *Austerlitz*, who like his author wanted nothing to do with the Germany that ruined his life, lost his parents (Sebald 34), and the world that young Germans beheld with their eyes lost some of its color.

Memory is a reality thief, and its accomplices are the human beings it serves. While we act based on the information that it stores for us, we influence what it will store and how it will do it. Thus, we are complicit in the errors it makes, just as surely as the German people were more responsible for the Holocaust than they would like to admit. *Austerlitz's* experiences show us that memory is imperfect and not to be trusted, because it is our subjective interpretation of events that gives even supposedly objective things meaning, just like how a photograph of a random actress may or may not be his mother (Sebald 253). The world molds our memories, and in turn our memories mold the world we see; and so in the end the world is only as gray as we interpret it to be as a result of our actions.

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Written for English 24, Professor Eben Wood, Spring 2015.

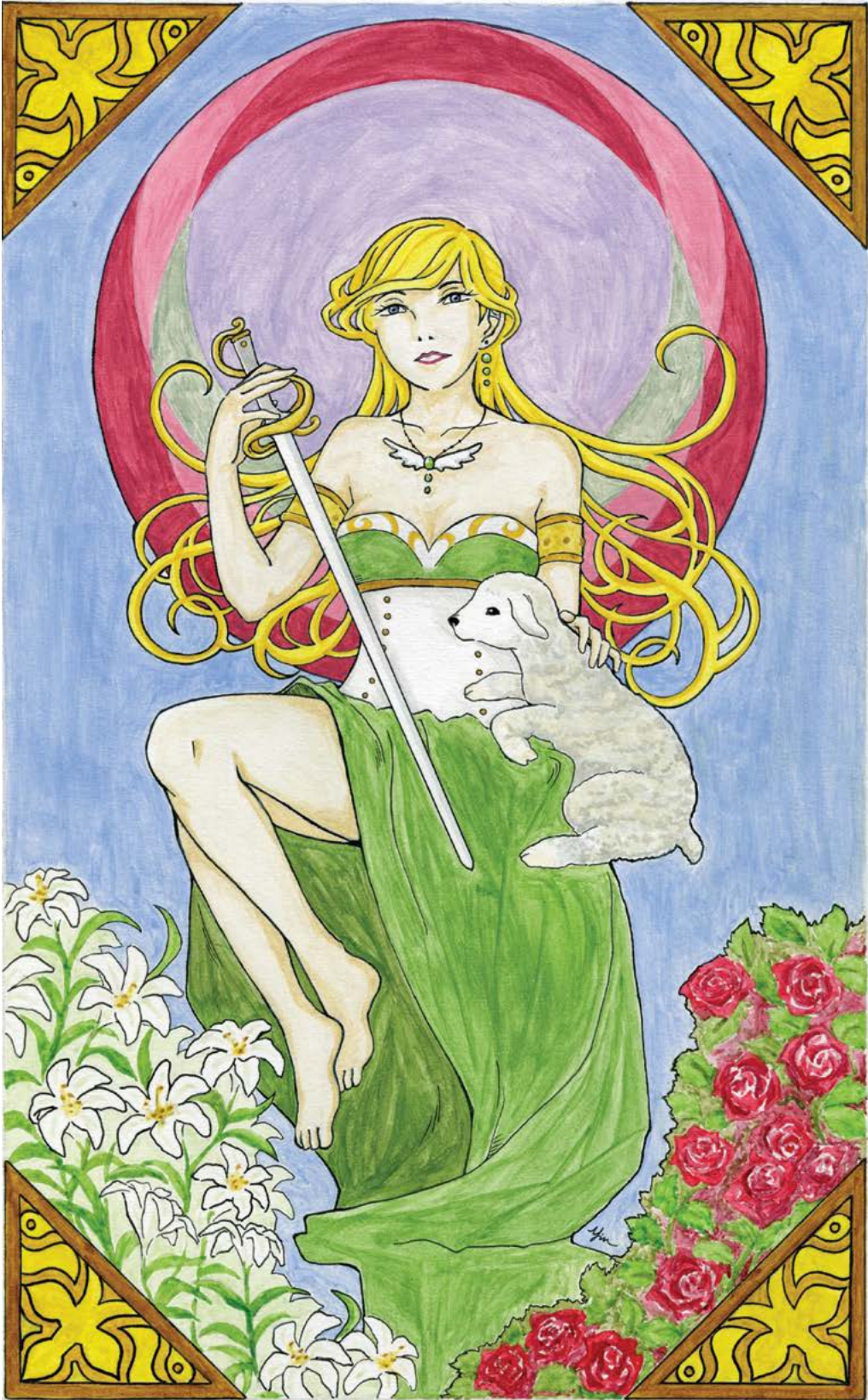


Illustration by Yin Yin Deng



Yin Yin Deng: “This is my first time having any work published, so I am very excited and extremely grateful to Kingsborough for giving me this opportunity. As a high school dropout, this experience has taught me that I can still have fulfilling accomplishments if I put in the effort. Being an Illustration and Design major has really pushed me to explore new limits, which in turn has helped me grow a lot over the past year. I hope to create more ambitious and meaningful works that are worth sharing in the future.”

YIN YIN DENG

ART NOUVEAU

As an artist myself, I am aware that as long as I continue drawing, there will always be room for improvement and an endless variety of methods to try out. Throughout the course of my classes this semester, I had the joy of learning about many different styles and design techniques for making art. In my art history class, I was exposed to a variety of modern artworks ranging from the Realist Gustave Courbet to the Impressionist Monet, and, of course, to the famous Vincent Van Gogh. However famous and popular those artists were, the style that I felt the most connected to was Art Nouveau. I applied the knowledge I have gained from my readings on the history of the style, the techniques and practices from my Art Design class, and my own personal approaches on those concepts to create my submitted piece [see illustration].

At first glance, Art Nouveau appears to be an artistic style that can easily sneak up and blend into our modern society. Stemming from England in the late 19th century and later becoming an international style, Art Nouveau is characterized by its detailed curves and frequent depiction of natural forms such as flowers and human figures, women in particular (Heyl 15). This was apparent in the Austrian artist Gustav Klimt’s famous work titled *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, which depicts curving lines from her flowing dress and decorative swirls that fill the background (Arnason and Mansfield 78). Another artist, Alphonse Mucha, also produced prominent work such as advertisements, posters, and sculptures in the Art Nouveau style (Arnason and Mansfield 77). His lithographs had a great variety of pastel colors and thick lines that captured the elegant flow of hair and the folds of the long dresses that draped the figures.

Drawing was something I always did on a whim and because of that, I often did not plan what I was about to draw or formulate any fixed ideas about what the end result should look like. My Art Design class taught me basic techniques regarding composition to help improve the overall appearance of my work. Tips like arranging the subject of the piece in off-center position or even having it cut off the canvas are small but useful means to creating a more distinct and visually appealing image. Lessons on lines, patterns, and colors were also very informative in that they provided me with the opportunity to experiment and play with different techniques I otherwise would not have attempted in my free time. The design I made for class assignments deviated immensely from the kind of work I usually do, but were nonetheless a fulfilling challenge.

Because of my growing fondness for the Art Nouveau style, I found it most appropriate to use it as the main influence for my project. The subjects coincided with what I usually draw outside of class assignments and the style seemed flexible enough for me to merge with my ideas. I initially thought of doing a Mother's Day piece back in April and after exposing myself to more Art Nouveau, it was apparent that many elements from my sketches aligned with Mucha's lithographs, the prints made with mostly oil and water on a metal or stone plate back in the 1800s and 1900s. His work became the main inspiration for my piece along with some personal aspects. The concept I wanted to express is the resilience, elegance, and protective nature of a mother. My own mother, while loving, does not possess what I would consider as the ideal and nurturing warmth that children chase after, but instead was an authoritative and fair woman who I followed around unconditionally. Stern at times and playful at others, my mother raised me by herself in rural China for several years before we immigrated to the United States to reunite with my father. When I think of my mother, I envision an assortment of flowers that fit her image: white lilies for grace and purity and bold red roses for her protectiveness over me and her bravery, both of which I included in my painting.

I certainly do believe that I have much studying to do on Art Nouveau before I can fully understand and properly utilize the style to integrate into my own work. This assignment gave me much insight into the art of the past and provided a challenge that tested my limits and creativity, which, while exhausting, was extremely beneficial to my learning as an artist. The required practice and techniques that came with the project also allowed me to put the different ideas of composition and color theory to good use. Although, the work may not be up to par with Mucha's, I am definitely thrilled to have gotten the chance to do such piece. With this work now completed, I hope I can continue to improve as an artist in the future.

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Written for Art 55, Professor Alex Paik, Spring 2015.



Heidi Zavala graduated from Preparatoria Federal por Cooperacion "Lazaro Cardenas" (high school) in Zacapu, Michoacan, Mexico. After completing her associate's degree, she would like to go to Brooklyn College to major in biology. It is her plan to become a dentist and a teacher.

HEIDI ZAVALA

FORTY-THREE BOYS AND THE CORRUPT MEXICAN GOVERNMENT

I believe that social chaos and violence were the worst actions leading to the mass kidnapping of the forty-three future teachers in Mexico on September 26, 2014. I think attacking other human beings in order to preserve power is unacceptable in today's world. The Mexican state together with drug gangs committed a crime against forty-three students in the state of Guerrero, Mexico. Authorities often use kidnappings, killings, intimidation and torture to instill fear in those people who do not dare to complain or speak the truth. Officials can do that directly or by using other criminal groups to protect them. They think only about which version could damage their corrupt system less: should they say where the students are or what really happened? They know that without evidence, there is no crime. Our society cannot be controlled through violent acts that harm it. If we are spectators of any crime we are also converting into criminals if we hide it. I believe the forty-three missing students from Ayotzinapa are proof of how the Mexican authorities became a threat to citizens. In their eagerness to stay in power and continue living in wealth, they demonstrated an interest in police wrongdoing. The kidnapping and possible mass murder of the forty-three boys from the Ayotzinapa college shows that the corrupt Mexican government will do terrible things to maintain their authority over all the citizens of Mexico. This theory is reflected by many writers like Paulo Freire, Karl Marx, W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, Anita Simmons, and George Ritzer, all of whom explore the ways in which powerful people keep their power.

The forty-three missing from Mexico did not embrace the "banking" concept; they adopted "problem-posing." For example they were critical about how their school received little money from the government. They were activists who wanted to raise funds for their school to help our society. They were the recipients of "problem-posing education." Education is the knowledge and development resulting from an educational process. Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pointed out these differences: "Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is spectator, not re-creator" (247). Freire means students do not achieve awareness of the real world. The student who does not ask is one who does not have any participation in his/her own education. The "banking," or the memorization and repetition, of knowledge

creates a contradiction between the professor, student and the real life. This creates frictions and it is very helpful for those in power because the student does not create his/her own consciousness. In “Problem-Posing Education,” Freire argues, “People develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (252). Problem-posing students become conscious of the real world; they can develop skills on their own instead of being told what they should do. Freire adds, “Banking Education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education treats them as critical thinkers” (252). He means “banking education” turns students into objects; in a different manner “Problem-Posing” makes students alive.

Another argument is how difficult it is to enroll in that college of Ayotzinapa. John Glibler is a writer and investigative journalist and the author of *To Die in Mexico*. Glibler gave an interview, “Testimonio Del Periodista John Glibler Sobre Los Ataques a los Normalistas de Ayotzinapa,” about what really happened with the students on September 26. He argues that the suppression of citizens in Mexico happened all the time. When he interviewed the remaining students he felt their pain when they remembered what happened. He explains that 140 students were accepted every year in the Ayotzinapa School. The requisites are: “Evidence of low family income and peasant origin, issued by the Mayor or corresponding to their place of residence by the Municipal Commissioner”; “in the case of applicants for the Bachelor of Intercultural Bilingual Elementary Education, they should preferably speak an indigenous language of the state of Guerrero or express their interest to learn” (Secretary of Education Guerrero).

There’s another argument that the college of Ayotzinapa does not have the privilege to have buses for any activity. Pedro Becquer-Ramos, a correspondent for the Associated Press, wrote “Mexico Seeks Answers over Injustices in Ayotzinapa.” He reported that the students wanted to participate in the October 2, 2014, parade to remember the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre; that crime was ironically against students who were young activists and wanted better things for education in Mexico. The Ayotzinapa students needed transportation to go to Mexico City. In Mexico the public schools do not have the privilege to have buses for any activity. When I attended school in Mexico and the school had activities, we needed buses to transport us from the school to the place where the activity was. The school personnel sent letters to our parents asking for money to cover the costs. Most of the times the parents did not have the money, as it was in my case and in the case of other students. We missed the activities for lack of money.

Glibler related how the students asked bus drivers for free transportation and the drivers accepted. He interviewed some surviving students. One driver told them he had to go back to Iguala to the bus terminal to leave the passengers who were on the bus. When the bus arrived in Iguala, however, the driver got out, talked to somebody on the phone, and then the security guys came for the students. The students called their friends on the other three buses and they asked them for help. The other students came back to Iguala to help their friends. Here is when they started to be attacked by Iguala Police. Glibler states, “The mayor and his wife have since been implicated in ordering that the students be massacred” (Goldman). He points out the students were attacked by the police and the drug gang Guerreros Unidos.

From the 140 accepted students, only twenty-two were left in school. Forty-three were missing and the rest were in hiding. They fled for fear of reprisals against them. The forty-three were between eighteen and twenty years old. They were sons of peasants who wanted to teach the children of those who did not have the opportunity to go to school. Abarca’s wife thought

the students could be a menace to her family business. Her brother was one of the bosses of the Guerreros Unidos gang. The students were freshmen and they did not plan to disturb the meeting for Abarca's wife in Iguala. She was supposed to announce that she would run for the Mayor position in the next election. Since the day the Iguala police took the forty-three students into the police trucks until today, there continues to be an enigma about where they are.

