2017-2019 Award-Winning Student Essays

The Roadrunner Review: A Journal of Student Writing

The University of Texas at San Antonio Writing Program
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Dear Readers,

The Writing Program is excited to present *The Roadrunner Review: A Journal of Student Writing*, a project highlighting UTSA undergraduate student writing.

During the 2017-2019 academic years, as part of its effort to recognize outstanding student writing, The Writing Program offered a series of 27 writing scholarships for undergraduate students: four $2,000 and seven $1,000 scholarships for Freshman Composition I students; four $2,000 and nine $1,000 scholarships for Freshman Composition II students; one $2,000 AFROTC scholarship; and two $2,500 Writing across the Curriculum scholarships (for sophomores and juniors). Each member of The Writing Program’s Academic Policy and Procedures Committee read the submitted student essays and selected the winners based on the effectiveness of the essay in communicating its message.

The essays published in this journal represent the winners of The Writing Program scholarships in the fall 2017 through the spring 2019 semesters.

Scholarship applications for next year’s scholarships are available on The Writing Program website: www.utsa.edu/twp

Congratulations to our students.

Gail Pizzola, PhD
Director
The Writing Program
Taylor Allen hails from Dallas and is a graduate of Trinity Christian School in Cedar Hill, TX. She was the Student Body President in high school and has continued her school service work by being a cheerleader at UTSA. Taylor is a Kinesiology major with a concentration in Health and Science with a minor in Spanish. She plans to become a physical therapist, hoping to use her degree to provide therapy across the globe. English has always been her favorite subject, so she is excited and thankful to be awarded the Judith G. Gardner scholarship from The Writing Program.

The Art of Peaceful Protesting

The Civil Rights Movement of the mid-20th century brought the first mass examples of peaceful protests, and the U.S. President during some of that time, John F. Kennedy, once remarked, “Those who make peaceful revolution impossible, make violent revolution inevitable.” As Kennedy saw these results firsthand, it is clear that the attempt to cease peaceful protests will create violence. Peaceful protesting has been used for years to introduce issues to the public, but unfortunately, peaceful events turning violent is often the case. There is a thin line between peaceful protesting and rioting, and although aims differ, we can distinguish the two by recognizing established law, law reinforcement, and practice.

To properly peacefully protest, we must first recognize established law. The First Amendment states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances” (Legal Information Institute). Our First Amendment ensures that the content of speech cannot be limited by the government. However, regulation restrictions set by the government can control the location, timing, details of the event, and some content based restrictions. Restrictions may apply if protests’ content are “narrowly tailored” to serve a government related interest. Though we have the right to practice our freedom of speech, many protests include crude signs and chants that offend and aggravate the target, along with many others.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is the organization that maintains general rights that protect our right to march, picket, circulate petitions, and other forms of peaceful protesting (Free Speech and the Right to Protest). Often, protests fail due to the lack of understanding of what the government can and cannot regulate. Indeed, American citizens have the right to freedom of speech, but there are rules that still apply. “Police and government officials are allowed to place certain narrowly drawn “time, place and manner” restrictions on the exercise of First Amendment rights” (Free Speech and the Right to Protest). Although these rights supply strong protection for freedom of the people, how they are exercised may be regulated. The ACLU states that any given restrictions must be applied to all speech regardless of its point of view.

Throughout history, protesting has been classified in various categories ranging from justified to unethical. Consider the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and the Neo-Nazi protest in August 2017. The two protests differed in aims but resulted in the same outcome,
violence. The Montgomery protesters remained peaceful even after being mistreated and beaten (Trueman). The Montgomery Bus Boycott was such a success because their reason for boycotting the bus system remained as the highlight of their protest, which emphasized the brutality upon them. Whereas, the Neo-Nazi’s demonstrates a violent protest that ended in 19 injured people, five of which were critically injured, and the murder of a women, all who were peaceful protesters against the rally. (Wilson). Thus, striking media nationwide over the devastating events of the protest rather than its purpose. This protest failed to be justifiable due to the lack of reinforcement of laws among the people. The government must reinforce regulations with the people in order for them to properly protest. Protesting will continue to fail to be peaceful if we allow violent demonstrations to be justified.

Many times, police turn on protesters with violence, and sometimes protesters turn violent when confronted by police unjustly. Jesse Marczyk, Ph.D., evolutionary psychologist, explains that, “such violence is expected, understandable, and sometimes even morally justified or praiseworthy,” but the problem is, citizens lack the knowledge of their rights. When we lack knowledge of rights and regulations for protesting, we fail to fully grasp the advantages and potential outcomes. The First Amendment of the American Constitution presents to us how to exercise our rights correctly. The government is not perfect, but the aim is for equality, and strengthening our justice system will establish and thicken the line between protesting and rioting.

Defining peace is the first step to reinforcing existing regulations. Oxford Dictionaries describes peace as a freedom from or the cessation of war or violence, and this includes during times of political upset. “Non-violent political movements, like those associated with leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi, appear to yield results” (Marczyk). As we have seen, protests can end in both negative and positive outcomes, but non-violent protests are the key to success. Non-violent campaigns have a success rate of about 73%, while violent campaigns see success rates of about 33% (Marczyk). Reinforcing positivity through campaigns will not only cause them to be more successful, but will also provide a general definition of peace to use during protesting.

Last spring, everyone’s favorite history teacher at my high school, Trinity Christian in Cedar Hill, Texas, was fired over reasons the student body felt to be unfair, and students protested, but I would not consider it peaceful. Their actions resulted in vandalism, interruptions in classrooms, and chaos for weeks. Their vengeance was aimed towards the board, but without intending it, their frustrations were on the sanitation crew, resulting in an un-peaceful protest. Their actions went unnoticed because of their miscalculated target. Often, protests fail because the protesters do not target the proper audience. The art of protesting is organizing a protest that will bring great results with positive acknowledgement. When property is destroyed and uninvolved citizens are disrupted by violent campaigns, it generates the need for social support (Marczyk). “While I disagree with what you have to say, I will defend to the death, your right to say it” is a commonly misattributed quote that encourages the practice of freedom of speech among the community. When we differentiate the target from those affected by campaigner violence, we see the devastating results of a violent and miscalculated protest. This is why the First Amendment is so vital in our justice system.
In recent events in the National Football League, kneeling during the National Anthem has become a method of peaceful protesting among athletes. An uproar has scurried across the nation due to the perceived rebellion against the National Anthem and American flag, but the athlete’s goal is not to rebel against a particular enemy but for them to acknowledge that they are hurting. Nick Wright, Fox Sports host, states that “when people march, they are not protesting traffic” (German). Wright elaborates that The Anthem was just a “vehicle” to drive the athletes protest to their goal. Rosa Parks practices the same technique of using the bus as a vehicle to drive injustice to equality among African Americans. Fueled with motivation to seek acknowledgement on the journey to reach equality, both NFL athletes and Rosa Parks gained attention to their issues. We the people use peaceful protesting to shine a light on an issue we believe deserves attention, often arising after an uproar or change targeting a certain audience. “Regardless of how unpopular or controversial your beliefs may be, you have the right to express your views” (Free Speech and the Right to Protest).

John F. Kennedy’s remark about peaceful revolution proves that protesting does not create violence, but negativity and inequality does. Standing up for something you believe in is a right we all share, along with the ability to practice freedom of speech. Just like wearing pink in October does not cure breast cancer but raises awareness in something someone finds to be important. Whether you are sitting down, pinking out, or kneeling, exercising our rights correctly are important because freedom cannot protect itself. Standing up for your right to protest can be challenging, but with definition, practice and repetition we can establish the line between protests and riots and accomplish successful protest.
Works Cited


An Analysis of Propaganda in World War II

World War II provides substantial data regarding the social and psychological aspects of war. Wartime propaganda illustrates how advertisers unite their countries, maintain support, and recruit new troops. Propaganda is “the spreading of ideas and information for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person,” as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Jib Fowles’ article on “Advertising’s Fifteen Basic Appeals” helps to analyze several examples of American propaganda during World War II. As the armed forces fought overseas, they needed the support of the people at home. Using different advertising techniques, advertisers successfully gave the general population the feeling of equal significance to those called to the line of duty. Memorable figures, such as “Rosie, the Riveter,” were essential in establishing strength for women. Other figures, particularly Uncle Sam, were pivotal in recruiting servicemen and maintaining the production of supplies.

In an iconic advertisement, Rosie, the Riveter, empowered women in the absence of millions of men during World War II. This poster reminded women at home they were equally as important as the troops abroad. In exclaiming “We Can Do It,” Rosie proselytizes women to understand the manageability of the jobs men left behind. This statement suggests success is not imminent, the key aspect of the proclamation. Her expression conveys determination, supporting the declaratory claim.

Fig. 1. The above is “Rosie, the Riveter” (“World War II Posters”).

Born and raised in San Antonio, Justin Ebel is pursuing his higher education in Biomedical Engineering at UTSA. He graduated from Ronald Reagan High School where he was actively involved in marching band. In his free time, he enjoys working out, spending time with friends, and exploring the outdoors. He commutes from home and lives with his family and three dogs.
Furthermore, the image maintains femininity through the makeup on her face, while pushing a masculine identity through the clenched fist, flexed bicep, and rolled up sleeves. The presence of Rosie, the Riveter, established a noteworthy reminder to women of their strength in difficult times.

In accordance with Fowles’ article on “Advertising’s Fifteen Basic Appeals,” this advertisement uses the need to achieve and the need for affiliation. The poster capitalizes on the need for affiliation through the diction of “we” alongside the visual of a fervent woman, enticing the viewer a desire to join Rosie in ideology. According to Henry A. Murray, the need to achieve stems from the inclination “to accomplish something difficult. To overcome obstacles and attain a high standard. To excel one’s self. To rival and surpass others,” while the need for affiliation is “to draw near and enjoyably cooperate or reciprocate with another” (qtd. in Fowles 282). Fowles provides a connection between this advertisement and its appeals. The need to achieve is a focal point due to the societal construct of the time, where men provided and women nurtured. The symbolism of a robust woman, Rosie, gave women the additional confidence to propel themselves into new social territory. Fowles’ need to achieve and the need for affiliation are highlighted in the poster as Rosie persuades readers with accomplishment and unity, respectively.

In addition to a call for strength and employment, other posters pushed women to join organizations such as the Red Cross and the military. At the time of the war, society favored a marital relationship in which the husband was the provider and the wife was the caregiver. This solidified ideology dictated much of American familial culture. However, a few years into the war, six million women entered the workforce, and by the end of the war, about 350,000 women served in the military (“The War”). Propaganda therefore proves effective in excavating vast quantities of women from the household and transitioning them into employment. World War II provided women with substantial ground in the fight for gender equality due to their newfound versatile application in society. With the absence of a broad population of men, an opportunity for women to illustrate the injustice in societal norms formed. Propaganda directed towards women had a fundamental impact on the result of the war and the result of gender equality decades later.

Fig. 2. A call to enlist in the army is pictured above (“World War II Posters”).
As Rosie, the Riveter, played an important role for women during the war, Uncle Sam made many appearances as well. In an analysis of Uncle Sam, the Encyclopædia Britannica identifies his origins back to the War of 1812. The story describes Samuel Wilson, who contributed to the soldiers in the army by sending packaged barrels of beef labeled, “U.S.,” representing government property. In doing so, the association between Sam Wilson and U.S. later manifested into an alternative meaning, Uncle Sam. His assistance during the war later made him an iconic American symbol, characterized by volunteerism, hard work, and patriotism. The symbolism behind Uncle Sam supports his materialization in propaganda during times of needed patriotism.

The above application of Uncle Sam illustrates how he was used to recruit soldiers for the military. Fowles' need for affiliation is most prevalent as Uncle Sam calls readers to support their country by fighting in the army. Uncle Sam is pictured in front of a bald eagle and American flag, beneath bold lettering enticing the viewer to “Defend your country,” and clothed in stars and stripes. Synthesized, these elements enhance Uncle Sam’s nationalism. Most of his attire lies on the ground and his sleeves are rolled up, indicating he has foregone normal life and joined the army. By identifying the viewer’s inclination to be patriotic, the advertiser uses Uncle Sam to affiliate this desire with joining the army.

Fig. 3. Uncle Sam ponders the results of wasted time in the above image (“World War II Posters”).

The above advertisement takes place in a similar setting to the former, as Uncle Sam dresses in patriotic clothing amidst a collection of aviation and marine vehicles. The application of the need to nurture, Murray defines as “to feed, help, support, console, protect, comfort, nurse, heal,” convinces readers the lives of the people overseas lie within their hands in stating, “Production means life or death,” a hefty proclamation for the working class. Evidence of the success of similar advertisements lie within the response to Franklin Roosevelt’s proclamation, “We must out-produce them overwhelmingly, so that there can be no question of our ability to provide a crushing superiority of equipment in any theatre of the world war” (“The War”). As the war ended, the United States rose to the top in production, housing “more than half of all industrial production in the world” (“The War”). The application of Uncle Sam in propaganda posters often varies, but from recruitment to support, the stern
and nationalistic “Uncle Sam,” proves effective. The widespread use of propaganda during World War II achieved its goal of reaching the entirety of the American population. The soldiers waging war across the world required continuous support from those who remained at home, which propaganda achieves. Rosie, the Riveter, and Uncle Sam appeared numerous times uniting men and women. Rosie transformed societal norms by bringing women out of the house and into the workforce, while Uncle Sam demanded loyalty and patriotism. Fowles’ article on “Advertising’s Fifteen Basic Appeals” identifies the need for affiliation, to achieve, and to nurture, which were used to captivate the public. World War II gave rise to valuable information about how propaganda establishes unity amidst chaos.

Works Cited
Isaiah Barbosa was born and raised in Amarillo, Texas. He is an aspiring eye surgeon and hopes to one day give the gift of sight back to impoverished communities around the world. As a graduate of Caprock High School, Isaiah not only excelled in his classes but was a member of the 2017 5A All-State band, being part of the top 2% of high school music students. Other than playing music, Isaiah loves to play sand volleyball and spend time with quality people. Isaiah is excited to see what his future holds for him and hopes to be a role model for his sisters and future children.

Genetic Engineering: A Biological Creation of Segregation
Redesigning the human DNA structure is like spanking someone else’s child: it’s not your job. From curing diseases to redefining our way of life, humans could reach a point where death is eradicated and pain is easily curable. But what happens when we play with genetics? Who gets to have their diseases eradicated and who dies? There are many benefits to human genetic modifications, such as treating diseases in an embryo or removing a gene that deletes a lethal illness from a family genome line. However, such modifications and treatments would be expensive and may only be accessible to a select group of people. For example, scientists have already begun genetic engineering on embryos through the process of in-vitro fertilization, which allows for the selection of specific traits before the fetus is developed. The worrisome aspect of genetic engineering is the fact that few can afford the process - only the rich, leaving the poor at a biological, economic, and social disadvantage. Future advancement in human genetic modification will lead to widespread classism and a greater disparity of economic and social resources by being accessible only to those who can afford it.

Genetic engineering is a relatively new area in science that scientists continue to explore. New discoveries are being made every day that redirect our path toward complete comprehension. June Goodfield, the author of “Playing God: Genetic Engineering and the Manipulation of Life,” discusses the selection of specific genes in DNA strands, and scientists adding, removing, or altering the code for a specific trait or disease (4). You can now remove the family genome for diabetes or heart disease, says Yanfang Fu, Deepak Reyon, and J. Keith Joung, coauthors of “Targeted Genome Editing in Human Cells Using CRISPR/Cas Nucleases and Truncated Guide RNAs,” with a process like CRISPR (or clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats), which train the cell’s nucleus to find and remove copies of a faulty DNA strand being passed through the copying process (Yanfang Fu, Deepak Reyon, J. Keith Joung 22). Although these advancements are not available to the public, with further research and experimentation, we can expect to see it at local hospitals in the near future. But what might genetic engineering potentially cost humanity?

Genetic engineering can have an economic impact. Only the upper class will potentially be able to afford genetic alterations to modify their bodies in order to live longer and be stronger. This means they will be able to work longer hours and in more physically arduous fields, and have a higher aptitude to work in any field, and, therefore, make more money. Unfortunately, what this means for the poor, who are most likely working labor-induced jobs and will suffer physical disadvantages, is that they will be unable to work as long...
to make enough money. Lauren Cahoon Roberts argues in her article “Type 2 Diabetes More Common Among Low-Income Families,” that being “born into [a] low-income family may mean worse health later in life” and will affect future generations to come (Roberts 1). This increases the disparity between the rich and the poor by putting the poor at a biological disadvantage when competing for jobs because they will be seen as less efficient to the company making them settle for low paying jobs, keeping them in the cycle of poverty. Potentially, scientists could start using the poor to experiment on like human lab rats while only the wealthy benefit.

Big companies have the power and means to abuse and perform unethical actions on patients in poverty to save as much money as possible in research and experiments and sell for millions. In The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks written by Rebecca Skloot, Skloot tells the true story of Henrietta Lacks, a black woman in the mid-twentieth century, who went to the John Hopkins Hospital for cancer treatment and had her cells experimented on without her consent (9). John Hopkins Corporation made millions off of Lacks’s cells, which were the first to reproduce, and she or her family have not received a cent nor were they aware what was happening (Skloot 58). The same thing will happen when big-time companies start selling specific traits that are only available in labs to make a profit of off biology that is not theirs to sell. Not only is it degrading but it leads to social segregation between the classes.

When a specific group of humans start to genetically alter better versions of themselves, there is the creation of a “perfect race” which can result in the feelings of superiority and hateful pride. A team from the University of Texas at Austin has researched the “selfish genetic elements” that animals contain supporting the idea that humans are selfish by nature. If scientists create a “perfect race” it will only be to benefit themselves and others gaining from genetic engineering rather than the embetterment of the human race as a whole (J. Biosci 623). Such is the case of Henrietta’s cells that have been used to create medical advancements like the polio vaccine and treatment for AIDS (Skloot 102). Although scientists and pharma were getting rich off of vaccines, the Lacks family was struggling with health problems and poverty (159).

Genetic engineering has the potential to lead to genetic racism and the further segregation that will be created once genetic engineering becomes a societal norm for humans. Athletic abilities, appearance, and health can all be improved so eventually to keep that genome line pure, breeding will become selective. For example communities of “perfect humans” will form and only accept those who have also been biologically modified, segregating the rich from the poor and the pretty from the ugly which can be connected to the plot of Brave New World by Aldous Huxley. This puts many at a disadvantage because now the standard of living is going to lower in impoverished communities along with the greater spread of diseases due to the repeated breeding of the natural and mutated humans that cannot afford to remove mutations from their family gene pool. All of this becomes unethical because no human has the right to choose who is cured and who is stuck with the original disease, leading to the final issue of playing God and the moral and ethical factors that follow.

