ReVisions

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Photo by Alex White

ReVisions: Best Student Essays is a publication designed to celebrate the finest nonfiction work composed by undergraduate students at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke. This issue was copyedited, designed, and produced by students in PRE 3450: Computer-Assisted Editing and Publication Design.

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Essays may cover any topic within any field of study at UNCP. We encourage submissions from all fields and majors, but we do not publish fiction or poetry. All submissions must be nominated by a UNCP faculty member. Students who believe that they have a strong essay for submission are encouraged to ask a faculty member to sponsor that essay. Nomination forms are available at http://www.uncp.edu/et/revisions.

Manuscript requirements: no more than 3,000 words in length and double-spaced. Do not include any names or identifying information on the essay itself; use the nomination form as a cover sheet, making sure to fill out all parts of the form. Please submit electronically the nomination form and the nominated essay in one Word or RTF file to teagan.decker@uncp.edu.

All essays will be read and judged in a blind selection process. If a submission is chosen for publication, the author will be asked to submit a brief biography, and a photograph of the author will be taken to be included in the publication.

Nominations to be considered for publication in the Spring 2013 issue will be accepted until December 2012. For further information, contact Dr. Teagan Decker, English and Theatre Department, 139 Dial Humanities Bldg., (910) 521-6437, teagan.decker@uncp.edu.

The cover photo shows one of the banners on display throughout the campus to celebrate the University's 125th anniversary. It was taken by *Indianhead* yearbook photographer Alex White, a Business Management major and member of Alpha Pi Omega sorority.

ReVisions: Best Student Essays

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When the Honeybees Disappear

By Daniel Atkins

Daniel Atkins is from Benson, NC. A 2010 graduate of South Johnston High School, he is currently a sophomore student-athlete who plays football. He is majoring in exercise physiology in the hopes of becoming a personal trainer or a strength and conditioning coach.

Imagine going to the grocery store, and as you round the corner to the produce section all you see are empty shelves. Out of the corner of your eye, you see a head of lettuce, but as you move closer you notice that the price of the lettuce is fifty dollars per pound. This situation may seem weird and unlikely. But in reality, we may not be far from this because of the population loss and possible extinction of the major pollinator of plants, the honeybee. Honeybees pollinate our plants, which allows crops to be grown. They also affect the economy through agriculture and the beekeeping industry. In recent years, a sharp decline in the population of honeybees has been noticed. If the honeybee population continues to drop, then there will be dramatic effects on the world and our daily lives.

There are more than 20,000 species of bees. Honeybees are a type of bee that live in colonies and are known all over the world. According to Grünewald (2010) there are nine different species of honeybees, with the most common and most widely distributed being *apis mellifera*, more commonly known as the western domestic honey bee (p. 63). Honeybees live in our environment and many are managed commercially for pollination services. According to the informative article "Honeybee: *Apis mellifera*" (n.d.), from the *National Geographic* website, honeybees are social creatures that live and operate in their own intricate social network. Honeybees are not native to North America and were introduced to the Americas by early European immigrants. Due to immigration and the different jobs that bees are used for, honeybees now exist on every continent except for Antarctica.

Over the past century, the world population of honeybees and bees in general has been declining. Several species of bees have already been declared extinct and other species of bees are on their way to extinction. According to Diana Cox-Foster (2009), professor of entomology at Penn State University, "The number of managed honeybee colonies in 2006 was about 2.4 million, less than half what it was in 1949" (p. 40). Many causes contribute to the population collapse. Some of the major known causes that negatively affect the honeybee population are changes in agricultural practices, loss of natural habitat, and spread of parasites and pathogens. There is also an alarming phenomenon, whose source is unknown, that has had a huge impact on the population of honeybees; it is known as colony collapse disorder, or CCD.

One contributing factor of the declining honeybee population is the spread of parasites and pathogens. Grünewald (2010) states that, "Honeybees are suffering from several parasites or pathogens. Among them are mites, bacteria, fungi, and viruses" (p. 64). There are many parasites that can harm bees such as the wax moth, hive beetle, Nosema infection, and other viruses, but possibly the major global parasitic threat to honeybees is the Varroa mite. Originating in Asia, the Varroa mite has become a worldwide threat to the honeybees. Since this arachnid lives on the outside of its honeybee host, it is considered an ectoparasite. The mites reproduce and develop within the hive, thriving on the bees and bee larvae. Over time, as the mites continue to be present and interfere with the bees' daily lives, the entire honeybee hive will eventually die off (Martin 2001). Although the Varroa mite is a major devastating factor for honeybees, there are other major factors that have negative impacts on honeybee population.

Daniel Atkins

Agricultural practices have had harmful effects on the population of honeybees. The use of insecticides, especially in commercial agriculture, has become very prominent and useful, but it is having large impacts on the way of life for bees and on the honeybee population. Grünewald (2010) says that insecticides affect the behavior and cognitive abilities of honeybees, accumulate in wax, pollen, or honey within the hives, and may possibly have effects on the population size of native bees (p. 65). Insecticides can cause the honeybees to become lost from their hive because of the effects that they have on the bees' behavior and cognitive abilities. Also, when the insecticides accumulate within the hive, they can weaken the honeybees and allow them to be more susceptible to disease and parasites. An example of the negative effects of insecticides is given by Grünewald (2010) where, "During spring 2008, most of the forager bees from several thousand colonies in the Rhine valley in southwestern Germany were accidently killed when the neonicotinoid clothianidin was applied against the western corn rootworm (*Diabrotica virgifera*), and high doses of the substance were released into the environment" (p. 65). The use of insecticides can, and does, have large scale effects on the population of honeybees.

In addition to the effects of insecticides, agriculture also harms the honeybees in other ways. The destruction of natural habitats and the improvement of farmland has sometimes driven out honeybees. As farming has intensified, more land is needed to keep up with the demand for crop production. As farmers create new fields by destroying hedgerows and clearing woodlands, they destroy the honeybees' natural foraging sites. Also, the use of unimproved farmland for more useful and productive agricultural practices has impacted the honeybees. Grünewald (2010) says that these unimproved areas of farmland offer an abundance of nectar and pollen sources for bees because they contain a high diversity of native flora (p. 65). As the land used for agriculture continues to increase, the honeybees' natural habitat, which they use for foraging, breeding, and sites for nesting and overwintering, continues to decrease. This has a large negative impact on the honeybee population. According to Grünewald (2010) "The two primary factors driving the rapid decline of tropical bees are deforestation and habitat fragmentation of rainforests in the Neo tropics, Africa, and Asia," by "reducing gene flow and preventing recolonization among remaining forest patches" (p. 64). When humans destroy or alter the honeybees' natural habitat, then the honeybees are greatly affected. The loss of habitat reduces the food supply and nesting areas for honey bees and also can affect the diversity of the bee population.

Another important agent in the collapse of the honeybee population is the recent arrival of a syndrome known as colony collapse disorder or CCD. When a hive experiences CCD, the honeybees that live in the hive just seem to disappear. In an article from *Scientific American* by Cox-Foster and Van Engelsdorp (2009), professional beekeeper Dave Hackenberg gives his account of colony collapse disorder where over 1,500 of his once thriving hives turned into a "ghost town" when CCD infected them (pp. 40-47). There are no known causes of the disease and therefore there is no way to prevent, or fight against, it. Even though there is no known cause of CCD, many people believe that it is caused by several factors. According to Cox-Foster and Van Engelsdorp (2009) possible causes of CCD are parasites, insecticides, stress, habitat loss, poor nutrition, and climate change acting together to weaken the bees (pp. 40-47). In an effort to determine a cause of CCD, a group of scientists gathered and performed a descriptive study comparing common factors within colonies exposed to CCD. According to Van Engelsdorp (2009), in this comprehensive survey of CCD-affected bee populations, the results showed evidence that suggested CCD is caused by pathogens, insecticides, and other stress inducing factors combined (pp. 1-17). Although the cause of CCD is a big question to scientists and beekeepers, another mystery of CCD is where are all of the bees that have disappeared from the hive? When a colony is affected by CCD, the hive is left vacant and the dead, or just missing, bees are nowhere to be found (Glausiusz, 2007, p. 24). Many factors, therefore, are affecting the population size of the honeybee. Agriculture, parasites, and disease have dramatic effects that are pushing honeybees closer to extinction.

Daniel Atkins, a UNCP football player whose family raised honeybees, concisely explains a recently identified ecological crisis. Dan explains the causes of honeybee decline and the potentially devastating effects of their extinction, confidently synthesizing (and accurately documenting) information and quotations from a variety of current scholarly and popular sources. Dan is a strong writer whose essay skillfully makes complex scientific concepts clear to general readers.

—Monika Brown

Because honeybees are essential to agriculture they are important to humans in many ways, and their decline affects the environment, agriculture, the economy, and our daily lives. Honeybees pollinate the crops, which we use for food. According to Rachel Mendleson (2010) nearly half of the 115 foremost international food commodities are reliant on honeybees for pollination (pp. 24-27). If the honeybee population continues to drop or the bees go into extinction, then there will be serious negative effects on agriculture. Since bees are the biggest insect pollinator, they are used commercially to pollinate large areas of crops. Just to get a look at how big the business of bee pollination service is, according to Ellwood (2009), a hive used for pollination costs anywhere from $150 to $200 and nearly 2 million hives are needed for the mono-almond forest alone (p. 8). The business of renting out honeybee hives for uses in agriculture and honey production is a big business that has effects on the economy. According to Grünewald (2010) "the production of 84 percent of all crop species cultivated for human consumption in Europe depends directly on insect pollination, and a large part is provided by feral and managed bee colonies" (p. 61). Without the bees to pollinate the crops, then there would be little to no crop production. Since honeybees are known to be on all of the continents except for Antarctica, they affect agriculture globally. Honeybees play a large role in crop production in the United States and, according to Glausiusz (2007), the job that the bees do in agriculture, which is pollinating all sorts of food crops, provides the food for 33 percent of the American diet today (pp. 32-34). Without honeybees acting as the major pollinator for our agriculture, there would be major food shortages worldwide. Due to the bees being a major pollinator that allow many of our crops to be grown for human consumption, the decline in population and possible extinction will dramatically alter our way of life.