In Mexico some politicians have connections with drug cartels. That incident was related to how Abarca and his wife put aside their dignity for the egotistical calculation to get a favor from the cynical and malicious drug gang. They were in over every law and they deprived students of their freedom. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx wrote how society became divided into classes for the purpose of creating things people needed to live. Most of the time those classes have struggles because one class exploits the other. Marx adds, "Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class" (165). According to Marx, that means for to the class who oppressed to obtain control over another class, the differences of age and sex are not important. The ex-Mayor Jose Luis Abarca sent the gang Guerreros Unidos to show them how much power he had over everybody, regardless of their age. The relationship Abarca had with the drug gang was merely for money and power. Marx explains that this kind of relationship "... has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.' It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom-Free Trade" (Marx 161). Marx means the owners want to get money for their own profit. The owners are not capable of being humane; they exchange their dignity for free trade. Abarca wanted to get money and power for his own profit.

But the parents continued asking the government to find their children. On October 29, 2014, in Mexico City, in the official Los Pinos residence, the President of Mexico, Enrique Pena Nieto, Secretary of the Interior Miguel Angel Osorio Chong, Attorney General Jess Murillo Karam, the President's legal counsel, Humberto Castillejos Cervantes, and Head of the President's Office Aurelio Nuo Mayer met with the parents of the missing Ayotzinapa students and reached several agreements. The first was that "the government will expand and, if necessary, redesign the Search Plan that the Secretariat of the Interior presented to parents, students, lawyers and representatives of civil society organizations in relation to the (finding of the missing students), which details the actions taken and the strategy to be adopted by the various Federal Government agencies in the search and location of the 43 students at the 'Ral Isidro Burgos' Rural Teacher Training College in Ayotzinapa. The aim is to intensify these actions, and in particular, to focus on finding the missing persons alive, in addition to continuing with the investigation carried out by the Attorney General's Office in relation to these facts" (States News Service). The government agreed to expand and redesign the search plan if was necessary. The great objective was to strengthen the parents' actions and have the Attorney General Murillo continue the investigation. The parents did not sign the document because they did not trust the government.

The parents already knew that things happened that the government did not admit to. For example, in the article "Todos Unidos Por Ayotzinapa" ("All United for Ayotzinapa"), Madelin Stocker wrote that, according to Mexican Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam, twenty-two cops were accused and they admitted that they had committed the crime and burned the bodies of the missing students. Furthermore,

investigators declared that they had found a lot of bags of human remains (Stocker).

The families of the Ayotzinapa students do not accept the government's version of the events. It was not a great piece of evidence to show them the remains they had discovered. They told the government they wanted the internationally renowned Argentine forensics team to do DNA tests of these remains to find the truth. The parents did not trust the forensics team the Mexican government assigned to the case.

In another news article, the journalist Anabel Hernandez "described the findings of her report, published in the Mexican magazine *Proceso*, which pointed to the role of federal authorities in the disappearance of the 43 students" (*Democracy Now!*). She said the official report from the Mexican government suggests that only the local government and police were involved in the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students. Hernandez argues that foreign investigators have found testimony, a video and documents which prove that the federal government was also involved. Cruz Bautista Salvador is the uncle of Benjamin Ascencio Bautista, a missing student. He told the journalist Amy Goodman that according to the information of various media outlets in Mexico, the Mexican government knew the ex-mayor of Iguala had ties to the delinquency. They said the representatives of the federal government checked the students when they left Ayotzinapa. That is a proof of how they planned this attack. Hernandez writes, "That shows the attack was planned; it wasn't an accident, it wasn't something casual. It was very, very planned" (*Democracy Now!*). Hernandez believes the federal government knew about everything from the beginning, which can be evidence that they know where the missing students are. They may not want to tell the truth because that would mean they would have to make a lot of political changes. They might want to cover up all the evidence and dismiss one more crime in Mexican society.

This time it is a little different because the media are paying attention to the events. The parents' "caravanas" in Mexico and in the United States are marching so that society will react to such grave crimes. On May 24, 2015, I interviewed one of the parents of the forty-three missing students. His name is Antonio Tizapa. He is the father of the student Jorge Antonio Tizapa Legideno. Tizapa told me "Ayotzinapa" means "place of turtles." He said, "Turtles are slow but undeterred"; he means for him and the other parents the messages are moving slowly but are undeterred. He told me he felt impotence, he felt despair and he felt rage because their children were kidnapped by the State. According to Tizapa he and the other parents felt the same way. That is because they cannot find their sons. "They said their children were kidnapped by the government because other students saw when the policemen took them in their trucks" (Tizapa). Tizapa said the first place the parents looked for their children was the jail because when somebody commits a felony they put the person in jail, and then the person waits to see the judge and the lawyer. When it is a small felony usually the person pays a fee and then they let the person go. They did not find the students in the jail and they did not know where they were. Their children did not commit a crime so there was no motive to put them into the jail. They are tired of the many injustices in that community. He is a runner and he wears the number "43" and the word "Ayotzinapa." When people see that, they ask him what that means and he explains to them what happened to their children. He and other parents believe their sons are alive. They do know why the government did not give back to them their loved ones. That is the reason he participated in caravanas and the silent marches.

Since the forty-three students went missing there have been demonstrations to show support. On November 20, 2014, students held protests at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) in solidarity for the students of Ayotzinapa. The SGA President

Jackelyne Briseño underscored the importance to continue to fight against these kinds of injustices. Dr. Sina Harris, a professor who led the university's protests, argued, "The protests in Mexico are beyond Ayotzinapa. Mexican people are tired of impunity" (Gonzalez); he further explains, "There are more than 22 thousand people [who have] disappeared, continuous violent crimes [are being committed], impoverishment [is everywhere], [and so are] proven ties and complicities between politicians and organized crime—like Abarca, ex-mayor of Iguala, who presumably ordered to kill the 43 students of Ayotzinapa and whose wife is the sister of two kingpins currently in jail" (Gonzalez). The Ayotzinapa students represented a menace to the system established in Mexico.

When any family loses a loved one, they cannot find any comfort. The students' relatives have been suffering since September 26, 2014, looking everywhere they could to find the missing ones. On the website for *Democracy Now*, in the article "Relatives of Missing Mexican Students Say U.S. Backed Drug War Is Fueling the Violence," the author gives a report about the trip of some of the missing students' family members to the United States. The families are asking President Barack Obama to end the indirect financing of the drug war in Mexico. Maria De Jesus Tlatempa Bello is one of the parents in the caravan that travelled throughout the United States to spread their message. In the interview Tlatempa gave for *Democracy Now* on April 28, 2015, she said, "And we're here asking the support of all the American people, asking for them to stand in solidarity with us, as parents, because it's the only way to demand our government help us find our children, and to pressure our government" (*Democracy Now!*). She wanted American society to help her and the other parents to spread the word and urge the president of Mexico and the Mexican authorities to do the correct thing and find their relatives.

The parents of the forty-three students are still looking and waiting for answers about where their children are. I am writing this essay in May; next Sunday will be Mother's Day. I am not a mother, but I am also a daughter and I can imagine how my mother would feel if I disappeared and she could not find me. It has been almost eight months since the students went missing and their relatives are still looking for them and continue to wait for resolutions.

In the article "Students Protest in Central Mexico Leave 43 Missing, 6 Dead and 22 Cops Arrested," published on September 30, 2014, by Fox News Latino, there is a picture of seven teenage boys between nineteen and twenty years old. They were throwing stones at the State Congress building in Chilpancingo, Mexico. That image I saw on different channels in Mexico and the United States. The media emphasized how the boys were acting. The media, however, gave negative information about why the students participated in the protests in Iguala. They showed them being leftists, but they should have focused more on how these students were threatened by the authorities in Mexico in conjunction with the drug gangs. After that protest, a lot more students were shown on Mexico television; many of the protests ended in brutality and violence by the police. In Mexico, according to the Constitution, people have the right to free speech but apparently the Mexican police don't know about this right. They prefer to use intimidation to show their power. That makes me feel very sad and I believe many others feel the same.

According to Stocker, many Mexicans have asked if the attorney general or the President of Mexico had participated or were complicit in the murder. Mexican society is tired of the widespread corruption. They do not trust any institution, which is their reaction to many years in which different authorities, politicians, and drug gangs committed many crimes and nobody did anything. Those crimes are perpetuating violence in Mexico. Mexico has been experiencing a period of corruption that creates confusion in people. Mexican society today

distrusts Mexican authorities and drug cartels. They know that if they suffer a crime they cannot declare it because many times it was proved that the authorities safeguard drug gangs, not civilians. Nobody believes anybody, which does not help people to live in a secure environment.

Gender-based violence is a common crime in Mexico. I believe that it is motivated by the fact that it is a bit easier for women in Mexico to find jobs than for men. Mexican men tend to feel impotent in these cases and they lash out at women, whom they see as responsible for their fate. Sexual assault, rape and relationship violence are crimes perpetrated by men against women. Many women suffer in Mexico society and other parts of world. In Mexico these crimes against women are quite frequent. My family and I came to the United States because we felt insecure in Mexico, where anyone can commit a crime and the police do not protect citizens. My mother suffered violence from my father for many years. He always told her that she depended on him because she had four kids and nobody would give her a job that could help her feed all of us. She tried several times to get help but nobody did anything to help her. My mother was a victim of many beatings as well as rape and psychological and economical abuse by my father. He used to beat her at least three or four times a week. My brother and I started to be beaten when we tried to defend her. I was five years old when I saw my father beat my mother. She was bleeding a lot and I thought she would die. My father broke her nose and she could not breathe. My brother and I tried to ask someone for help, but my father realized that and he beat us. Then he threatened that if we said something he would kill my mother. That happened for many years until, one day, my mother was brutally attacked by him. We went to the police department to receive protection and in response we were persecuted by them. My father gave money to the authorities in my town Zacapu, Michoacan, Mexico. Eventually, my mother divorced him and she did get a job. That made my father even angrier and he kept following and threatening her. We had to move because no authorities helped us. I know how the students felt scared of instead of protected by the Mexican authorities. They are supposed to protect and serve, not to attack or persecute you. Everybody has to live free away from violence and corruption.

In Mexico men are characterized by machismo and they are aggressive. In my country it is common for men to act aggressively. They do so to show power and they teach their children to be aggressive, too. Sometimes the mother tries to correct the children's behavior. Most of the time, however, she is attacked by her own husband. This may be an explanation for what might have happened with the students. Maybe Abarca's wife felt the Ayotzinapa students would be a menace for her plans. She asked the Guerreros Unidos drug gang for help. Gang members are very violent people, known for killing women and children; they are the representatives of a macho society that puts no value on life. They might have got angry with the students, which is usual with these gangs.

All this attention in the American media has influenced American college students to take action in the cause of the forty-three boys. In the article "Todos Unidos por Ayotzinapa," Madelin Stocker wrote that students from the Oberlin College published a lot of pictures of the missing 43 students from Ayotzinapa and posted them around the school. That convinced many other Oberlin students to show support. They knew the Ayotzinapa students had the right to study and give back to their communities. The Oberlin students in the United States wanted to demonstrate the importance of free speech to the Mexican authorities. They showed that they knew how the Mexican state imposes its power through violence.

The young students in the community of Ayotzinapa were developing a sense of Double Consciousness as described by W. E. B. Du Bois in his writings. When Du Bois was little in a small school in New England, on Valentine's Day he gave a card to a little

white girl. But she refused it because he was a black boy. He realized he was different from others. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois explains what double consciousness is: “The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil” (2). He means that “double consciousness” is like having a veil over one’s eyes when you feel overwhelmed about something. It means looking at yourself from outside, through the eyes of somebody else. For example, for a black kid like Du Bois, it meant thinking of himself in the way that white people would think of him. Education is important to help you understand who you really are so that you can reach your aims. I agree that education is the only way to help us to take any veil from our eyes. When Du Bois as a boy felt the rejection from the little white girl, he realized he was different from the others. He was starting to feel different and had contradictory feelings. He was African American, but he was later educated in Europe. He had the chance to compare the high class to low class. Du Bois discovered that education is important to help you to reach your aims. In Europe Du Bois wrote poems, songs and books where he pointed out that there were problems with the failed effort to bring equality and justice to African Americans after the Civil War. The community around Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, Mexico, where the forty-three students went missing, does not feel they have the power to do anything because, like African Americans, they have been told, for many years, that they are not worth much. They have a veil over their eyes. The students’ parents are trying to tear away this veil. Today Americans, especially in the colleges, react very strongly to the atrocities in Mexico. It is important to spread the truth about what really happened to the forty-three missing students because that would take the veil off people’s eyes. American students can learn from the knowledge of possible improper behavior by other governments.

“Never Forget: TAMIU’S Ayotzinapa 43 protest” points out that on November 20, 2014, there was a worldwide remembrance of the missing students. Different countries showed solidarity with the families. One participant was Texas A & M International University (TAMIU). The SGA President Jackelyne Briseño and Dr. Sina Harris led the demonstrations on the stage. Briseño told the story of a few of the missing students, “There were a few that were direct siblings, and another who was the sole provider for his family, cousins”; she added, “They all wanted to be teachers and better the world and it’s not fair that they’ll never get the chance to do so now” (Gonzalez). The forty-three students wanted to contribute to a better society and a better world.

On May 11, 2015, here at Kingsborough Community College we had an event titled “The Case of the Missing 43: State Violence and Youth Activism in Mexico: A Teach-in”; Kingsborough’s event featured two speakers who explained their research in the case of the missing students. The first speaker was Florencia Ruiz Mendoza, a graduate student in Liberal Studies at the New School University. She is also a graduate of the Human Rights Advocates Program at Columbia University. Ruiz explained how many other violent events happened before the forty-three students went missing.