When humans try to interpret human evolution, they jeopardize the process of natural selection and disrupt nature’s way of keeping Earth in balance and healthy, which Jon W. Gordon discusses in his book, The Science and ethics of Engineering the Human Germ Line (Gordon 191). With the reductions of disease, life expectancy will increase and cause an overpopulation of the Earth which also leads to food shortages, famine, and overcrowding. In
the science fictional short story 2BR02B by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr, death is cured and if someone is wanting to conceive a child someone must volunteer to die in order for the baby to live. In desperation the husband in the story commits a murder suicide so his new born triplets can to live. Is this our future? In Ethical Issues in Governing BioBanks by Bernice Elger, Nikola Biller-Andorno, Alexandre Mauron and Alexander M. Capron, the authors argue that the government isn’t too concerned about specific regulations in genetics. Politicians have no priority for genetic engineering because the field of study is not a huge problem in today’s time which in turn leaves scientists at their own disposal to what happens in the lab (Elger, Biller-Andorno, Mauron and Capron 247). This is crucial because the government should actively be involved in the scientific future of humanity. On the other hand, government involvement might result in totalitarianism, like in the fictional work 1984 by George Orwell, and be controlled and monitored by the government.

Today we can see the potential loss of medical care for millions of citizens. Without easily affordable medical care, the poor are likely to suffer from diseases, which will prevent them from bringing in money to the economy. For example, Lauren Roberts argues that the cause of type 2 diabetes isn’t solely caused by poor diets and obesity but is also connected to “stress related to financial adversity” and being in a constant state of uncertainty and worry (Roberts 2). Although genetic engineering promises an end to type 2 diabetes only the wealthy are likely to be able to afford the modifications. The economically challenged, or poor, unable to afford such modifications, will continue to suffer the devastating effects of type 2 diabetes.

Genetic engineering is a dangerous but resourceful concept that scientists must work wisely with and plan ahead rather than learning along the way. Science is amazing, and we have many possibilities but we must constantly remind ourselves of the risks we take with every new advancement. If science fails to do so, the human race is on a path of segregation in economic and social classes that will be biologically justified and encouraged. Scientists must think in the mindset of treating with genetic engineering rather than using genetic engineering for enhancement purposes only. One day people might see a Build-A-Baby store open in a nearby mall or even a “buy two get one trait free” specials at their local hospitals. With the potential risk of biological segregation, scientists must remind themselves that we do not have the right to build perfection as if were created perfectly by design.
Works Cited


Brandon Richardson is studying psychology here at UTSA. He grew up in Humble, Texas, and graduated from Kingwood Park High School. To efficiently communicate with him, his mother began teaching him sign language when he was 6 years old. His mother instilling ASL as a second language is what inspired him to create an essay based around ASL as a foreign language, as he is a fluent speaker, and it is prevalent in his life.

Observing American Sign Language as a Foreign Language

Many universities require their students to take a certain amount of credit hours that fulfill the foreign language prerequisite, in turn sparking debate over what meets the criteria of a foreign language. In recent years American Sign Language (or ASL) has come to be recognized by most to be included in the category of a foreign language, but some insist that American Sign Language cannot count because it is native to America and dependent on English. Students are often infuriated to learn that they cannot begin or continue their education of American Sign Language at the college level because it is deemed by some states to not be a foreign language. Another barrier is met when the student is unable to transfer their American Sign Language credit from one university to the other because of a similar predicament. When analyzing American Sign Language, one can conclude that is indeed a foreign language because it is the staple of deaf culture and the deaf community, meets the qualifications of what is regarded as a foreign language, and carries its own unique grammatical structures that vary from other languages.

Before attempting to define American Sign Language as a foreign language, it is important to comprehend what American Sign Language is. American Sign Language is a visual language that utilizes hand signs as a means of communicating, with different hand signs and body movements working together to present different information (“What is American Sign Language” 1), allowing deaf individuals or individuals who wish to speak with the deaf an efficient way of depicting their thoughts and emotions. There are a projected 100,000 to 500,000 Americans who use American Sign Language as their primary language, with users ranging from deaf people who have acquired the language from either their parents or other deaf individuals, to hearing children with deaf parents, signifying the language as a vital method of communication employed in America (Davies et al. 2). With the basis of the language understood, one can now explore how ASL can fit into the foreign language criteria.

To observe how American Sign Language meets the qualifications of a foreign language, one must outline what the word “foreign” interpolates. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines foreign as “born in, belonging to, or characteristic of some place or country other than the one under consideration” (“Foreign”). Under such a definition, American Sign Language would qualify as a foreign language to a person who primarily speaks English, Spanish, French, etc., based upon the idea that American Sign Language and its surrounding culture would be unfamiliar to the user. Today, over half of the country accepts American Sign Language as a foreign language, conveying that the public view of American Sign Language has
shifted into a more positive light (Davies et al.). Moving forward, the immense culture that American Sign Language embodies serves as the foundation for its validity as a language and strengthens the standpoint of those who believe it is a foreign language.

The deaf community is filled with vibrant life that strives off involvement, development, and expression. Unlike Latin, a language considered to be dead in the 21st century, American Sign Language is an active language spoken largely by deaf and hard of hearing individuals, along with hearing people who were taught by either deaf people or other hearing people for the purpose of communicating with the deaf that they could encounter in their daily lives. Although some Americans are aware of the unified and lively deaf culture that exist in the United States, they do not fully comprehend the extent to which it impacts the lives of many of the deaf. This lack of knowledge adds weight to the claim that American Sign Language should be counted as a foreign language, as it not only allows the learner to gain the ability to fluently communicate with those who have had a history of tension with hearing people, but it broadens their mind on the body of people who use the language so heavily. The primary reason for the history of tension between hearing and deaf people is because hearing people have often distanced themselves from the deaf, and, up to recent years, have shown minimal to no effort to treat deaf individuals as equal human beings, often viewing their deafness as a disability rather than simply a difference.

Like culture, another definitive aspect of language is grammar. Upon observing the grammar and syntax American Sign Language possesses, one will notice that it is distinctive from other languages. Because it is a visual rather than auditory language, expression and conceptualization is crucial when attempting to interface with another signer (Davies et al. 8). In American Sign Language, sentences are structured in such a way that the signer is able to flow together various points and stories that allow signs to be used efficiently, with negligible use of words such as “the” or “of” because under most circumstances, they are deemed unnecessary to the overall conversation and are not needed to convey a complex idea in American Sign Language. Another form of sign language is English Sign Language, in which the signer would speak in English through signs. Many of the deaf consider English Sign Language to be inefficient and sometimes even clumsy compared to American Sign Language, as it is much more drawn out. Users of the language utilize their hands, the chest area, and face in order to express numerous emotions as words can often carry a different meaning depending on the way they are signed. The idea that visual communication is held to the upmost importance is one of the sole purposes American Sign Language is distinctive from the thousands of other existing languages in the world. Some deaf students have even gone to the degree to argue that American Sign Language is their primary language and English is their second language or foreign language that they have had to acquire through school and interactions with others, explaining that they have mastered American Sign Language and can exhibit exemplary skills in English but not to the same extent (Armstrong 3).

The overlying argument posed against qualifying American Sign Language as a foreign language is that it is indigenous to the United States, it does not have a prominent culture that embodies it, and it is structurally indifferent from English, but all three of these claims have been refuted through concrete evidence. As explained above, when deconstructing the definition of “foreign,” American Sign Language would be considered a foreign language to anyone who is unfamiliar with it and uses English as a primary language. The claim that American Sign Language does not have a definitive culture can easily be disputed
when analyzing the immense deaf culture that uses American Sign Language to bring each other together and activate a vivacious social life. In response to those who propose that American Sign Language is not a valid language because it is based on visuals and lacks oral aspects, American Sign Language contains its own grammatical structures and syntax that differ greatly from English and has the ability to transmit advanced concepts that any other effective language would be able to do. Although American Sign Language lacks any unique form of literature, the vast culture is able to serve as an appropriate substitute.

As a fluent speaker of American Sign Language, I believe it has the credentials to be measured as a foreign language. Because my mother is deaf, I am given the opportunity to experience first-hand the extent of the deaf community and how deeply connected each individual is. I am also able to attest to the idea that American Sign Language can get progressive concepts across to another person or a body of people. Because of its unfamiliarity with most Americans, specialized grammar, and culture, American Sign Language has the validity to count as a foreign language credit at the university level.

Works Cited
Jonathan Tschickardt was born in Florida, but has lived most of his life in Corpus Christi. He is an eighteen-year-old Freshman at the University of Texas at San Antonio. He hopes to get an undergraduate degree in Biology, go through medical school, and eventually become an anesthesiologist sub specializing in pain medicine. He is thankful for his former teachers and professors who made him into the writer and student that he is today. He is ready for the rest of his college education and hopes that he continues to prosper in his studies.

The Need for Reliable and Affordable Food: Why Countries Should Use Genetically Modified Organisms

According to Arthur L. Caplan, a professor at New York University’s Langone Medical Center, a new type of rice, referred to as Golden Rice, can incorporate Vitamin A with the rice to help combat the lack of vitamin consumption in the Philippines (407). This type of method is being used in different types of produce to make superior products. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) could be a solution to world hunger, yet countries are hesitant to use them because of the bad reputations associated with them. Instead of avoiding GMOs, countries need to support the use of genetically modified food because of the cost effectiveness, survivability rate, and the higher quality food that they aide in creating.

GMOs offer a superior way to produce food as evidenced by the price reduction they create for farmers and consumers. Farmers often struggle with the cost of farming, and they have to rely on their crops surviving harsh weather and other detrimental conditions. Brooke Borel, editor at Popular Science, explains that GMO resistance to herbicide allows farmers to use herbicides and know that their crops are safe. However, organic farmers have to do a lot of work to make sure the crops survive weeds and insects. Plants with GMOs are built to survive, reducing much of the stress of farming. As the farmers are able to lower the cost of food production, they are able to pass the savings on to the consumers in the form of lower food prices. Kate Siegel, writer and editor at WebMD, claimed that GMOs create “crops that yield more and cost less.” The plants with GMOs also grow faster than normal plants, so they can be replanted and produced more quickly. This provides more growing opportunity for farmers and creates a surplus of produce, which contributes to the lower cost of food.

While inexpensive food is important for lower income households, it also affects people of all income ranges because proper nutrition is a necessity for human survival. If GMOs were banned, the price of food would increase, making it difficult for people to survive day to day. The price of organic food is often more expensive than genetically modified foods. Graham Brookes, an agricultural economist, suggested that without GMOs, corn could cost up to six percent more, and prices for soybean products could be ten percent higher (Stebbins). Many people do not have the luxury of choosing between organic food and genetically modified food because their main priority is cost. GMOs give people who are jobless or earning minimum wage their best chance at survival.

In addition to being the least expensive food source, GMOs also contribute to better plant survivability. Borel advises that GMOs allow crops to make a protein that kills insects.
Plants with GMOs are superior to organic plants because of their resistance to herbicide and insecticide. The resistance allows for the herbicides and pesticides to be placed on the plants, which kills other harmful plants or insects that would otherwise destroy a large number of crops. Furthermore, GMOs allow plants to grow in areas that would usually be hostile to organic plants. The GMOs in plants modify their genetic make-up, and that can enable plants to require less water than they need in order to live in areas with harsh climates. This allows for people to grow certain types of crops where they normally could not, and it also results in lower consumer costs because there is no longer a need for shipping expenses.

Increased survivability of plants gives countries the opportunity to provide food for their citizens at all times. Plants with GMOs are much more reliable than organic crops because of their survivability. Temesgen Deressa, a contributor to The Brookings Institution, explained that GMOs give Africans a chance to grow foods like rice, maize, and sweet potatoes in the face of climate change. GMOs make it possible for people to attain food that was previously unavailable to them. Additionally, GMOs render plentiful amounts of affordable food that is available year-round. Countries will be vulnerable to food shortages if they do not take advantage of what GMOs have to offer.

Not only do GMOs allow for reliable and affordable food production, but they also provide higher quality food. Siegel noted that scientists have altered the fats in soybeans in order to create a healthier alternative to the unhealthy trans-fat oils that are used in cooking. Scientists can use GMOs to modify produce and make it more nutritious. With an increase in nutrition, people who could previously only afford a small amount of inexpensive food can now obtain the nutrition that they need. GMOs' resistance to harmful conditions reduces the likelihood of having insects and diseases that could potentially be a threat to a person's health. Hans De Seur, a researcher in the department of Agricultural Economics at Ghent University, attested that Golden Rice makes it possible to boost vitamin A in other staple crops (26). GMO usage is constantly evolving and has the possibility of boosting various nutrient levels in food.

Since having good nutrition is critical to human health, GMOs are the best option that countries have. The extra nutrition in foods is important because it gives people healthier bodies that can fight off sicknesses and function more efficiently. Malnutrition is a serious threat to many people in undeveloped countries and also in certain areas of developed countries. The added nutrition that GMOs provide give people the chance to have a balanced diet that can improve their quality of life. Increased nutrition could also contribute to lower medical costs in countries. Human bodies that have proper nutrition are more prepared to fight off sicknesses, injuries, heart problems, and other medical issues that many people face. Scientists constantly try to innovate food with GMOs in order to benefit consumer health. For example, Siegel claims that some researchers are discovering ways to make meat healthier by increasing the omega-3-fatty acids, which could aide in putting a stop to some health issues such as heart disease, strokes, possibly cancer, and other sicknesses. Since organic food does not always have the amounts of boosted nutrients that GMOs can offer, countries must take advantage of what GMOs offer.

GMO opponents often argue that genetically altering food is not safe for people because of the risks of cancer or other health problems. Professor Emeritus Joe Cummins from the University of Western Ontario mentioned that “there is evidence that [Bt] will impact directly on human health” (qtd. in Mather 411). Bacillus thruringiensis (Bt) is a type of
pesticide that has been put into plants with help from GMOs. Research about health defects scare people away from GMOs, but people choose not to see the other side of research. Borel reported scientific evidence from seventeen hundred reviews from the past 30 years with a general consensus that GMOs are no more dangerous than organic food. Science supports GMOs as a safe means of food production, but countries are influenced by the few articles that disagree with scientific facts because they fear making decisions. Countries need to follow the general scientific consensus that GMOs provide a safe way to give people the proper nutrition that they deserve.

Countries should implement the use of genetically modified food because of the cost efficiency, survivability rate, and higher quality food that GMOs help to produce. If countries want a sufficient supply of crops at a reasonable price, they need to start investing in GMOs now. The world needs to know that GMOs are healthy and can provide better quality food at a better price. Countries are demanding more crops due to population growth; however, climate change creates an environment which decreases crop production. GMOs provide the only solution that satisfies all of the requirements for proper food production.

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When History Repeats Itself: Why Millennial Stereotypes Apply to All Generations

When asked to describe a ‘millennial,’ self-centeredness, laziness, and entitlement are traits often used in discussion by outside generations to describe the young group. However, if a millennial were to describe an older generation, he or she would likely also respond with unfavorable characteristics like condescension and patronization. Stereotyping groups of people as large as generations can be seen across large age groups, from the baby boomers to the newest post-millennial generation. However, because millennials are now adults and young adults entering the workforce, the spotlight is on them and any changes they might bring or cause, and assumptions are being made in order to summarize the entire group as a whole. Stereotypes generalizing millennials inaccurately portray the group because these stereotypes not only are specific to age rather than birth year, but also apply to other generations, and stereotyping any large group of people creates an inherently limited and biased image.

Many characteristics associated with millennials should be attributed to age and development, rather than the generation itself. Some examples of negative characteristics attributed to the millennial generation are narcissism and immaturity. However, Erin Burns, a reference librarian for Penn State University at Shenango, suggests that in terms of psychology and development, all young people exhibit narcissism, but older people fail to see this because narcissism levels tend to decrease as one gets older (484). Burns’s idea that across generations, people exhibit narcissism whenever they are the age that millennials are now undermines the concept that only the current young adults are guilty of self-centeredness. Instead, it should be considered that the older generations accusing young adults of these traits were likely guilty of having them as well, but have separated themselves from this following maturity. Additionally, Kathryn Tyler, a contributor to HR Magazine, explains that parts of the brain—specifically, the prefrontal lobes, which are associated with decision-making and planning—have been proven to be still developing in ages as late as the early twenties (479). This enforces the idea that young people spanning many generations have gone through phases of immaturity due to natural physiological growth rates, and that traits like egotism and childishness are not the result of any social shift in modern culture.

In addition to being relevant to age, many of the negative values associated with the millennial generation are also seen in other generations. Eve Tushnet, a contributor to The Weekly Standard magazine, discusses young people living with their parents at later ages. Tushnet states, “Starting your adult life in your parents’ home was not historically stigmatized...because it offered young adults an oasis of stability in a chaotic economy,” referring to
the Great Depression in the 1930s (496). Another particular issue millennials are often criticized for is dependency on their parents at far later ages than the children of previous generations, but historically it can be seen that this dependency has existed across generations and is not a new phenomenon. Additionally, Burns highlights the fact that people across all generations have been criticized by their elders (483). This suggests that the criticism of character currently facing millennials, while it has changed slightly over time, is part of a cycle that has faced young people across generations.

Furthermore, generalizing a large group of people by select prominent characteristics provides a limited and biased representation. Burns believes that these generalizations “tend to be suspect, especially when they are being used as convenient excuses to change what is currently in practice” (484). On the same note, Raffi Wineburg, an intern for The Jerusalem Post newspaper, discourages defining millennials and suggests that “diagnosing” the generation produces drawbacks; he suggests that focus should instead be on making policy changes to help millennials struggling in the job market (490). Assuming that all millennials are egotistical and technologically dependent allows outside generations to attempt to accommodate or resist changes to their professional and social environments. However, like any stereotyped group, the millennial generation consists of individuals, and a stereotyped representation is more likely to be cherry-picked and exaggerated than a true image of what today’s young adults are like.

Some believe that the millennial generation is immature and dependent on others as a result of current social culture rather than because of their age or current state of physiological development. Tyler suggests that millennials are depending on their parents and staying children longer, thanks to their ability to rely on others by communicating over long distance via smartphones and email (479). However, this same argument suggesting that millennials lack independence thanks to access to recent advancements in smartphones and computers also highlights how the parents of millennials are largely responsible for their children’s so-called dependency. Tyler even comments that “technology...has also abetted parental oversight” (479). The same argument that blames millennial dependency on computers and cell phones also places a large portion of the blame onto previous generations dragging down the current one, rather than on millennial behavior or available methods of receiving communication or information.

Generalizing the millennial generation with stereotypes of narcissism, dependency, and immaturity may be accurate to an extent, but this is because of the current age of the generation, rather than the generation itself. As the millennials age and gain maturity through life experience, like previous generations, these traits will likely lose their association with the generation. As time passes, the millennial generation will most likely stereotype the post-millennials with the same traits that were once associated with them, as these traits can be seen across all generations but are forgotten as the years pass.
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Sexual Harassment of Men: Experiences and Influences

The past year has been marked by great movements and actions hoping to create awareness about sexual harassment and assault of women in all sorts of fields. Such movements and actions include the #MeToo and Time’s Up movement, wearing black on the Golden Globes red carpet and white roses on the Grammy’s red carpet. Besides these movements and actions, many women have come out with their sexual assault/harassment experiences, creating a domino-effect. This is of great importance; however, there is another side to the story. All these movements and actions did and do not include male victims of sexual harassment and assault. As the past year has shown, it is no secret that men’s experiences of sexual harassment remain rarely acknowledged and even less often studied. Therefore, with this paper, the types of sexual harassment experienced by men and how the harassment/assault is experienced by them will be explored, as well as how society’s influences the awareness and experience of sexual harassment of men.