Since the bees have such a major impact on agriculture, they also have a significant impact on the economy of our nation and of the world. An article written by Ron Smith (2011) for an issue of the *Southwest Farm Press* quotes Jim Reese, the Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture, who said that agriculture is the "backbone" of the United States economy. Agriculture is practiced all over the United States and the world providing populations with the food needed to survive and forming a market which has major impacts on the economy. According to Glausiusz (2007), the role that honeybees play in U.S. agriculture is valued at $15 billion annually (pp. 32-34). That is a huge economic role that bees play in the United States alone. When the value of bees worldwide is assessed, the numbers are even more astonishing. According to Grünewald (2010) the worldwide annual value of insect pollination is around 153 billion Euros (p. 61). If the honeybees were to go into extinction, or if the population continues to decline, then there would be major economic decline just because of the lack of bees in agricultural practices. As the population of bees decreases and fewer crops can be produced, the prices of produce and other food sources would sky rocket. With the prices of goods increasing and fewer goods being produced, markets in countries around the world would see the harmful effects of the declining honeybee population. In addition to the effects on that country's economy, there are effects on the prices of agricultural goods in the world market (p. 61). The loss of the world's most important pollinator proves to have drastic effects on the economy, and therefore on our daily lives.

The honeybee population has made great contributions to our society. The bees play an important role in agriculture by pollinating the crops that we use to feed ourselves. Their use in agriculture as pollinators and the business of commercial bee pollination services affect our economy. The population of honeybees worldwide has an important impact on the way that we live our lives. As the population continues to decline then the world will suffer from crop losses, a decrease in agricultural productivity, food shortages, job losses, economic decline, and even human population decline. Without honeybees, the world would be completely different from the one we live in. It is even possible that without honeybees on earth, humans wouldn't be able to survive. According to an article from the online environmental magazine *Heyoka* (Independent, 2007), Albert Einstein stated, "If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe, then man would only have four years of life

left." Although this statement is bold, many people believe it to be true. Since the honeybee plays such a vital role that impacts the lives of humans today, then the extinction of honey bees could lead to our own extinction.

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Okonkwo Falls Apart

By Sarah Beal

Sarah Beal, from Efland, NC, is a sociology major at UNCP. She enjoys being involved with campus organizations, making new friends, and serving the Lord.

In the modern novel *Things Fall Apart* by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, which portrays in depth a traditional Ibo village that experiences colonization by the British around 1900, the main character Okonkwo is a tragic hero who undergoes a reversal of fortune. In the first half of the novel Okonkwo is a strong warrior of the Ibo tribe who is respected highly by his community. By the end of the novel, Okonkwo loses his power and influence because white men arrive and change the way many of the Ibo people live, causing his tribe to "fall apart." Because of the pride Okonkwo has in himself and in his people, he is unable to accept the changes in the values of his clansmen and the change in his role in his clan, and his inability to change ultimately leads to his tragic suicide.

In the beginning of the novel, Okonkwo is an authoritative and admired man among the clan and has not yet had his masculine role challenged. He is a successful farmer, warrior, and wrestler who has three wives and eight children. He is not gentle or compassionate, for he believes that those qualities are signs of weakness. Okonkwo has a lot of pride and despises weakness because he wants to be nothing like his father Unoka, who was a known failure in the tribe. In an interview on the Diane Rehm Show, critic Roger Wilkens, speaking about Okonkwo, said this:

> He has been a great warrior, he has been a great athlete, he is a very affluent farmer, he is a highly respected man, but he is rigid. He only has one gear, and that is strength – and anger if you cross him. The reason is that he hates what his father was...He was a failure, and Okonkwo was afraid that he would be like his father. And all his problems, really, stem from the rigidity of that fear. ("A Discussion")

The underlying reason for Okonkwo's extreme pride, then, is that he does not want to be a failure like his father. He therefore relishes strength and has a lot of self-admiration in his own masculinity and in that of his clansmen, and this ultimately causes his downfall.

At first, Okonkwo does not realize how much the white people are altering the tribe's culture, and thus altering his identity and the identity of the others. Before the white men come to Mbante, his place of exile, he feels no threat at hearing of their arrival in a nearby village, even though the whites massacred the Abame people. Okonkwo believes that the Abame people have themselves to blame: "They had been warned that danger was ahead. They should have armed themselves with their guns and their machetes even when they went to market" (Achebe 2920). When the white men come and preach the gospel in Mbante, one of the missionaries tells Okonkwo about the love of God, but Okonkwo thinks the man is a lunatic. The narrator describes Okonkwo's response in these words: "At the end of it Okonkwo was fully convinced that the man was mad. He shrugged his shoulders and went away to tap his afternoon palm-wine" (Achebe 2923). At this point Okonkwo cannot foresee the great change that the white men will bring upon the tribe nor does he know that his power will soon be greatly moderated.

Okonkwo becomes angry and realizes how much the white men are shifting the people's attidude in Mbante when his son, Nwoye, becomes a Christian. One night when Nwoye comes home his father, full of fury, grabs him by the neck and asks him where he has been. "'Answer me!' roared Okonkwo, 'Before I kill you!' He seized a heavy stick that lay on the dwarf wall and hit him two or three savage blows" (Achebe 2925). Okonkwo tells

Nwoye to leave the compound and to never come back, so he leaves with the missionaries and goes to Umofia. Now Okonwo is outraged and desires to wipe out the church and all the Christians in the clan. He soon decides that his son is not worth fighting for and blames his own "personal god" or chi for his misfortune, his exile, and his son who is a disgrace, just like his father Unoka. Okonkwo thinks it is an abomination that Nwoye has abandoned his ancestors to worship the white man's God and decides that if all his children should follow in Nwoye's footsteps, he will wipe them off the face of the earth. Now his anger is building up against the white men who have compelled Nwoye to throw away his own traditions to pursue the Christian's way of living.

Later, Okonkwo is dumbfounded and also angered by his people's apathetic response to the Christians' conduct. One of them kills a python, the most revered animal in all Mbanta, and Okonkwo wants to chase all the Christians out of the village with whips. However, the others decided to let the gods fight their own battle and Okonkwo, displeased and irate, says,

> "'Let us not reason like cowards. If a man comes into my hut and defecates on the floor, what do I do? Do I shut my eyes? No! I take a stick and break his head. That is what a man does. These people are daily pouring filth over us, and Okeke says we should pretend not to see!'" (Achebe 2928).

Okonkwo thinks that Mbante is a womanly clan for responding this way and that his fatherland, Umuofia, would be fearless and not allow the whites to go unpunished. The Mbante clan decides only to ostracize the Christians and Okonkwo is disgusted with this weak form of reprisal.

In the last chapters of the novel Okonkwo happily returns to Umuofia but things are different and he realizes that his clansmen have given up their pride and allowed the white men to sway them. Okonkwo is not received by his people in the way he had expected and he learns that many of them have decided to follow the white man's God and new government. Okonkwo goes to Obierika's obi and talks to him about why his people have lost their power to fight. Obierika asks him if he has not heard of what happened to the Abame clan and Okonkwo replies:

> I have heard. But I have also heard that the Abame people are weak and foolish. Why did they not fight back? Had they no guns and machetes? We would be cowards to compare ourselves to the men of Abame. Their fathers had never dared to stand before our ancestors. We must fight these men and drive them from the land. (Achebe 2934)

Okonkwo hates how weak the Abame clan had been when the white men came and believes his clan is stronger, but to his disappointment they are not acting as men and fighting against the colonists. Okonkwo does not have his people backing him up. The narrator relays this and says,

> There are many men and women in Umuofia who did not feel as strongly as Okonkwo about the new dispensation. The white men had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia. (Achebe 2935)

Many people in the clan have accepted the white men and are even grateful they have come but Okonkwo has not learned to accept them and his hatred is growing. He is no longer the strong leader he used to be and he cannot change anything because his people have been won over by the white men: "'It is too late' said Obierika sadly, 'Our own men and our sons have joined the rank of the stranger. They have joined his religion and they help uphold his government'" (Achebe 2934).

As more white men and corruption come to the village, the egwugwu, a group of people who represent the clan's ancestors, decide that the church must be desolated and Okonkwo has hope that his clan is regaining its vigor and tenacity. They completely destroy the church, and Okonkwo begins to have some confidence in his people:

> For the first time in many years Okonkwo had a feeling that was akin to happiness. The times which had altered so unaccountably during his exile seemed to be coming round again. The clan which had turned false on him appeared to be making amends. (Achebe 2941)

This assured feeling does not last for long, however, and a few days later the District Commissioner handcuffs the six egwugwu leaders and confines them to the guardroom for harassing Christians and burning their place of worship.

The Nigerian novel *Things Fall Apart*, a modern non-western classic, portrays a traditional Igbo community and its gradual disintegration under British colonization in the 1890s. Sarah Beal, in her well-written and thoughtful critical essay, contributes to debates about the character flaws of the novel's tragic hero, Okonkwo. She argues persuasively, using well-selected quotations, that the main reason for his tragic decline and fall is his inability to accept change.

—Monika Brown

While locked up the men are treated harshly by the prison guard: their hair is shaved off, they are kept from going out to urinate, they are taunted by messengers, and they are not given any water for six days. Okonkwo burns with hatred and regrets not killing the white man when he had the chance. The egwugwu pays two-hundred bags of cowries to be released, and the next day the clan rallies together to discuss what to do next. Okonkwo is ready for war and one of the six imprisoned men speaks to the people and says, "When I saw you all pouring into the meeting from all the quarters of our clan so early in the morning I knew that something was after our life" (Achebe 2945). There is indeed something after Okonkwo's life; all the attributes that make him the man he is are being attacked. He is no longer able to demonstrate his great power and strength because the white men have taken that which, in the past, he had power over: his son, his clansmen, and his way of living. Five court messengers interrupt the meeting and when the white man tells them to put an end to their gathering, Okonkwo does not hesitate to draw his machete and cut off the man's head. After that Okonkwo knows that the clan will not go to war because they let the rest of the messengers escape instead of killing them when they have the chance.