The second speaker was Christy Thornton, a Ph.D. student at New York University focusing on Latin American history. Thornton wrote “White House Silence on Mexico Protests Speaks Volumes.” At the event, she explained how the United States had its share in the incremental rise in violence in Mexico. The United States government has spent 3 billion dollars in the Merida Initiative. Starting back in 2007, when George W. Bush was president, they used that money for security assistance to Mexico; President Barack

Obama has not ended this aid. Thornton argued, “Here’s why Americans should care: We are collectively funding this war. Our tax dollars, in the form of security aid, provide the equipment, weapons and training to state security forces responsible for an ever-lengthening rap sheet of human rights abuses.” Thornton is right: our taxes are financing the drug war in Mexico. Our tax money has been used to give weapons and preparation to Mexican authorities to commit crimes. They used that training provided by the United States to intimidate, kill and kidnap people in Mexico. That should concern us as monetary contributors to our American society. We should ask for an explanation about how they decided to use that money.

In a way, by helping the Mexican community allow the students to tear off the veil from their eyes, we may be helping ourselves, too. Those details should be known by the society in the United States. We should know how drugs are affecting our health and we should also know that they give cartels and even the government the opportunity to kill people in Mexico and disappear students.

Meanwhile the consumption of drugs in the United States is very high. Addiction is a big problem in our society because it causes side effects in our health. Thornton argued, “U.S. drug habits, in the form of an insatiable market for narcotics, marijuana and amphetamines, provide the liquid cash that has proved so corrosive when it has come into contact with every level of the Mexican State.” Thornton was very specific when she said our American society had a great dependency on drugs. The people addicted to drugs do not realize that they are giving more power to corrupt institutions in the Mexican state.

In brief, we should create awareness about all those sad tragedies happening now in the world, because corruption damages our society. We should also educate others not to commit violence against anybody. We should participate more in any issue concerning our society. We can have a better society if we stop being spectators only. Our world needs action, which can simply mean reading books, articles, or going to the conferences on campus. A great citizen participates in different events in the community. We can learn more about how the drugs can harm our bodies and also our society because in order to gain profit, drug dealers are capable of kidnapping people and committing atrocities. We should teach youngsters how the drugs can affect them. We should educate others not to commit crimes or violence in order to obtain power or money. Our children need a world free from violence and corruption and the only way we can eradicate that is through education.

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Written for Sociology 31, Professor Dominic Wetzel, Spring 2015.

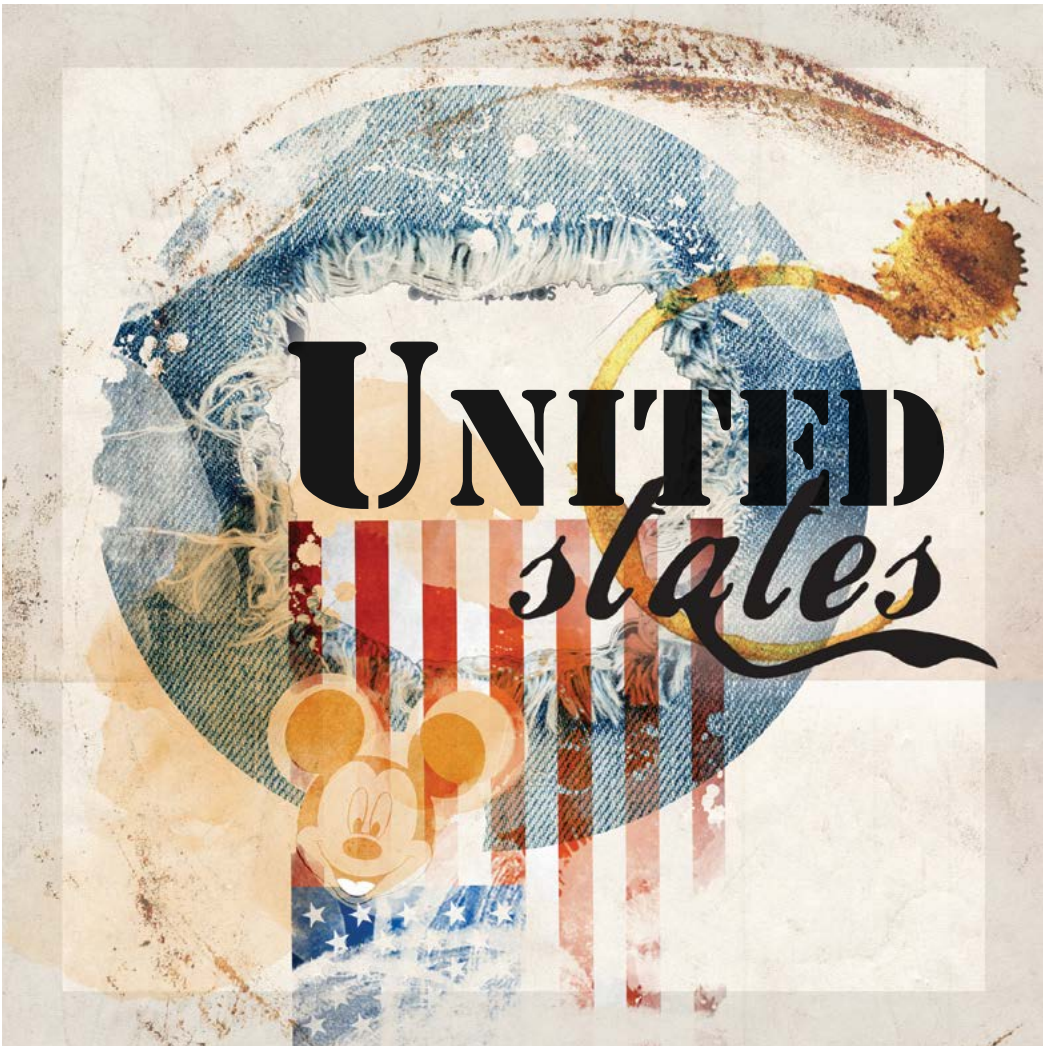


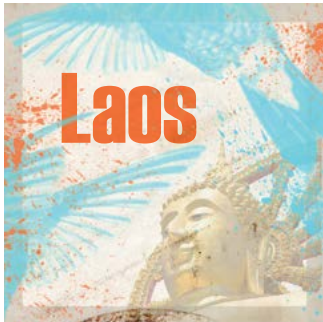
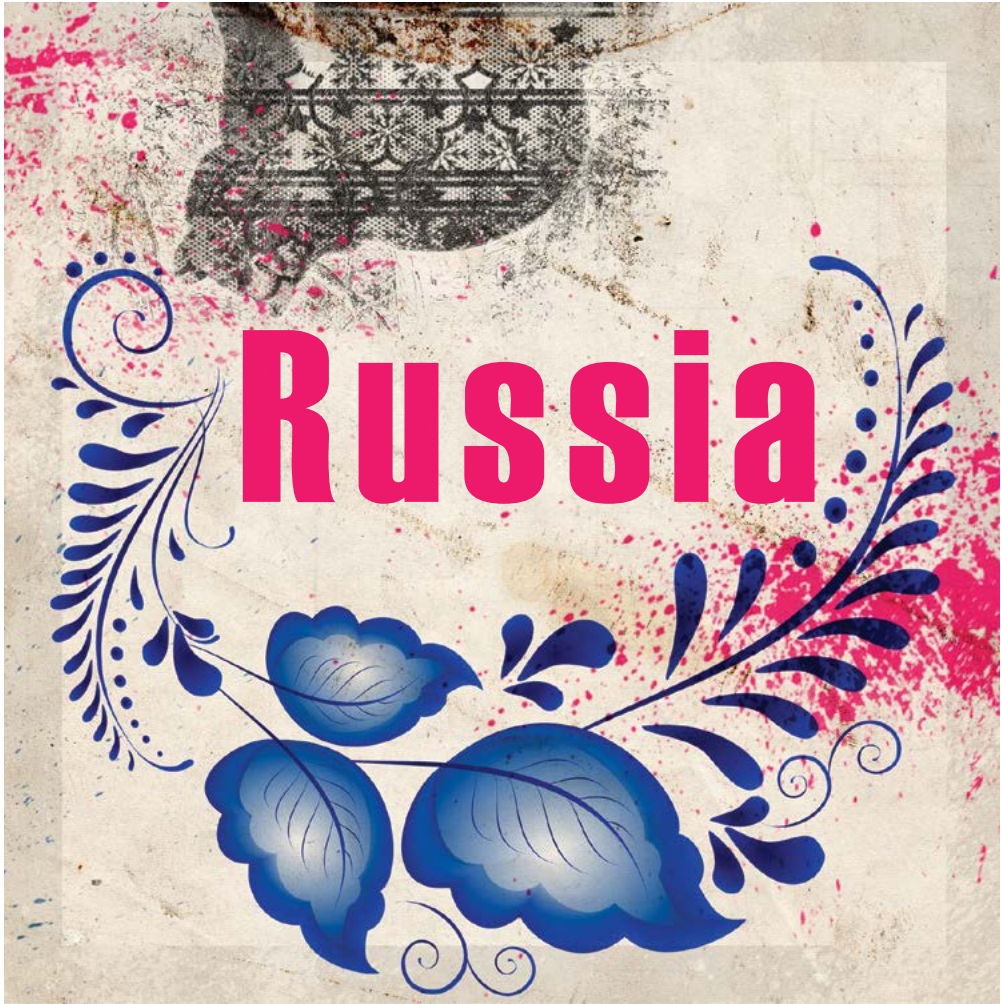
*Irina Pistsov is a Graphic Design major.
“I perceive art as the honest history of humankind,
history that is alive and speaks directly to one’s
ears and eyes and heart with shapes, lines and
colors with no middleman needed. I’m pursuing
a career in graphic design because it simply
makes me happy. It makes me wonder, it makes
me believe, it keeps me curious, it excites me and
helps me explore the world around and inside.”*

IRINA PISTSOV

EXPERIMENTAL ALPHABET: ALPHABET FOR TOURISTS

The artwork was produced for Art 74, Professor Valerie Sokolova, Spring 2015







Growing up in an Orthodox Jewish community, Jacob had little access to secular studies, yet he always had a keen interest in the business world. After earning his GED, he served in the Israeli military before returning to the States to work for a property management company: "Although I was employed full-time, I still wanted to get a firmer academic foundation." Kingsborough has provided Jacob that foundation, and he has particularly enjoyed his accounting and marketing classes: "My professors are experts in their fields, and they are also great at making the content engaging." Jacob is currently in his first semester at Columbia University,

where he is majoring in Financial Economics; he hopes to one day work in investment banking, private equity, or hedge funds: "I am very proud of what I have accomplished thus far, but I also know that I could not have done it all without the guidance and support KCC has provided me."

JACOB (YAKOV) LEZELL

EXPLORING MUSIC: ADAGIO FOR STRINGS BY SAMUEL BARBER

Adagio for Strings by Samuel Barber is a work that stands the test of time. This piece has been played and enjoyed by distinguished musicians from classical conductor Arturo Toscanini to modern day deejay DJ Tiesto. Listening to this piece in several genres changed the way I experience listening to music. Toscanini's diary will give us an insight to the reaction a notable musician, namely Toscanini, had upon being requested to play such a majestic piece. As a novice listener of classical music, taking this journey through diverse music periods gave me a better understanding and appreciation of music and the rich history that it offers.

Listening to classical music has never been a pastime for me. As someone without a background in classical music and who cannot play any musical instruments, music was something I only listened to get pumped up before a party or for passing time during a long drive in the car. When I would come across a radio station playing classical music, I would typically change the channel to a hip-hop or pop station. But now for the first time in my life I'm listening to classical music (or concert music) with a keen interest in understanding the melodies, rhythms, and the patterns of the meter.

Adagio for Strings by Samuel Barber was written in 1936 (and premiered in 1938). The song reflects a time in history where America was recovering from The Great Depression and Hitler's Germany was pushing towards another deadly war. It is a sad and intense piece of music. Listening to the music made me reminisce about a time in my life that was sad and intense.

Four months ago my friend Josh had his 24th birthday party at a bar in the meatpacking district in New York City. At the party I met a beautiful looking girl, Julia. We got to talk about what we were doing in our lives. She told me about how she was adopted from Russia and was brought to New York by a family who took her in and treated her like their precious daughter. She mentioned to me that she planned to return to Russia after she graduated and find out who her real parents are and see them for the very first time since her infancy.

Just a few months ago, Julia graduated from the Stern College of Yeshiva University, and I knew it was only a matter of months before she commenced her journey to find her parents.

That was until last week when I went on Facebook and I saw on my newsfeed that our mutual friends were writing on her wall about how much she will be missed and how they could not believe she is gone. I first thought she had left for Russia and it would be some time before she returned. After looking at her wall though, I saw tons of wall post and prayers for her. I kept looking and discovered that she had tragically passed away just a few weeks earlier in a horrific train accident.

The most heartfelt part of the music was between 4:21, and 5:58. At 4:21, when the music stopped for a few seconds, I was again reminded of my feeling upon reading of her death. As I looked up from my laptop it was almost like resurfacing for air after a deep dive, and thinking about what I had just discovered, and of the girl I had found attractive and planned to see again is now gone. I will never have the chance to message or see her again. The sad melodies of the sound touched a part in my heart that made me think of Julia and the moment I found out she had passed away.

I believe the composer was attempting to express a sad moment in his life and an intense moment in American history. This is shown by the largo of the tempo in the music. The sounds of the musician playing the strings of the cello, violin and viola gave the music a certain sound of intensity that only strings can make.

