

Is your homecoming theme sexist?

Do themes like “zookeepers and animals” objectify female students?

by Darcie Kim

Homecoming at New Trier is a unique experience, with people dressing up in themes ranging from ‘80s skiers to fantasy football. The variety of homecoming themes is extensive. In fact, the wide diversity of themes adds to the overall hype of the dance. However, some people have recently begun to question and take offense at certain themes they feel are sexist towards women.

It is uncommon for a school dance to encourage students to wear costumes rather than the typical formal dress code. This freedom has led past groups to do costumes such as hunters and prey, pirates and booty, and zookeepers and animals. In these cases, the girls were the prey, the booty, and the animals.

People have begun to notice the possibly sexist implications of these themes, and have claimed that they objectify females.



Students of the class of 2015 attend homecoming dressed up as firemen and dalmatians, monsters and little girls. | FB

However, “I would say that people are reading too much into [these themes]. Sure, some of them are rather suggestive but that doesn’t make them sexist. It’s a school dance and you’re supposed to be having fun, and what that entails is up to you, not other people,” expressed senior Miles Purcell.

Other students feel that these themes have crossed the line that separates fun from sexist. “Girls are not anyone’s property. While hunters and prey may seem like a funny joke, we are not the punchline,” said junior Margot Feigen.

Feigen also explained why she believes girls concede to

certain themes. “Girls often strive to be cute or get attention from the amount of skin we are showing.”

Junior Isabella Roselli agreed with Feigen that sexism exists in the context of school dances, but she had a different reason to explain why girls do not speak up. “[People] want to seem like the cool girl archetype. I think deep down, sexism is something all women understand and hate, but men act as though we don’t deserve to be angry about sexism in our culture. If you get to go to the dance with someone you really like, why would you want to butt in and say the theme is sexist? Girls are afraid to say something,” she said.

Some students argue that girls do not have to follow the dress up for a theme if they do not want to, or they can change the names of themes. “Let’s say I’ve been assigned to be ‘booty’ for a ‘pirates and booty’ theme and am uncomfortable with that. I could go as a literal treasure chest. It would be funny and I would be sticking it to anyone who expected otherwise,” said Purcell.

The one thing that Purcell, Feigen, and Roselli all agreed upon was that sexism is present in our current society. Whether or not that sexism is a part of our school dance is still up for debate, but its existence as something that needs



to be eliminated is indisputable. Although women have been victims of sexism for generations, more advancements have been made in the past century than in all of history.

As Purcell put it, “Sexism has been a part of human society since its beginning, and only recently have there been huge strides in gender equality. Sexism is an old, outdated part of society that we are progressively getting rid of.”

A two-week change in culture

Students get a sneak preview of studying abroad

by Jesse McCauley

It’s not every day that students are able to take their studies outside of school. It’s also not everyday that students are able to study abroad. That’s usually a perk of college.

However, this past summer, students enrolled in either Chinese or Spanish got to do just that. These two-week trips gave students the opportunity to enrich their understanding of the language and the culture as well.

Sara Chao and Julia Kessel lead the China trip, while Jenny Pilewski, Maria Barraza, Stephanie Gamauf, and Ana Del Rey took their students to Spain. Prior to both these trips, students had to do research and attend meetings in order to prepare. After that, they were able to experience everything in person.

The first week of Spain consisted of visits to Madrid, Sevilla, and Granada, where students were free to eat, shop, and interact with locals.

Senior Jack Brown said, “I enjoyed Sevilla and seeing the cathedral there because they have a lot of history.” Brown also appreciated the flamenco dancing and music.

After a packed schedule of sightseeing, each student spent the second half of the trip staying with a host family. This involved sleeping at their house, eating meals with them, and even touring the local high school with the teenager of the family. To many of the students, this was the best part of the trip, and many also said that the kids there were excited to spend time with American kids.

“When we visited their school, every single kid wanted to meet us. It was the most hospitable experience I’ve ever had,” said senior Stephen Hajjar.