By the end of the novel Okonkwo has lost all dignity and pride in himself and in his clansmen because they have allowed the white men to change how they live. The day after the messenger is killed the District Commissioner and his soldiers appear at Okonkwo's compound looking for him. He is not there but a few clansmen sitting outside of Okonkwo's obi agree to show the Commissioner and his men where he is. They are then led to a tree, from which hangs the dead body of Okonkwo. In the Ibo culture it is unspeakable for one to kill himself: "It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offense against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it" (Achebe 2947). Okonkwo, the man who once so passionately desired that his tribe return to their own customs and values, breaks one of those values himself by committing suicide. He lives his whole life trying to escape a shameful death like that of his father's, but now he ironically brings an even more shameful death upon himself. Okonkwo feels that his life no longer has any meaning. His clan has become weak because of the divide among the people; some choose to follow the white man and his ways, and the others decide that challenging the new ways is not worth fighting for and passively allow the white men to take over. I agree with critic Arlene Elder that "One explanation of the suicide could be that Okonkwo recognizes finally, that he is a man out of time. His values no longer resemble those of his society; therefore, no honorable life remains for him" (62). Okonkwo commits suicide because all that he and his clan once valued, including vigor and dominance, is no more and he cannot live a defeated life any longer. He has lost all pride and even in his death his adamant stature is compromised.

Okonkwo is a tragic hero who experiences a downfall due to his unwillingness to change or accept change in Umuofia. Critic Kathleen Puhr says it this way:

> Okonkwo embodies the classical requirements of the tragic hero: he is strong (a wrestler), brave…wealthy…respected…resourceful… Okonkwo is afflicted with a tragic flaw, pride coupled with a quick temper, which contributes to his downfall. (43)

Okonkwo's pride is his tragic flaw because it does not allow him to accept the changes that take place in his village. All of his purpose and ambition centers on being a powerful man in the powerful Ibo tribe. When his clansmen fail him by allowing the whites to take over and when his own status is no longer prominent, he loses his purpose for living. Okonkwo is driven to commit suicide because in this changed Umuofia he has lost his identity, as critic Biodun Jeyifo recognizes (Eze 54-55), and he sees no reason to continue on in his life. Okonkwo has lost his identity; he is no longer who he once was nor are the people of Umuofia who they once were. The values of the clan have changed. Okonkwo, who is driven by the fear of failure, tries all his life to embody the characteristics of a powerful leader, but this causes him to become rigid, prideful, and unyielding to changes being made in his community. After white colonists arrive in the Ibo village, Okonkwo's responses to changes in members of his tribe, especially to their loss of masculine pride, and to changes in his own role in

his clan, cause him to experience a downfall and finally to tragically kill himself.

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"We Are A Culture, Not A Costume" Campaign

by Teresina De La Cruz

Teresina De La Cruz is originally from Florida, but her family moved to Robeson County when she was 15 years old. In everything that she does, God and her mom serve as her greatest inspirations. Currently a freshman at UNCP, she plans to major in criminal justice and someday become a Juvenile Court judge.

Throughout history, America has often been described as a "tossed salad," and rightly so. This nation is made up of many different people who originate from various backgrounds; yet, they all seem to come together to form the colorful culture of this country, each without losing their individuality. Unfortunately, though, there are those who are intolerant of this unique mix of cultures and they tend to mock or poke fun at the various cultures. Because of this ignorance, STARS, an Ohio University student organization, serves to educate society on the ills of cultural discrimination. This Halloween 2011, STARS has launched a campaign called "We Are A Culture, Not A Costume." According to STARS' president, Sarah Williams, "The purpose of the campaign was to educate and create dialogue, and it did" (qtd. in Balandis, par. 6). The campaign tackles the issue of the morality of promoting a negative depiction of a particular culture through their native dress as a Halloween costume. While it may seem funny and "not a big deal" to some, to others, it actually hurts those whose native culture is represented in such a negative fashion. America is an ever-growing nation comprised of many different cultures, religions, and ethnic backgrounds. This is an unstoppable expansion and because of this, STARS launched the "We Are a Culture, Not a Costume" campaign, with hopes of teaching America to think twice before ridiculing an individual culture's customs or traditions just because they are out of the norm.

Everybody is guilty of somehow, either intentionally or unintentionally, stereotyping or prejudging someone of another cultural group based solely on their appearance, and even more so if they are wearing clothing typical of their native culture. For example, imagine you are on a plane, preparing for takeoff, when out of the corner of your eye you spot what appears to be a Middle Easterner dressed in traditional Muslim attire. Your initial assumption might be that he is a terrorist and he is planning to hi-jack the plane. Thoughts like these originate as a result of the September 11 terrorist attacks on America, but society needs to realize that not every Muslim is a terrorist or suicide bomber. Just like not every Japanese woman is a Geisha forced to succumb to every man's desires nor is every Mexican a sombrero-and-poncho-wearing man who rides around on a donkey. These are just a few of the numerous typical stereotypes that society has placed on the diverse people of our nation. Stereotypes are expected; that's a given; however, the sad part is that America accepts them as if they do not impact society. It is disheartening that even after all these years since the Civil Rights Movement racism is still very much alive in America. For this very reason STARS was formed, per their Mission Statement, which is posted on the group's website: "…to educate and facilitate discussion of all ism's (racism, sexism, classism, etc.), raise awareness about social justice, and promote racial harmony" ("S*T*A*R*S"). America needs to band together with STARS and other anti-racism movements to stomp out racial injustice once and for all.

According to the organization's history posted on their website, what started out as a class in 1988 by Dr. Sheila Williams, professor at Ohio University, has developed into an influential student organization of young activists. STARS is an acronym for "Students Teaching About Racism in Society." Although its members are few, STARS has hosted various events on the Ohio University campus to raise awareness and prevent racial ha-

tred and the organization has been nationally recognized by the NAACP ("S*T*A*R*S"). All too often, Americans widely accept the mockery of any given culture's or religion's customs and traditions, which includes their dress, speech, and beliefs, not taking into consideration how hurtful it could be to an individual of that culture or the group as a whole. Because of this, STARS launched their campaign entitled "We Are A Culture, Not A Costume." Taylor See, Ohio University student and STARS member, designed the iconic images that have become representative of the group's campaign (Grinberg, par. 5). STARS did not expect to receive much feedback from the media and the internet. What started out as a simple posting of their symbolic posters on STARS President, Sarah Williams's, Tumblr page, has expanded into a full-fledged national controversy (Balandis, pars. 1-5). According to an article in Ohio University's campus newspaper, *Compass*, within hours of Williams's post, she was being contacted by several news networks and newspapers (Balandis 3 and 4). What the group did not anticipate was the amount and intensity of negative feedback they would receive from dissenters.

As with any protest, there's bound to be controversy, but STARS did not expect it to be as heated as it has become. "We Are A Culture, Not A Costume" is not so much a verbal campaign, in that their message is conveyed through their posters and not through speeches. There are about five different varieties of the posters that they have released. The eye-catching design features a person of a minority culture holding up a picture of someone dressed up in a costume that serves to ridicule their culture. For example, in one of their posters, a Middle Eastern Muslim young man holds up a photo of someone dressed as a suicide bomber. At the top of each poster, the words "This is not who I am, and this is not okay" are printed in bold lettering ("S*T*A*R*S"). While most people were able to understand what was being said and took the group's message very seriously, there were those who immediately began to express feedback in a comical manner. They responded by counter creating posters of their own which made parodies of the original poster designs. They utilized subject matter such as vampires, dogs, zebras, and such, which created a sort of comic relief ("45 Funniest 'We're a Culture, Not a Costume' Parody Posters"). In a recent interview with STARS treasurer Stephanie Sheeley, she stated that although some of the satirical posters may be funny, it is important not to lose sight of the campaign's message and purpose (Sheeley). Unfortunately, though, there were some negative and offensive comments made and counter-posters created.

It is so surprising that in twenty-first century America, racism and prejudice still exist and to top it off, it is widely accepted throughout much of the mainstream population. In her interview with *Colorlines,* STARS treasurer Stephanie Sheeley informs us of a highly offensive parodical poster that was released. The poster featured a man dressed as a gorilla holding up STARS's original version of their poster which was shown through the perspective of a black female. Sheeley mentions how extremely offensive that was and how that type of negative response shows STARS that their campaign's message is not being effectively communicated. In turn, it just creates more controversy on top of what was initially being fought against and essentially, the issue is never resolved (Sheeley).

In addition to those who satirize the campaign with insulting posters, there are those who strongly believe that STARS is making a big deal out of nothing. Robyn Urback, author of a blog on the *National Post* website, entitles one blog "Halloween's Anti-racism Crusaders Need Perspective." Basically, she argues that there is no harm in dressing up on Halloween because, after all, that's the whole point of the holiday, "…to become a specific, identifiable character…" (Urback, par. 3). Even so, one should be careful and considerate of others in choosing a costume. In one comment left on Urback's blog, a reader states "Oh give me a break…Everybody knows that a Halloween costume doesn't represent anyone's culture. It's just a fun time to dress up and be silly" (Urback par. 9). Be that as it may, some take the jokes too far and, even though it is not intended, somebody may feel insulted and embarrassed. Despite the unexpected negative feedback, STARS has taken the criticism and controversy in a graceful manner. STARS has not lashed back at objectors with insults nor has the organization retaliated with opinionated com-

The assignment for this essay was to choose an event in recent American history (1950-2011) that either sparked a protest or was itself a protest. Students were to research the event and then analyze its causes and its impact on American society. Teresina chose a recent protest that has been somewhat under the radar, and her readers (other students in the class) found the topic interesting and worthy of discussion. Teresina's essay is well written and informative, but more importantly it is honest, and after reading it, most people will think twice before donning an ethnically stereotypical costume, whether it be on Halloween or Mardi Gras.