Another point in the music that stands out to me is the 1:45 mark, where the violinists and bass players play at a high pitch with an ascending melody. As the homophonic texture slowly reaches its climax it reminds of my siblings' weddings. Growing up in an ultra-Orthodox community in Crown Heights meant we observed very strict and religious laws and customs. Ultra-Orthodox women follow the law of birth control pills. Since giving birth to a child is considered a blessing, ultra-Orthodox women are forbidden from taking birth control pills, except for special circumstances. Therefore, it is not uncommon for women in my community to give birth to more than a dozen children. My mother was one of those women who had many children; she was blessed with fourteen kids. Being third to youngest in my family, it meant I experienced many weddings of my older siblings. Listening to the above-mentioned part of the music made me reminisce of the wedding ceremonies and the music that is played along with it.

At Jewish weddings there is a ritual that takes place under a canopy, in which the bride and groom stand during the wedding ceremonies. During this ceremony, the parents and grandparents of the bride and groom walk around the couple seven times while singing slow homophonic traditional melodies. While this is occurring there are many wet eyes, as the song that is played is awfully emotional. In order to keep the listeners' emotions high when listening to the song, the song can only be played during weddings.

As a young child attending these weddings, I never understood why our parents and guests of the wedding were crying while the music was being played. But like the ascending melody of the music, my emotions kept growing along with every wedding I attended. Last December, my youngest sister got married, and for the very first time the emotional melody had an affect on me and it made me think of how special those moments are for my sister. The 1:45 point in the music took me back to my sister's wedding and showed me how my emotions kept growing like the pitch of the music. While being a man is sometimes synonymous with being tough and showing little emotion, the music at the wedding felt comforting and pleasant. I was able to close my eyes, tune out the crowd around me, tune in to the melodies of the music and enjoy the wedding ceremonies and the intense emotions that came with it.

Another point in the music that stood out to me was the 5:47 mark, where all the string players (violin, viola, cello, and bass) played a high-pitched sound. I hear similar music when watching horror movies. The music is generally played when something horrific is about to happen to a character in the movie. The music creates an intense feeling in the viewer, and while they know something shocking is about to happen, they do not know when and to whom it's going to happen.

At the 6:02 mark, after a short pause, the music begins again to play at a gravo tempo and with soft dynamics. The slow tempo and soft dynamics of the melody reminds me of a peaceful time - a time where I am just relaxing, maybe at the beach and in a peaceful state of mind. The most recent time I had a relaxed and peaceful moment to myself was in February when I visited the Galapagos Islands. Along with it being the location where Darwin got his inspiration for his Theory of Evolution, the Galapagos Islands are known for the most unique and beautiful species in the world. But what is not well known about the Galapagos is the bleach-white sand beaches and green colored water. When I lay back on the sand and looked over at the green water, I was at peaceful place in my life. I did not want to leave where I was and return to New York, where the buildings are tall and the water is bluish at best. Listening to this part of the music took me back to the sun and beaches in the Galapagos, and made me yearn for the upcoming summer even more.

I was not the only one who enjoyed the soft melody of the *Adagio for Strings*. The conductor Toscanini was shocked and thrilled when Barber asked him to play this piece live on radio in 1938. A recording of Toscanini conducting it seems to illustrate the excitement Toscanini felt.¹

Here is an excerpt of what I imagine Toscanini's diary might have contained:
Dear Diary,

I, Arturo Toscanini, am a 71-year-old from Parma, Emilia-Romagna, Italy. I am currently living in New York with my wife Carla and our three children and conduct classical music for the world's most talented composers. I started conducting operas in South Africa at the age of 19. I consider myself a conductor who is intense, a perfectionist, and pay great attention to details in the music I conduct. My performances are acclaimed by critics and audiences alike. I was named the "the greatest conductor in the world" by Fascist leader Benito Mussolini. Although he may be well-versed in music, I am an anti-fascist and disagree with everything he represents. Therefore, I refuse to play songs that have anything to do with fascism. On May 14, 1931, at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna, in the presence of Fascist foreign minister Galeazzo Ciano in the audience, I was beaten badly--by men in all-black uniforms who were loyal to Mussolini--for refusing to play "Giovinezza," the official hymn of the Italian National Fascist Party.

I returned to the United States in 1937 to conduct the NBC Symphony Orchestra. It is January 1938 now and I just received an orchestrated version of the *Adagio for Strings* from the remarkably talented 28-year-old American conductor Samuel Barber. I cannot believe Samuel would trust me with such a piece. With the exception of Howard Henson's Second Symphony, which I conducted in 1933, I have never conducted the music of an American. This piece is an awfully sad, simplistic and emotional one with a slow melody. The piece is a serious and dignified one, which is played slowly by a large group of strings. It begins with incredible sadness, which feels forever lasting, and then builds to an

¹ [Editor] Listen, for example, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC8f1VknVqk>

astounding apex of intensity. The music then reaches a softer and slow melody, and then repeats three times. As an intense conductor who specializes in intense and dramatic classical music, I am surprised that Samuel would choose someone like me for this piece. But I will be sure not to let him down. I want to show him that I can play it with a sense of gentleness, sensitivity, and not be overly dramatic; I will remember this piece by heart. This will surely show him how seriously I am taking this and how much this means to me. I am impressed that Samuel wrote *Adagio for Strings* when he was in his twenties. Can he be the next Mozart?

I believe that a performance cannot be artistically successful unless unity of intention is first established among all the components: singers, orchestra, chorus, staging, sets, and costumes. Therefore, I understand that rehearsing for this piece won't be an easy task. I am not used to playing such soft, light tempo music with my orchestra. We generally play classical music with intensity. This piece will require me to change the way I teach my orchestra music. I am prepared for this and I look forward to the challenge.

February 1938

Dear Diary,

I just received a letter from Samuel in which he expressed his frustration that I returned the music without comment. I must be sure to send him a letter informing him that sending back the piece was a genuine gesture, one to show that I memorized the music and will not need the paper when I play it on the radio. I plan on playing the piece in November with the NBC Symphony Orchestra. The concert will be broadcast in New York with a radio audience of millions across America. This year has been a year of turmoil. Hitler is gaining support from the Germans and his rhetoric against us Jews is frightening and threatens the survival of Jews all across Europe. Hitler is pushing for war across Europe. As anti-Semitism is rising, I have used and will continue to use my celebrity status in Italy and America to be an outspoken voice and attend protest in support for the German Jews and Jews across Europe. I understand that the protests I held in Europe were dangerous. I understand that while I was in Italy Mussolini was tapping my phone and I was being followed, but I know it was the right thing for me to do. If not me, then whom? Since I am blessed with great ear for music, I will continue to use this gift as a medium to reach my audience and inform them of the terrible atrocities that are going on in Europe.

Although America was going through hard times when Toscanini played the piece on live radio, the music is still being played today. Like many pieces of Modern Day music, *Adagio for Strings* has been transformed into a more upbeat and electric type tempo that attracts the youth of today. The salient points of this genre are described in a recent concert review of the performance performed by a European DJ.

During my time at Kingsborough Community College I have been given the opportunity by the Music Department to attend a concert of DJ Tiesto and write about the experience I had. My friends and I have been fans of DJ Tiesto for over three years. We play his music during our parties, while working out in the gym and even while studying for school. Unfortunately, DJ Tiesto has never performed in New York before and we did not have the means to attend any of his concerts until last week. This past Monday evening I,

along with four of my best friends, went to his concert in a large arena in the Netherlands. Purchasing tickets was not an easy feat as the concert was sold-out weeks in advance; however, we were able to obtain a few online. When we entered the arena there were over twenty-five thousand fans in attendance, predominantly between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. The ceilings were more than one hundred feet high, the spotlights were shining in all directions, and the energy was high. The temperature in the arena was cool, approximately sixty degrees Fahrenheit, but it did not take long for the sold out crowd to turn the cool arena into a man-made sauna. My friends and I looked forward to this informal concert as a way to forget about school and work and focus exclusively on dancing to the beat of the music.

DJ Tiesto was the sole performer of the night. Wearing jeans and a t-shirt, he fist pumped and danced to the beat of his own music. From where I stood in the arena I was able to see his headphones pressed against his ears while his hands moved hastily across the spinning table and laptop in the DJ booth. The piece he played was called *Tiesto: Adagio for Strings / Who's the Starter*. The music was a mixture of the legendary Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings* remixed with his own beats. It had repeated sections, a steady beat and the dynamics were pretty stable. The rhythm was also generally stable and the pitch went down at points and then quickly jumped back up and dropped a beat. At the 3:08 mark he played a very slow and sad melody that came directly from *Adagio for Strings* piece. The concert had a contemporary and modern day feel and very little in common with the classical music style. One of the few similarities that stood out for me was that of his DJ booth and the classical orchestra. Just as a conductor of classical music conducts the music with the movement of his hands, DJ Tiesto was also directing his orchestra (in the DJ booth) with the movement of his hands. Another similarity I noticed was his gesture of "thank you" and appreciation of the crowd. Just as the conductor of classical music bows with outstretched hands to his audience as a sign of appreciation, so did DJ Tiesto to the crowd in the arena.

Throughout the night I looked at my friends and they seemed happier than ever. Not only were they spending time with one another and forgetting their day-to-day drudgery, they were enjoying the electrifying and energetic tempo of DJ Tiesto's music. I believe this was the intent of DJ Tiesto to play a happy and up-beat tempo beat that kept the crowd jumping. The music made me happy, pumped up, and free. DJ Tiesto played the right beats that forced me to focus in on the music and keep my eyes on him and the DJ booth. Overall, I enjoyed his performance. He understood what his crowd anticipated and was able to deliver the music they desired.

Classical music like *Adagio for Strings* will stand the test the time if it can live with the time. Some might argue that DJ Tiesto's alteration to the piece was disrespectful since he changed the way the music was originally composed. I feel like it will only help prolong the life of the music and keep it around throughout the future musical periods. I personally adored the original music and hope future generations will not feel the need to change the way it was originally performed in order to appreciate its magnificent sounds. Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings* was an instant classic, still is a classic and will continue to be classic as long as it can live with the times.

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Written for Music 31, Professor Dawn Taitt, Spring 2015



Kate Maziarz: "I came from Poland three years ago, where I graduated from high school. Before entering community college I went to a language school in New York in order to learn a new language, English. I will graduate in the Fall with an associate's degree in chemistry. I am interested in finishing my B.S. in chemistry and pursuing a Ph.D. in polymer chemistry."

KATE MAZIARZ

PURIFICATION AND CHARACTERIZATION OF 2,3-BIS-FLUOREN-9-YLIDENESUCCINIC ACID

PREFACE (FOR LAY READERS)

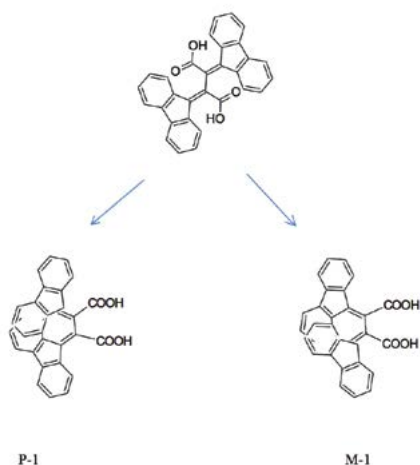
I am synthesizing a molecule that has axial chirality; therefore it has a helical molecular structure. This type of structure is well known, for example, in DNA, peptides, and sugars. This particular structure is also very interesting due to its applications such as supramolecular chemistry, separations, catalysts, and helical polymers. The following paper presents only a first step, which is the synthesis of racemic mixture, purification, and full characterization. Once we know that the product is ready, we can go to the next step, which is the separation of enantiomers. Why is it so important to separate them? Because only one enantiomer is useful and might be used in one of the applications. Our goal is to apply it in supramolecular materials

ABSTRACT

Condensation of 9-fluorenone and dimethyl succinate in the presence of potassium tert-butoxide and tert-Butyl alcohol yielded 2,3-Bis-fluoren-9-ylidenesuccinic acid. The compound was successfully purified by recrystallization from acetonitrile and then ethyl acetate. The experimental procedure has been described previously, however the molecule was not purified correctly and the full characterization was not reported. Analytical techniques such as thin-layer chromatography (TLC), Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (NMR), Infrared (IR) Spectroscopy, and Mass Spectrometry (MS) were performed to complete the characterization of the molecule.

Introduction

We previously synthesized 2,3-Bis-fluoren-9-ylidenesuccinic acid as a racemic mixture, which contains left- and right-handed helical enantiomers. An interesting fact, which lead to usage of this compound for my research project, is that restricted rotation around central C-C bond this molecule could provide P-1 and M-1 helices.¹ In order to use 2,3-Bis-fluoren-9-ylidenesuccinic acid further in our research, the molecule has to be pure and fully characterized. Therefore, it is critical to understand the recrystallization process. As previously reported, recrystallization using acetonitrile did not give a completely pure product. Recrystallization is a process where a solvent is used to dissolve a solid and



Scheme 1. Helical structures of the target molecule.

allow it to re-form slowly as crystals without impurities. The impurities do not turn into a solid, but stay in the mother liquor – solution that remains after crystallization. A serious issue with this technique is loss of the product; nevertheless, the crystals may be completely pure.²

A very useful technique which was used in determination of the purity is thin-layer chromatography. It is very useful because it is the cheapest and faster method for the rapid separation and qualitative analysis of small amounts of material.³ A thin-layer plate is spotted with a sample by a small capillary pipet. Then, a chamber – a small amount of solvent placed in a beaker needs to be prepared. The TLC plate should be placed in the beaker, and the small spots travel up with the solvent. When the solvent reaches the front line, TLC is ready to be checked under the UV lamp.