One study performed by Berdahl et al. shows that men are indeed sexually harassed, however it occurs at a lower rate than women are (539). Yet, as Russel and Oswald point out, The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has recorded increasing rates of men’s claims of sexual harassment over the past fifteen years from 11.6 percent in 1997 to 16.3 percent in 2011 (525). Most men who are sexually harassed are sexual minorities (i.e. gay, lesbian, bi), as explained by Holland et al. (22). A study performed by Deborah Lee shows that most of the sexual harassment men experience is in the form of sexual allegations rather than physical harm (154). This includes gender role harassment, as well as constructing males less than the ideal of masculinity when they do not behave in certain ways, causing them to be perceived as “feminine” (Lee 154). This “feminine” perception is then often used as an excuse to sexually harass another man, especially by male offenders (Lee 154). This is parallel with Stockdale’s finding that male victims of harassment are likely to be those who are perceived by their offenders as weak, young, effeminate, or homosexual (651). According to Holland et al., this can help explain why men identifying as sexual minorities are more likely to be harassed (22). Holland et al. also found that, besides gender harassment, men also experience sexually advancing harassment (e.g., unwanted touching) (17). Another form of sexual harassment experienced by men is sexism, especially hostile sexism. This refers to a need for sexual dominance sought by others, control, and viewing inferiority in the opposing gender (Russel and Oswald 527). Stockdale et al. found that most sexual harassment toward men...
rejection-based (651). However, the research conducted by Berdahl et al. shows that many of their male participants were unsure about what sexual harassment toward men entailed, or whether an incident that happened to them was truly sexual harassment (540). When researching the kinds of harassment experienced by men, Russel and Oswald found that men are more likely to experience same-sex harassment than females (525). Overall, as Stockdale et al. explain, sexual harassment of men is often intended to perpetuate male dominance (655).

Stockdale et al. argue that many victims of harassment, especially the male sexual minorities, are more likely to come from male dominated or exclusively male workplaces, as these places are more likely to develop norms of hypermasculinity (653). They also found that male environments tend to be more sexualized and less professional than gender neutral environments (Stockdale et al. 653).

When talking and discussing what kinds of sexual harassment are experienced by men, it is also of importance to discuss how the harassment is experienced by the male victims. When analyzing Lee’s research, we can conclude that the experience of sexual harassment, no matter it being verbal/psychological or physical, is harmful to men, as her participants either committed or thought about committing suicide (154). The study performed by Holland et al. shows that sexual advance and gender harassment experienced by the male victims were both associated with decreased psychological well-being and job satisfaction (23). Stockdale et al. also found that people who have been sexually harassed are less satisfied with their jobs, supervisors, and co-workers than others and are more likely to experience signs of emotional and physical distress such as depression, anxiety, and somatic complaints (654). However, as Berdahl et al. research shows, the male victims of sexual harassment gave the experience both a negative and positive evaluation, due to not feeling threatened, anxious or nervous (541). Interestingly, research conducted by Russel and Oswald shows that male victims often experience more minimization of victimization, as well as a higher rate of tolerance when reporting the harassment, meaning those who are reported to are less likely to undertake action than when a woman would report an incident of harassment (533). As Stockdale et al. explain, same-sex harassment was described by male victims as “the most distressing experience” (650).

When discussing how the sexual harassment is experienced by the male victims, it is hard to deny the immense influence and impact society has on not just the victims, but all men in general, as the research conducted by Berdahl et al. shows (542). Berdahl et al. argue that society teaches males from a young age on to be tough, and to be flattered when approached by others/when others show a certain interest in them (542). This can explain the uncertainty about harassment experienced by male victims mentioned earlier. This can also relate to the attitudes of modern sexists found in Russel’s and Oswald’s research (527). They found that modern sexists tend to support conventional gender roles and lack egalitarian (i.e. believe in principle that all people are equal) attitudes (Russel and Oswald 527). Another aspect that confirms society’s impact on how sexual harassment is experienced by male victims, is that a man’s experience of workplace sexual harassment is “underpinned by a restrictive discourse of ‘acceptable’ masculinity”, as Lee explains in her research (148). This relates to the fact that men are expected to enjoy sexual flirtations at work and complaining of sexual harassment can compromise their own masculinity, making them vulnerable to sex-based harassment, as Russel and Oswald explain (539). Holland et al. also argue that the results from
their study support theoretical conceptualizations of sexual harassment as a form of punishment for men who deviate from the prescriptions of traditional masculinity (22). This, then, connects to the feminine construction of some men which was mentioned earlier, as well as help explain why it is mostly sexual male minorities who are harassed. Russel’s and Oswald’s study shows that there is a greater tolerance of sexual harassment of men, confirming societal influence of some kind (533). Yet, the correlational patterns throughout their research showed a similar trend in tolerance among men and women, suggesting a shared ideological belief that justifies tolerance of the sexual harassment of men (534).

The purpose of this paper is to explore what types of sexual harassment are experienced by men and how this harassment/assault is experienced, as well as research society’s influence on the awareness and experience of sexual harassment of men. The sexual harassment of men has been a relevant and researched issue for the past 30 years, and yet it remains mostly ignored.

This is very interesting since my research shows that studies from 30 years ago found the same results as studies from only 2-3 years ago. This shows that the sexual harassment of men has been and will keep occurring, which is why I hope to bring awareness to this issue by writing this paper. It also shows that little progress has been made concerning the sexual harassment of men, as many studies have been performed over the years, and yet the issue remains barely discussed or known. By combining several studies who show exceptional similarities between the findings, I hope to make others and society overall more aware of sexual harassment of men. It needs attention and policies must be created to recognize and reduce the occurrence of sexual harassment of men. Being aware of the harassment of men will cause victims to feel more comfortable discussing their experience. Also, greater societal awareness will help men better understand when they are being harassed and how to deal with it. Being aware that men are being harassed is especially of importance to feminists and female victims, as it can help create a greater equality in society as well as create a broader support group.
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Albert Orna is currently studying Biology at the University of Texas at San Antonio. In 2018, Albert wrote this essay for his Freshmen Composition course. The essay also required the use of qualitative elements as dictated by the Writing Program.

The Predictability of Marital Outcome

“Most of you will never fall in love and marry out of fear of dying alone.” This is a comical quote from the animated sitcom The Simpsons that gives a rather bleak outlook to the prospect of marriage. While also an interesting perspective on the cultural views of marriage, it’s not surprising that popular culture would satire the traditional expectations of marriage given the inevitable outcome that so many suffer. While marriage is typically viewed as a cultural universal, a trait common to cultures worldwide, a large percentage of marriages ultimately end up in divorce (Marinchick). This despite cultural norms that consider marriage as one of the essential components of adulthood and traditionally expected by society. This is also significant in western society where marriage can be considered to be the key adult relationship (Patz). So, why do so many marriages fail? What are the warning signs that a couple’s matrimony is in dire trouble and will most likely lead to divorce? Is there any method that could be applied to predict with certainty the outcome of a marriage? There might be an answer. According to a study conducted by psychology professor Ted Huston, there are several signs in the early developmental stages of a marriage that can be examined and used to determine its outcome (Patz). Using a summary of Huston’s study, this paper will analyze the fictional couple from The Simpsons along with the results of a survey conducted by UTSA students to examine how they fare against the results of the study.

According to Aviva Patz, former Executive Editor of Psychology Today, there is a way to determine whether a marriage will be successful or end in divorce. Patz first learned of the study after she attended a lecture conducted by University of Texas at Austin psychology and human ecology professor Ted Huston. Patz’s article, “Will Your Marriage Last,” summarizes the results of the study and highlights the important concepts and details. The article begins by accentuating the aspects that makes the study stand out. While there has been an abundance of research into the causes of divorce, Huston’s study was unique. Instead of focusing on marriages that were already at risk, he chose to follow and analyze newlyweds. In 1981 Huston began the Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships or the “PAIR Project” (Patz). The purpose of the PAIR project was to examine the relationship between courtship and early marriage (Huston).

Over the course of thirteen years, Huston documented the lives of 168 couples from the beginning of their marriage. His study concluded that the first two years are essential in predicting the fate of a marriage (Patz). During this time there are several factors to consider. Contrary to popular belief, not all newlyweds have an idealistic romance (Patz). Those mar-
riages that do, tend to not last. This is because the amorous desires couples have for one other begin to fade and erode with time. On that note, if a marriage begins with little to no love then there is no erosion of love. This is why the main reason for divorce tends to be the loss of love and affection (Patz).

When the study concluded in 1994, Huston was able to use the data collected to place couples into their own specific groups. There were those who were either happily married, unhappily married, divorced early, or divorced later (Patz). The first group, which involved successful marriages, were couples that had little animosity and were less critical, expressing mostly positive feelings about their significant other. The other group involved failed marriages that initially began well but eventually devolved into a more negative and critical relationship (Patz). What Huston also found was that couples fared much better when the courtship period was longer and the first two years were devoid of any major change (Patz). The aspects of the courtship period is also important. Relationships that led to divorce usually began with drama and shallow criteria. This is the opposite of what occurred in a successful relationship, where the couple had time to make routines and develop realistic expectations. Huston described how these situations can be classified and have models applied to describe them (Patz). The “fading dynamic” or disillusionment model occurs when love and intimacy begin to fade early on in a marriage. As time moves on, couples in this model begin to notice flaws with one another; this realization leads to disappointment, loss of love, and eventually divorce. However, not all unsatisfactory marriages end up in divorce. While many couples may be in distress, they ultimately choose to remain together despite leading an unhappy marriage (Patz).

In contrast, the “enduring dynamics model” can be used to describe the patterns that lead to a stable and successful marriage (Patz). The more time a couple spends together, the better they get to know one another (Huston). While the initial honeymoon sentiment eventually fades, these couples are able to transition from a “romantic relationship” into a “working relationship” allowing their marriages to endure (Patz). In the end, Huston mentions how he believes culture is to blame for the idealistic views of marriage that many couples possess. He states how culture, western society in particular, has created an unrealistic expectation of marriage that places pressure on couples to marry (Patz). Taking into consideration the idea that media and culture shape the views of general populace this study will now be applied to analyze the marriage of a well-known fiction cartoon couple.

In the annals of television history there is no marriage that has endured with such longevity as that of Homer and Marge Simpson from *The Simpsons*. The main characters proper to the series consist of Homer and Marge along with their children, Bart, Lisa, and Maggie. Created by cartoonist Matt Groening, *The Simpsons* originally began as a series of animated shorts that was later adapted into a half-hour series in 1989. While the series faced some controversy over the content, this didn’t mitigate the show’s success. The series received widespread critical acclaim for its earlier seasons and has a significant impact on the history of television and comedy (Alberti). Given the floating timeline of the series itself, with characters not aging in almost thirty years, most of the analysis will focus on the earlier seasons of the show. Throughout the series, Marge and Homer display traits of the “enduring dynamics model.” In the second season episode “The Way We Was,” it is revealed that Homer and Marge met in high school back in 1974, making them high school sweethearts. Later on in the episode “I Married Marge,” it would be reveal that Homer married Marge in 1980 after
Bart was conceived. During this time period, the only major changes were those of Marge’s pregnancy and Homer’s struggle to find a job. Nonetheless, this occurs at least six years later after the inception of the relationship, four more than the critical two years from as mentioned in Huston’s study. According to the PAIR project, this means that Homer and Marge had a courtship period long enough to get to know one another and develop a successful marriage. Another important aspect of a positive marriage that the PAIR project found was that couples needed to express positive sentiments to one another (Patz).

This is something the Simpson couple routinely displays throughout the series despite some mishaps along the way. While these mishaps have been the focus of a multitude of episodes, they all concluded with Homer and Marge reconciling in the end and saving their marriage. For example the episode “Life on the Fast Lane” ends with Homer getting a surprise visit from Marge. Marge had previously been angry with Homer for getting her an unthoughtful gift for her birthday. This is because Homer forgot her birthday and quickly bought something without putting in much thought. However, they both remember the positives of one another and reconcile. A similar scenario occurs in “The Last Temptation of Homer,” where Homer reiterates his faithfulness to Marge after being tempted by another woman. The episode ends with Homer and Marge sharing a romantic evening together and finding a turkey behind the bed. Taken together the Simpson marriage would be placed into Huston’s category of happy and married. Despite Homer’s noticeable flaws, Marge hold no animosity towards him. This is a trait Huston described as important for a successful marriage (Patz).

However, there is an elephant in the room, which is the fact that Marge and Homer have technically been divorced before. This occurs in the season eight episode, “A Milhouse Divided.” The episode has Homer filing for divorce after feeling guilty for giving Marge a lackluster wedding. However, this was all just a scheme Homer conceived to give Marge a better second wedding. While Marge is surprised, she gladly agrees to the offer. With all the information collected, it is evident that the results of Huston’s study would support the idea of Homer and Marge having a long and successful marriage. This statement is quite subversive given the fact that Huston views media and culture as proliferating unrealistic expectations (Patz). It seems appropriate given the satirical nature of the show itself. However the series, like any other media, differentiates from reality. The next section will analyze a survey of college students and see how they fare against Huston’s study.

For many, the process of finding a mate in life is a complex and unpredictable venture. Many people have a variety of preferences they take into account when searching for their significant other. To research this, an anonymous survey was conducted at The University of Texas at San Antonio by students of the spring 2018 WRC-1013-014 freshman composition class. Each student was given the task to ask five different students on campus to list the top five traits they look for when searching for an ideal mate (UTSA). The only restrictions to the survey were that students had to ask other students of the same gender, and the students questioned had to be attending UTSA. After the survey was concluded the results were collected and measured to discover what were the most prominent traits given. Separated between genders, the preferred traits shown by both men and women display the mindset of student population and the dissonance between the sexes when it comes to what’s important in their ideal mate.

From the twenty females that were interviewed, the trait that came in at number
one was a sense of humor. Around 14.6% of the women polled included this attribute in their list. The list of traits chosen by females, as well as their percentage were as follows: caring, (12.6%) intelligence (7.3%), loyalty (7.3%), and tallness (6%) respectively. Behind those traits were those of affection, honesty (5.3%), attractiveness (4.6%), and religiousness (3.3%). At the bottom of the list was communication. Given that only 3.3% of women were seeking this specific trait, it is clear that women placed significantly less value in this specified attribute than the previous traits. Figure 1 below charts the traits from the most common trait to the least common trait.

Figure 1. Traits Chosen by Females

The survey results for the males was similar but had some noticeable differences. Out of the fifty males interviewed, the most commonly desired trait was a more superficial one with attractiveness at the forefront. In total 11.79% of men listed this as a necessary aspect. The next trait was a more emotional one with 10.49% if men listing affection as one of their traits. The next couple of traits were a sense of humor (10.2%), intelligence (8.3%), loyalty (6.8%), and communication (5.8%). Subsequently the next traits were honesty (7.8%), cleanliness (4.9%), and ambition (4.6%). At the bottom was creativity with only 3.4% of men listing it as a desired trait. Figure 2 dictates this information graphically.

Figure 2. Traits Chosen by Males
There is some disparity between the top traits chosen between the two genders. For females, their top choice of “sense of humor” with the male preference to “attractiveness” (UTSA). While there are substantial differences between the two, there are some traits both genders chose. For example both genders expected honesty and affection from their partners. They also want their significant other to display communication skills and a sense of humor. However, some of the top traits were more superficial ones such as attractiveness and tallness. These traits are ones that could fall within the disillusionment model (Patz). Using the information from Huston’s study, if the students enter their marriages with these expectations, in all likelihood they will either end up in unhappy marriages or divorce. With all this in mind, it is evident that a number of UTSA students might find themselves in an unsuccessful marriage. They may realize that they are not the best choice for their partners because of the choices they have made.

The idea of marriage is changing in the modern world. While a marriage will vary from couple to couple, there are clues that can be observed and analyzed to make a prediction. The “PAIR” project study conducted by Huston paints a rather accurate portrait of what a marriage might result in given the early signs. Relationships that begin with stability and have more positivity last more than those that may begin well but contain more negativity. It is ultimately the loss of love that is the driving force of divorce. While Huston places some blame on media for the idea of a stereotypical romance, the results of his study gives a surprising amount of support for successes of the Simpson marriage. Whether intentional or not, The Simpsons is a good example of a successful marriage supported by the study. On the other hand, the students of UTSA might face some difficulties unless their expectations change. Many of the traits they chose would have Huston concluding their failure. Perhaps it would be wise for couples to contemplate their own relationships and examine their traits. Spending time together would allow couples to make better marital decisions. Whether people’s marriages end up successful or in tatters, the hints are there. It is up to oneself to take them into consideration and determine whether your marriage will last.
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Jenai Coleman is a Public Health major with a concentration in epidemiology. She chose a Public Health major after seeing the movie Contagion wherein CDC members address a worldwide epidemic. Everything that she has learned about public health so far has made her more passionate about entering this field, which she believes is reflected in this essay over the War on Drugs. Jenai also loves art and was considering becoming an artist. She has been painting since she was 12. She focuses mainly on human subjects though she has done a concentration on insects and a few pieces on animals. She creates and sells pieces in her free time. Other fun facts about her are that she has been a vegetarian for five years, she has three dogs, and she's been out of the country twice.

Why has America's War on Drugs Failed?

The War on Drugs (WOD) can be characterized as a culmination of policies created to address the global issue of illegal drug use, distribution, and crimes related to the drug market. This research paper however, will focus solely on the policies enacted in America. The agenda began officially during the Nixon administration in 1971 in response to an increase in control of categorizing illegal drugs by the federal government (Neill 383). This entailed the formation of two new administrations that would set the stage for future strategies employed by the WOD, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) (Neill 383). There seems to be a consensus that, since its conception, the WOD has relied primarily on harsh law enforcement and punitive measures in the hopes of creating a drug free society. Not only has this strategy failed in attaining its goals but it has also had an adverse impact on public health, the federal budget, and minority groups in America.

The WOD consists almost entirely of policies geared towards the punishment of drug users and traffickers. The strategies employed by law enforcement include arresting drug traffickers, using seizures to contain drugs, intercepting trafficking networks, and confiscating income generated by criminal activity (Polomarkakis 399). The assumption of this approach is that decreasing the supply of drugs, along with a subsequent increase in price and harsh punishment for drug offenses, will decrease demand. However, a major finding has been that such law enforcement measures have had little to no influence on drug use or the drug market except by forcing them to adapt quickly to new changes. This can be attributed to the fact that addiction is a disease that requires treatment and thus drug addicts do not follow the basic economic principles used to predict consumer decision making. In addition, it has been found that as the supply of drugs in the market is reduced by seizures, the number of drug traffickers is multiplied thereby negating the decrease in quantity (Polomarkakis 399).