—Jan Gane

ments in response to what has been said in opposition. STARS recognizes that engaging in any type of partisan argument between itself and its dissenters would just create chaos and it would completely defy the group's purpose.

STARS understands that Halloween is a fun holiday where one can dress up and become somebody else for the night. This concept is enjoyed by Americans of all ages, beginning with infants and toddlers, all the way up to college students and even middle-aged adults. Despite what some might think, STARS's intentions are not to spoil anyone's fun. STARS is committed to informing the public of the hurtful effects which result from using a culture or religion's traditional dress as an object of satire. Although some believe that the group is being overly sensitive and that it should discontinue its "We Are A Culture, Not A Costume" campaign, there are those who stand in full support of the campaign's objectives. I, myself, am one of those supporters. Being of Hispanic and African-American descent, I know what it is to be ridiculed or stereotyped because of my race. At times, it becomes frustrating because people tend to view me as a certain image that has been presented to them rather than to view me for who I am. Now, I will not lie—I, too, have been guilty of poking fun at other ethnicities, and sometimes even my own, for their traditions and customs which seem strange and alien to me. There is no justification for this whatsoever. Rather than contributing to the mimicry, I now realize that I should be more tolerant of all cultures, even if I do not agree with a culture's beliefs. I also realize that a particular culture's traditional dress does not define an individual. Just because a person's clothing is different, it does not make them any less of a person, and just because a person identifies with a certain culture does not mean that person fits the "traditional" depiction of that culture. Americans, myself included, need to open their eyes and understand that because this nation is so diverse and rich in variety, we are bound to witness things that will seem "out of the ordinary"; however, we must not let ourselves become closed-minded to that which is unfamiliar. To be considered the "outsider" is such an unpleasant feeling. In turn, we should place ourselves in others' shoes and ask ourselves how we would feel if we were being mocked to the extent that various cultures are currently experiencing in America. Once we realize how insensitive we, as a nation, have become, then we can truly stomp out this aspect of intolerance and prejudice in America.

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White-nose syndrome:
A race against time to save our North American bats

By Paula Garcia

On February 16, 2006, Paul Rubin, a hydrologist working in Howe Caves in New York, took a picture of some bats (Youngbaer, 2010). Unknown to anyone at the time, that picture would later become the first known evidence of a fungal disease that has caused unprecedented declines among six species of North American bats. White-nose syndrome (WNS) is an emerging infectious disease caused by a psychrophilic fungus known as *Geomyces destructans* (Foley et al., 2010). This cold-loving fungus invades the skin of hibernating bats, targeting their wings, ears, arms, tails and muzzles. The most obvious sign of infection is the characteristic appearance of a white fuzzy muzzle (Figure 1). WNS has become the first sustained epizootic affecting bats in recorded history (Cryan et al., 2010) and should be considered a major threat to ecosystem integrity. It is now confirmed in 17 states and Canada. On February 9, 2011, North Carolina had its first confirmed cases of white-nose syndrome involving a bat from the retired Avery County mine and one bat from a cave at Grandfather Mountain State Park (US Fish and Wildlife, 2011).

Species Affected

Currently six species have been affected by white-nose syndrome: the little brown bat, big brown bat, northern long-eared bat, tricolored bat, eastern small-footed bat and the federally endangered Indiana bat. Three other species, the federally endangered gray bat, the cave myotis and the southeastern myotis have all been documented with *G. destructans* on them but so far none of these species have exhibited symptoms. The endangered Virginia big-eared bat and the Ozarks big-eared bat are two federally listed species that are found in the affected areas that have not been confirmed with *G. destructans* or white-nose syndrome (Center for Biological Diversity, 2011). Currently, North Carolina has eight species of bats federally listed (Table 1).

Bat Facts

There are more than 1,100 species of bats throughout the world. Of the 45 species of bats in North America, over half hibernate in caves or mines. Of those, four are on the endangered species list and include the Indiana bat, gray bat, Virginia big-eared bat and Ozark big-eared bat (Foley et al., 2010). Bats range in size from the world's smallest mammal, the tiny bumblebee bat of Thailand weighing less than a penny, to the giant flying foxes of Indonesia that have a six-foot wing span. Many bats are primary predators of night-flying insects. A single little brown bat can eat up to 1,000 mosquito-sized insects in an hour or half of its body weight per night (BCI, 2011). Other bats are important pollinators and seed dispersers of numerous plants. The three species of vampire bats found in Latin America lap blood. However, these bats have proven to be very important in medicine, as enzymes in their saliva are potent blood clot dissolvers and are used in treatment of human stroke victims.

Bats are the only mammals that can fly and are among the few true hibernators. Their bodies undergo dramatic metabolic and physiological shutdown. For survival during winter hibernation, bats require a build-up of adequate fat reserves during the fall. During their hibernation, they may arouse periodically to adjust to different temperatures, to urinate or to drink water. Moisture from

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the cave walls or condensation on their fur provides drinking water. Bats may arouse every couple of weeks or hibernate uninterrupted for as long as 83 days (Bat Conservation International, 2011). If aroused too often they may not have enough fat reserves to sustain them through their hibernation, which lasts anywhere from five to eight months. During hibernation metabolism and immune function decrease dramatically. Their heart rate drops to as little as 20 beats per minute, nearly inaudible compared to their normal heart rate of 600 beats per minute when at a resting state and up to 1,300 beats per minute in flight. Normal body temperatures of bats range from 35 to 39°C. They drop down to 1 to 15°C in hibernating bats (Cryan et al., 2010). Laboratory studies conducted by Donald Thomas of the University of Sherbrooke in Canada indicate that each time the little brown bat is aroused during hibernation, it expends fat sufficient to have lasted 67 days (Thomas et al., 1990). He also found that the bat will use up 107.9 mg or more of fat if it must fly. During a typical hibernation period, a little brown bat will awaken 15 times, using up a massive 1,618.5 mg of fat or 84% of its fat reserves (BCI, 2011).

Bats are under severe pressure from multiple sources. Until recently, rabies was the only disease of significant threat to the conservation of bats in North America (Weller et al., 2009). However, virologists interested in documenting reservoirs of disease in wild animals have identified other diseases of serious concern; those include Ebola, SARS, Hendra and Nipah viruses. Throughout the world habitat loss has affected insectivorous, frugivorous and nectarivorous bats. By degrading our natural ecosystems we're eliminating food sources and habitat. An increase in insecticides has also had an adverse effect on bat populations. Their newest threats are white-nose syndrome and an increase in wind turbine construction. While cave-dwelling species are being decimated by WNS, migratory tree-dwelling species are being killed in unprecedented numbers by wind turbines across the country (Boyles et al., 2011). Though there are no large-scale monitoring programs to assess the fatalities caused by wind turbines, it has been estimated that 33,000 to 111,000 bats will be killed annually by 2020 in the Mid-Atlantic region alone.

A devastating fungal disease, sweeping across the continent, threatens to decimate North America's bat colonies, thus altering the natural environment for years to come. Paula's essay captures the urgency of this troubling and very real threat to America's pint-sized cave dwellers. Why should you care? Try insect pest control for starters. A single bat (and that, a small one) can devour as many as 1000 mosquitoes per hour. Where did this disease come from, is there any cure, and will any of our bats go extinct as a result? Read Paula's essay—good, solid science writing—to find the answers.

—Lisa Kelley

Geomyces Destructans

G. destructans is a newly discovered psychrophilic (cold loving) fungus. Though the genus *Geomyces* contains other psychrophilic fungi, *G. destructans* has distinctive, asymmetrically curved conidia (Gargas et al. 2009), and is the only species capable of invading and eroding the skin of hibernating bats (Cryan et al., 2010). Mortality rates have reached epic proportions of up to 95% at some hibernacula.

G. destructans grows in optimal temperatures of 1 to 15°C and high humidity (Cryan et al., 2010). Consequently, hibernating bats are perfect hosts of this disease. Transmission occurs through direct bat-to-bat contact (Blehert et al., 2009; Foley et al., 2010). However, it is believed the fungus has been transferred from Europe to the U.S. from contaminated caving gear. Once a bat is infected, the fungus colonizes the skin, eroding the epidermis and filling the apocrine glands and hair follicles with fungal hyphae (Figure 2). Over time, this replaces the connective tissues, blood and lymphatic vessels and muscle fibers of their wing membranes (Cryan et al., 2010). Severe wing damage may be seen in bats that have recently emerged from hibernation (Meteyer et al., 2009).

When fungal hyphae invade their muzzle, it penetrates the hair follicles, destroying the epidermal sheath (Cryan et al., 2010). Usually, there is no inflammation due to their decreased metabolism and immune function, and their bodies are unable to fight off the infection. However, bats affected with WNS don't always have the obvious fungal growth, and they may display abnormal behavior such as flying outside during the day, flying when temperatures are below freezing, or clustering around entrances to hibernacula.

It is unknown if WNS will affect tree species in the future. However, all cave dwelling bats are at risk (Foley et al., 2010). To date, there is no cure and efforts to control this disease have been ineffective (Hallam and McCracken, 2010).

Other Countries of Occurance

The origin of WNS in North America remains a mystery. In a 1983 German report, a picture shows the presence of a white muzzle on a bat, and the caption states that periodic sight-

ings of bats with white muzzles have been observed over the years. This could suggest that European bats might have been infected with *G. destructans* for at least 23 years before its arrival in the North America in 2006. It is safe to assume that European bats may have developed a resistance to WNS because they may have coevolved with the fungus (Blehert, 2010). Behavior may also play a role, as European bats hibernate in smaller groups of less than one hundred, whereas North American bats hibernate in groups that can range in the thousands. In addition, cave surfaces in Europe may have also coevolved to incorporate *G. destructans* as a nonpathogenic component in its community (Wibbelt et al., 2010).