Once the molecule is purified, a proper characterization can be made. Also, analytical characterization can be used to compare product before and after crystallization. One of the instruments used in this project is Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (NMR) which depends on the absorption of radio frequency. This happens when the nucleus of an atom is excited from its lowest energy spin state to the higher one. The two elements that are the most common in organic molecules (carbon and hydrogen) have isotopes (^1H and ^{13}C) capable of giving NMR spectra that are rich in structural information.⁴ The chemical environment of carbons in the molecule are seen in the ^{13}C -NMR, while the ^1H -NMR represents protons. The knowledge of chemical shifts allows us to determine the structure of the molecule. In this project, we are interested in the shift between 7 and 8, which belongs to the aromatic area.

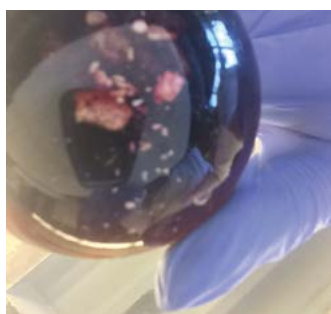
Infrared spectroscopy is an extremely important tool in analytical chemistry because its signals show functional groups within the molecule. Among the ways a molecule responds to the absorption of IR energy is by vibrational motions such as the stretching and contracting of bonds and the opening and closing of the bonds angles.⁵

Mass Spectrometry (MS) is a technique used for measuring the molecular weight and determining the molecular formula of an organic molecule.⁶ The technique used in this experiment is by direct probe insertion and ionization by an electron impact (EI). This means that the sample is vaporized and bombarded by a beam of electrons to form an unstable radical cation, which then decomposes to smaller fragments. A mass spectrum plots the intensity of each ion versus its mass-to-charge (m/z) ratio.

EXPERIMENTAL

2,3-Bis-fluoren-9-ylidenesuccinic acid was obtained condensation of 9-fluorenone (8.00g) and dimethyl succinate (3.20g) with 20.0 ml of tert-Butyl alcohol under reflux. The base, potassium tert-butoxide was dissolved in 40.0 ml of tert-Butyl alcohol and added to the round bottom flask.⁷ After 30 min, the crude product was obtained. After the mixture cooled down to room temperature, the solvent was removed by rotary evaporator. The crude was washed and filtered with HCl (6 M) and water, giving yellow color.

The yellow crude was recrystallized using 50.0 ml of acetonitrile. After two weeks the red crystals were gathered giving the yield of 65%. Due to impurities indicated by TLC, another recrystallization was necessary. Red crystals were purified using 40.0 ml of ethyl acetate, which gave yellow crystals with the yield of 50%.



During the reflux

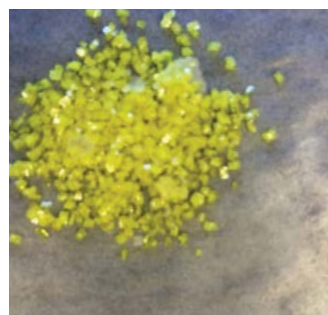


After filtration

Figure 1. Synthesis of 2,3-Bis-fluoren-9-ylidenesuccinic acid



Red crystals



Yellow crystals

Figure 2. Crystals obtained from acetonitrile (red) and ethyl acetate (yellow)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to determine purity and full characterization of the molecule, TLC was checked first. Three spots were made: fluorenone (F), yellow crystals (Y), and red crystals (R). The chamber was prepared by 90% of petroleum ether and 10% of acetone. After development, TLC showed that the red crystals had two spots on the top and on the bottom; meaning that those crystals contained still mixture of fluorenone and the main product. The yellow spot gave a pure product, evidenced by a single spot on the bottom of the plate.



Figure 3. TLC plate showing red crystals (R), yellow crystals (Y), and fluorenone starting material (F)

When the purity was confirmed, NMR was used to verify the structure of the molecule. We compared the NMR of red crystals and yellow crystals. According to the structure, ^{13}C -NMR should contain 16 carbons in the aromatic area, however, one carbon is overlapping, thus we see only 15 in figure 4. Unexpectedly, the red crystals, which are impure, showed less carbons in the ^{13}C -NMR. The ^1H -NMR spectra (figure 6) shows the expected 16 protons in the yellow pure sample. Surprisingly, only 12 protons were found in the impure sample. These results are summarized in Table 1.

Crystals	^{13}C -NMR (number of carbons)	^1H -NMR (number of protons)
Red	12	12
Yellow	15	16

Table 1. Number of carbons from ^{13}C -NMR and protons from ^1H -NMR

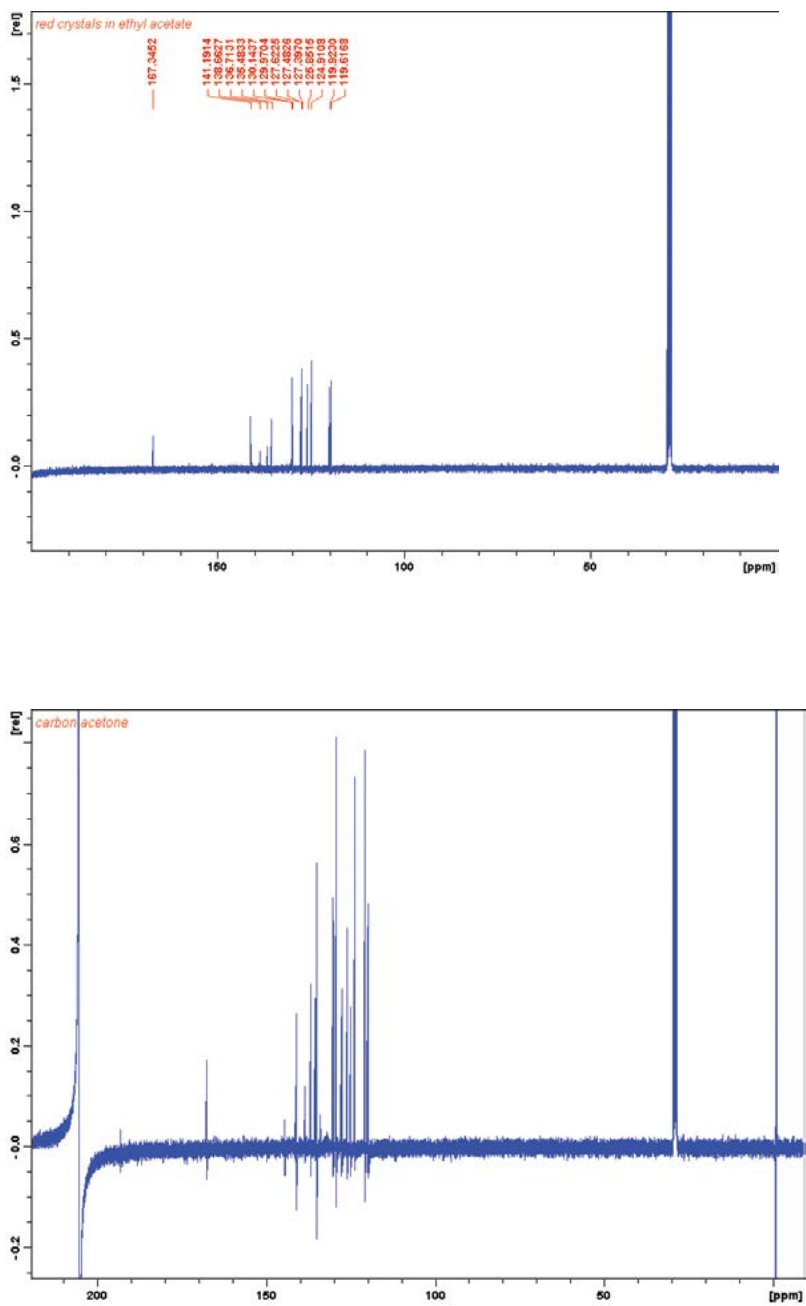


Figure 4. 100 MHz ^{13}C -NMR of red crystals (top) and yellow crystals (bottom) in acetone- d_6 .

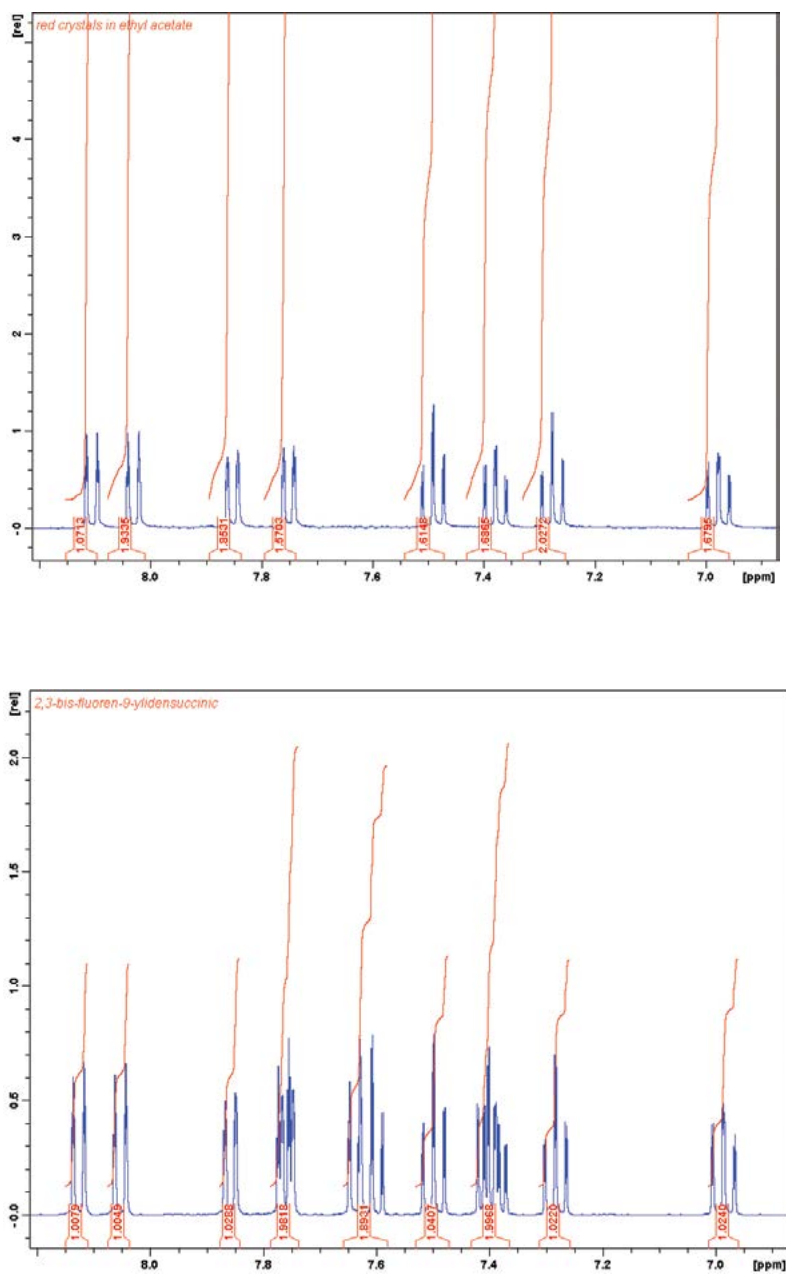


Figure 5. 400 MHz ¹H-NMR spectra of yellow (top) and red (bottom) crystals in acetone-d₆.

Spectroscopic investigation with IR shows the functional groups for both red and yellow crystals, with peaks characteristic -OH peaks (3418 cm⁻¹) and C=O peaks (1710 cm⁻¹). An interesting fact is that comparing both crystals to fluorenone can confirm purity of yellow crystals, which shows no overlapping fluorenone peaks (figure 7).

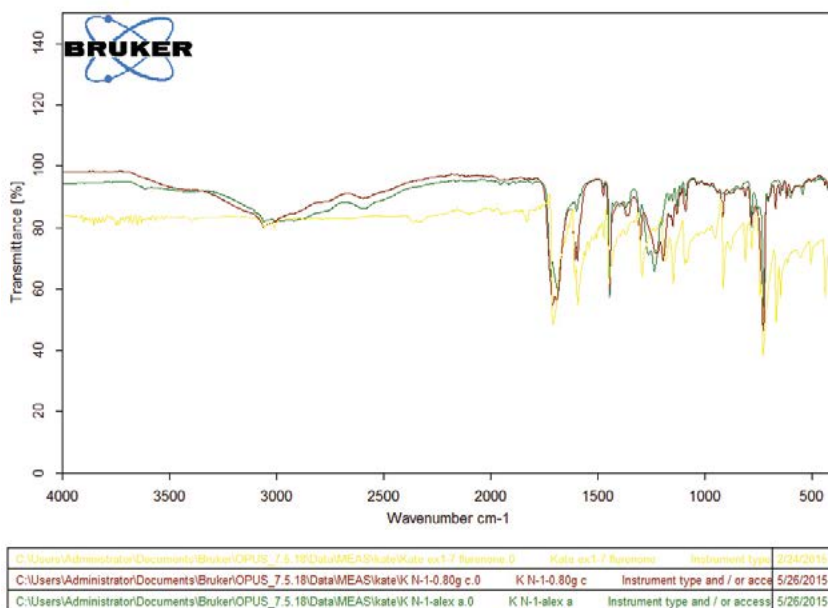


Figure 7. IR spectra of fluorenone (yellow line), red crystals (red line) and yellow crystals (green line.) Overlapping peaks between the red crystals and fluorenone confirm TLC results.

Mass spectrometry allowed us to confirm the molecular mass of this compound. The expected mass is 442 amu. However, due to the high energy ionization we observed the dehydration of the molecule (loss of water H₂O). Therefore, the observed mass by was 424 amu (loss of 18).