Other negative effects of the WOD’s reliance on law enforcement is the neglect of public health. It has been shown that injection drug users (much like the drug market) adapt to new law enforcement strategies, often by rushing their preparation for injection. This behavior, while allowing them to achieve the high and dispose of the evidence quicker, also increases their risk of infection and vascular damage (Polomarkakis 400). Additionally, abusive law enforcement methods cause drug users to be in a constant state of paranoia. This can deter them from seeking medical care or treatment and inhibit them from examining the quality of their drugs, thereby increasing their risk of overdose. There exists, in foreign
countries, effective public health models that address illegal drug use and its negative effects. One such approach is harm reduction which acknowledges that there can be no “drug free society” and “instead of trying to eradicate drug use, focuses on minimizing harm” (Neill 389). Harm reduction initiatives include: primary prevention of drug use, rehabilitation of individuals who want to stop using drugs, prevention of after effects associated with drug use such as accidents or criminal behavior, and secondary prevention measures intended to forestall impairment of their health while still allowing an individual to continue drug use. A prime example of an effective harm reduction strategy is Sweden’s needle and syringe programs, which provide drug users with clean needles in order to decrease the spread of diseases such as HIV. Despite Sweden’s near 50% decrease in HIV related to intravenous drug use and similar evidence supporting the efficacy of harm reduction, such initiatives are often disregarded by American policy makers due to their controversial nature. Thus law enforcement continues to dominate the policies comprising America’s WOD.

In addition to this, it has been found that heavy reliance on law enforcement is a drain on the federal budget. The consensus amongst the academic community appears to be that the U.S.’s approach to reducing illegal drug use and trafficking is financially unsustainable (Bergen-Cico 376). The federal budget for drug control “exceeds $20 billion annually” (Bowen 267). This does not account for funds spent by the U.S. government on the consequences of its punitive practices. This includes the cost of growing prison populations (a direct result of harsh sentencing policies) and the rising cost of health care needed by substance abusers. Approximately $1 trillion has been lost to the War on Drugs and due to the cyclical nature of its issues, that number is increasing exponentially.

One reason for the continued emphasis on law enforcement, despite its many shortcomings, is that the drug policies in America are often “framed by the social and political perceptions of drug use” rather than research or scientific evidence (Neill 379). A major contributor to social and political perceptions are social constructs. A consistent example of this concept in literature is the perpetuation of racial discrimination seen in enforcement of drug policy. For a large portion of American history, a racist culture has existed against African Americans, causing the development of a negative image, discriminatory systems, and discriminatory politics which are deeply ingrained in American society. This social construct causes politicians to think of African Americans (especially those of low income) as “deviants” who “cannot be trusted to make responsible choices” and are only incentivized by punishment (Neill 379). Thus, with this pre-existing perception of the African American community, policy makers deem the target group not only unworthy of their consideration during policy design, but also deserving of severe punitive measures. This provides an explanation for why African Americans account for only 14% of drug users yet make up 37% of drug arrests and 56% of inmates convicted for drug offenses (Neill 376).

A particularly interesting finding were the opinions of foreign drug policy administrators on America’s drug policy. A survey included government members of 14 Central and Eastern European countries that all received drug enforcement training from the U.S. (Bergen-Cico 370). Two drug policy administrators from each country were asked to participate in a SWOT analysis of U.S. drug policy. Representatives recognized strengths such as the U.S.’s strong medical research, democratic processes, and an abundance of funding (Bergen-Cico 373). These were identified as being contributing factors to policy change and, in collaboration with dedicated advocates, could potentially improve drug policy. Weaknesses
identified by the representatives included the rejection of research findings by the U.S. government, disproportionate power of the D.E.A in the scheduling of drugs, lack of regulation on its own pharmaceutical companies, heavy influence of ideology on policy design, continued approval of economically unsustainable policies, slow moving democratic processes, lack of human rights, and emphasis on incarceration over treatment. It is important to note that the D.E.A “is not a scientific or medical organization,” yet it is given the authority to determine the schedule of drugs (Bergen-Cico 377). This was heavily criticized in the study as the most updated categorization of drugs placed cannabis in the same schedule as heroin and methamphetamine. The same scrutiny was given to the U.S.’s disregard for human rights when enforcing drug policy. The representatives recognized incarcerating drug users without health services or addiction treatment as being a violation of their basic human rights. Nevertheless, the study participants agreed that America’s drug policy, while flawed, had the potential to be transformed with the allocation of funds for treatment and a deeper consideration of research in policy design.

It has been observed that researchers believe the failures of the War on Drugs in America are mostly attributable to severe criminal justice policies designed by discriminatory policy makers. As well as failing in its goal to create a drug free society, the War on Drugs has also been detrimental to public health, the federal budget, and minority communities in America. Researchers agree that effective, proven public health initiatives exist to combat illegal drug use. However, they go unutilized by American politicians due to a history of ignoring scientific evidence in favor of political opinion and assumptions.

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The Benefits of Foreign Aid

Many of us are familiar with President Donald J. Trump’s famous “America first” slogan. Some people might call President Trump’s memorable saying patriotic, but the actions behind President Trump’s message of patriotism may cause more harm than good. These actions include cutting foreign aid drastically while the U.S. military budget will receive a significant increase. President Trump’s designed budget for FY2018 proposes slashing funds for many foreign aid programs, including the USAID (United States Agency for International Development), a part of the U.S. government that is in charge of foreign assistance and development (“Here’s Why Foreign Assistance is Important”). This plan would reduce foreign aid programs by over $11 billion, or close to 30%, while the Defense Department would gain an additional $52 billion dollars, amplifying its budget by approximately 10% (Zenko). Even military leaders believe that cutting foreign aid would be a careless move; more than a hundred retired U.S. generals and admirals issued a letter to congressional leaders criticizing the Trump administration’s intended cuts to foreign aid programs, articulating, “We know from our service in uniform that many of the crises our nation faces do not have military solutions alone” (Zenko).

President Trump is not completely amiss to speculate the validity of foreign aid. There have been quite a few situations in the past that illustrate the shortcomings of different foreign aid affairs. U.S. aid to Pakistan in the early 2000s is an example: a lot of the money that was supposed to go towards counterterror operations and training drills in Pakistan was instead redirected by members of the military for personal gain (Zenko). In another case, an aid foundation claimed that Zimbabwe misused millions of foreign aid dollars: Zimbabwe’s government officials were suspected of wasting $7.3 million donated by an international organization to combat deadly viruses and has not yet honored appeals to give the finances back (Duggar).

Nonetheless, it is unwise for the Trump administration to abandon foreign aid due to the fact that a few plans have been unsuccessful. A cutback of international support proposed by President Trump, which consists of life-changing endeavors in education, health, and famine, threatens not only our interests overseas by alienating our allies, but also endangers good-old American values; our country was built by helping each other, and we should extend that kindness to the rest of the world. What is even more eye-opening is that the United States’ foreign aid budget consists of only $49 billion, which may seem like a lot of money, but in reality, is only 1.3% of the federal spending plan (McBride). This is a minuscule amount of
money compared to other departments, such as the military and Defense Department, which has the luxury of a $598 billion spending budget (Amadeo). Foreign aid improves lives, forestalls epidemics, empowers international and domestic markets, and inspires philanthropy across the globe. Foreign aid is a necessity, it yields extraordinary benefits, and it should not be cut.

First, foreign aid assists in preventing the spread of infectious diseases across the globe, but under President Trump’s plan, world health funding would suffer immensely. The United States’ foreign aid programs are the foundation of global humanitarian response and save millions of lives every year. The 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa took over 11,000 lives, but we would have witnessed a larger number of deaths if the disease had dispersed in the neighboring country of Nigeria, a country that inhabits approximately 180 million people (Gates). One contribution to the containment of this disease was a group of doctors who were stationed in Nigeria for an anti-polio movement. They were reassigned to the Ebola fight, and their efforts helped stop the disease and kept it from spreading across the ocean and into the United States (Gates). The largest funder of the anti-polio effort has been the U.S. government, which protects its citizens by helping to prepare for the next pandemic. To put an end to these looming viruses, we need America’s investment in foreign aid and health programs (Gates).

A second example of how foreign aid contributes to the prevention of the spread of diseases is the United States’ world-wide HIV/AIDS effort, called PEPFAR (The President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), a U.S. governmental initiative that focuses on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic and helps save the lives of those living with the virus, especially those affected in African nations (“PEPFAR: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”). PEPFAR started with the George W. Bush administration and facilitates some of the most destitute places on earth. There is no doubt that PEPFAR has been a triumph; 11 million people who live with HIV are alive today thanks to the medications that PEPFAR administers. Many people didn’t even get the virus to begin with because of the preventative measures that PEPFAR backs (Gates). Under President Trump’s plan, funding for AIDS would be slashed and many people could be left without testing, or potentially, without treatment.

Severing these programs will result in even more children dying from a reawakening of preventable illnesses and diseases. A higher quality of well-being also gets countries on the road to self-sufficiency, which is crucial for overcoming poverty and increasing global development. When the overall health of a nation enhances, the citizens of that nation decide to have fewer children. This is because they presume that the children they do have will indeed survive into adulthood. The average household size decreases; therefore, it is easier for countries to nurture, educate, and create a promising future for their citizens (Gates).

Another significant contribution that U.S. foreign aid makes is the accessibility and improvement to the quality of education for people across the globe. There are approximately 62 million children who do not have access to learning and education, and only half of the children who are refugees have access to school (“Four ways Trump budget cuts put America - and the world - at risk”). Thanks to resources from USAID, 14,000 schools have been built, 35,900 educators have been trained, and 41.6 million children who are vulnerable to chaos now have a safe environment to be educated in (“Education”). Foreign aid’s contribution to education has been a triumph, but unfortunately, because of the Trump administration’s budget restraints that are now in progress, many third-world countries are set to relinquish
a large amount of aid in the very near future. President Trump wants to cut both education and gender programming by more than one-half, diminishing education programs in 17 different countries and leaving an additional 2 million girls uneducated (“Four ways Trump budget cuts put America - and the world - at risk”). Education not only gives children the tools they need to survive, but also gives them a chance to give back to the world around them.

Foreign aid does not only improve the well-being of other countries, but it also benefits the United States’ economy, and severing these endowments may potentially backfire on American employees. People are more likely to find opportunity when nations around the world are wealthier: as a nation advances in the economic playing field, you begin to observe solid improvements in the lives of its citizens (Gates). Prosperous states are also less likely to declare war, and are more adapted to preventing world-wide epidemics. They can also afford to purchase more products from other countries, like the United States for instance (Gates). Another way that foreign aid helps American companies is by introducing them to wealthy, new buyers and suppliers. USAID uses its abilities to push private businesses to collaborate on projects. For example, USAID has worked with Cargill and Land O’Lakes to help dairy farmers in East Africa increase their amount of production, raising the price of the companies’ exports to nations such as Kenya (Gates). As the companies’ CEOs wrote, “This benefits not only the farmers in Africa, but food producers and their workers in the United States, and it promotes goodwill in a part of the world that can be a market for more American goods in the future” (Gates). Along with Cargill and Land O’Lakes, USAID has also worked with Walmart by training thousands of farmers in sub-Saharan Africa; they have worked with Starbucks and Keurig by helping coffee bean farmers in South America grow and improve their crops so they have a chance of competing in the world market (Gates). These efforts display the United States’ role in the international arena and economic authority, and giving up now would mean leaving the world spotlight; it would rob American businesses and workers of the chance at new and exciting opportunities while also impairing the productivity and well-being of some of the most impoverished people on earth (Gates).

Despite the advancements that are due to foreign aid, many people still doubt the role that foreign aid has played in said results. How much credit does it really deserve for making all of these improvements? It is a difficult question to answer because the growth of productivity of a nation can have many causes. Although aid might not directly result in growth, there is a firm connection between a country’s growth and the amount of foreign aid it receives. Establishing a country from lower to a middle-class status requires a solid education framework, good infrastructure, and healthcare that works - and foreign aid promotes these things very adequately (Gates). For example, combatting AIDS helps saves lives, and it increases productivity; nations are better off when they have strong and healthy educators, law enforcement officials, and businessmen/women. The nations that have collaborated with PEPFAR improved 3 times more on one measure of economic development than the countries who have not worked with PEPFAR, and their per-capita income also saw rapid growth: between 2005 and 2015, Tanzania’s per-person income grew more than 37%, Zambia’s increased by 55%, and Ethiopia’s increased by a staggering 107% (Gates). As these nations became more prosperous, so did their hunger for American goods. At the same time, America’s exports to Tanzania increased by over 77%, U.S. exports to Zambia rose to 189%, and Ethiopia’s increased to 241% (Gates). It is important to understand: foreign aid does not directly
make the poverty-stricken wealthier, but it encourages the construction of a strong foundation for growth. Along with many other factors, it helps abolish some of the boundaries that prevent people from making the most of their knowledge and skills. It has been proven that when people in one place do better, the rest of us do better too. We can keep building on this development, but America’s government must keep nurturing the momentum (Gates).

Ultimately, no matter how powerful America’s military can be, it will never put an end to poverty, hunger, and economic distress. The citizens of the United States deserve to have a strong military, and we already have one; what we do not have is a world where children don’t go to bed hungry and a place where everyone has the same educational and economic opportunities. Cutting foreign aid is careless and detrimental. Instead of these cuts putting “America first,” they threaten our morality and our international interests by not living up to the United States’ long-established pledge to combatting global poverty and humanitarian leadership (“Four ways Trump budget cuts put America - and the world - at risk”). Foreign aid is crucial, and the United States needs to keep making these investments for the sake of American citizens and people across the globe.

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A native Texan, Rebekah Stagg is pursuing an undergraduate degree at UTSA in Biochemistry with a minor in mathematics. Her dream is to eventually enter the world of neuroscience to learn more about the inner workings of the human mind. While she enjoys the sciences, she also takes pleasure in the arts. A classically trained pianist and avid reader, she enjoys spending her free time learning new music and reading the latest fantasy novels. One of her greatest joys is participating in English equestrian lessons, where she spends time riding horses of all sizes and personalities. In the coming years, she looks forward to completing her education and continuing to develop as a writer, a student, and a member of the scientific community.

Analysis of the Argument in Blackfish

Over the years, marine parks in America have become the center of a highly polarized, and often vitriolic, controversy. Some, such as the animal rights group PETA, argue that “Aquariums and marine-mammal theme parks like SeaWorld… are part of a billion-dollar industry built on the suffering of intelligent, social beings who are denied everything that is natural and important to them” (PETA). On the other hand, the parks themselves claim that “Our world-class standards of care, state-of-the-art animal habitats, and a commitment to animal welfare that spans more than five decades, have established our parks as global leaders in the zoological community” (SeaWorld). Clearly, finding the truth of the matter is not easy, and there are many sides to the issue. However, some have endeavored to reveal what really happens in American marine parks.

Blackfish is a documentary directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite that seeks to unveil the cruel treatment of captive animals in American marine parks. The documentary especially focuses on Tilikum, a killer whale responsible for several deaths while held captive, including trainer Keltie Byrne in a park in British Columbia, Canada, and senior trainer Dawn Brancheau in a park located in Orlando, Florida. Throughout the duration of the documentary, Cowperthwaite unravels Tilikum’s story, asserting that he not only suffered in captivity, but may have in fact been afflicted by a form of captivity-induced psychosis. Footage of Tilikum and other whales along with testimonials of trainers, witnesses, and additional experts are used to support the claim that killer whales - as highly intelligent and emotionally sensitive mammals – would ultimately be better off in the wild (Cowperthwaite).

At first glance, Blackfish appears to be making its argument with great success. There is no way to watch the documentary without feeling sympathy for the killer whales depicted, and a general sense of horror at the events and deaths associated with them is prevalent throughout. However, when inspecting the documentary more closely, it becomes apparent that not everything is as it seems. The argument presented by Blackfish, while compelling to the uninformed, is fundamentally ineffective due to the overuse of pathos, the lack of established credibility of the interviewees, and the myriad of false claims and implications made in the film.

Even without looking into the veracity of the claims made by Blackfish, its argument is unequivocally undermined by the flagrant and pervasive emotional manipulation present throughout. Using everything from idyllic scenes of orcas cavorting in the wild, spray shining in the morning sunlight (repeated twice, in fact), to sequences of footage containing bleeding
orcas and people alike, and even to ominous background music more at home in a horror film than a documentary, *Blackfish* purposefully plays on the emotions of the audience to garner support for its claim (Cowperthwaite). While it is true that some of the events surrounding orcas in marine parks have been tragic, and should be treated as so, scare tactics and manipulation have no place in a documentary purportedly revealing the truth behind these events. Pathos, in moderation, is a valid addition to any argument. However, the extensive overuse of pathos in *Blackfish* comes to the point of committing the logical fallacy of Appeal to Emotion. Instead of using reason and logic to win the argument, the documentary instead relies much too heavily on emotion to sway its audience (Appeal to Emotion). One article, in a scathing critique of *Blackfish*, states

“*Blackfish* was developed on the foundation of sensationalism. [It is] a 90-minute spectacle of anthropomorphism and audio/video manipulation, all set to dimmed filters and a suspenseful, dark musical score. Cowperthwaite implemented persuasive, emotionally driven film techniques, assuming that would be enough to argue with fifty years of scientific study and research.” (Cookish)

Film techniques such as these set a tone that significantly reduces the persuasive impact of the documentary; rather than logically presenting her side of the argument in a well thought-out and informed way, Cowperthwaite instead comes across as a militant fanatic desperate to prove her point through any means necessary. By using these strategies, the documentary not only alienates viewers, but also cheapens its argument - causing viewers to eschew becoming involved in Cowperthwaite's claim in order to avoid emotional exploitation.

Furthermore, the documentary does not clearly establish the credibility of the individuals interviewed. While it presents them as experts, after a closer inspection it can be seen that they most certainly are not, and should not be depicted as such. One of the former trainers interviewed, Samantha Berg, worked at SeaWorld over 20 years previously and never with Tilikum (“Blackfish Analysis”). In fact, when asked to testify against SeaWorld in the case brought by OSHA, she herself has concerns about her credibility, stating, “Mainly, I am concerned that because I only worked at SWF for 3 ½ years… that my testimony may not be credible compared to a guy with 25 years of zoological experience… I question whether this qualifies me to speak to SeaWorld’s current safety or training procedures” (“Blackfish Analysis”). Moreover, Dean Gomersall, another trainer used as a credible source by the documentary, had not worked for SeaWorld for 17 years at the time of the interview, and never worked with killer whales (Blackfish Analysis). Additionally, David Duffus, presented in the documentary as “OSHA Expert Witness, Whale Researcher,” has not done any research on whales in captivity; all of his research pertains to whales in the wild, and his specific area of interest is, in fact, gray whales (“Members of the Whale Lab”). Much of the credibility established by Blackfish is a facade; an overwhelming majority of the interviewees are not qualified to speak on the subject of orcas in captivity, and instead are offering what amounts to their opinion on the matter.