Research on European bats is underway. During intensive monitoring of bats in France, one bat displayed a white fungal growth on its muzzle (Puechmaille et al., 2010). Testing determined that it was *Geomyces destructans*. However, the bat was not underweight, and a six-year study that took place between 2004-2009 of that site and of five additional sites within a two km radius did not show any further cases of WNS, and bat populations remained stable.

Further studies were conducted from live bats that displayed obvious fungal growth at eleven hibernacula sites (eight in Germany, one in Hungary, two from the United Kingdom and two in Switzerland) (Wibbelt et al., 2010). Each hibernacula contained one to five animals, and a total of forty-three samples were taken. Samples were analyzed from February 2009 through the end of March 2009. All bats from Germany, Hungary and Switzerland were confirmed with WNS.

States Affected by White-Nose Syndrome

In the U.S. this disease first started in New York in 2006 (Figure 3). Since then it has spread rapidly to Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Indiana, North Carolina and Ohio and to three Canadian provinces (Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick) (Center for Biological Diversity, 2011).

White-nose syndrome continues to spread westward along migratory flyways towards the largest bat colonies in Texas and New Mexico.

Agencies Involved and Management Stratagies

There is an extensive network of biologists who are working to investigate white-nose syndrome. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Forest Service, National Wildlife Health Center, Ft. Collins Science Center, the National Speleological Society and many universities and other state and federal agencies, all of which are involved in monitoring, researching and testing WNS.

Currently there are no treatments for bats, and though chemical and biological control agents show promise for the eradication of *G. destructans*, they have not proven safe for bats or for microbial flora of caves (Foley et al., 2011). The deliberate warming of areas within hibernacula has been suggested as a means to increase bat survival, but no tests have been conducted yet. Bats have evolved to survive winter temperatures at which *G. destructans* grows, and the warming of caves could also decrease the chances of bat survival (Boyles and Willis 2010; Foley et al., 2011). Bats may respond to warmer temperatures by moving closer to entrances of hibernacula or shortening the duration of torpor during the winter (Weller et al., 2009). Providing food and water for hibernating bats has also been proposed, since starvation plays a major role in mortality of bats with WNS. However, insectivorous bats may not be able to adjust physiologically to winter food availability (Foley et al., 2011). Captive breeding programs for critically endangered species may be necessary in the future.

Caves have been closed nationwide in an effort to try to protect the remaining bats and also in hopes of delaying or preventing a WNS outbreak. Decontamination protocols have also been implemented for anyone allowed entry into caves.

Impacts

Pest control services provided by insect eating bats in the United States alone likely save the U.S. agricultural industry at least three billion dollars per year and as much as $53 billion per year, and yet insectivorous bats are among the most overlooked non-domesticated animals in North

Figure 1

Little brown bat showing characteristic appearance of white-nose syndrome on muzzle, ears and wings. Hibernating little brown bat with white muzzle typical of White-nose syndrome. Location: PA, USA Photographer: Greg Turner, Pennsylvania Game Commission http://news.opb.org/article/mysterious-killer-white-nose-syndrome-threatens-bats/

America (Boyle et al., 2011). Populations of one of the most abundant species in North America, the little brown bat, have declined so dramatically because of WNS that regional extirpation and even extinction are expected (Boyle et al., 2011). Some estimates suggest that one little brown bat can eat four to eight grams of insects each night. If we apply that to the one million bats that have been estimated to have died from WNS, that would mean that 660 to 1,320 metric tons of insects are no longer being consumed per year in the affected states (Boyle et al., 2011).

Because of WNS and other factors, the Center for Biological Diversity has petitioned for endangered species listings of two bat species, the Northern long-eared and Eastern small-footed bats (Bat Conservation International, 2011). And because of the threats posed to the little brown bat, listing them is being considered as well. Listing a species under the Endangered Species Act is very expensive, costing an average of $15.9 million. Since life histories of bats are so complex and their geographical distribution is so widespread, listing them could actually cost much more.

Funding and Public Support

In June 2009, Dr. Thomas Kunz of Boston University testified before Congress and outlined a need for funding for WNS (Bat Conservation International, 2011). Through an extensive collaboration with other scientists he proposed that an additional $45 million over a five-year period would be needed to continue research on WNS. In the fiscal year 2010, Congress appropriated $1.9 million to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for WNS. The FWS then distributed one million dollars to WNS research, $450,000 to state WNS response activities and another $450,000 to FWS WNS coordination efforts. This was just a small percentage of the funding needed to research WNS (Bat Conservation International, 2011). Congressional support is critical because other funding sources are extremely limited. State budgets have been drastically reduced, and federal agencies cannot absorb this cost within their existing resources.

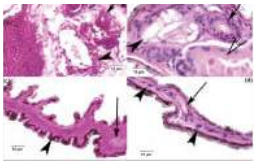
In May 2010, over 60 conservation organizations, including Bat Conservation International, submitted testimony to congress requesting urgent funding for fiscal year 2011 (Bat Conservation International, 2011). With the United States being trillions of dollars in debt and budget negotiations nearly causing a governmental shutdown, scientists eagerly await funding for a disease that has no end in sight.

Conclusion

Bats provide numerous ecological services worldwide such as insect suppression, pollination and seed dispersal. And yet, as species they are extremely undervalued. Low reproductive rates and long generation times mean that population recovery will take decades or even longer.

As budget constraints continue to hamper much needed research, scientists wait to see if the newly emerging hibernating bats display any signs of white-nose syndrome. Convincing the public about the importance of bats to our ecosystems and to our economy when books, movies and folklore have portrayed them as creatures who drink blood and represent evil could prove challenging. But at a time when there are such severe budget cutbacks in our economy, funding must come from all available sources, including private donations. Educating the public about the importance of bats and the devastating effects of WNS to our bat populations will be necessary. If WNS continues to spread, it could result in disastrous ecological and economic outcomes.

Figure 2



Photomicrograph of wing showing fungal penetration (a,c) and normal tissue (b,d). Photomicrographs of periodic acid Schiff-stained 4-μm sections of wing membrane prepared as previously described from a little brown bat (Myotis lucifugus) infected by Geomyces destructans. (a) Fungal hyphae penetrate and replace apocrine gland (white arrow), hair follicle (black arrow pointing to hair shaft), and sebaceous gland (arrowhead). (b) Normal pilosebaceous unit including the apocrine gland (white arrow), hair follicle (black arrow pointing to hair shaft) and sebaceous gland (arrowhead). (c) Infarcted region of wing membrane showing loss of all identifiable vital structures in the dermis, including blood vessels, connective tissue, muscle, elastin fibers and the large bands of connective tissue that traverse and stabilize wing membrane (arrow). No discernable cell structures or nuclei remain, the wing membrane is contracted and hypereosinophilic (intense red staining), and only residual pigment is present on the membrane surface (arrowhead). (d) Microscopic section of normal wing membrane with identifiable blood vessel containing circulating red blood cells (arrow) and nuclei of connective tissue cells (arrowheads). Cryan et al. BMC Biology 2010 8:135 doi:10.1186/1741 7007-8-135 http://www.biomedcentral.com/1741-7007/8/135

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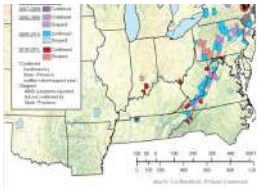
Figure 3



Map displaying year and state where White-nose syndrome was confirmed http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/white-nose_syndrome/

Table 1. Status of listed North Carolina bat species

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Gray bat	*Myotis grisescens*	FE, NC-E
Indiana bat	*Myotis sodalist*	FE, NC-E
Virginia big-eared bat	*Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus*	FE, NC-E
Rafinesques big-eared bat	*Corynorhinus rafinesquii rafinesquii*	NC-T
Eastern big-eared bat	*Corynorhinus rafinesquii macrotis*	NC-SC
Eastern small footed bat	*Myotis leibii leibii*	NC-SC
Florida yellow bat	*Lasiurus intermedius floridanus*	NC-SC
Southeastern bat	*Myotis austroriparius*	NC-SC

FE – Federally Endangered; NC – North Carolina; E – Endangered T – Threatened; SC – Special Concern

White-Tailed Deer

By Effie Locklear

Effie Locklear is a mother of two children, a grandmother, a homemaker, and a lifelong student. She was born in 1950 to parents Dock and Mary Wynn and has resided in Robeson County her entire life. The desire to obtain a formal education has led her to further her education at UNC Pembroke with a bachelor's degree in American Indian Studies, a pursuit that continues to influence her life both personally and professionally.

Native Americans have always hunted animals as a source of food and as companions into the spirit world. Shamans and medicine men used their spiritual connections for healing. Native peoples' existence is partly due to hunting wild game as a source of food, shelter, tools and clothing. As the Acoma Pueblo ancestors understood, their way of life included the white-tailed deer as a friend and companion that was willing to sacrifice himself to insure human survival. The white-tailed deer has also been a traditional food source for Lumbee communities for generations. In this essay, I will discuss the origins of the white-tailed deer and its impact on indigenous peoples and my family.

Many creation stories indicate that indigenous peoples used deer as one of their food sources because deer were plentiful and were an important part of indigenous cultures. The white-tailed deer's origins can be traced back millions of years. Geist states, "The genus Odocoileus is a very old one, which had its origins almost four million year ago in south-western North American. In addition, 'the white-tailed deer is an original species, which dates back to the Pliocene'" (212). Deer have other qualities as well: "they are beautiful, graceful animals who have excellent vision" (217). Their speed and other qualities are sought during vision quests and rituals. Our indigenous ancestors observed the natural world around them and believed they could take on the form of the animal spirit. All indigenous people believe that all things are connected to each other to keep harmony and balance. This is why it is important that the hunter hunt the deer in the appropriate manner and give thanks and reciprocity back to the animal for giving its life for humans.