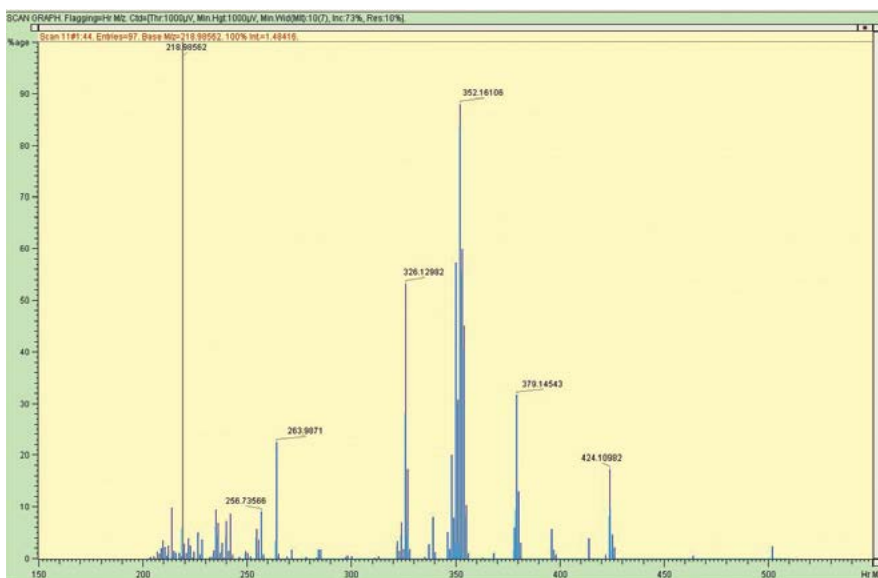


Figure 8. Mass spectrum of the target molecule shows loss of water.

CONCLUSIONS

2,3-Bis-fluoren-9-ylidenesuccinidic acid was successfully purified using acetonitrile and ethyl acetate recrystallizations. Towards its full characterization, we show ¹³C-NMR, ¹H-NMR, IR, and MS spectra, and compared this with the impure product. Further work aims to fully characterize the compound by analyzing its spectroelectronic properties, as well as 2-D NMR for proton assignments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Written for Chemistry 12, Professors Aleksandr Gorbenko and Homar Barcena, Spring 2015.



Nandane Tiwari is a Biology major. Her professional goal is to become a cardiovascular surgeon. In her spare time, she enjoys writing, reading and spending time with friends.

NANDANEE TIWARI

NATURE V. NURTURE: HEART DISEASE

INTRODUCTION

Heart disease is currently the leading cause of death: “Americans suffer 1.5 million heart attacks and strokes each year. Cardiovascular disease—including heart disease and stroke—is the leading cause of death in the United States. Every day, 2,200 people die from cardiovascular diseases—that’s nearly 800,000 Americans each year, or 1 in every 3 deaths” (The Million Hearts Initiative). According to the World Health Organization, a global number of 17 million people die annually from heart disease (Buttar, 229). These staggering statistics prove the need for continuous research and medicine to treat and prevent this deadly disease. Furthermore, it is just as important for the public to be aware of the risk factors and the changes they should make to ensure a healthy heart.

Heart disease is complex and consists of different types of diseases such as rheumatic heart disease, hypertensive heart disease, ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular heart disease, inflammatory heart disease, congenital heart disease, and heart failure. Subsequently, all of these types of diseases have different and multiple causes, some of which are caused by genetic traits, and others by more controllable variables—diet and exercise. However, even if a person has a history of heart disease in their family and has inherited the genes for the risk factors leading to heart disease, this does not mean they will definitely have the disease. Instead, they are only at a greater risk of developing heart disease. The fact is that there is no specific gene for heart disease. This is good news for people with a family history of the disease.

Does this mean that heart disease is predominantly caused by our self-destructive habits of a poor diet and lack of physical activity? Well, to find the answer let’s first discuss the specific genetic loci that raise a person’s risk of developing certain cardiovascular diseases.

HUMAN GENOME RISK FACTORS

In “Genome-Wide Linkage Scan Identifies Two Novel Genetic Loci for Coronary Artery Disease: In GeneQuest Families,” Hanxiang Gao et al. identify two genetic loci that increase susceptibility to risk factors, and thus to coronary artery disease (CAD). According to the article, “Risk factors for development of CAD, include smoking history, older age, male gender, high fat diet, personal history of angina pectoris, family history

of myocardial infarction (MI), obesity, diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, increased plasma total and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol.” These risk factors can easily develop based on one’s genetic makeup. Specific loci on chromosomes contain susceptible genes, which in turn make a person more susceptible to these risk factors and therefore more susceptible to CAD. Research has found that the two loci on chromosome 3 in particular hold a great significance (Gao et al.). Chromosome 3 loci 3q29 and 3p25.2 were identified as containing susceptible genes associated with risk factors for CAD. The locus 3p25.2 is associated with lower levels of high-density lipoprotein (HDL). HDL is known as “good cholesterol” and lower levels contribute to the increased chances of developing CAD. Thus, the 3p25.2 locus directly contributes to the development of risk factors by lowering levels of good cholesterol, which then increases chances of coronary heart disease.

Similar experiments have also been conducted, focusing on lipid concentrations HDL and low-density lipoprotein (LDL). LDL is known as “bad cholesterol,” and higher levels are associated with a higher risk of CAD. Cristen Willer et al. have measured the association of lipid concentrations with different loci of chromosomes. They conclude that “the association of LDL cholesterol concentrations with the CELSR2-PSRC1-SORT1 locus is particularly notable, because variants in that region have not been previously implicated in lipid metabolism. In our sample, allele A at rs599839 was associated with an increase of 5.48mg/dl in LDL cholesterol concentrations. Notably, the same rs599839 allele has recently been associated with an increased risk of CAD in an independent study, suggesting that the association to CAD risk might be mediated by the effect on LDL cholesterol concentrations” (Willer et al., 164). These loci seem to be correlated with the production of lipid concentration in LDL cholesterol. As previously mentioned, LDL is a risk factor of CAD, therefore increasing the likelihood of coronary heart disease.

Another study conducted by Riyaz Patel and Shu Ye has uncovered one of many loci associated with coronary heart disease (CHD). Patel and Ye concluded chromosome 9p21 is associated with CHD, independent of traditional risk factors such as family history. A total of 30 chromosomal loci are associated with CHD. Moreover, there are also a variety of loci that indirectly contribute to CHD by giving rise to certain risk factors. Studies have found 40 loci responsible for type 2 diabetes, 30 variants for obesity, 90 variants known to contribute to lipid phenotype, 20 variants known for hypertension, and a variant on chromosome 15 associated with increased smoking behavior (Patel et al., 1466). These loci contribute to the number of risk factors a person has and therefore increase chances of coronary heart disease.

While it seems as though DNA plays an overwhelming role in developing heart disease, there are some areas of concern pertaining to “missing heritability.” Gao et al. claim that while there are more than 50 variants associated with CAD, they only account for less than 20% of heritability. Willer et al. claim that the variants discussed in their study only accounts for “5-8% of the variation in the three lipid traits in the populations studied, leaving much of the heritability of these traits unexplained” (168). Patel agrees: “the identified common variants still only explain less than 10% of the known heritability of CHD ... missing heritability is instead likely to be due to rarer SNP’s (<1%) with larger effect sizes ...” (1470). While everyone seems to agree that the discussed loci and variants represent a small portion of the overall heritability, there is much research to be conducted to fully identify all loci and variants contributing to the risk factors and ultimately the disease, as well as to understand the significance of heritability in developing heart disease.

There is also an overall agreement concerning the most significant risk factor for the disease. Gao et al. point to family history as being the most significant risk factor,

accounting for 40-60% of the risk for CAD. Willer et al. claim smoking, diet and exercise also play a role in determining LDL and HDL concentrations, but half of the variation is genetically determined (162). However, while Willer et al. argue the importance of genetics, there seems to be some discrepancy in linkage between loci, lipid concentration and CAD. For example, some alleles had a significant association with LDL cholesterol but no association with CAD. Furthermore, the chromosome 9 locus is strongly correlated with CAD but has no effect on lipid concentrations (167). Patel and Ye also argue the importance of genetic makeup contributing to CHD. However, in spite of these questions, there is an overall consensus about genetic makeup dominating the likelihood of developing heart disease.

If this is true, then it is possible for a person with the aforementioned genetic variations and loci to avoid heart disease? Is a healthy diet and exercise really enough to keep heart disease at bay? Even if a person followed a perfectly healthy diet and a proper exercise routine, does that ensure this person a 100% guarantee of not developing the disease? Or is there still a chance of getting the disease even if they were to do everything right? To answer these questions we must first understand the role of a healthy diet and exercise routine in preventing heart disease.

HEALTHY DIET FOR HEART HEALTH

There are many changes a person aiming to prevent heart disease can make to their diet. Frank Hu and Walter Willett have concluded that "... diets including nonhydrogenated unsaturated fats as the predominant form of dietary fat, whole grains as the main form of carbohydrate, an abundance of fruits and vegetables, and adequate omega-3 fatty acids can offer significant protection against CHD" (2575). Omega-3 fatty acids consist of saturated, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated fatty acids that work to increase levels of HDL cholesterol when replacing carbohydrates and/or saturated fats. On the other hand, trans-fatty acids found in stick margarine, vegetable shortenings, baked goods, and deep fried foods increase LDL cholesterol and lower HDL cholesterol. One should aim to increase their intake in omega-3 fatty acids by including healthy oils such as fish oil, mustard oil, and soybean oil in their diet. Hu and Willett state: "Two recent studies have shown that consuming two or more servings of fish per week was associated with 30% lower risk of CHD in women and that blood levels of eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) were strongly associated with decreased risk of sudden cardiac death in men. α -Linolenic acid (ALA), an omega-3 fatty acid high in flaxseed, canola, and soybean oils, can be converted to EPA and DHA in humans and, thus, may have a role in prevention of CHD" (2572).

Whole grains are also essential to lowering the risk of developing heart disease. Unrefined whole grains contain fiber, which is proven to lower cholesterol levels, decreasing the amount of lipid in the blood and lowering chances of heart disease. Foods such as oats, barley, and rye are rich in fiber. They are digested slowly and have a low glycemic index, keeping blood glucose (blood sugar) levels down, as opposed to starchy foods such as potatoes and white bread that spike insulin levels. Interestingly enough, "Several studies have found a stronger association for cereal fiber than for fruit or vegetable fiber" (Hu et al., 2573). However, do not underestimate the importance of fruit and vegetables in preventing heart disease. Green, leafy veggies and vitamin C- rich fruits contribute to maintaining a healthy heart. Overall, "... a 'prudent' pattern characterized by higher intakes of fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, poultry, and fish was associated with lower risk of CHD, whereas a 'Western' pattern characterized by higher intakes of red and processed meats, sweets and desserts, potatoes, French fries, and refined grains was associated with a higher risk, independent of lifestyle factors" (Hu et al., 2574).

EXERCISE TO PREVENT HEART DISEASE

A proper exercise routine is another crucial factor of heart health. For one, exercise is proven to be effective in preventing strokes by influencing blood coagulation and fibrinolysis. Harpal Buttar et al. discuss the role of exercise on blood coagulation and fibrinolysis: “Blood coagulation and fibrinolysis are two important physiological functions influencing the formation and breakdown of clots within blood vessels ... compared with sedentary people, those who took part in regular physical activity tended to exhibit more effective fibrinolytic profiles and a decreased potential for resting clot formation. In sedentary people, the fibrinolytic capacity was reduced while the plasma concentrations of PAI-1 were increased, possibly leading to a larger coagulation potential” (231-232). Essentially, there is an inverse correlation between exercise and stroke; the more active a person is, the less likely they are to have a stroke.

Recent studies also show that exercise can actually influence the physiology of the heart, a process called vascular remodelling. In fact, “To determine whether physical activity had any influence on vascular remodelling, the investigators measured the diameter and intima-media thickness of the femoral artery ... They found that the prolonged endurance training of 55 athletes, who were distance runners and/or triathletes training heavily and competing in local races, caused the lumen diameter of the blood vessel to increase, whereas the arterial wall thickness decreased. Measurements showed that in the endurance-trained people, the lumen diameter of the femoral artery was 9.62 ± 0.12 mm compared with 9.03 ± 0.13 mm in the sedentary subjects. Furthermore, in the endurance-trained subjects, the femoral artery intima-media thickness was 4.6 ± 0.1 mm compared with 4.7 ± 0.1 mm in the sedentary subjects ... The large diameter of the arterial lumen plays a significant role in minimizing resistance against blood flow and maximizing perfusion to organs, tissues and cells” (Buttar et al., 233). Cardio workouts are proven to change the physiology of the heart, leading to wider passageways such as in the femoral artery, and therefore allow blood to flow more freely, decreasing risks of blood clots and high blood pressure. The same can be said with the decreased thickness in the arterial wall. Also, studies have proven that exercise lowers levels of LDL cholesterol and raise levels of HDL cholesterol (Buttar et al., 234). The minimizing of LDL levels and maximizing of HDL levels combined with the free flow of blood throughout the arteries of the heart and decreased blood pressure decreases the chance of developing various risk factors that lead to heart disease.

While these findings seem to have a sound backing, if a person can prevent heart disease through a healthy diet and exercise, why do perfectly healthy people still have heart disease? People who eat the right foods and exercise daily still seem to be at a risk of the disease. Does this mean that these particular people just seem to have genes that are especially susceptible to the risk factors leading to heart disease? Can a person really override their DNA even if they have all the right loci and variants for developing heart disease?