The tremendous lack of credibility in the documentary significantly erodes the very foundation of its argument. If the people Cowperthwaite chose to present her argument cannot be trusted, then the argument itself is suspect. Furthermore, most of the interviewees are former trainers - thus giving viewers only one side of what is assuredly a multifaceted, complex issue. Had Cowperthwaite used a greater variety of actual authorities on the subject, and fairly presented both sides of the issue, her argument would have been much more persuasive
to a skeptical audience. The egregious lack of both credible sources and acknowledgment of the other side of the issue in the documentary severely compromised the effectiveness of the argument presented therein.

The absence of credibility in *Blackfish* continues even further; there are a multitude of claims made, and implied, by the documentary that are patently false. First, the documentary clearly claims, and emphasizes, that trainers at SeaWorld were unaware of Tilikum’s history when he arrived (Cowperthwaite). However, in the released Animal Profile of Tilikum used at SeaWorld, it states under the heading ‘Aggressive Tendencies,’ “Please be advised that this whale was involved in the accidental drowning of a trainer at Sealand of the Pacific in 1991 and involved in an incident with a guest in his pool in 1999 at SWF” (“Blackfish Analysis”). Furthermore, *Blackfish* paints an idyllic picture of whales in the wild, stating that the violence inflicted by whales in captivity on each other, such as raking one another with their teeth, does not occur in the wild. It also states that the collapsed dorsal fins seen in the whales in *Blackfish* only occur in captivity (Cowperthwaite). However, in a paper published in 1998, significantly before the documentary, the author states “Two adult male killer whales have been photographed with prolific body scars… [and] the collapsing, collapsed and bent dorsal fins found on the New Zealand killer whales do not appear to be uncommon in this population” (Visser). In choosing to ignore the facts in favor of creating an emotionally compelling narrative that fit her claim, Cowperthwaite loses the trust of her audience, completely sabotaging any credibility she had left. These direct contradictions of the truth cause the critical viewer to doubt her authority on the subject, and casts her in a fraudulent light. Ultimately, this, more than anything, invalidates the argument presented in Blackfish.

Altogether, *Blackfish* fails to provide a compelling reason why viewers should ascribe to its claims, and ultimately presents an insubstantial and fallacious argument. The excessive use of pathos alienates viewers and overshadows the rest of the film; the glaring lack of credibility of the interviewees casts suspicion on the film’s reliability; and the blatant lies throughout raise questions about the trustworthiness of the argument and the integrity of the director. In all, Blackfish is an extraordinarily defective, unsound, and fundamentally ineffectual example of argumentation.
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Ansley Lewis is a military brat who grew up in Stuttgart, Germany, with her parents and younger brother. She is an English major with a passion for writing, illustrating, and playing video games. After she graduates in December 2018, she plans to pursue a career in the video game industry and contribute to games that add more diversity. Diversity for her means games that are more inclusive for women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ communities. She hopes to help create games that continue to inspire future generations of gamers.

Rhetorical Devices in the Mass Effect Trilogy

When people think about video games, most do not consider the amount of writing involved in the games’ development. Even those who play video games often forget the writers who are needed to create the worlds, characters, and dialogue within the games. Like novels and movies, video games have different genres and audiences; they can be horror, science fiction, thriller, fantasy, or any mixture of these. However, what separates and makes each genre easy to define is the writing. Successful writing creates the ability to pull gamers into these digital worlds and make them believe they are in an alternate reality. One video game franchise that is highly successful at persuading its players that they are making a difference in another universe is BioWare’s Mass Effect series. Mass Effect is a player-driven, sci-fi, role-playing game that relies heavily on the rhetoric of its narrative and character development to make it believable. Through the use of rhetorical devices, Mass Effect continues to persuade and create empathetic connections between gamers and the game’s virtual universe that forces players to make difficult decisions throughout the trilogy.

Possibly the most successful aspect of the Mass Effect trilogy is the interactive narrative. Unlike most games that have a more linear plot, Mass Effect allows players to take a proactive role in the gameplay. For example, players are introduced to the Paragon vs. Renegade system during Mass Effect 1, which continues throughout the entire trilogy. In Craig Hayden’s article “The Procedural Rhetorics of Mass Effect: Video Games as Argumentation in International Relations,” he explains the nuances between Paragon and Renegade by saying, “Renegade… is adorned at times with harsh or brusque language, impatience, and sarcasm dialogue options. The Paragon path, in contrast, defers to the sanctity of established social and political institutions, as well as a certain degree of conversational decorum” (185). Hayden describes how Paragon and Renegade mirror personalities and expectations from real life. If a person acts like a degenerate, people are usually going to respond in a negative manner. Likewise, if a person is respectful, people will usually react more favorably. This system works like Good vs. Evil, but the game never outright calls Paragon “Good” or Renegade “Bad.” Instead, players are given a choice between deontological and utilitarian ethics, which add consequences to the player’s actions depending on which alignment is chosen (185). Players are often persuaded to make difficult decisions based on how their actions will be perceived by other characters within the game. However, this system would not be nearly as effective if it was not for the rhetorical devices used by the game’s writers. Through use of procedural rhetoric, players are often given two dialogue options that reflect either Paragon or Renegade, and they must make a decision between the two alignments to progress further.
in the game (Hayden 185). The decisions are often difficult to choose between; both options have their merits, but it comes down to the player's own morals and conscience. However, there are moments in the games where reactions backfire. In journalist Patrick Lee's article “Mass Effect's Universe Gets Ugly When a Paragon Decision Finally Backfires,” he provides an example where the writing is successful at persuading players to make the “wrong” decision. Lee’s example takes place in Mass Effect 3 when a former crewmember admits that a terrorist organization is looking for her because she is helping refugees. In response, the player must choose between a Paragon and Renegade dialogue option. The Paragon option makes the player tell the crewmember to continue aiding the refugees, which seems fine in hindsight. However, if the Renegade option is chosen, the player orders the crewmember to change her identity and to immediately go into hiding. While the Paragon option is usually the safest choice in most matters, it subsequently leads to the terrorist organization murdering the crewmember. Instead, players must choose the Renegade option to save the person's life. The writers intentionally made both options appealing to players, effectively persuading a huge majority of players to choose the “wrong” option (Lee). This situation effectively parallels what would probably occur in real life if someone is being hunted by a terrorist organization. The Paragon vs. Renegade system is one of the major ways the trilogy is able to persuade players to make difficult choices and branch off into differing paths.

However, there are some arguments against the trilogy’s interactive narrative. One of the complaints is that it interferes with the game’s writing. In their article “Mass Effect 2: A Case Study in the Design of Game Narrative,” researchers Jim Bizzocchi and Joshua Tanenbaum explore the positive and negative aspects of Mass Effect 2’s interactive narrative. In regards to it negatively affecting the writing, they say,

…potential for narrative contradiction seems to be rooted in the idea that players of games are primarily interested in asserting their own authorial vision over plot decisions and the outcome of the story. If accurate, such a conception is at odds with the goals of the storyteller, who needs events to fit together in a coherent manner. (394)

Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum address the issue that an interactive narrative can potentially allow players to navigate from the writers’ intended story arc. They explain how there is a belief that some players intentionally manipulate the game mechanics to tip the storyline in a direction that deviates from the way the writers would have it lead. For example, successful games rely on the plot to be both interesting and coherent to their audience. There is often a fine line between being both engaging and comprehensible that can easily be broken if the interactive mechanics of the game allow players to mess with plot conventions. Even though Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum acknowledge the issues that could potentially arise from interactive narratives, the researchers have a strong counter argument. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum argue that “Mass Effect 2 is like a river – as you make progress you inevitably get carried downstream, but you have some choices on how you get there… player's actions can only deepen each narrative arc in the game, without derailing the direction of the story” (401). Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum refer to games that do not allow players the freedom to choose their own paths. While Mass Effect does not offer infinite possibilities, and, therefore, seems to usher players onto limited paths, the interactive narrative gives players flexibility on their journey to the endgame. Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum’s river metaphor describes the player-driven storyline perfectly because each decision the player makes progresses the game. Like a river is confined within its banks, the player is confined to the limitations of the game, but they are
free to make certain choices regarding the direction they are being pulled. As the players get more invested in the game's storyline, each subsequent action they make carries more weight.

The interactive narrative is also supported by a well-developed cast of characters that provide players the opportunity to form relationships. These characters and their relationships with the player are another successful rhetorical device used by BioWare to get players invested in the trilogy. Maintaining the characters’ relationships becomes one of the grounding factors for most of the decisions made within the game. In the article “Game Characters as Narrative Devices. A Comparative Analysis of Dragon Age: Origins and Mass Effect 2,” scholar Kristine Jørgensen explores the development of characters within Mass Effect 2. Regarding the importance of well-developed characters, Jørgensen says, “An important narrative technique… is to focus on companions in the role of pivotal characters by giving them considerable depth and development, and by closely associating them with the narrative progression” (317). Jørgensen believes well-written characters are better received by players. As the narrative progresses, the character should progress. The trilogy follows this guideline throughout all three games. Further in her article, Jørgensen explains that personal growth and development makes “characters psychologically deep and interesting” (318). She states, “Development happens through the unveiling of latent potentials in the character, and character growth happens through changing or maturing together with the progression of the plot” (318). Mass Effect’s characters do mature alongside the player. One of the reasons players tend to get so invested in the storyline is because they want to see what happens to the other characters, and they make choices that directly impact the growth and development of these characters. One character that experiences personal growth, development, and maturity throughout the trilogy is Garrus Vakarian. Arguably one of the best companions from the Mass Effect trilogy, Garrus mirrors the growth of the player’s character (Kaiser). In his article “Why Garrus Is the Real Hero of Mass Effect,” Rowan Kaiser describes why players tend to hold Garrus in such high regards. As an example of Garrus’s parallelism with that of the player, Kaiser explains that “Garrus’s personality reflects the overall moral feel of the story… like [the player], he has been detached from his support structure, dropped into hostile territory and has to try and do good in a place where playing by the rules is totally ineffectual.” As Kaiser explains, Garrus’s growth and development is dependent upon the player’s progression through the game. BioWare’s decision to have Garrus go through some of the same events the player deals with makes it easier for the player to care about what happens to Garrus. Likewise, other characters go through similar drastic changes over the course of the trilogy that also impact and sway the player’s decisions. BioWare’s decision to create well-written characters helps the player create emotional attachments that influence the player’s choices throughout the trilogy.

The ability for these platonic relationships to evolve into romantic relationships is another successful rhetorical device. BioWare is one of the first developers to elevate romantic relationships in video games (Burks). Like the popular phrase “sex sells” implies, Mass Effect has garnered much popularity based upon the player’s ability to romance certain characters. BioWare’s capacity to create well-developed characters generates eerily realistic romantic relationships that persuade players to become emotionally invested. In her article “How BioWare Elevated the Video Game Romance,” Robin Burks explains how the steps involved in building the relationships are not just throwaway quests. She says, “A romance isn’t just a meaningless side quest… Instead, romance can make or break a character, as well as help a
character choose a side in whatever battles and wars come up. Those romances also mean the player must often make hard choices” (Burks). Players are forced to make difficult decisions regarding many of the trilogy’s companions. Depending on whether the player has created a bond – platonic or romantic – with a character is often the determining factor behind major decisions in the game. For example, in Mass Effect 1, the player must decide between saving the characters Ashley Williams or Kaidan Alenko. Only one can survive, and it boils down to how much of a relationship the player has developed with the characters up until that point. If the writers had done a poor job creating meaningful characters, this defining point in the game would have been a lackluster event. Instead, players are forced to make one of the hardest and most emotionally devastating decisions in the trilogy.

Of course, there are some people who criticize Mass Effect’s characters for not being well-developed or persuasive enough. In his reflective essay, “A ‘Mass Effect’ Trilogy Retrospective,” critic Isaac Handelman argues that BioWare failed to deliver on the emotional payout. In regards to Mass Effect 2, Handelman admits to feeling no attachment or emotional connection to the characters during the game’s final quest, the Suicide Mission. The Suicide Mission is a pivotal moment at the end of the second game that was designed to elicit a strong emotional response from players (Lane). Players must choose the correct options during this mission, or the characters they have bonded with are killed off one by one. In defense of his stance, Handelman says, “The game treats the Suicide Mission as a tragic quest. Dramatic music flares, and [the player] stands speechless when each of [his or her] comrades falls [sic]… I felt nothing when my teammates perished, except for disappointment.” Handelman acknowledges the anti-climactic way in which the player’s character reacts to the death of his or her companions. Even though Handelman’s reaction is a reasonable one, players can avoid the death of their companions entirely. It seems like BioWare did not intend for players to fail at the Suicide Mission, but, in keeping with the interactive narrative of the games, still provided players with the capability to kill off certain companions. This mission relies on the players’ choices before reaching this point in the game. If the player chooses to complete loyalty missions for each companion, and assign the companions to jobs relevant to their skillset during the Suicide Mission, it is entirely possible to complete the game with all companions alive. With the knowledge that Handelman’s experience can be completely avoided, his argument against the lack of character development does not hold as much weight. If the player makes the right – and often obvious – choices during this mission, the companions will live and progress to Mass Effect 3. The Suicide Mission is just another way that Mass Effect’s persuasive writing forces players to make difficult decisions that leave a lasting emotional impact.

The rhetorical devices implemented into Mass Effect’s development are part of the reason behind the games’ garnering such an extensive fan base. The persuasive elements behind the games’ interactive narrative entice players to become heavily invested in the trilogy’s storyline. With the ability to make their own decisions, players are able to deviate from a mostly linear path and create their own personal stories. In conjunction with the interactive narrative, the inclusion of well-developed characters creates a more believable environment for players to explore. Lastly, the relationships that players develop lead to emotional connections and a genuine concern for the growth of the characters as the trilogy progresses. All of these elements make the Mass Effect trilogy’s writing successful at persuading its player base to make difficult decisions while also becoming emotionally invested in the games.
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Kaitlyn Vigil is a kinesiology major from Katy, Texas, and hopes to be a pediatric physical therapist after graduating from PT school. In her free time, Kaitlyn enjoys playing ultimate frisbee, working out, and volunteering with different organizations. Here at UTSA, she is involved in the Pre-PT Society, Young Life, and the women’s ultimate frisbee team. Outside of school, Kaitlyn enjoys volunteering to help kids with disabilities participate in different sports and activities. In fact, after earning her Doctorate in Physical Therapy, Kaitlyn would love to work with disabled kids as a physical therapist. Her future goals also include moving to San Antonio permanently and raising a family. Lastly, Kaitlyn wants to thank the UTSA Writing Program for the amazing scholarship!

Free Speech on College Campuses

On October 4, 2018, members of Young Americans for Freedom, a conservative group on The University of Texas at San Antonio’s campus, protested against allegations accusing supreme court justice nominee Brett Kavanaugh of sexual assault. These protestors held signs saying phrases such as “Confirm Kavanaugh” and “#MeToo gone #TooFar,” which offended students with opposing opinions of Kavanaugh leading them to rip some of the posters to show their disgust. One thing led to another and a member of the conservative protestors allegedly “slapped a woman while she attempted to destroy his sign” (Caballero, “Confirm” 1).

This incident is the perfect example of what happens when students freely express their opinions on controversial topics. Most people would agree that college campuses should foster controversial conversation in order to promote the intellectual growth of their students. However, when students have conflicting values to what is being protested, they tend to let their emotions take over causing the protest to quickly go from peaceful to violent. As a result, the decision of where to draw the line on free speech restrictions is a difficult battle that college administrators face. Some people believe that letting students freely express their controversial ideas is a must, while others believe that hate speech and other seemingly offensive language used to express an idea is not acceptable and should be regulated. Since finding a middle ground on freedom of speech is not a simple task, rules and restraints against it on college campuses tend to be very controversial. This is why some campus administrators have restricted free speech through code of conduct policies and others have given power to their students to make their own decisions about it.

College campuses are commonly seen as restrictive sites for freedom of expression and limit this first amendment right through code of conduct policies. David Hudson, ombudsman for The First Amendment Center, explains that universities have implemented “free speech zones” which limit student protests to specific areas on campus in order to avoid disruption of the learning environment. At New Mexico State University, student activist Sean Rudolph was arrested for distributing handouts that criticized the universities policy on freedom of speech and its three small free speech zones. At the University of Cincinnati, members of a student organization were prohibited from going around campus to receive signatures for a ballot initiative and were told that if a signature gathering were to occur outside of a free speech zone, the students in the organization would be subject to arrest (Hudson). Some people would agree that these free speech zones are in violation of the students right
to freedom of speech, while opposers argue that without these specific zones on campus, the peaceful campus environment would be disrupted.

There are many college campuses who have policies that some people feel infringe upon the first amendment rights of college students. In another article regarding freedom of speech on college campuses, Journalist Conor Friedersdorf lists the names of forty-three “red light” rated universities who have at least one policy “that both clearly and substantially restricts freedom of speech” (3). Furthermore, he mentions that even the schools who do not have written policies regarding freedom of speech have still punished students for utilizing their first amendment right in various ways (Friedersdorf). Campus administrators often struggle to find a balance between the first amendment rights and the safety of their students which causes them to create restrictions that some students may feel infringe on their right to freedom of speech.

On the other hand, recent events have shown that some college campuses give students the power to make decisions about issues regarding free speech. There have been numerous occasions where college students were able to disinvite controversial speakers whose opinions and beliefs they disagreed with. For example, in February of 2017, riots erupted at the University of California, Berkeley because right-wing public speaker and author Milo Yiannopoulos was scheduled to speak at the campus. After his speech was canceled due to dangerous violence and immense property damage, UC Berkeley issued a statement saying that even though Yiannopoulos's views and tactics are contrary to their own, the campus's principles “enable freedom of expression across the full spectrum of opinion and expression” (Park). The decision to cancel Yiannopoulos's speech was not an action that campus administrators wanted to take, but more of a decision that they felt they were obligated to make in order to ensure the safety of their students, administrators, and the speaker himself. This incident is a perfect example of the role that college administrators play in the issue of free speech on campus. This issue of free speech on campus is multi-dimensional and complicated, which is the reason why administrators have a difficult drawing the line between the freedom of speech of their students and the safety of their students.

A similar opinion of free speech in the hands of college students is that of the argument of college professor Thomas Cushman. He states that universities are giving students the power to control professors and administrators through tactics such as student evaluations where students can report professors for supposed racism, sexism, and other micro-aggressions used by their professors. Cushman also mentions that students with political agendas have the power to “generate baseless petitions against other students, professors, or administrators” which in some cases has led to the unemployment of these professors and administrators (Cushman 35l). Again, the argument of “how much is too much” in terms of restricting free speech of college students comes into play. Should students be able to control the actions of their professors and administrators? Or is this power important for students to have in order to ensure that they are having their voices heard by their university? Both of these questions stem from valid arguments, which is why it is so difficult for a middle ground to be found on this issue.