In order to hunt deer according to the Acoma Pueblo way, you start out from your residence with a song. After reaching camp that night:

> The men separate and take a prayer stick with them to pray to the mountain lion, eagles, hawks, wolves, and other wild beasts. Then we bury our prayer-stick and pick up a log and sprinkle it with cornmeal, and say to it: "You be the deer which I expect to bring into camp," and then we carry this piece of wood in and place it on the campfire, and blow our breath on a pinch of cornmeal in our hands and throw it on the flames. Doing so we receive power, and hunt well. (Gill 122)

This ceremony is performed in anticipation that the creator will hear their prayers and grant them successful hunting. The Acoma use of deer illustrates that it should be honored with the proper ceremonies in an effort not to offend the spirit of the deer so they will return the next season and give their lives as provision for the people. "They sprinkled cornmeal on the nose and fed the deer's spirit. They had to show their love and respect, their appreciation; otherwise, the deer would be offended, and they would not come and die for them the following year" (Blumenthal 371).

Deer dancing is a main part of the hunting ritual that takes place the night before the hunt. "Not only does the ceremony feeding from the deer's spirit insure future hunting succession, it is a reaffirmation of the circular and interconnected life patterns fundamental to Native American spirituality" (Blumenthal 371). As Paula Gunn Allen states, "At base, every story, every song, every ceremony tells the Indian that each creature is part of a living whole and that all parts of that whole are related to one another by virtue of participation in the whole being" (qtd. in Blumenthal 371). Native

peoples believe all things are related and connected to each other. As Blumenthal notes: "[A]ll Pueblo people share this reverence for the spirit world of animals, plants and nature, which they believe coexists, unseen, with the physical world" (372). Among traditional stories, there is a fundamental understanding that everything is related and that all living things play an important role in keeping the earth and everything in it in balance and harmony with everything else around it.

Like the Acoma people, my family has eaten deer since I was a child and before I was born as a supplement to help keep food on the table during the winter months. My dad died when I was eleven from complications of an appendectomy, and my mother was forced to make do with what was available at the time. I remember my mom talking about her brother hunting deer, birds, raccoons, rabbits and foxes as an additional source of food and as a sport. I have always enjoyed eating deer meat because my mom would fix it in so many different ways. She prepared a stew and deer hash, which was my favorite. In order to prepare the hash she would boil it until it was tender, tear it apart, mix it with sage she grew combined with onions and other spices, and bake it in the oven. She would barbecue it on occasion or just fry it after soaking it in vinegar overnight to reduce the wild game taste.

Most of my family members continue to cook deer today not just out of necessity but because they like the taste of the meat. Hunting deer in Robeson County and surrounding communities has become a pastime now for Lumbees. Lumbee hunters pay to join hunting clubs in order to experience the thrill of killing deer. Modern technology makes processing deer meat easier today. Meat processors allow you to make various assortments of meats; for example, ground deer that resembles sausage, hamburger meat, cube steak, and roasts. Deer meat in the Lumbee community remains a staple food source.

Indigenous peoples have prepared lodges, utensils, food, and clothing from deer for generations.

Even today, the Odocoileus deer are plentiful and common in the United States and are an important game animal hunted throughout the country as a sport that continues to be a main source of food for some (Geist 217). However to have successful hunting, as the Acoma Pueblo and their ancestors did, you should ask permission to hunt the deer and this is done through the "performances of deer dances the night before the hunt, which celebrates the relationships between humans and all other-than humans persons in the wilderness, particularly deer" (Delgado 287). Reciprocity of giving back to the deer and nature should always be observed through ceremonies in appreciation for the sacrifices made to humans.

My family has a history of preparing deer meat at family gatherings and as a source of food during the winter months. As a young girl, I acquired a taste for deer meat because of the ways my mother prepared it, and today as an adult I still enjoy eating deer meat. I have continued this tradition, which my mother began a long time ago, and I hope my family will carry on this custom when I am gone. Today the Acoma Pueblo and Lumbee people continue to hunt deer as a source of food and as a wild game sport.

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Effie's essay skillfully draws connections between the cultural significance of white-tailed deer to the Acoma Pueblo people living in present-day New Mexico and to her own Lumbee people in North Carolina. With its clear organization, solid research, and unembellished language, Effie's writing celebrates a traditional Indigenous source of physical, spiritual, and ceremonial sustenance. At the same time, her essay adds to a growing archive of Lumbee environmental literacy and lifeways that expands all readers' understandings of Southeastern American Indian experience.

—Jane Haladay

Foxwoods vs. Prairie Winds:
Is Indian Gaming Economical?

By Joshua Rimes

Joshua Rimes is a history major at UNCP from Elizabethtown, NC. He has a strong interest in examining issues facing Native Americans today and is hoping to pursue graduate work in Native American archaeology. He is a member of Alpha Chi, and some of his off campus passions lie in woodworking, environmental preservation, and agriculture.

It is evident that Indian gaming goes back thousands of years and was recorded by Europeans at the time of colonial contact. Native Americans played both games of dexterity, such as the ball game shinny, and games of chance, such as dice games (DeBoer 217). Yet, this history seems to be forgotten as Native America deals with Westernization's advantages and disadvantages when catering to casinos and their games of chance. Casino building on reservations requires a lot of consideration and is a very lengthy process. But casinos have both positive and negative results for federally recognized Native tribes, specifically in the cases of the Oglala Sioux and Mashantucket Pequot. It is my intent to show the economic effects of casino gaming upon these two federal tribes, its limitations, and whether it has positively or negatively affected investment and interest in tribal culture.

To begin with, to understand these tribes' current economic situations, one must learn of their individual struggles. As a tribe the Oglala Sioux have had a harsh past. In 1851, the Lakota people were allotted 60 million acres in Dakota Territory in what became known as the Great Sioux Reservation. Here, the Oglala Sioux tribe settled on part of the reservation around what the federal government deemed the Pine Ridge Agency. In 1877, due to an act by Congress joined with congressional coercive methods against the Lakota people, specifically threatening to take away federal support if the deal was not ratified, the Black Hills were stolen (Gonzalez 114). To further compound this problem, in 1889, the federal government wanted to shrink the Great Sioux Reservation's size and thus began a policy of allotment. It must be recognized that the Oglala were not farmers. They made their living by hunting buffalo and trading the hides with European traders (Biolsi 3). By 1904, the Lakota people were split onto 320 and 160 acre plots and the Oglala were put within the boundaries of the two million acre Pine Ridge Reservation (Biolsi 7). 'Ignorance,' 'stupidity,' and 'worthlessness' have been the adjectives used by federal policy makers in describing the Oglala. Due to their isolation from the general American populace, being 120 miles from Rapid City, South Dakota, the Oglala have fared no better today than they did in 1904. The Oglala have no true economic industry as they depend on tourists for trade, and survive based on aid they receive from the federal government. Forty thousand people live on the reservation with the unemployment rate between 85 and 95 percent and the average income not exceeding $2,600 a year ("Pine Ridge Statistics").

It is no wonder then why the Oglala Sioux decided to build a casino on their reservation. Begun in 1994 with three double-wide trailers, the Oglala at first established a bingo hall. However, by 1998, it was determined that to better benefit the tribe a more up-to-date facility was needed to provide entertainment, food, meeting space, and sleeping accommodations. Thus, in 2007 a 47,000 square foot casino was opened with a 35,000 square foot hotel and convention center. Like other tribes, the Oglala believed that casinos bring economic prosperity to depressed reservation economies. But in fact the Prairie Winds Casino has been only mildly profitable to the Oglala, grossing a poor two million dollars in 2008. With the creation of 250 jobs, Prairie Winds has been nowhere near as glamorous as the Mashantucket Pequot's Foxwoods Casino in New London, Connecticut (Daly).

Foxwoods, which began as a bingo parlor in 1986 and opened in its modern state in 1992, has

become a mega asset to the Pequot. In 2000, the casino and convention center alone were grossing $1.2 billion. With this revenue, the Pequot have been able to make their reservation self-sufficient with paid ambulance, fire, and police services. Furthermore, the state of Connecticut has been given hundreds of millions of dollars in slot revenues, topping a total of one billion dollars in 2000 (Cartensen, et al. 2-4).

Yet, out of this prosperity the Pequot have suffered as a tribe. As a people the Pequot were a strong nation in the Mystic and Thames River Valleys of Southeastern Connecticut at the time of European contact. After the Pequot War of 1636-7, the Pequot were relocated to the Noank reservation and given 2,000 acres to live on at Mashantucket (Eisler 83). By 1730, due to white encroachments, their lands only totaled 1,000 acres. This outside takeover continued into 1936 until only 179 acres was left to two remaining Pequot tribal members: Elizabeth George Plouffe and Martha Landevin. Over this early 300 years the Pequot had either died or abandoned the reservation for employment in towns and cities such as Boston. However, the revitalization of the Pequot has been the doing of one man, Skip Hayward, who believed he could re-establish what his people lost. In 1983, through lobbying efforts, the Pequot became a federally recognized tribe and gained the rights to federal aid (Eisler 87).

It was by an act of Congress that casino gaming on reservations has been allowed. In 1988, Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, which made legal bingo parlors and casinos, and created a National Indian Gaming Commission to oversee gaming affairs (Rand and Light 33). It was through this legislation that tribes were given the ability to bring new economic revenue to their reservations. If casinos were to be established they had to meet five purposes: fund tribal governmental operations and programs; provide for the general welfare of the tribe and its members; promote economic development; make charitable donations; and fund local, non-government agencies (Rand and Light 50). With this in mind tribes saw casinos as money.