DNA V. DIET AND EXERCISE

While the previously mentioned studies on the importance of exercise and healthy eating for heart health seem sound, there are some points of concern one should be aware of. There is no doubt that the intake of omega-3 fatty acids and unrefined grain directly contributes to maintaining a healthy heart. However, the amount of these foods that will lead to optimal heart health is yet to be known. Further research is needed to specifically prescribe amounts of fruit, vegetables, legumes, and poultry needed in a person’s diet to

ensure optimum heart health. Similarly, too much strenuous exercise can lead to heart disease. These strenuous workouts put pressure and/or strain on the heart, possibly leading to heart diseases such as heart failure or cardiac arrest. But how does a person know when too much exercise is too much? Some people like to push themselves to run that last mile or keep going for that last ten minutes of their home workout DVD. They think if they could just get through the next couple of minutes, it would do their hearts and their bodies a world of good. However, this is not the case. Over-exertion has detrimental heart effects, and in some cases people can actually tear the heart muscle. The key is listening to the body. While it is normal to experience discomfort, there is a difference between discomfort and pain. If something feels painful, it is advised to stop that activity immediately and consult a physician.

Although there are some areas of vagueness pertaining to what constitutes a healthy diet and exercise, Buttar et al. state, “The INTERHEART study provides convincing evidence that CVD is preventable by lifestyle changes.” This international study consists of 29,972 subjects from a vast range of nations in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Australia, North America and South America, totaling 52 countries. “Based on the findings of this large international case-controlled study, it appears that almost 90% (not 50% as was previously believed) of heart disease is caused by nine potentially modifiable risk factors” (Buttar et al. 231). This study has been a breakthrough in the scientific world, and its conclusive findings are widely accepted partially due to its incredibly large and diverse sample size. The INTERHEART study proves that any person of any age, gender or background can overcome 90% of heart diseases by following a diet rich in fatty acids and unrefined whole grains coupled with a regular, moderate workout routine. Exercises including biking, jogging, swimming, and dancing are all moderate forms of exercise that will ensure a healthy heart.

Furthermore, “contrary to what was previously believed, heredity or the genetic makeup of a person does not play a major role in causing CVD. Therefore, it appears that if one’s parents or siblings have or had heart disease, the other closely related persons are not necessarily bound to suffer the same fate” (Buttar et al., 231). Diet and exercise seems to be the most feasible way to prevent the majority of cases of heart disease. Even if a person has loci and variants that make them more likely to develop heart disease, they can still prevent 90% of heart disease through diet and exercise. This person will only have a greater risk of developing the remaining 10% of heart disease. Thus, it is safe to say that the majority of heart disease cases around the world are self-inflicted in that they are caused by our poor eating habits and lack of physical activity. We are not fated to have most kinds of heart disease, even if our genetic makeup causes us to be more susceptible to them. The majority of heart diseases are not solely genetically determined.

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Written for Biology 2, Professor Kristin Polizzotto, Spring 2015.



Anastasia Kharchenko: "My major is Graphic Design and Illustration, and it is something that I have been passionate about for many years. I finished high school in Moscow, Russia, and moved to New York City to study design. After completing Kingsborough Community College I am planning to continue studying design at one of the art schools in New York. The 'Vinyl Record' illustration is a part of my Extinctions series. My interest in music and color as well as the process of time passing were my primary inspirations for creating these artworks."

ANASTASIA KHARCHENKO

VINYL RECORD. EXTINCTIONS SERIES

The artwork was produced for Art 68, Professor Valerie Sokolova, Spring 2015





Sim Rosenbaum: "My major is Liberal Arts with a focus in English. I plan on transferring to a four-year college locally and majoring in business. I aspire to one day be a horror film screenplay writer, trade on the stock market and use the fortune I make to help homeless people get off of the streets. Currently, I write poetry and short stories under the pen-name Sam Letter."

SIM ROSENBAUM

SOCIAL DEVIANCE OR SOCIAL PROGRESS: EXAMINING SOCIAL DEVIANTS THROUGHOUT HISTORY AND THE SOCIAL PROGRESS THEY BROUGHT

Social deviance is often thought of in a negative context. We view people committing crimes and disrupting order as criminals. We see protestors as a hindrance and homeless people a bother. We set the oddly dressed and queerly gendered as outcasts and determine who belongs where. Those who do not comply and deviate from the path we choose for them often face consequences, such as banning their marriage, not hiring them, or even jail time. What I would like to propose is that perhaps deviance is not as bad as it sounds; sure, maybe some deviants are in fact criminals and deserve to be punished accordingly, but there are many positive associations with deviation as well.

Social deviants throughout history have brought about social progress. From the American Revolution to civil and social rights, change throughout history has almost always started with a few deviants willing to step out of their expected roles to make a statement: "All significant moral change springs from people who are in some sense deviant" (Berson, xi). Many people who have deviated in an effort to bring about change have suffered severe consequences for their deviations: "When a few men and women protested, they were mobbed in the public interest with the public consent" (Berson, 38). It was not until we can look back in history that we can see the positive effects of deviant actions.

Positive deviation often takes place by way of large-scale reform. Before the Revolutionary War, deviating from British culture, colonists fed up with the way they were treated deviated as a group and revolted against the British. George Washington himself, once highly esteemed in British society, deviated when he got upset at the way he was treated, and joined the colonists' fight for freedom (Hamilton). The American Revolution became the symbol of successful revolutions and throughout history encouraged others who felt oppressed to deviate and revolt such as in the French Revolution (Gilje). Large scale deviation has since become feared by Western cultures.

While the American and French revolutions were actions of large spread deviation, change is often caused by deviance of a smaller scale. Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, "Social progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless effort and persistent work of dedicated individuals" (Berson, xi). In the 1800s abolitionists

such as Calvin Fairbanks were considered deviants. Fairbanks served a seventeen-year prison sentence for his part in the Underground Railroad; other participants were brutally beaten and some were killed (Altman). Today we look at those involved in the Underground Railroad as heroes, people whose actions we look up to as brave and courageous. These individual deviants were able to make a profound difference in the history of freedom.

Deviants from white-America became symbols of the civil rights movement. When abolitionists were successful in freeing American slaves after the Civil War, black people were still treated as second-class citizens in America. The segregation and discrimination against colored people became institutionalized with the Jim Crow laws; anyone who stood up to the white man was considered deviant to the American culture (Atwell). People who deviated such as Rosa Parks, who did not give up her seat on the bus for a white passenger, were arrested (Steenbergen). The punishments for deviance were used to keep black people from standing up to racism. However, over time the deviance brought about change: “The grotesqueness of racism and segregation has brought about some of the most admirable actions in our history” (Berson, xiv). Just think, where would society be today had Rosa Parks complied and given up her seat on that bus?

Civil rights activists were not the only social deviants fighting oppression at that time. In America, there were many movements for the advancement of human rights happening all at the same time: Women’s rights, Native-American rights, union organizers, etc. Robin Berson writes about many of the positive deviants of the time in his *Marching to a Different Drummer: Unrecognized Heroes of American History*; how appropriate a title for a book of deviant heroes.

Tolerance of others, while growing, has yet to become the norm in America. Currently, gay people in America are openly judged and mistreated: “The overwhelming majority of Americans found homosexuality thoroughly unnatural and abnormal” (Shah). These people are denied jobs, wedding ceremonies, and services because of their sexual orientation. Deviants who fight for gay rights battle powerful traditionalists who oppose and punish them. Unable to punish deviants in the ways they used to be punished, today they are denied jobs and services based on their deviant behavior, such as the gay couple who was denied service in a McDonald’s branch in New York (Sieczkowski). With all the social progress we have made in America over the past century, we still see deviants taking actions towards positive change.

Positive deviation from oppressive culture is not limited to America and goes on all over the world. Today, civil and women’s rights movements are being led by deviants in the Middle East. An example of this would be the women’s rights movement taking place in Iran. Women in Iran are expected to adhere to sexist laws such as women must cover their hair, cannot sing in public or even attend sports events. Women’s rights activists began to break these rules in acts of social defiance. The movement, which became known as “My Stealthy Freedom,” was started on a Facebook group where Iranian women would post pictures of themselves without their traditional hijab to cover their hair; it has since become a huge movement with people showing support from all over the world (Carpenter). The movement has grown tremendously and now has a website sponsored by a London-based organization, My Stealthy Freedom. These positive deviants face jail time in their effort to bring about social progress in Iran; similar deviant movements go on across the globe, very many of them in the Middle-East, where it is common for traditionalists to rule. “Bombings, trumped up charges, and threats against family members are common forms of intimidation, often complemented with the charge of supporting a ‘Western’ agenda that seeks to impose foreign values opposed to ‘traditional’ social norms” (Al-Suwaij, 90).

Although deviance can bring about change, not all deviance does bring change. It is easy to deviate from norms of society and compare ourselves to historical figures who have deviated. However, not all deviance is positive, and not all positive deviance yields results. Crane and Platow describe positive deviance as a way to voice discontent with the overall actions of a group in an attempt to change the actions they view as wrong (828-9). The positive deviant hopes to reach the group in a way that can hopefully bring change. The negative deviant, however, is someone who deviates without the motive of bringing positive change from within (Crane and Platow, 828-9).

It is possible for negative deviance to result from positive motives. An example of such deviance would be the Occupy Wall Street movement. The movement claimed they wanted change but was unable to formulate a plan of action, because “to make demands was already to conform to the mainstream agenda, and any fixed set of demands would be intrinsically reformist” (Hammond, 301). The lack of means or willingness to bring about positive change, despite motives, would be considered negative deviance.

Our society has been largely shaped by social deviants. Throughout history deviation from oppression is what brought about progress towards social tolerance and equality. Be it large scale or small, at home or abroad, it is deviance that brought about change. Society would never have restructured itself without positive deviants such as George Washington and Rosa Parks. Where would we be today if Harriet Tubman had not escaped slavery? Or if Susan B. Anthony had not fought for women’s rights? Or if Martin Luther King, Jr., had not had a dream?

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Written for English 24, Professor Hazel Courtney, Spring 2015.



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ANGELICA SHASTAPALAVA

MIND SETS ACCORDING TO GEOGRAPHY

It is common knowledge that Western and Eastern societies differ from each other not only in terms of geographical location but also in belief systems and cognitive processes (Nisbett). Eastern countries such as Korea, China or Japan are famous for their interdependent nature or collectivistic way of thinking. On the other hand, Western countries like the United Kingdom or the USA are seen as individualistic societies and well-known for an independent life approach (Nisbett). The Western world lives by the principle of “the squeaky wheel gets the grease,” or in other words as long as you stand out you will be heard. However, Asian countries follow the rule of “the nail that stands out gets pounded down,” which encourages individuals to consider themselves as part of a bigger group (Tweed and Lehman). Culture has a huge impact on people’s worldviews and cognitive processes, which in turn influences attitudes and beliefs of the whole society.

The reason for this mental phenomenon resides in the different tools people use to understand the world. For example, Americans tend to focus on objects in isolation while Asians view the picture as a whole. Human cognition is not everywhere the same (East and West 2012). The question is why does it occur and what is it influenced by? This paper will discuss such topics as how Western and Eastern mind sets are different and the nature of these differences. The start point of this research will be based on the findings of the famous social psychologist and the author of *The Geography of Thought*, Richard E. Nisbett. In addition, there will be some research concerning Eastern European countries. In order to identify the different types of perception let’s consider the systems of thought they were based on.

In *The Geography of Thought* Nisbett uses the term “sense of agency” while referring to people’s sense of their own lives and their freedom of action. The way Eastern and Western cultures think today and determine their “sense of agency” is inherited and consequently based on Greek and Chinese philosophies. The Greeks were famous for their exceptional sense of freedom and believed that each and every individual is unique and has distinctive attributes and goals. On the other hand, the Chinese encouraged the idea of collectivism and harmony. For them the individual was a part of a bigger group of people like family or society. The person was considered “a totality of roles in a relation to specific others” (Nisbett). In other words the unique patterns of personal identity were developed according

to social roles. All roles were connected to each other. That is why the Chinese believed that if one of the roles changed, the other ones would adapt and transform out of necessity. As a consequence, the whole personality might change and create a “different” person.

The Greeks were concerned with understanding *arkhe*, the common substance or the origin of everything. Most of them built their theories on a base of sensing and observation. They tended to use general logic towards answering the questions of the unknown (Curd). Nevertheless, Socrates, arguably the father of Western philosophy, was the one who introduced critical thinking as a part of learning. He questioned his and others’ beliefs and evaluated others’ knowledge. For him, the process of learning began by implanting doubt (Tweed and Lehman). Unfortunately, none of Socrates’ writings have survived. The main records of his ideas come from Plato, a student of his. In *Apology*, one of Plato’s dialogues, he says that the unexamined life is not worth living. Constant questioning of the world had an individualistic nature. Socrates supported the idea of independent truth and believed that every person has to find the truth in him- or herself. He did not mean that the truth is different for each person but that it is found by the individual.

The Greeks frequently used exact sciences like geometry or math in order to explain something. “Exact” literally means *outside of the act or a move away from the act*. The goal is to remove oneself from something that is concrete and use abstract reasoning. Through this approach Parmenides “proved” that the world is static and unchanging: To say of a thing that it does not exist is a contradiction. Nonbeing is self-contradictory because if nothing exists it is already something.

“Parmenides created an option for Greek philosophers: They could trust either logic or their senses. From Plato on, they often went with logic” (Nisbett 7).

In *Meno*, another dialogue by Plato, he tells how Socrates used a geometry problem in order to make a boy evince doubt – the first step of learning in his view. The goal of doubting was to remove oneself from something that is concrete and move towards abstraction. Socrates believed that the boy found the answer because he stated it as a question. As a result the Greeks became “slaves to their linear, either-or orientation of their logic.” This way of thinking evokes the images of separation and considers objects and human beings in an individual form. As a consequence, it became a strong foundation for the individualism that we can observe in Western countries nowadays.

