

Dear Professor Belli and readers,

The process of this Research Project was somewhat of a difficult task. The research project was assigned by Professor Belli before Thanksgiving break. In honesty, I only glanced at what was expected. I understood that it was an individual project, which was great for me since I do not enjoy being in group projects. Also, I understood that we could pick our very own topic, but it had to be connected to the science fiction genre and it had to pass the ultimate “so what” test. So one day, I sat down in front of my computer, and I thought about the variety of topics I could choose from. There were many topics that grasped my mind. Topics such as time travel, the multiverse, parallel universes, alien invasions, space travel, temporal paradox, an interstellar war. But one topic had caught my attention. And that topic was uplifting. At first, I thought that uplifting was about the enlightenment or advancement of a person. But by doing some intense researching, I found out what uplifting truly meant. Uplifting is the use of technology or artificial intelligence to improve the overall intelligence of a non-human species. By doing this research, I found this topic to be familiar. I realized that I have seen this process of uplifting in the 2011 film “Planet of the Apes” and in various animated cartoons. My interest in this topic increased.

When I finally chose my topic, I crafted out my first draft of the proposal. In this draft, you had to provide as much detail and explanation as possible. For my research, I went through multiple sites. I found articles that provided an overview of uplifting, and proposed different claims of whether uplifting was a great or bad idea? During this process, I found out that most people would agree that uplifting was rather harmful to the animal species. Although there was one person named George Dvorsky, who claimed that uplifting is an ethical imperative, meaning that this issue is morally correct and vital for mankind. I understood his claims but I was still in between the benefits and consequences of uplifting. I find this topic of uplifting interesting. The genre of science fiction is known for its different possibilities. Uplifting can have different possibilities. This topic should interest others because if there's a possibility that uplifting is a success, who knows what the animals are truly capable of. With enhanced minds and intellect, uplifted animals could possibly govern their own cities. Or uplifting could possibly harm the natural environment. Since I was indifferent on the topic of uplifting, I chose to provide a brief overview and only some examples that I can use to help my proposal.

After the first draft of my proposal was completed, it was time for peer reviews. Peer reviews were held during class time. During this process, other classmates and I read each other's draft proposal. I was lucky enough to be paired in a group of four of my classmates, Christopher, Tyler, Mohammad, and myself. Basically, during this session of peer review, I received questions on what my stance was. I was asked if there were current experiments of uplifting going on in the real world. I was asked on how I would add my own perspective to this topic. All of this information turned out to be beneficial when I was crafting my second proposal. To my surprise, the topic had caught the attention of my classmates. Also, while reading over my own proposal, I realized that it had not answered the “so what” test. Later into the week, I gathered my peer review edits and my brand new thoughts and began to draft out my second proposal.

In my second proposal, I refined my topic. I found three other sources that I can use to back up my argument. In my first paragraph, I wrote about how uplifting can be a controversial topic. There have been serious debates regarding the ethics, benefits, and consequences of it. In my second paragraph, I offer my own perspective of uplifting being morally right. I thought long

and hard about how I was going to answer this question. I did not want to seem like an animal murderer. I wrote about the possibility of uplifting working on humans and how it could benefit us. One of the benefits I mentioned is that if uplifting were to work on animals, we can use the same technology to increase our own intelligence. I then wrote about one of the major consequences of uplifting, which is the ultimate mass extinction of a species. From my first peer review of edits, I was asked multiple times about my stance. I chose to argue that the uplifting of animals is cruel and not needed. So for my research, I will be looking into the consequences of uplifting. Also, in my paper, I included the first prime example that I will be using, the 2011 film, "Rise of the Planet Apes". This film helped shape my perspective of how animal enhancement is wrong. I feel like that this topic is important because it speaks upon the future. Many futurists, who are people that make predictions about what the future holds, think that uplifting is possible. In my second round of peer review edits, my classmates agreed on my stance. They found it to be compelling and arguable.

After the second proposal, Professor Belli was conducting individual one-on-one conversations. Basically, she wanted to check up on you to see if this topic was both manageable and important to the class. During my conference, she needed clarification on what uplifting is. I explained to her that there is much more information about uplifting that I had included. I find this to be a problem in my writing. Sometimes I find things that are connected to my topic but I do not include them because I do not know how to put in words. But in a regular discussion, I can speak my mind fully about the topic at hand. This research project opened my eyes in so many ways, through writing and researching. Also during my conference, she gave tips on my argument that I found to be beneficial. She explained the concept of social Darwinism, which I find to very interesting. Social Darwinism is different from what uplifting is. Social Darwinism uses the phrase "survival of the fittest". In the process of uplifting, it is also like that. I found Professor Belli's advice to be helpful in editing my second proposal.

Now that the proposals were finished it was time to create my lightening presentation. These presentations were supposed to be quick and precise. In the short amount of time, presenters were asked to provide basic information, citations, and images. In the creation of my presentation, I forgot to include an in-text citation. When I was presenting in front of the class, I felt a bit nervous and I lost track of my words. In the end, tips were given to help enhance my presentation. I took all these comments in and thought about different ways on how to fix my presentation. I need to answer to the "so what" test. I need to stay on my argument. And I need to grab the attention of the audience.

In conclusion, I found this research project to be time-consuming. I am not saying that it is a bad thing, but I enjoyed my time doing the research, drafting out the proposal, creating the presentation, and learning about a new topic. The proposals were difficult to grasp at first. But through the peer reviews and the conference with Professor Belli, it got easier. I enjoyed the research project overall. Ultimately, I wish I had more time with this project.

Best,  
Vishal Naraine