So how have Prairie Winds Casino and Foxwoods Casino economically benefited the tribes in which they are located? To come to some comparison and contrast, one must first look at the huge benefits Foxwoods has had for the Pequot. As soon as its doors opened in 1992, Foxwoods became a boon. Using the monies gained from the venture, Hayward was able to accomplish what his depressed timber, greenhouse, and pizza industries could not do: pay the people (Eisler 105). With 10,000 people showing on its opening night, the casino began making two million dollars a day (Eisler 171). The first thing Hayward did with this money was begin to purchase adjacent lands for tribal homes and to increase the reservation's land size. Behind the casino, twenty $200,000 homes and 9,000 acres adjacent to the reservation were purchased, 1,250 being federally recognized (Eisler 194). A 30 million dollar city hall was built at Mashantucket and, by 1993, checks of $50,000 were given as cash payments to tribal members under the 1988 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. As of 2000, the tribe has been able to continue sharing these benefits with tribal members (Eisler 194). Large payments, free housing, free tuition to private schools and colleges, and free tribal health care have all been the perks granted by Foxwoods. Now, let's examine the Prairie Winds Casino and its economic impact on the Oglala.

According to a Harvard research study on why some American Indian tribes economically outperform others, sovereignty rights—concerning making independent decisions and directing resources—encourage economic growth (Aoki and Chatman 3). In the case of the Oglala Sioux, it is true that the Prairie Winds Casino has a minor impact on the reservation's financial situation, but the main problem with the casino is it is limited in how it can develop because South Dakota discourages Natives from pursuing gambling because it upsets government investments. The Oglala's Tribal-State Compact stipulates that the tribe can have no more than 250 gambling machines in its casino, even though there now are 309, and can have no bets over five dollars at a time (Gaming Compact 3). The state has done this so as to allow Deadwood, South Dakota the chance to gain most of the revenue reservations were to receive from gamblers (Giago). This has led to funding shortages and an unwavering dependency on federal

Joshua's essay on two American Indian gaming operations – one wildly profitable, one modestly so – illustrates his ability to conduct extensive research and to write cogent, balanced analysis. Outlining the historical trajectory from traditional Native gambling activities to the often-controversial context of today's Indian casinos, Joshua's essay allows readers to understand the complex politics and diversity of circumstances around gaming as a form of economic development and an assertion of Native American sovereignty.

—Jane Haladay

support. Take for instance the struggle the tribe has made just to get the funding for a jail in 2007. Because the crime rate on the Pine Ridge Reservation is high due to a constant problem with alcoholism, at 300% in 2008, it took a thirteen million dollar grant from the United States Department of Justice to build the facility ("Pine Ridge Jail"). Furthermore, the funding which the Prairie Winds Casino gives back to the reservation pales in comparison to the ten million dollars given by Congress as an appropriation just to help with the tribe's housing (Raymond).

The problem of full sovereignty in running the Mashantucket Pequot Reservation's economic interests has not been an issue in directing the revenue of the Foxwoods Casino. According to the Pequot's Tribal-State Compact with Connecticut, the Pequot have the full right to conduct all games of chance including para-mutual betting, and the casino can determine what the betting limits are for gamblers. The only role the state plays is in performing criminal background checks on potential employees to prevent the penetration of organized crime (Tribal-State Compact 15, 35). Clearly, state policies have played a critical role in determining if casinos are economically beneficial.

Yet, geography has also played an important role in the power of these casinos. Prairie Winds Casino is located in the southern district of Badlands National Park. Here, the facility is isolated from any rural populace and is surrounded by a hostile environment of ridges and peaks. The casino is dependent on 70% of its revenue solely from Natives living on the reservation and sporadic tourists (Lewis). A United States Department of Transportation study done for the reservation found that in 2003, $6,947,742 worth of outside revenue came into the reservation's counties of Shannon and Jackson. This was in comparison to $151,685,199 of revenue that poured into the Northern section of Badlands National Park and Mount Rushmore (2). Also, because South Dakota does not keep up the roads on the reservation, and the main route into Pine Ridge is two-laned, this prevents tourists from even considering Prairie Winds as an option (Transportation Investments 2). In contrast to this is the case of Foxwoods. Foxwoods Casino and Resort is built between two major cities: New York and Boston. In this economic sector, there is a large, wealthy population as well as high stakes players who enjoy making huge bets. The roads around the casino have been improved and the casino itself now holds well over 8,500 parking spaces for visitor convenience (D'Hauteserre 1).

Now, the major question: Have Prairie Winds and Foxwoods ushered in a renewed cultural interest for the Oglala Sioux and the Mashantucket Pequot? Obviously, these two tribes have had differences in their ability to fund tribal programs, the third requirement under the IGRA (Rand and Light 33). And they differ in their ability to spark cultural interests as well. The development and success of Foxwoods has given the Pequot the money for the development of a heritage center, which showcases the tribe's past. The Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, a state-of-the-art facility which showcases the Pequot heritage and Native North America through cultural and archaeological exhibits, educational workshops, a theatre, Native craft days, and a Native restaurant, was established with 193.4 million dollars of Foxwoods funds. Since its opening in 1998, the museum has worked along with researchers in documenting over 250 archaeological sites on the reservation as well as show-cased the Native artisans and vendors in the Connecticut region and outside communities ("About the Museum"). On the other hand, the Oglala Sioux continue to experience major issues on the reservation concerning crime, depression, and unemployment. Coupled with the fact that, according to the Red Cloud Museum, if everyone on the reservation received money from the casino they would get fifteen cents a month, no spark in preserving the Oglala cultural heritage has occurred. There has been talk of a Lakota Heritage Center being built, but the fact that the average Lakota language speaker is 65 years old speaks for the cultural interest of the tribe ("Facts About"). The Oglala Sioux need major economic changes to occur before tribal members will be willing to put aside their individual troubles for the benefit of the reservation.

In conclusion, the economic and cultural success of the Mashantucket Pequot and the Oglala Sioux differ hugely. The Pequot's success has

stemmed from their location and good relationship to Connecticut. However, the Oglala Sioux have not been so fortunate and are now planning on building a second class II casino, East Winds, in Martin, South Dakota to attempt to catch revenue from Nebraska residents (Moon). Will this be successful? Time will tell.

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The Hindu Goddess

By Courtney Thomas

Courtney Thomas is currently pursuing a degree in social work and aspires to continue her education in the Master of Social Work – Advanced Standing degree program at UNCP. She has a passion for diversity of people, ideas, culture, and, most of all, imagination. She is constantly in awe of the human spirit and its capacity to thrive in the most unlikely of places. As stated by Ralph Waldo Emerson "to be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."

The Hindu goddess has long been seen as a force of mysterious and magnificent power. She often possesses magnified aspects of femininity's greatness and is seen as an idol for male and female worshippers. However, like human women, her journey to independence has shaken her identity, often leading to the goddess's transformation into a being that is both terrible and wrathful. Despite her continued metamorphosis the Hindu goddess has yet been able to seize the name of the Great Mother Goddess.

In early Vedic texts the role of the goddess was one of subordination to her more prominent male deities (Flood, 1996). In this tradition the goddess was often referred to simply as the consort of a male deity. These early traditions often supported the idea of the extremely devoted wife, like the goddess Pavarti or Sita, who glorifies her husband as a god (Kinsley, 1986). The goddess was also considered a more physical representation of her more powerful male counterpart. The goddess during this time did not match up to the strength and popularity of male deities. This is evidenced by the absence of a goddess that is comparable to the supremacy and the sovereignty of god-heads such as Brahma, Siva, and Visnu as described in Vedic scriptures (Preston, 1985). Goddesses in Vedic tradition held small roles and appeared mostly in regional community worship (Preston, 1985).

The goddess did not ascend to the level of an all-encompassing Great Mother Goddess Devi, also known as Durga, until her appearance in a section of the Markandeya Purana, called the Devi-Mahatmya (Pintchman, 1994). The Puranas promoted a more developed concept of the supreme mother goddess who, like Brahma, Siva, and Visnu, was greater than all other deities. According to Pintchman (1994), in the Devi-Mahatmya "[the Goddess] is described as the ultimate, highest reality, a description that is often applied in other texts to whichever god is considered to be Brahman" (p. 119). In this text the goddess finally rises to a level in which, independent of any male deity, she is the cradle of all creation.

This break away from the tradition of subordinate female role had both benefits and consequences for the image of the independent goddess. As a benefit of her promotion to that of ultimate creator, the Goddess in her omnipotent glory was able to encompass the form of all goddesses. In this way all goddesses represent different aspects of the one supreme Mother Goddess or Devi. Like her god-head predecessors, she is able to display the vastness of her power by her inability to be contained in a single form.

The goddess's declaration of independence from the un-mitigating rule of the male deity also causes a divide in the characterizations of the goddess. This divide views the more self-reliant form of the goddess as a potential source of instability, ferocity, and disorderliness, whereas the goddess that recognizes the power of her male counterpart is viewed as stable, loving, and civilized (Kinsley, 1986). For example the goddess Kali, who is often depicted as independent of any male deity, is characterized as having dark skin, sharp teeth, wild menacing eyes, and blood-stained lips. She also wears a necklace of human heads, demands a blood offering, and entices men to take part in her lustful exploits (Kinsley, 1986). According to Babb (1975), "when female dominates male the pair is sinister; when male dominates female the pair is benign" (as cited in Preston, 1985, p. 12). As a consequence of her independence from a male

the goddess seems to embody many of the negative aspects of a woman who has strayed away from the idealized view of the role of a Hindu woman.

As an extension of the idea of divisions in the characterizations of the goddess, Flood (1996) indicates that deities are either hot or cool. Flood (1996) describes hot deities as those that are "associated with passion, hot diseases such as small pox which need to be cooled, pollution, and lower social layers," and cool deities as "associated with detachment, the cooling of passion, purity, and higher social levels" (p. 193). As a result of this classification many of the forms of the ultimate female goddess are considered hot, whereas many of the male deities are considered to be cool. Hot goddesses such as Kali have also been known to be re-birthed as, or to intercede for, a usually cool goddess such as Pavarti or Durga as an exemplification of the ferocity of the goddess (Kinsley, 1986).