If Socrates is seen as the father of Western philosophy, Confucius is considered as the father of Eastern philosophy. In the same way as Socrates, he left few if any writings, but his students carried over many of his ideas into the *Analects*. As opposed to the Greek philosophers, Confucius believed in the collective approach and the importance of relationships. He valued hierarchies and spelled out a way of communication. The idea is that each person is a member of a bigger group of people (family, village, country) and has obligations towards the others. “Confucius served as a teacher who educated men with an eye to putting them into civil service positions” (Lehman and Tweed). His main goal as a teacher was to prepare men to pass examinations to serve in the state bureaucracy. The person’s commitment to the subject and constant working on himself were much more valuable than ability or talent. If Socrates believed in questioning the world, Confucius believed in persistence and hard work.

It is important to mention that the Chinese supported the idea of collective work and hierarchy but not conformity. Confucius taught not to parrot but rather to “agree with others without being an echo. Demonstrating systematic understanding and grounding into the chosen subject or field was a key to success” (Gorry). The main goal was to reach agreement as a one unit or one group but save individuality at the same

time. Furthermore, different people with individual traits were those who created the harmonious society. In *Zuozhusn*, one of the Confucian texts, he compares individuals to flavors in a dish. So as different ingredients and blends make a dish completed, different people make the society fulfilled. A dish without flavor is vapid. We obtain a savory taste only due to the properly blended but distinctive contributions of each ingredient (Nisbett).

Another philosophy that shaped Eastern minds is Taoism. Asians believe that the world is full of contradictions and in order to appreciate the good we need to understand the bad. There is a famous Chinese story about an old farmer whose horse ran away. When neighbors came to show their sympathy, the old man refused to accept it by saying that nobody knows what is good and what is bad. Indeed, a couple of days after the horse came back and brought another wild horse with it. When people wanted to congratulate the man, he refused again and said, “Who knows what is bad or good?” After a couple of days the old man’s son broke his leg in an attempt to ride the wild horse. When a friend of his wanted to express his sadness about the accident, the old man said, “Who knows what is bad or good?” “After some time an army came to the village to enlist for war all the healthy men. However, the old man’s broken-legged son was unable to serve and remained at home (Nisbett 12).

This story expresses the idea of a constantly changing world and the existence of bad in good and good in bad. The visual example of this concept is the sign of the Tao. As you can see in the picture below the Yin sign is black and represents the feminine while the white sign is Yang and represents the masculine (Yin Yang). The Yin and Yang cannot exist separately (Nisbett 14). Moreover, they complement each other. Black and white dots in the opposite colors mean that in order to understand the positive, we have to realize the negative and vice versa. That is why Asians tend to use not only internal but also external circumstances in order to fully understand the situation. In contrast, Western cultures usually use the individualistic approach and limit the explanation within the object or person.



Later on Buddhism came to Eastern countries from India. It was readily absorbed by Asian cultures and made an impact on the way they think (Nisbett 17). One of the main ideas of this religion is that all individuals are connected to one another and to the environment. Buddhism is the way of life that makes no distinction between the individual human being and the environment in which that person lives. Therefore, if people around you are happy, it makes you happy too and the other way around. This idea made the individual consider him or herself as a link in the chain or one unit in a bigger group. For Buddhists harmony in the environment around themselves creates positive sensations. In addition, they believe in karma, which is based on the law of cause and effect. It means

that all our actions enter the universe and come back to us. Simply, if you are a bad person, negativity will come back to you. If you are a good person, you will attract positive things. This kind of philosophy created a collective approach towards life where people tended to examine themselves not as a single individual but as a part of something bigger.

The ancient Western and Eastern cultures had completely different logics and approaches towards life. Mathematics and critical reasoning played a big role for the Greeks. Socrates introduced them to the concept of learning by doubting. This approach has deeply rooted in Western minds and still can be seen nowadays. They believed in the static and unchanging world which every person has to explore by oneself. In contrast, the Chinese believed in the world which is undergoing constant changes and is full of contradictions. In order to follow these changes people had to adapt and transform themselves. However, it was vital for them to combine these actions into harmony with themselves and others. The differences between these two philosophies have had great repercussions. Western countries tend to focus on the self as independent and have developed an individualistic way of thinking. On the other hand, Eastern cultures focus on the self as interdependent and have a collectivistic approach towards life (Nisbett).

There is a belief in the West that nothing exists in between people. For example, it has been always considered that the universe is empty and there is nothing in between the stars. However, Asians think that space is full of energy, which is called Qi (East and West). Therefore things and people that exist in space are connected by this energy. In addition, it is considered that objects exist only by gathering Qi. As a consequence Eastern people think that all people and objects are united with each other. They are connected by Qi and can influence one another. However, Westerners tend to believe that if two objects are placed in the distance, then there is nothing between them. Hence, they cannot be influenced by one another (East and West). In order to better understand these concepts let's consider the following pictures (East and West):

Picture A represents the Western view. As we can see, there is emptiness between the Earth and the Moon. In the second picture both stars are connected by Qi. That is how Asians see it. This energy not only connects two objects but also influences them. Due to this reason ancient Eastern cultures much earlier than the Western discovered that tides are influenced by the moon. They believed in action in the distance. In other words, one object can be distant from another but still operate on it. Even though it seems obvious to us nowadays, Westerners did not believe in such a thing until the end of the 18th century. Nevertheless, this approach can be applicable not only to stars or objects but also to people. It is another reason why Asians see themselves as part of the whole while each Westerner tends to consider him or herself as an individual (East and West).

A)

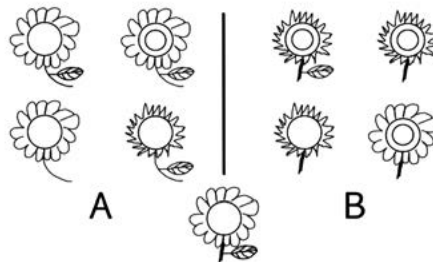


B)



TEST #1

In order to find out if these ideas still exist nowadays there has been a study done which is discussed in a documentary video called *East and West*. In this documentary people from Western countries like the USA and the United Kingdom and Eastern countries like Korea and Japan were asked to answer questions that might seem simple at first. However, there is a deep meaning behind the questions. For instance, people were asked to identify a model flower with Group A or Group B flowers (the picture is given below (East and West)). Most Asians thought that the target object was more similar to the group on the left while 67% of the Americans associated it with the group on the right (East and West 2012). The difference in the answers occurs in the different ways of perception between Eastern and Western countries. The Easterners chose the A group, since most of the flowers in this group have round petals similar to the model flower. They consider the flower as one inseparable object. However, Westerners look at the whole picture from a different point of view. Their analysis involves the separation of the stem from the petal. Since the model flower and all flowers in the B group have straight stems they tend to choose this group. In addition, there is one flower with the sharp petals in the left picture. Due to this reason it is hard to identify the model flower with this group. On the other hand all the flowers in the B group have one identical detail – a straight stem, so the generalization can be made. In this case, the generalization means grouping flowers by at least one common detail or feature. That is why Americans tend to associate the model flower with the A group.



TEST #2

In the second test people were asked to compare an object shaped like a cylinder and made of wood (you can see this object in the middle of the following picture (East and West)). It was called a "Duks" in order to avoid all possible assumptions. The task was to refer to one of the two objects as a Duks. The one on the left has the same cylinder shape but a different color while the one on the right is made from the same material but in a different form. Most of the Westerners chose the blue cylinder while Easterners favored the wooden hexahedron. The reason for this derives from the distinction between the substance and the object. Asian participants think in terms of relationships. It is much easier to connect two wooden pieces since they are made from the same material. The same substance of the objects means that they can be seen as different parts of one unit. That is what guided Asian participants to choose the hexahedron. However, for American and English people all these objects are seen as three separate pieces. They do not see them as parts of some bigger object. Due to this, it is easier to make a generalization or group objects based on the same shape, and therefore they chose the first object. In other words

Easterners chose two wooden objects because they saw them as a part of one “family,” one bigger unit. On the other hand Westerners do not try to “relate” objects but find similarities. Hence, from their point of view the shape is much more important than the substance.



TEST #3

The concept of an interdependent and independent way of thinking was embedded in the following test too. Participants were asked to identify the boy in the middle of the following picture as sad or happy (East and West). After that they were asked to do the same thing with the second picture. The only difference between the two pictures is the background. In the first one the people surrounding the boy are happy but in the second one they look angry and sad (East and West). Let’s see how Americans and Asians answered.

Americans said that the boy in the two pictures looks happy. Some of the participants even did not notice the change in the background. However, most of the Easterners identified the boy in the second picture as sad. The reason for that were the sad people who were surrounding the boy. So as in the previous test, Westerners used an independent way of thinking. They saw only the person in the middle and concentrated on him as the main one. Due to this reason they did not evaluate the background. On the contrary Asian people considered both the environment and the boy. Most of them said that the boy in the second picture is sad because the people around him are sad too. This test demonstrated how self-centered and multiple-centered ways of logic and evaluation work in practice. In other words it is easier for Westerners to concentrate on one thing or object while for Easterners on multiple objects.



Picture #1



Picture #2

TEST #4

In the last test people were shown the following picture of a panda, a banana and a monkey (East and West). They had to group out two of the three pictures. The American participants showed a preference for grouping on the basis of common category membership. They chose the panda and the monkey since both of them are animals. Eastern Asian participants think in terms of relationship. They showed a preference for the monkey and the banana since a banana is the food of a monkey. This test proved that Westerners see the world in terms of categories. They tend to evaluate things in an independent manner and focus on the main objects. However, Easterners consider things as a part of something bigger. That is why instead of trying to find similarities between separate things they try to find a connection between them.



In order to find out if these findings are still relevant I conducted my own research with the same abovementioned tasks. Thirty-four individuals participated in the study among whom, there were people with Eastern Asian, and Western and Eastern European background. My findings showed that more than 50% of the American participants answered at least one question based on the interdependent way of thinking. This percentage is higher than in the previous study. However, the number of participants in this study is not that big. Due to this reason it is hard to make assumptions for the whole nation. Nevertheless, the results prove that many Americans start to see the world not only in terms of categories but also in terms of connections. Slowly but surely they begin to see people and objects as parts of some bigger groups or units. Yet none of the Western participants assumed that the boy in the second picture of the third test is sad. All of them described him as the happy one. It means that people in the US still concentrate only on the main object and do not pay attention to other details.

Most of the Eastern Asian participants answered three to four questions in terms of an interdependent way of thinking. It proves that Eastern cultures still consider themselves as “units in the chain.” They also categorize everything by identifying connections. On top of these results there was an interesting finding concerning Eastern European participants. Over 80% of them had two questions in preference of the “Western” way of thinking and two in favor of the “Eastern” way of things. It seems like a geographical location plays a big role in developing our approach towards life. Due to Eastern Europe’s location people are able to assimilate to both collectivistic and individualistic concepts. They are located in between typical Western and Eastern countries and have become a hybrid of philosophies and ideas from both parts of the world.

In this paper we have discussed how and why people from different geographical locations think differently. This phenomenon emerges from the times of Socrates and Confucius. Their philosophies made a huge impact on people’s ways of thinking. Socrates concentrated on critical evaluation while Confucius admired the collective approach and a hierarchical social system. These became a foundation for individualism in Western

countries and collectivism in Eastern ones. Of course, there were many different factors that influenced these ideas like religion (e.g. Buddhism) or other philosophies (e.g. Taoism) (Nisbett). As a result, nowadays we can observe how Westerners have more “lined up” logic and tend to concentrate only on one main object. In addition they tend to be more individualistic. In contrast, Eastern people are more likely to consider themselves as a part of some bigger unit or group and think in terms of relationships. The studies found that American people started to use the collectivistic approach more often than before but still are far away from the Eastern way of thinking. We also found that many Eastern European countries had combined both Eastern and Western concepts. It seems like geographical location plays a big role in our reasoning and evaluation. Nevertheless, now we are aware of this phenomenon and can work towards absorbing the best from both cultures.

I, as a person who lives in the Western part of the world, believe that knowing about these things can make Americans and other nations that are famous for their individualism more connected to each other. The world can become a better place if people will be more considerate of each other. Easterners are well-known for their cohesion and sympathy. They are united due to the reason that they see themselves as different parts of one bigger unit or nation. They consider themselves related to each other and that is what helps them to stay connected. I think that this concept is very important and helpful in developing a relationship between each other. It would be great if Westerners could adapt this idea from Easterners and become more united and related to each other.

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Written for Psychology 33, Professor Jason VanOra, Spring 2015.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

I would like to consider for publication any course work, in Honors or non-Honors classes, that have required research or creative development and that a general reader could learn from and enjoy. I ask that students submitting work in specialized studies that aren't accessible to a layperson (including, not to pick on but for instance, physics, chemistry, mathematics, accounting) provide a note, as Kate Maziarz has so patiently provided for her chemistry paper in this issue, explaining to us lay-folk the exercise or experiment at hand.

If a student, even without the specific recommendation of his or her professor, has done work for a class that demonstrates research or an extended creative idea, I encourage him or her to submit it, noting the course and professor to whom it was originally submitted. Articles should include a list of Works Cited and be properly referenced according to the guidelines of the Modern Language Association, American Psychological Association, or other citation system appropriate to the discipline for which they were written.

Write directly to me, Professor Bob Blaisdell, at Robert.Blaisdell@Kingsborough.edu, with the subject line **DISTINCTIONS SUBMISSION**; provide a short introductory note as well as an attachment of the document. Submit a hard copy, in 12-point type, double-spaced, please, to the Honors House in M-377. I will acknowledge all submissions upon receipt, though the acceptance or rejection note will not arrive until a month after the closing of the submissions period.

The Spring 2016 issue's submission deadline is January 31. Submissions arriving after that will be considered for the Fall 2016 issue (deadline August 1).

--Bob Blaisdell

SPRING 2016 **SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS JANUARY 31**

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