Universities play an essential role in shaping their students into productive members of society. In order to accomplish this, it is the job of college administrators to determine the amount of free speech that they will allow on their campus. President of Brown University, Christina Paxson, believes that “freedom of expression is an essential component of academic
freedom” and in order to promote growth academically, universities need to allow students to have difficult conversations that will stretch them intellectually. Her understanding is that the majority of college students do not want to be shielded from ideas that make them uncomfortable; in fact, at Brown University students do not shy away from difficult conversations covering topics such as “racism, sexual assault, and religious persecution” (Paxson). Despite the controversies that occur on college campuses all over America, most college students enjoy having conversations with people whom they do not necessarily agree with because gaining a new perspective on an issue can be beneficial to one’s intellectual growth.

College is a unique time for an individual, and for most students, it is the first time that they are forming their own opinions on seemingly controversial topics. Therefore, most people would agree that exposure to conversations, protests, and speakers who hold contrary ideas to their own is the best way for a student to understand every side to an argument. In a follow-up article, Paisano staff writer Arnulfo Caballero addressed the assault that allegedly occurred at the Young Americans for Freedom protest on campus by saying that the UTSA police department determined the assault was an accident after conducting an investigation. Joey Rubbico, a junior and YAF member, was the student accused of assaulting an opposing protestor and the incident occurred when someone tried to steal his poster, leading him to accidentally brush the opposers face when he moved his hand back. In the days following the protest, students harassed Rubbico by printing out flyers with his face on them and passing them out to students around campus as well as students threatening him on twitter causing him to “fear for his life” (“Student Accused” 1-2). Politics aside, most people would agree that the students protesting for the confirmation of Judge Kavanaugh had a right to peacefully voice their opinion on this issue, and the people who opposed the opinions of the conservative group also had a right to publicly show their disagreement on the matter. However, the problem with this protest occurred during the aftermath of the incident when people’s emotions caused them to utilize hate speech in order to make another person feel inferior, despite having any concrete evidence on the matter. Finding a middle ground on this issue of free speech on college campuses is not an easy task, which is why some campus administrators have restricted free speech through code of conduct policies and others have given power to their students to make their own decisions about it.
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Rosylyn Burk is a San Antonio native. She does my best in school and has a thirst for learning and improving. She hopes that someday she can use her writing towards something meaningful and important.

American Media Not Mediating?

As former NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams once said, “If cell phones are the new outlet for news, we’re there. If it’s computer screens, we’re there, ... I know there are changing habits, but they’ll come around to us.” Today’s different news media platforms have collectively contributed to the discrimination and stereotyping of racial minorities in the United States by influencing the viewers of such platforms through conscious and subconscious biases held by journalists and reporters, misrepresentation or underrepresentation of said groups, and misinformation and journalistic errors.

Conscious and subconscious racial biases can be acquired from any number of different sources. Whether these biases are retained from household teachings and beliefs, or bad experiences, they are present in every aspect of being. They can influence almost any decision or situation. According to Data USA, the average age of someone in the journalism field is about 40 years old (“Journalism”). If a comparison were to be made between two households that were almost identical in every aspect except time period, there would most likely be major variants regarding the two household dynamics. The time period someone was raised in can have immeasurable reverberations on a person’s character, beliefs, and ideas.

Though time period is a notable influence toward the racial biases certain people may have, it is not the sole variant that can create or impact prejudicial thoughts or biases. The cultural exposure one experiences on a day-to-day basis may contribute to the aid or hindrance of another’s cultural understanding, acceptance, and stereotyping. According to the American Survey, in 2015, it was recorded that 62% of the US population were Caucasians. Though the United States is more diverse than many countries, Caucasians and people of European descent still make up a majority of the population. Those currently living in smaller, more homogenous cities are more likely to be sheltered heavily from the culture of other ethnicities and races. One can infer that this variant may also be a contributor to the cultural biases present in modern society.

The final major notable influencer of another’s conscious or subconscious beliefs and racial biases may be the result of a bad experience. Some individuals in society have been unfortunate enough to experience traumatic incidents such as armed robberies, violent assaults, and other unspeakable crimes and events. The aftermath of such traumatic events can cause a person to assimilate more biased beliefs. These biased beliefs, not only risk influencing the behavior of others, but these beliefs can be subtly embedded in a person’s writing. Madison Gesiotto for The Washington Post argues the validity of media sources that critique law en-
forcement officers for shooting people of certain minority groups. Though it is stated that the base of the article is opinionated, its platform is widely viewed by a diverse audience where numbers cannot be estimated. This is how many platforms are susceptible to spreading racial biases or stereotyping in posts and articles.

How a person presents themselves, whether it’s for a potential job opportunity, or just meeting a new person, is critical. This is apparent when a situation calls for a certain type of presentation that may be foreign, or difficult to evoke. Maybe it’s a bad interview or an awkward first encounter, it is clear that how a person presents themselves will determine how others behave, interact, and think about them. The same can be true in regards to how journalists and reporters misrepresent and under-represent racial minorities in modern media.

Many journalists don’t necessarily have poor intentions when reporting, specifically when under a certain pressure to perform well. In a Youtube video by FirstLeakTV, two anchors for Chicago’s WGN reported a plane crash only to realize the plane was apart of a set for a TV show. It is important to take into account that time frame due to last-minute stories and newly revealed information can hinder the quality of media. Some reporters have a tendency to misconstrue the accounts given by witnesses. This misinterpretation can be present for a number of reasons. Some journalists make the mistake of taking a person’s quotation out of context in order to fit the narrative of the story. Others simply choose not to correct or clarify those errors.

However not only is miscommunication an ongoing phenomenon still embedded in mainstream media, but underrepresentation still plagues our screens and can be just as harmful. A majority of those who are fortunate enough to be chosen for a live interview generally are not what most consider to be appropriate, whether it be for a witness account or an interview regarding the public opinion on a structure being built. Typically, it is not the intention or interest of a journalist or reporter to misrepresent a community; it is more likely the result of last-minute interviews, without considering the possibility of poor misconduct on live television.

Underrepresentation and miscommunication also can be linked to the lack of prioritization of racial and cultural understanding in media. Large media platforms cannot stay on a large scale if they do not appeal to the interests of their readers. So, though it can be beneficial for a media outlet to express the importance of understanding, an article will have no effect if no one reads it. It is also the job of many media outlets to report sudden major events and crises, which can be a daily occurrence. This may lead to limited windows of time to report on issues that can be beneficial in eradicating racial biases in society.

Many would like to believe that reporters and journalists never have mal-intentions, or that they would never consciously decide to bend the truth in favor of something dishonest. Many of the reasons society still harbors racial biases today is through the destructive manipulation of society by well-known, trusted reporters. The formidable few reporters can be characterized as deceptive for many reasons including intentionally twisting the words of others to change the context of the quotation. Another is consciously allowing secondary sources to inaccurately describe situations in a light that may further an agenda.

Some reporters go as far as to “embellish the truth.” Brian Williams was the former *NBC Nightly News* anchor until it was revealed in 2015 that during his time in Iraq he had lied about an incident with the Chinook helicopter he was on. Though this specific incident is difficult to link to racial biases in society, the aspect of dishonesty within journalism is
enough to make people untrusting of certain outlets that can be extremely useful in informing the public on racial matters.

Even in instances in which a reporter does not have an agenda or has no motivation to give false information, the information given not necessarily accurate. Many people a reporter may consider interviewing may give a false account of events to benefit themselves or progress their own agenda. The Youtube video mentioned before by FirstLeakTV helps exemplify how simple it is for false information to plague credible and trusted sources. Reporters and watchers alike must be careful not to trust the wrong sources for information.

In modern society, different media platforms continue to grow with easier access and more information being added every day. It is through many well known and trusted platforms, that the stereotyping and discrimination of certain racial minorities are tolerated. This lack of acknowledgment that journalists and reporters can hold conscious and subconscious racial biases is detrimental to those communities. Misrepresentation or underrepresentation of said groups is preventing the possibility of widespread cultural exposure and understanding. Misinformation and journalistic errors are negatively impacting the public’s view of racial minorities, possibly for the agendas of others. These are many of the reasons American society still faces racial biases towards minorities today.

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Nuclear Melodrama: The Overlooked Benefits of Nuclear Energy

As a result of the Chernobyl accident in April 1986 and Fukushima disaster in March of 2011, the public formed many negative opinions regarding the value and reliability of nuclear energy. However, the recently overdramatized downsides of nuclear energy often give reason to overlook the true benefits of its use. In recent years, the advancements in technology and skilled workforce have led to increasingly more reliable nuclear sites and safer forms of energy. This means that accidents, such as in Fukushima and Chernobyl, will be significantly less frequent if they even occur at all. Consequently, the general public could widely reconsider nuclear energy due to its benefits rather than dwelling on the issues that have occurred in the past. In fact, experts in the energy industry insist that nuclear power is beneficial due to its carbon-free nature, high efficiency rate, and comparatively low risk.

Nuclear power, being free of carbon emissions, proves to be the most environmentally conscious form of energy to be introduced to society. As other forms of energy producers come about and lessen the proportion of nuclear energy to the total, carbon emissions will rise as well. According to Lamar Alexander and Sheldon Whitehouse from The New York Times, 60 percent of the carbon free energy used in the United States comes from just the 99 reactors within its borders. This points out that nuclear energy is a vital source of the total energy used within the U.S. and even around the world. Along with this, nuclear energy is significantly better for the environment and its future. Alexander and Whitehouse affirm that “this matters because the investments we make today, in new plants and transmission infrastructure, will be around for decades.” They point out the importance of making conscious decisions and specifically keeping nuclear energy up and running. However, over the next decade, eight reactors across the U.S. are to be shut down due to deterioration and lack of funding. If this occurs, the energy lost from these reactors will need to be compensated for in the form of other types of energy, which would most likely result in “unclean” energy production.

This will result in a drastic increase of carbon emissions into the atmosphere. Due to the closing of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station in late 2014, carbon emissions in the electricity sector of New England rose an entire five percent in just a few months, according to Alexander and Whitehouse. Taking this into account, shutting down multiple reactors around the same time can result in major changes. With this in mind, the possible closing of the eight reactors across the United States is expected to raise carbon levels by an incredible three percent nationwide, according to Alexander and Whitehouse. This will clearly impact
the status of the effects of global warming, and in turn, can soon be followed by larger consequences.

Along with being carbon free, the high efficiency rate of nuclear power production makes this form of energy stand out among others. Compared to any other form of energy producer, nuclear power is able to exponentially out-produce with less supplies than other forms. William Tucker, writer for the *Wall Street Journal*, pointed out that coal plants require a 100-car freight train that arrives every 30 hours to stay serviceable, while for a nuclear reactor, all that is needed is a pack of six trucks that arrive only once every two years. Considering this, the possible amounts of labor and time that can be saved by putting work into nuclear energy easily surpasses the value of energy produced by other forms that require large amounts of such. Tucker also mentions that 449 coal mines reside in the state of Kentucky alone, which provide for a small fraction of all the coal plants in the area, while only 45 Uranium mines exist in the entire world which provide for all the existing reactors. This clearly points out how inefficient “unclean” energy really is and the true economic benefit of using nuclear energy.

These facts often lead to the contention of the use of other clean sources of energy that do not require as much supply. The use of other clean sources of energy, such as wind farms and hydroelectric dams, is beneficial and extremely environmentally conscious. However, considering that all other forms of clean energy are significantly less efficient than nuclear power, it gives even more incentive to simply stick with nuclear power. According to Tucker, a hydroelectric dam must back up at least 250 square miles of water in order to generate the same amount electricity that a nuclear reactor can in just a single square mile. Even though no detrimental cost to clean energy is present, this still fails to meet the quantities of energy produced by nuclear means. Also, if just one nuclear reactor were to be replaced by windmills, it would require lining the entire Hudson River from New York to Albany with 45-story-tall windmills to even come close to producing the same amount of energy, according to Whitehouse and Alexander. Regardless of the available clean energy being provided, the amounts produced by other clean forms is nearly negligible compared to that of nuclear energy.

Aside from its physical benefits, nuclear energy proves to have comparatively low risk, meaning that less people are expected to be harmed in the process. Even though nuclear reactors require a dangerous process to obtain energy, compared to other forms of energy, it has historically proven to be less detrimental to the public’s safety. Tucker mentions how, in the twentieth century alone, coal mining killed more than 100,000 workers, but coal mining is still occurring. Along with this, he brings up the natural gas explosion that killed 130 people in Cleveland in 1994 and comments, “we still pump gas right into our homes.” As part of advancing a particular technology, errors will occur. However, these errors only lead to a progression of development. Although the two nuclear incidents brought pain to many people, it still brought about new procedures and advancements in its following.

The Fukushima disaster displaced thousands of households and, to this day, still has lasting consequences. However, the public must consider that the disaster was caused by the largest tsunami Japan had ever experienced. Also, this was the first incident to have occurred in over 20 years since the Chernobyl accident. With this in mind, other disasters have occurred within other energy producers that have greatly surpassed the effects of the two nuclear incidents. In Japan, an earthquake caused a hydroelectric dam to suddenly burst,
which led to 1,800 homes being destroyed and an unknown number of people being killed, mentioned Tucker. The point being, errors exist within any industry and accidents are bound to occur. The only issue with nuclear energy is “that the stakes are unimaginably high,” noted Eugene Robinson from the *Washington Post*. This is simply because no fool-proof way to stop natural disasters or human errors exists; therefore, the risk taken on nuclear energy is practically the same as any other source.

All in all, the public often overlooks the benefits of nuclear energy because of the few incidents that have occurred in the past. The issue is not that nuclear energy is unsafe, but rather that it is relatively new and somewhat undeveloped. Taking into account of all factors is imperative when a disaster occurs. Because of this happening so often, nuclear energy has been placed in a negative perspective to many. Robinson states that all the benefits made present “now… [look] more like a bargain with the devil,” which seems to hold true today. However, perspectives can possibly change with the growth and advancement of nuclear power. Once the public sees the new reliability of this form of energy many will change how they view it and it will become more widely accepted.

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Kathryn M. Jones is a native Texan from a small town south of San Antonio. She began college at Yale University, moved to San Antonio a few years later to study briefly at several local universities, and then abandoned college for a successful career as a paralegal. She enjoyed her legal career, but regrets waiting thirty years to resume her studies. Ms. Jones is pursuing a degree in history, with minors in professional writing and museum studies. After graduation, she will commence her second career as a freelance writer. She has four grown daughters and lives with her husband in downtown San Antonio. Besides her academic interests, she enjoys her five dogs, travel, reading, genealogy, and the arts.

Treason or Patriotism: A Rogerian Argument for Taking a Knee

Americans love their national anthem, even though many know only some of the words, few have the vocal range to sing it well, and almost no one knows the second verse. When Colin Kaepernick first sat on the bench during the national anthem at a 2016 NFL preseason game, and began kneeling shortly thereafter, many people misunderstood his highly visible protest. Although Kaepernick protested racism and police brutality, critics understandably characterized his taking a knee as protesting the anthem, the American flag, and the American military, and some called it treason. U.S. Representative Beto O’Rourke recently stated, with respect to whether protest during the national anthem is treasonous or patriotic, “…reasonable people can disagree on this issue, and it makes them no less American to come down on a different conclusion” (qtd. in Bieler). Both sides interpreting Kaepernick’s protest have valid viewpoints.

While a national anthem aims to unite the people of a nation, a national anthem may also divide the people. Daniel Hummel of Bowie State University believes national symbols such as an anthem “can define more tightly who are insiders and who are outsiders” and that singing the anthem at public events builds community and inspires nationalism (227). Dr. Igor Cusack, a researcher at ResearchGate, likens national anthems to “national hymns” (qtd. in Hummel 227). Since President Woodrow Wilson signed a 1931 bill making “The Star-Spangled Banner” the U.S. national anthem, the anthem has been sung at countless civic events, at sporting events, in schools, and at many other public gatherings, strengthening the bonds in these communities (Delaplaine 26). However, Avi Gilboa and Ehud Bodner of Bar-Ilan University found that minorities and less powerful groups perceived anthems differently (Hummel 227). For these people, a national anthem may have the opposite of the desired effect, highlighting the fact that the outsiders do not share the insiders’ values.

During tumultuous times, national anthems become particularly important to countries, as the governments of these countries seek to inspire patriotism among their people. Jemimah Steinfeld of Index on Censorship magazine posits that, in the chaotic first half of the 20th century, loyalty was critical, and countries used national anthems to inspire the loyalty of their citizens (115). During this time, the U.S. national anthem was likewise used to intensify patriotic fervor. Wesley Morris of The New York Times opines that the propagandistic patriotism of World War II has now changed into theatrical patriotism: “We can know patriotism only when we see it – and so you’ve really got to show it” (24). Politicians
must wear flag pins, national party conventions must be saturated with flags, musicians must perform over-the-top interpretations of the anthem (Morris 24). President Donald Trump literally hugged the flag after a speech on immigration earlier this year. Some countries have begun legislat ing patriotism; in China, the Philippines, Russia, and even India, ruling parties and legislatures are criminalizing behavior which they say disrespects their anthems -- changing lyrics, not singing fervently enough, not standing (Steinfeld 114). Likewise, President Trump suggests anthem protestors should lose their citizenship (Morris 24).

Many people believe that singing the U.S. anthem shows respect for the military, in addition to strengthening patriotic and nationalistic bonds. The U.S. Navy began playing “The Star-Spangled Banner” in 1904 during the raising and lowering of the flag, before the song became the anthem (Delaplaine 21). In 1916, President Wilson made the song the official anthem for the Navy and the Army (Delaplaine 21). In 1918, the song’s connection to the military and sports was firmly established when a Navy sailor, on furlough to play for the Boston Red Sox in the World Series, performed “The Star-Spangled Banner” with such enthusiasm that his rendition was reported in The New York Times (Waxman 29). By the mid-1940s, after the song became the national anthem and loudspeakers were common, the anthem was ubiquitous at sporting and civic events (Waxman 29). Adam Rugg of the University of Iowa reasons that sports teams use military jargon to amplify the importance of sports, as well as to marry pride in country to pride in sports (22). Morris notes that the NFL has “long sought to conflate itself with the military, making it easy to confuse players with troops and political protest with treason” (24). The military-sports connection strengthened after 9/11, particularly with the NFL’s “Salute to Service” campaign, which aggressively marketed the connection and featured “extravagant spectacles of patriotic display” (Rugg, 21).

When the U.S. Senate investigated the Department of Defense’s funding of such campaigns, however, the late Senator John McCain and Senator Jeff Flake termed these campaigns “paid nationalism” – millions of dollars paid by the Department of Defense to sports teams, primarily the NFL, for promotional activities (qtd. in Morris 24). Under these circumstances, some people, both civilian and military, understandably believe the anthem is sung in tribute to the military and that not standing during the anthem is disrespectful to soldiers. For example, Vietnam veteran Tim Lee, in a recent Ted Cruz campaign ad, argues, “I gave two legs for this country. I’m not able to stand. But I sure expect you to stand for me when the National Anthem is being played” (qtd. in Bieler).