It is critical to note that in this comparison it is the hot deity that needs the help of the cool deity to reach stability. It is also worthy of recognition that the term hot, used to refer many female deities, describes a harsh and extreme measurement of temperature whereas the term cool, used to refer to male deities, is a description that acts as a median of stability between either extremity (hot or cool) of temperature. The Great Mother Goddess, however, supersedes either of these descriptions, as she can be either hot or cool whenever she prefers (Flood, 1996).

Another division that arose as the result of the arrival of the independent Goddess is the two natures that exist within the Goddess herself. O'Flaherty described these dual natures as the goddess of tooth, and the goddess of breast (Flood, 1996). The goddess of tooth is unyielding, blood thirsty and vicious; she is full of eroticism and either dominates her male consort, or is single and "free to attack men" (as cited in Flood, 1996, p.174). The goddess of tooth is also carnivorous, requiring blood sacrifice and alcohol to appease her ferocity (Flood, 1996). The goddess of tooth is a stark contrast to the goddess of breast who is a yielding partner to her dominating husband and who exemplifies the essence of a fertile, maternal, and generous mother (Flood, 1996). Once again, as the Supreme Mother Goddess, Devi possesses the capability to evoke her power as both a goddess of tooth and a goddess of breast.

The Great Mother Goddess is often depicted as a source of creativity, nourishment, and stability. The fierceness of the Great Mother Goddess is as important as her benevolence as she must have the power, like human mothers, to protect, punish, and supply for her children. The Great Mother Goddess has the ability to uphold the stability of the world as well as destroy it. She is the embodiment of a universal mother who is mother to everything in the universe. Ram Prasad states that "the Divine Mother is in every creature. While you eat, think, you are offering her an oblation" (as cited in Kinsley, 1986). Her pervasiveness is not limited to the living creature but, like her god-head predecessors, is itself existence.

The Great Mother Goddess can also be seen as a symbol of fruitfulness and fertility for both nature and human reproduction. In some forms, such as the form of Durga, the Goddess and the earth are one and the same (Preston, 1985). The Goddess, when associated with fertility, has much visual and metaphorical emphasis on her hips, breast, thighs, buttocks, and womb (Kinsley, 1986).

Capable of eternal attentiveness to her subjects, the Great Mother Goddess plays an important role in the everyday lives of her followers. Like a human mother she cares about the worries of her children and has great compassion and understanding for her worshippers (Preston, 1985). Devotees may pray to the Goddess to mediate during financial problems, fertility issues, disputes, and bad weather. Her followers may even ask for her protection against enemies that may intend to cause harm.

Goddess worshippers are known as Shaktas or Saktas. The name for goddess worshipers is derived from the word Sakti, which describes the power of the feminine as the substance of the universe (Flood, 1996). The worship of the goddess in Shaktism does not focus as much on asceticism as other Hindu beliefs in gods may purport. Tantrism, a form of Shaktism, encourages its devotees to embrace all aspects of life including the sexual. According to Preston (1985), for one to obtain spiritual clarity one must accept that the body is a microcosm of the larger universe, and therefore

Hinduism is the most diverse and complex of all the major world religions. At least as much as any other aspect of Hinduism, the role of the goddess reflects that tremendous diversity and complexity. Courtney Thomas in her essay clearly and effectively expounds upon that role with its various countervailing angles and dimensions. In so doing she has valuable things to say about gender roles in both the East and the West, both historically and contemporarily.

—David Nikkel

join together in sexual acts as a practice of combining opposing elements in the universe and discovering that they are one.

Worship of the goddess as a Sakta is not the only way one can declare one's devotion to the goddess (Morris, 2006). Many Hindus worship the goddess in some way though they may not consider her their supreme deity. Small villages also have their own form of the goddess, which they worship as their Mother Goddess. The goddesses of such small villages have through time assimilated their goddess as another representation of Devi, the Great Mother Goddess. Often the village goddess is a hot deity that can both bring destruction and disease and cure it if she is rightly appeased (Kinsley, 1986).

My background affects my view of a Great Mother Goddess as a supreme deity both because I am a woman and because I have been raised in a monotheistic male-dominated religion. It is difficult to imagine the supreme deity in the form of a woman. We in Western society have been taught that the woman is a very wayward creature and is easily provoked to sin. According to this view, the woman is also very weak in her mental and physical capacities to overcome challenges, excluding childbirth. Therefore she is simply not a suitable archetype to serve as the representation of an all-powerful, omnipresent God.

The woman's ability to bear children, according to the views of Western society, does not make her strong but weak. Pregnancy is often viewed as a sickness and having children makes a woman vulnerable and preoccupied more with the affairs of her children than the affairs of the world. This is epitomized in the lack of female persons of leadership. When the issue of having a woman as a leader is confronted, many people are fearful of the idea because of the notion that a woman will make irrational and emotionally driven decisions. There is also speculation that the woman may not be able to handle the full duties of her household and that of a quality leadership position at the same time. Instead of being idealized as the responsible protector, as many mothers in reality truly are, the woman is considered a nuisance and a risk to the stability of society.

The belief in the omnipotent male deity that pervades all Western monotheistic religions only confirms the notion that women cannot be a source of godly power. Mary, mother of Jesus, is the only woman who plays a significant role in Christianity. However, instead of Mary being invoked as a reason to praise the power of motherhood in women, she is viewed as an exception of purity and motherly strength because she, unlike the average woman, was favored by God. Still, even Mary shows signs of the weakness of womanhood as in the biblical story of Jesus depicted as a boy: Mary frantically searches for her missing twelve-year-old son after finding out that he wasn't among the rest of the family and after three days finally finds her child; when she inquires about why he had left his family to remain in the temple Jesus responds "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my father's house?" (Luke 2:49). Although Mary was acting as a rightfully concerned mother, I have often heard pastors indicate that this is an example of how women are more preoccupied with the worldliness of mothering than they are with spirituality.

Despite the influence of Western religion (and its sexism) on me, I can understand why the idea of a Great Mother Goddess could be appealing and serve as a function of everyday life. Unlike that of males, the traditional gender role for females is that of a woman who is nurturing and loving to their families throughout their lifetime. The woman bears children, gathers and cooks food to prepare for her family, makes clothes for her family to wear, nurses her family when they are sick, and ensures that the house is in order by cleaning and ensuring that each of her members of her household behave and are well kept. It is then much easier to understand how the idea of a benevolent mother would be more appealing than the idea of a benevolent father which often contradicts what we as humans witness in reality.

Although the role of the father in society is changing, the majority of fathers are depicted as playing a role that is more distant from his family. He is portrayed as the provider for his family but, because he is away from the home often, he is not able to attend to his children as aptly as the mother. Fathers may often be preoccupied with being cared for more than they are concerned with

caring for and showing love towards their children. The idea of a Mother Goddess may therefore be seen as a more personal goddess to her devotees. Because she is a part of nature and the earth, she is physically close to her devotee, unlike the distant ascetic god of many Hindu beliefs. This allows her to be more easily integrated into the everyday life of worshippers who may appreciate the attentiveness and the close proximity they receive when serving a goddess.

For the woman the idea of the goddess is a double-edged sword. Depictions of the sometimes terrifying nature of the independent goddess with her drunkenness, thirst for blood, and unrestrained sexuality represent a taboo for human women who are discouraged from such behavior. Therefore, if a woman sought to be like the goddess in her independent nature, it is possible that she may be shunned by society in both Western and Eastern cultures. The myths of the terrible nature of independent goddesses and their tendency for disorder act as proof that women need to be subservient to a man to maintain balance and stability in life.

This is the same mechanism for social order that is posed in a Western society that champions the independence of a man and spurns a woman who is independent of a husband and family. Often in Western society the childless and husbandless woman is stigmatized after the woman becomes a certain age. It is also a taboo for a woman to admit her lack of interest in marriage and childbearing when she is young. This is especially true in the southern part of the United States, which places the value of a woman on her ability to mother and to be a wife.

I also find it useful to view the Great Mother Goddess as uncontainable in one simple image. This idea is easier for me to accept in the female form than it is in a male form, because I feel that it is an accurate portrayal of the human woman. One of the challenges that women face today is that society wants to simplify the idea of a woman. Society wants to place women in categories in which a woman is either a sex kitten or a shrew; she is either a faithful wife or a promiscuous Jezebel; she is either completely devoted to her husband or in competition with him. However these characterizations do not accurately depict the vast and diverse nature of a woman. In reality a woman can embody many of these aspects and still be considered a great mother.

Through the women's rights movement and changing societal standards, women in the western world today have the opportunity to access power that has been monopolized by males for centuries. Many women share in the responsibility as breadwinner of the household as well as perform the duties of a wife and mother. Some feminists may use this as proof that women are inherently more powerful than men, mainly because of a woman's ability to perform in multiple roles. However, unlike the all-encompassing Mother Goddess, many human women find it difficult to satisfactorily fill each of these roles to the full extent.

With the onset of reality television, and the popularity of pop stars and actresses, the goddess has reawakened to once again take on both a fierce and beautiful form as a diva. This modern, generic form of the goddess, however, has often perplexed and angered me. My anger stems from the habit of the media to highlight and even praise the negative aspects of the modern-day Devi, the divas of entertainment. This, to me, is a modern-day example of demonizing women who are both beautiful and have a spirit of independence. However, the media has demoted the female status even more by depicting many of these television divas as superficial, temperamental women who devour men for their money.

Women today use the image of the goddess to find strength and independence in their femininity. However, as interesting as the tooth goddess may appear, the breast goddess is also needed to evenly balance the role of goddess. As exemplified by the all-encompassing nature of Devi, it is the woman who provides stability and wellness to her family that earns the title of Great Mother. In this way the Hindu goddess will continue to live on, transforming and increasing her strength, as human women continue to discover liberation.

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