Hajjar loved the family stay because not only did he improve



Students visited historic sites in Spain and China. | Del Rey, Baldwin

his Spanish, but he also experienced the cultural shift. He noticed that Spain is a country that values family and opposes materialism.

Senior Morgan Sheridan also enjoyed this part of the trip. “The highlight of my trip was definitely the family stay. It was so interesting to see how their family lives differently than mine,” said Sheridan. For example, a usual dinner for her host family began as late as 10:30.

“To see the faces of the kids when they first speak Spanish with the family and the family understands them is my favorite part. They realize that what they learn in class can be used in the real world,” said Del Ray.

Spanish students weren’t the only ones who got to apply their learning.

In China, students explored Shanghai, Beijing, Tiananmen Square, and many rural areas. Students were able to climb the Great Wall, ride camels, and visit a school, among other activities.

“The highlights of the trip were climbing the Great Wall and shopping in the underground markets,” said senior Connor Baldwin.

During the trip, students kept their own personal blogs and wrote about what they learned and what they did each day.

Baldwin learned that outside of the classroom, there are many ways to understand a different language and culture. He believes that this was one of the best trips of his life.

“I learned that China has a very rich culture that is centuries old and that the people are extremely proud of their nationality there,” said senior Emma Yang.

Baldwin and Yang also discovered many differences between the two cultures. Baldwin noticed that the kids there were very proper and always wore their finest clothes for them.

Yang also observed the serious demeanor of other teenagers. However, she found that most locals were very happy to greet them.

Kessel also commented that the locals always loved to see her students and even took pictures with them.

These two trips were fulfilling experiences for students, most of whom had never before experienced these cultures outside of their classrooms.

“We get to take the kids to the real scenario. When we get to the country, everything becomes reality,” said Del Rey.

Students decry textbooks that are never used

Textbooks are collecting dust on the shelves

by Katie Kim

One of the worst days of summer is when you get the letter in the mail with a list of expensive textbooks to buy for the school year. This is not the worst day solely due to the reminder that school is starting soon, but because students expect that the textbooks will not even be used in class.

“I always get my textbooks before the start of school. On the first day of my math class, my teacher announced ‘not to buy the eBook.’ I tried getting my money back but my textbook was non-refundable,” said senior Thea Riggio.

Many students buy their textbooks with their own money to avoid asking their parents for money.

It is disappointing enough to buy a non-refundable eBook, but it may even be worse to buy a non-refundable textbook that weighs down your bag and hurts your back.

“Last year, I was told to buy multiple textbooks and one of them was a thick, hard-covered, physical textbook that was expensive. I never ended up using it at all,” said junior Jillian Bock.

“I purchased a \$66 textbook freshman year but didn’t even end up touching it. It was a complete waste and I wasn’t able to get my money back,” explained sophomore Devrim Tak.

Edutopia, an education foundation, has worked for over five years with urban high school AP Government and Environmental Science teachers to figure out ways to expand learning from textbooks.

Edutopia workers found that many students do not ever use their textbooks because teachers often change their listed

textbook for that specific course to a different electronic book.

New Trier requires students to purchase their own textbooks. Many students feel that the amount currently charged is absurd.

However, senior Samantha D’Egidio shared, “I know many of my friends usually share one or two textbooks to save money. I also don’t mind sending a couple pictures of my textbooks to my classmates in need.”

“My sophomore year, I took chemistry as my science and the required book for that course was a pretty pricey eBook but we never ended up using the book for the curriculum,” said junior Aidan Cahill.

“It was a complete waste and I wasn’t able to get my money back.”

However, many teachers do try to remain loyal to their original textbook lists.

“I know a lot of people that experienced this conflict but it has never happened to me. I think it might be because I’ve only had to buy a couple hardcover textbooks. I mostly only need to buy eBooks for all my classes,” said sophomore Tina Hong.

Imagine your freshman self, ecstatic to start your first year of high school. You have a different colored binder, labeled and ready for each class, even your elective. You have your stack of textbooks that are worth at least \$150 all together. But, little do you know, you will never touch most of your textbooks.