However, many veterans dispute that the anthem and the military are synonymous. Michael Rodriguez, a Green Beret veteran, says, “That flag doesn’t just represent our Founding Fathers, and it isn’t just about the military either. That flag represents everybody who has fought for any type of right in this country” (qtd. in Holmes). However, a 2017 poll of eight thousand veterans by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) found that sixty-two percent were against the protest, and thirty-nine percent expressed their intent to stop watching NFL games due to their disapproval (“Eight Thousand Veterans”). Unquestionably, Kaepernick’s protest is unpopular among the military.

The right to protest enjoys a long, albeit sometimes controversial history in the United States. The United States originated in the 18th century from civilian protests over taxes and representation. Revered American philosopher Henry David Thoreau coined the term civil disobedience in the mid-19th century to explain his refusal to obey civil authority (Chenoweth 352). Suffragettes, civil rights activists, and Vietnam War protestors in the 20th
century practiced civil disobedience. Activists for all manner of civil rights continue to practice civil protest in this country today. Certainly, these dissenters met and continue to meet resistance – members of all these groups have been beaten, arrested, and imprisoned, while many civil rights activists and war protestors have been killed. The potential consequences have not discouraged civil disobedience, which continues to be used today on all sides of the political spectrum. The right to protest in the United States is rarely questioned, except by President Trump.

Civil disobedience remains popular as a form of protest because it is a proven method of highlighting issues and changing policies, laws, and even regimes. No one argues anymore that women should not vote. No one argues that separate facilities for African-Americans are equal. No one argues that Vietnam draft dodgers should be imprisoned. Erica Chenoweth of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies and the Peace Research Institute Oslo believes that the use of civil protest is, in fact, increasing, pointing to the success of such campaigns in Eastern European countries, South Africa, and North Africa in the last several decades (351). Chenoweth also claims that “campaigns of civil resistance [are] much more likely than campaigns of armed struggle to succeed outright…[and] have been far more likely to achieve democratization” (354). The success of the recent #MeToo movement is a salient example of the power and continuing popularity of civil protest.

Additionally, the Supreme Court has long held that civil dissent is constitutional, particularly with respect to patriotic rituals. In the 1943 Supreme Court case of West Virginia Board of Education vs. Barnette, the Court held that students could not be compelled to participate in patriotic rituals (Hassanein). Justice Robert H. Jackson wrote in that ruling, “If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein” (qtd in Hassanein). Unfortunately, President Trump seems to repudiate that philosophy with his criticism of Kaepernick.

Unlike President Trump, ninety-eight percent of the veterans polled by the IAVA agreed that protest is constitutionally protected, while sixty-two percent agreed that professional athletes peacefully protesting during games are within their constitutional rights, even if the veterans disagree with the protest (“Eight Thousand Veterans”). Rodriguez also agrees that Kaepernick is entitled to protest (Holmes). Another Army veteran, Rocio Serna, sees military significance in Kaepernick’s actions: “In the military, taking a knee is a symbol of taking a break, in a manner where you still don’t lose your fighting stance. You stand ready at all times…We take a knee, because we’re always ready” (qtd. in Holmes). Serna further questions the condemnation of those fighting for democracy at home versus the approbation of those fighting for democracy abroad (Holmes). This dichotomy drove many African-American World War II veterans to protest during the civil rights movement and still compels many minorities to protest today.

Civil dissent is sometimes disturbing and frequently unpopular when it occurs, but today’s dissenter is often tomorrow’s patriot. Martin Luther King was vilified in his lifetime but is a national hero today. When some members of society suffer injustice, and a person in a prominent position in society can focus societal attention on that injustice, protest is patriotic, not treasonous. Kaepernick followed a time-tested, constitutionally-protected method of dissent, using his position of privilege to bring attention to police brutality and racism.
Kaepernick states, “This [stand] is because I’m seeing things happen to people that don't have a voice, people that don’t have a platform to talk and have their voices heard, and effect change. So I’m in the position where I can do that and I’m going to do that for people that can’t” [qtd. in Biderman]. Although Kaepernick never intended to protest the anthem, the flag, or the military, he knew his protest would be interpreted as disrespectful, he knew there would be backlash, and he knew he risked his livelihood. Sean Gregory and Alana Abramson of Time magazine ask: “What’s the truer measure of patriotism: standing at attention before a football game, or asking whether the country is living up to the lyrics of the ‘Star-Spangled Banner,’ which salute the ‘land of the free and the home of the brave?’” (102). Kaepernick should be hailed as a patriot, not as a traitor.

A national anthem can unite a country, but it can also divide when a country fails to live up to its anthem's promise. Heightened nationalism tying the military to the anthem, and prohibiting any protest of the anthem, erodes democracy. However, military veterans almost uniformly recognize the right to protest, and Americans still have a strong belief in the righteousness and the sanctity of civil dissent. U.S. Representative O'Rourke finished his recent remarks on Kaepernick’s protest with these words: “I can think of nothing more American than to peacefully stand up, or take a knee, for your rights, any time, anywhere, in any place” (qtd. in Bieler). Any American's right and privilege to engage in civil dissent should be unquestioned.

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Gracie Mooney is majoring in Environmental Science, is from Deer Park, TX, and graduated Cum Laude from high school. Gracie is a strong advocate of wildlife conservation and LGBTQ+ rights. Gracie enjoys drawing and attending concerts and is excited to be here at UTSA.

Fake News

After the 2016 Presidential election, Donald Trump allegedly sent aliens to abduct Hillary Clinton, claiming he “wanted to rid the earth of her evil.” Chances are no one heard that news story. For one, it’s ridiculous, and two, it’s fake news. While this may seem like an extreme and ridiculous example, it is not far off from the fake headlines and conspiracies circling the internet. These days fake news is everywhere. False information can be found on Twitter, Facebook, and many other platforms. Everyone from citizens to news anchors to the President is talking about fake news. The topic of false information has become a rather popular subject among society. Most of the conversation revolves around the dangers and consequences of these misleading articles that pollute social media and news outlets. Some argue that fake news has no real consequences because society has always been fed lies among a number of other reasons. However, the research and studies on the topic suggest otherwise. Fake news is detrimental and has real-world consequences like swaying public opinion in important elections, causing violence among citizens, and spreading propaganda.

Consequences of fake news include swaying public opinion in important elections. One of the biggest and most relevant examples of this is the 2016 Presidential election. Tensions were high as citizens watched the presidential candidates day after day trying to gain support. An individual could not scroll through their Twitter or Facebook feed without catching a glimpse of the newest and most controversial scandals. The more frustrating and alarming thing about this is many cannot distinguish the real articles from the false. According to the author of “The Psychology of Fake News”, “the average American was exposed to somewhere between one and three articles from a known fake news distributor” (Lombrozo). In other words, the majority of Americans were exposed to false information in an incredibly crucial election at some point in time. Not only that but according to Dave Davies in the article “Fake News Expert On How False Stories Spread and Why People Believe Them,” as the election came to a close, the number of engagements with fake news spiked well above the numbers of reputable news journals. Fake news expert Craig Silverman states, “three months before the election...we actually saw the fake news spike” (Davies). This suggests that fake news was utilized as a tool to influence a number of citizens ultimately on which candidate would receive their vote. Both articles depict the dangerous weight these fake news articles carry.

Others would argue that fake news has no effect because most of society knows who they will vote for based on party. Some individuals do not bother with the articles and the
news outlets but rather pick their nominee based on their existing beliefs and designated party. In the article, “When It Comes To Politics and Fake News, Facts Aren’t Enough,” the author states that in Tali Sharot’s research society is open to new information, but only if it aligns with pre-existing beliefs. The author, Vedantam, clarifies, “We find ways to ignore ideas that challenge our beliefs” (Vedantam). This study backs up the argument that people vote based off party alone because people are only open to information if it fits within their beliefs. In other words, a person’s vote will not be swayed by fake news. However, this argument does not prove that fake news has no consequences because it relies on the idea that all citizens voted based off party, ignoring the percentage of undecided voters. Moderates and undecided voters are often swayed by information pertaining to elections. A large majority of society follows the news and research who they will vote for. This is really amazing except for when misinformation has to do with that research. Fake News expert, Craig Silverman, states that many fake news articles circling Facebook at the time of the election were pro- Trump or anti-Clinton but anti-Trump articles did not gain traction. Silverman continues “...what happened is that a lot of people creating fake news looked at this and said, well, let’s go all in on Trump” (Davies). As a result, the majority of false information circling the internet favored Trump, so the general public viewed more and more reasons to favor him over Clinton. This suggests that a number of internet and social media users were influenced by the false information they read. The phrase “don’t believe everything you read,” has been around for a long time. However, the general public has not taken their own advice. These fake articles have destructive and detrimental weight to them. The 2016 election is just one example of fake news’ ability to affect the popular opinion. All of these articles show how fake news can creep its way into the decisions made by voters, but the consequences of fake news do not stop with elections.

In today’s climate, tension grows among society and their differing beliefs. Recall the Charlottesville protests where an extremist took the life of a young woman by running her over. Think back to the incident where four men attacked a gay couple walking about after attending Pride. These are just a couple examples of how tension is high among society and the capacity for violence seems to be growing. Fake news is known to be guilty of stirring the pot and inciting violence. The extreme left and right wing individuals are constantly at each other’s throats, and this proves extremely dangerous when false information comes into play. The most popular example of fake news instigating violence would have to be the “Pizzagate” shooting in Washington DC. Author, Nsikan Akpan, reports in his article, “The Very Real Consequences of Fake News and Why Your Brain Can’t Ignore Them,” a man fired an AR-15 in a ping pong pizza bar. He claimed he was investigating the conspiracy that “Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton allegedly led a child-trafficking ring out of Comet Ping Pong” (Akapan). While this may seem to be an exaggerated example of violence, these are the real-life consequences of fake news.

Society proves susceptible to manipulation of fake news. However, many argue that fake news is not the cause of violent actions. If a person is violent in nature, they will find a reason to act out. While this may be true, some people are violent in nature, this does not negate the fact that fake news acts as a trigger for those with violent tendencies or aggressive behavior. The shooter of the pizzeria was triggered by the article he read instigating his violent outburst. In the article, “Facebook to Remove Misinformation That Leads to Violence,” the author comments on the removal of information that “spread hate speech and false informa-
tion that prompted violence” (Frenkel). Simply put, even Facebook realizes the damage that fake news can do. Often times fake news is biased and extreme. Its main purpose is to evoke a reaction, typically an angry one, regardless of whether you agree or disagree. This angry reaction is the desired effect of false information. If the author can incite anger and manipulate their audience, they have achieved their goal. Together, both Akapan’s article and Frenkel’s article recognize the danger fake news poses to society as a whole. The violence displayed in society has shown that the general public is easily manipulated and swayed. The right article or news story sends individuals into a frenzy. They lose their compassion and humanity. Further suggesting that fake news does, in fact, have real-world consequences that should not be overlooked. Not only is fake news dangerous to society in this manner, but it is also used to spread propaganda among citizens.

The use of fake news to spread propaganda has become very relevant in the past year or so. After the 2016 election, fake news was the topic of debate everywhere. While fake news has been around before the 2016 Presidential election, fake news is widely more discussed among society. Again, the consequences of misinformation vary, but another big consequence of this false information is the spreading of propaganda. In Laura Sydell’s article, “How Russian Propaganda Spreads On Social Media,” she explains how a Facebook group for Black Lives Matter turned out to be a Russian propaganda page to “covertly sow division within society.” According to Sydell, the mentality is to “divide and conquer” (Sydell). The tension among the American people appears to be at an all-time high. The left and right wing continuously fight for their cause often times brutally, leaving society torn down the middle. Hatred and lack of compromise keep the public divided. The use of propaganda is used to divide citizens even more. Further division among society makes it easier to control and manipulate the American people. This is not the only example of this kind of propaganda either. Sydell furthers her point explaining the twitter page called the Tennessee Republican Party. The page is known for its fake news and is run by Russian propaganda pushers. However, this does not stop some of President Trump’s closest supporters from interacting with the page. According to Sydell, “the account was often retweeted by...Kellyanne Conway and the president’s son” (Sydell). This further proves that individuals are easily convinced or manipulated.

Some people argue that the use of propaganda does not interfere with society because individuals research the validity of the claims they read. However, research shows that individuals typically do not research their sources nor do they know how to distinguish what is real and what is fake. According to the author of, “The Classroom Where Fake News Fails,” in a recent Stanford study “America’s middle, high school, and college students are shockingly bad” at distinguishing fake news from real news (Lonsdorf). However, it isn’t just the nation’s youth that struggles with this. Recall the man who fired an AR-15 in a restaurant because of the fake news article he read. People just do not verify the information they read, and they do not know how to tell if the articles are real. This is what makes the public vulnerable and susceptible to manipulation. If society were to dig further and question the information they read, as a whole, the public would be safe from the consequences of false information. Overall, society is in danger when it comes to false information because of the chaos it causes. Both Lonsdorf’s article and Sydell’s article depict the way fake news is used as propaganda and how this is dangerous to a society that cannot distinguish the real from the fake.

While fake news will always be a topic of debate, it is clear that it does, in fact, have real-world consequences that cannot go ignored. False information has been known to sway
people’s decisions in important elections, possibly changing the overall outcome of these elections. Society has seen false information stir up hate and violence, magnifying tension until it bursts. It has also been used as a tool to spread propaganda and divide the public more than they already are. All of these consequences prove to be linked together. The swaying of public opinion was a big player in the 2016 election, and the tension between the two parties often lead to violence. The propaganda used also divided the nation further, which suggests that these fake articles have one purpose. That is to magnify the unrest and manipulate the public into believing the lies fed to them. For these reasons, society must think carefully about what they read and what sources they trust. Only when the public can do this, will the dangerous nature of fake news be defeated. If society continues to believe and fall for these fake articles, the public will be subject to a number of consequences. The repercussions of fake news have had a wide disastrous impact on society and can no longer be avoided or ignored.
Work Cited


Katherine Schreiber is a full-time Environmental Science student, part-time teacher’s assistant, and part time dog walker. More importantly, she is a dedicated dog mom, animal rights activist, and artist who hopes to use her degree to serve and protect the Lonestar State as an Environmental Investigator for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. She owes everything to her Mom, Dad, brother, and best friends; they have helped me throughout life’s trials. Truthfully, she avoided taking Freshman Composition II until my third year of college because she was afraid of failure. In fact, she nearly dropped it by the third week! However, Professor Piña was an incredible guide and asset to her academic success and life; she is an amazing role model and impressive leader.

Fake News: A Menace to the Truth

Having access to truthful and relevant news is an essential part of life in the 21st century. The actions of one country, organization, or leader may greatly affect the day to day life of an individual. News comes in a variety of topics and mediums; it can be dispersed by word-of-mouth, paper, radio, television, or the internet. Unfortunately, not all news is created equally. Information may be twisted out of human error or malice. The collaborative nature of the internet in particular allows for more error. Recently, untruthful information has been at the forefront of political debate. However, fake news is not a new and upcoming trend. For example, the Nazi party utilized fake news as propaganda to condone the killing of innocent people. Fake news has real world consequences because it competes with real news, it alters a person’s perception of reality, and it may instigate acts to harm society.

Fake news has real world consequences because it competes with real news. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow users to create an echo-chamber of opinions and information. In other words, one is more likely to read and share articles that align with their current beliefs, regardless if the information is truthful or not. Unfortunately, opinion and truth are often muddled together when left in the hands of the general public. Fake news feeds off of real news and current events; it portrays the opposing opinion in extreme but eye-catching headlines or clickbait.

An example of competitive fake news is the presence of over 200,000 Russian Twitter bots during the 2016 United States presidential election. Twitter bots are a mass-produced collection fake accounts used to generate favorites, retweets, or follows; the goal is completely up to the person responsible for creating them. The Russian twitter bots were created with the intent to influence US voters to favor President Donald Trump and dislike Mrs. Hillary Clinton. According to NBC News, a Russian twitter bot post with 178 retweets states, “Look at Europe! It was betrayed by greedy politicians! Hillary will do the same for America!” (Popken). Another fake post with 297 retweets states, “Latinos stand w/ Trump! But the media will never show this! Spread online!” Although these Russian twitter bot accounts were suspended, there is no way to mitigate this competitive method of fake news.

Other factors unintentionally contribute to the competitiveness of fake news. Artificially intelligent computer programs, like Google AdSense, observe and record one’s internet traffic to suggest similar articles (Davies). These programs cannot differentiate between real and fake news, allowing fake news to compete for the spotlight. Countries across the world
are experiencing the side effects of fake news, not just the US. For example, the Swedish Media Council distributed pamphlets on detecting false information prior to one of their important elections (Good). To reiterate, fake news has real world consequences because it competes with real news.

Also, fake news alters a person's perception of reality. A human's perception of reality is based on an amalgamation of personal experiences and recorded history. When the record is altered -or fake news articles are created- it results in a change in history's DNA and thus the perception of reality. For example, information may be altered or redacted within school-taught history textbooks. A high school McGraw-Hill World Geography textbook referred to African slaves as “workers” and “immigrants” (Higson). Historical misrepresentation fails to build a truthful reality for children across the world.

North Korean propaganda is a more blatant example of reality altering news. Their “intranet” access is restricted to less than 30 websites; the news articles are questionable and only pertain to the “supreme leader’s activities” (Asher). The pictures and stories have an eerie brainwashing effect, as the perception of reality for North Korean citizens rests in the hands of their government’s fake news. As can be seen, fake news has real world consequences because it alters a person's perception of reality.

Furthermore, fake news has real world consequences because it may instigate acts to harm society. Whether the article is satirical or malicious, the author may unintentionally stir the reader. In some cases, the reader becomes so upset that emotions transform into actions. For example, a fake news article convinced Mr. Edgar Welch the basement of a Washington D.C. pizza parlor, Comet Ping Pong, was a front for child sex slavery, run by Mrs. Hillary Clinton and her campaign manager, Mr. John Podesta (Domonoske). Welch took matters into his own hands by walking into Comet Ping Pong and firing upon innocent workers and customers. Fortunately, no one was injured and he surrendered to D.C. police after failing to find the sex dungeon. The owner of Comet Ping Pong, Mr. James Alefantis, has received multiple death threats related to Pizzagate, in addition to the violent attack. Sadly, there is virtually no way to predict when the next fake news related incident will occur; the internet with plagued with too many rumors and conspiracies to count. Clearly, fake news has real world consequences because it may instigate acts to harm society.

On the other hand, some would say it’s often easy to distinguish fake news from real news. Readers are responsible for fact checking their news sources. Firstly, fake and real news articles are found on completely different platforms, like Infowars or the Onion. Some alternative news sources have a disclaimer at the top to explain the satirical nature of the website. Fake news providers are easily identifiable as such. In addition, the bogus articles often use ridiculous headlines and silly pictures. For example, the Onion wrote an article awarding Kim Jong-Un as the “sexiest man alive” (Kim Jong-Un Named). The piece was noticeably intended to entertain rather than inform. Realistically, fake news is easy to detect and avoid.

Some believe that people should naturally be more skeptical in this day and age, knowing that they should not believe everything their eyes come across. In response to the vastness of the internet, determining source credibility is a skill taught from elementary school to university. According to the University of Texas at El Paso, one should check the domain name, examine the author, look for agreeing sources, and only use Wikipedia or blogs to get ideas for further research (4 Ways to Differentiate). As such, readers should take responsibility for fact checking the information they read, regardless of the source.

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Additionally, some would say that people don’t normally go to the extreme of opening fire in a pizzeria. Absurd cases, like Pizzagate, are far and few between. The people who act out to harm society are most likely mentally ill in the first place. Some argue that the article is not responsible for how people will react. Also, new sources most often report on the extreme cases as soon as they happen, making it seem like they happen all the time. The rest of everyday life is the silent majority. The reason these instances seem so common is because that’s the perfect attention-grabbing information that the news uses to get more views or clicks.

In rebuttal, fake news does have real world consequences because it competes with real news. People do not have time to do in depth research on every piece of information they read; they have work, kids, school, or assignments to keep track of. Instead, they need fast paced and easily accessible news. Social media platforms, like twitter and snapchat, take advantage of the demand for easily accessible news articles. It has become a trend to listen to the radio show on the way to work or scroll through the front page of one’s social media account. Some apps that use this technique are Google Current, Gist, and Simply Lines; they advertise to people who do not have time to pick up a newspaper or magazine. It is virtually impossible to analyze every article that one comes across in a day. Recall the ridiculous article about Kim Jong-Un receiving the sexiest man alive award? China’s People’s Daily actually mistook that bogus article for real news (Onion: We Just). Shockingly, the Chinese news source is a state-run source. The article has since been removed from their website. Satirical writing may not transfer between languages or countries and end up spreading fake news on accident.

Moreover, fake news does have real world consequences because it alters a person’s perception of reality. Once it goes viral, many people are affected and it can inadvertently infiltrate their perception of reality and events. Psychologically, this phenomenon is known as false memory syndrome (Britannica). Because human memory is so moldable, the brain may make up things one can only perceive as facts. Also, people with mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, antisocial personality disorder, or bipolar disorder are naturally predisposed to an alternate reality. The age of the audience also contributes to how likely an article will affect one’s perception of reality. Older audiences are more gullible; they are also the demographic that is more likely to be involved in voting (Bunis). Bogus articles about politicians have the same effect as rumors in high school. In regards to technology, children and the elderly are naturally more susceptible to fake news and less tech savvy than middle-aged adults. Younger and older audiences may have trouble keying in on subtle satirical cues from websites like the Onion. All of these factors play a role in fake news causing real world problems.

Lastly, fake news does have real world consequences because it has instigated acts to harm society. It has happened; and when it does, it is devastating. Obviously fake news has real world consequences because it affected the real world, when a man went into the pizza shop and started shooting (Domonoske). It only takes one instance for something to become a real-world situation. If fake news did not have real world consequences, then there would not be examples like Pizzagate or voting interference. According to a segment from the television show Full Frontal, people actively create fake news against political figures to get a rise out of others (Bee). The goal of some “fake news providers” is to trick their enemies into using the bogus articles as a real source and then pointing out their mistake. Unfortunately, some people take their emotions too far and then act out on the false information they’ve
learned from the fake news article. Although the intention of fake news articles may not be to cause physical harm to society, it still occurs as a real-world consequence.

Much like rumors in a school yard, not all news is truthful. Information may be altered accidentally or purposefully. Regardless, the consequences remain the same. Whether its actual bogus news articles, hand-crafted textbooks, Russian twitter bots, or biased news articles, they all fall into the category of fake news. This has been a problem since the beginning of time, and it will continue to be a problem for many generations. Parents can only do so much to teach their kids to protect them from false information. Some countries teach this skill in schools, while some countries completely censor the internet. The freedom of speech is a beautiful thing, but comes with many consequences, one being fake news. In summary, fake news has real world consequences because it competes with real news, it alters a person’s perception of reality, and it may instigate acts to harm society.
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Christian Penlap was born in 1999 in Cameroun. He perfectly speaks two languages, French and English. He came to America in 2016 to live in San Antonio. His sophomore and junior year was at Judson high school, where he was nominated for the National Academy of Future Physicians and Medical Scientists Award of Excellence. He graduated from Judson high school. He is a Criminal justice major with a minor in communication. He works as a full-time team member at the restaurant Chick-fil-A. In his free time, he like to play and watch soccer.

How do military leaders maintain effective leadership through fair and equitable treatment of all DoD personnel in the ever changing cultural and social environment?

Good leaders are made, not born. If we have the desire and willpower, we can become an effective leader. Good leaders develop through a never-ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience. Within the U.S. military, leadership is generally considered something of a given. It is a fundamental ingredient of warfare, without which the outcome of a combat operation cannot be assured. Military leaders are the brain, the motive power of command, upon whom subordinates rely for guidance and wisdom, and depend upon for good judgment. Military leaders must be determined, unflappable and charismatic; confident in delegation of authority; able to combine the various strands of command into a common thread; seasoned, intelligent, and thoughtful.

The Department of Defense is responsible for providing the military forces needed to deter war and protect the security of our country. The major elements of these forces are the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. The department of defense is under the President, who is also Commander in Chief, while the Secretary of Defense exercises authority. Each military department is separately organized under its own Secretary and functions under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense. The Secretary of each military department is responsible to the Secretary of Defense for the operation and efficiency of their department.

Military leaders maintain effective leadership through fair and equitable treatment of all DoD, mostly because of the importance and affection that they accord to their Core Values. All military leaders within the U.S. live by the same Core Value, which is Duty, Integrity, Ethic, Honor, Courage, and Loyalty. Integrity is one of the top attributes of a great military leader. It connotes a deep commitment to do the right thing for the right reason, regardless of the circumstances. Military leaders living with integrity are incorruptible and incapable of breaking the trust of those who have confided in them. For example, president John F. Kennedy did the right thing for all of humanity by not invading Cuba in 1962, and ‘bridging the gap’ with Premiere Nikita Khrushchev and the Soviet Union. The proof of his integrity is the fact that the U.S. military is still the greatest military in the world, 50 years after his murder. Like Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity.” Besides integrity, a military leader embraces ethics in all his or her meaning to ensure fairness and equitable treatment of his or her personnel in the social environment.

Ethics is concerned with what is good for individuals and society and is also described
as moral philosophy. Ethical military leaders make ethics a clear and consistent part of their agendas, set standards, model appropriate behavior, and hold everyone accountable. Leaders in the military must ensure that each of their fellow soldiers understand the concept of ethics to make sure that they are being treated fairly and treat other people with fairness and equality regardless of race, gender, and background of every individual in and out the military. For example, on the 29 of September, 2017, Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria defended diversity and denounced the “horrible language and horrible ideas” in the racist message. “If you can’t treat someone from another race or different color skin with dignity and respect, then you need to get out,” he emphatically said. “If you can’t treat someone with dignity and respect, then get out.” This quote shows the kind of ethic Lt. Gen Jay Silveria wants to imply in the way of his fellow cadet. Furthermore, this is the duty of every military leader to maintain equal treatment in the ever-changing cultural environment.

Duty in the military is something that we have to do because it is part of our job, or something that we feel is the right thing to do. Herri Frederic Amial once said, “Our duty is to be useful not according to our desire but according to our power.” Military leaders have the power and the desire to do everything necessary to maintain within their unit, that way they can be sure that all his personnel are working in a challenging and reward environment. There are many characteristics that make a good military leader. However, military leaders who succeed often have unique characteristics like having a positive outlook towards the situation and being open-minded to any possibility. A good leader needs to live by the rule he is applying to his cadet: Duty, Integrity, Ethic, Honor, Courage, and loyalty. All in all, military leadership is about being ready to lead people by taking appropriate action. With this mindset, that leader in the military can achieve fairness and equal treatment within his personnel.

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Serving Those Who Have Served: How the Extended United States Military Involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan is Affecting Innovation in Medical Treatment of Veterans.

Modern protective gear that U.S. soldiers wear today prevents death, and to some extent, certain injuries. However, the complex nature of today’s injuries and the growing number of veterans who suffer from them requires different approaches in treating the modern veteran. Many returnees survive what would have been sure death experiences in previous conflicts but must adapt to live their lives as amputees, with constant and sometimes severe pain or with psychological trauma that they and their loved ones are not prepared for or able to address. Unfortunately, the Veterans’ Health Administration (VHA) seemed, for quite some time, just as ill-prepared. Only in recent years did the VHA finally acknowledge the utility of and begin approving some nontraditional medicinal means in individualized healthcare. The Veterans’ Administration (VA) still has much room for improvement in the care and treatment of veterans, especially as the VA transitions to a single Contractor to coordinate all external care. Meanwhile, researchers are studying various avenues for veteran treatment by incorporating complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), utilizing animals, introducing farming programs specifically for veterans and studying the effectiveness of recreational drugs on patients who do not respond to more traditional treatments.

Until approximately five years ago, active duty military members and veterans always paid out of pocket for chiropractic treatment, acupuncture, massage, yoga and other such nontraditional treatments that improve mobility and reduce pain. Psychologist Gabriel Tan of The Institute of Stress discusses the efficacy of these types of CAM, described as “a group of diverse medical and healthcare systems, therapies, and products that are not presently considered part of conventional medicine” (195). The U.S. military ultimately started incorporating these modalities, albeit on a limited basis, toward the end of the last decade. Hospitals on the larger bases now offer these options to active duty personnel as availability and individual schedules allow.

To better accommodate the complex and growing veteran population, the VA established the Integrative Health and Wellness (IHW) Program in 2012. The IHW is a comprehensive CAM clinic integrating services such as those listed above and integrative health education to treat the modern multi-symptom veteran population. Dr. Amanda Hull, Director of the IHW, discusses some of the lessons learned so far, services already increased or expanded due to proven effectiveness, and possible future implications of recent studies integrating CAM for the broader veteran network throughout the VA (19). The IHW is

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constantly evolving and incorporating complementary treatment approaches and is a positive step towards addressing the complex needs of the expanding veteran community.

To treat veterans outside of the confines of hospitals and offices and with fewer drugs, more and more programs and studies are also now involving dogs and horses. For example, the VA’s patient-centered treatment is already incorporating animals in addressing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Regarding such programs, Psychologists Andrew Christensen of University of California and Neil Jacobson of the University of Washington suggest “personal change that does not rely on experts may create a sense of personal autonomy or personal empowerment that is not obtained in a professional therapy” (12). Thus far, studies show greater independence and mobility, less stress and high participation rates among eligible veterans, highlighting the efficacy of animal therapy. However, the number of veterans using companion dogs is still limited due to the long training period for the canines and the initial costs involved. Dr. Gennifer Furst, Criminal Justice Director from William Patterson University, promotes prison-based animal programs as an avenue to provide more therapeutic canines for veterans with PTSD, while also saving shelter dogs and providing purpose to inmates. Such programs exist and are being utilized in several countries, but lack of oversight and inconsistency in training programs have produced varying results.

While dog-based therapies have shown promise, horses as companion animals may prove the best cure for some veterans. Clinical Social Worker David Ferruolo states that Equine-facilitated mental health (EFMH) therapy has “shown promise in treating veterans with depressive and anxiety disorders and reintegration issues” (59). Johnson et al. echo that assertion and add that such programs also increase physical activity (3). However, funding for such studies has been limited and often delayed; more non-governmental than government funding has provided for these programs, and further evaluation, including larger groups of military veterans and researchers, must occur. The facts that horses live twice as long as dogs on average, are less likely to compete with humans for dominance, and have near 360-degree vision could prove crucial in securing funding for incorporating them more into treatment plans. At the same time, veterans and care-givers must realize that horses will require more space and food than most companion animals when not used solely in treatment settings.

Beyond traditional medicine and CAM, farming is another field that is gaining popularity amongst veterans and is proving therapeutic for many of them. Seizing this opportunity and to bolster farming in America, veteran organizations, government programs and NGOs initiated small agricultural programs to help veterans make the transition to farming when they return to civilian life. As has often been the case in the U.S. military, a disproportionate number of veterans killed and injured in the current conflicts came from rural communities and returning to farming can facilitate reintegration for veterans. A significant number of military personnel choose to live in rural areas in retirement to get away from the fast-paced base and city lifestyle. Often, military veterans are more kinetically-inclined than their civilian contemporaries. All these factors and the need for treatments beyond pills and counseling for PTSD, pain and readjustment led to several unique programs and the empowerment of many a veteran. Special correspondent Mike Cerre, reporting in an episode of PBS Newshour, provides an overview of this effort and discusses trials and tribulations with several veterans. For example, “the Farmer Veteran Coalition is helping the U.S. Department of Agriculture develop micro-loans with reduced experience requirements for veterans more likely to be starting less traditional agricultural businesses.” Veterans are embracing the
programs, and many describe how they can apply skills acquired in the military to farming. Others appreciate the fact that this “mission” gives them purpose and keeps them moving more regularly.

When the above-mentioned therapies prove unsuccessful, some even less conventional methods may provide hope. Investigations utilizing illegal recreational drugs, including hallucinogens and marijuana, as part of a course of treatment have shown that they provide relief for some veterans who did not respond to more traditional treatments. Kai Kupferschmidt of Science Magazine relates several encouraging recent studies involving methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), more commonly known as ecstasy, to treat PTSD. Freelance science writer Jana Lawrence provides participant statements and research findings from more recent studies, which reflect that MDMA has proven effective in relaxing participants and reducing anxiety and depression in initial limited studies. Besides significantly reducing dependency on other drugs, MDMA-assisted psychotherapy led to two thirds of participants no longer meeting the criteria for PTSD and several of them who were previously unemployable returning to work. In an interview with the New York Times, Dr. John Krystal, head of the Neurosciences Division at the VA National Center for PTSD, advocated MDMA-assisted treatment citing the “current lack of more effective treatments.” Many veterans are already using ecstasy illegally to self-treat, which is dangerous due to the complete lack of quality control in manufacturing street drugs.

Medical marijuana is another area that is garnering support as a treatment option. Veterans, and others, often use marijuana for pain relief. Many patients have even chosen to move to states where medical or recreational marijuana is legal in order to obtain and use it without fear of being arrested for self-medicating. Meanwhile, even though thirty-three states now allow doctors to use medical marijuana, VA Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) are neither allowed to endorse nor prescribe marijuana usage. Furthermore, although most veterans support marijuana legalization and increasing medical cannabis research, government-led studies on the potential benefits of medical marijuana have been limited. Kari Williams, associate editor for Veterans of Foreign Wars Magazine, details several recent medical marijuana studies; recently passed related bills urging VA to research possible medical applications of marijuana; and a recent act passed in the Senate that “restricts punishment for veterans using medical marijuana and doctors promoting its use in states where marijuana is already legal” (44). Several other groups representing veterans, including the American Legion and the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America consistently assert that veterans support further medical marijuana research and over eighty percent of veterans would pursue the option for relief if it were available.

Some specialists have proposed leveraging more modern technology to lessen the travel burden on veterans, expand treatment options, and to accommodate hard to reach patients. Psychiatrist Megan Olden of Cornell University asserts that “technological innovations in psychiatry ... have enormous potential … from the treatment of patients to the education of providers.” Although studies prove that these approaches are as effective as in-office treatment, there is still much reluctance in their expansion and usage. Reservations argued include: some providers and patients prefer office visits; patients are still required to see a doctor face-to-face at least once monthly to receive controlled medications; insurance billing is more complicated for tele-visits; and the training required for implementing technology in treatment is both costly and time-consuming. Regardless, as people continue to rely more

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on technology for everything, doctors and patients will probably eventually accept its usage for most medical appointments. Some VA physicians are already seeing their patients via video-teleconference or conducting follow-ups over the phone. However, those options are currently at the discretion of the individual doctors and not yet required by any written guidance.

Many of the obstacles to innovative treatments at the national level can be avoided in more local and state-led initiatives. For instance, thirty-five states have created Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs) to address the mental health needs and substance use disorders that frequently lead veterans to have contact with the criminal justice system. University of Yale Division of Mental Health Services and Treatment Outcomes Research Director and VA Research Director, National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans, Dr. Jack Tsai, together with several other researchers, examined national data on VTCs and their participants from 2011 to 2015. The researchers concluded that “proper substance abuse treatment as well as employment services for VTC participants” must be incorporated to improve the effectiveness of the diversion process (236). The initial concept is catching on; growth and integration of new approaches will help both the veterans and their communities.

Innovation in the treatment of returning veterans is evidence of progress. Still, more can be done at all levels to better care for wounded veterans. Wegenfeld et al. best summarizes most of what others repeated throughout the readings for this essay: “Programs and spaces sited at facilities providing opportunities to participate in meaningful outdoor activities such as service dog training, sustainable farming, and physical and psychological rehabilitation in a naturalistic setting have tremendous potential to improve health outcomes for veterans diagnosed with PTSD” (402). The expanding veteran voice in Congress appears to be listening and helping further those concepts that have merit. Serving those that served may eventually become a reality rather than just a slogan.

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Is Hollywood taking action towards becoming more diverse?

In 2016, for the second year in a row, the Academy Awards nominations for best actor and actresses were all white. Due to this controversy, it became evident that the film industry had reached a tipping point. For decades, onslaughts of racial and gender bias, and discrimination continue to overwhelm the American film and broadcast entertainment industries stemming from protests from minorities, women, and civil rights advocates. From virtually all facets of the business, white men still comprise most of the directors, producers, writers, and actors. As the nation becomes more heterogeneous, with minorities encompassing thirty-eight percent of the population, and projections reaching fifty-six percent by 2060, Hollywood will continue to be scrutinized (Wazwaz). As white-washing has plagued Hollywood for decades, and is still an issue today, an ongoing debate continues on why this is happening and whether steps are being taken to diversify the community. This essay will address the practices of Hollywood film productions underrepresentation and discrimination against racial and gender minorities and how they alter the public’s perceptions on different matters. This discussion will also highlight how a gradual growth of inclusion is emerging in the industry.

How does the film industry institutionalize the practice of discrimination and underrepresentation? In “Institutional Racism in the Film Industry: A Multilevel Perspective”, Sophie Hennekam, who holds a doctorate in human resources management, constructs a holistic and multilevel perspective of institutional racism where she argues that in the network-based recruitment practices there is an abundance of importance of “who you know” and “who you are” rather than “what you can.” This practice excludes not only many talented actors and actresses, but behind-the-scenes workforce. The ongoing challenges of Hollywood’s hegemonic crisis can be contributed to economic risk aversion (Molina-Guzmán). With the growing price of movie and television production, Hollywood “gatekeepers”, the decision makers, hire those in their own social group who are familiar and safe. It is often argued that white “A-listers” have the largest pull at the box office and non-white actors do not attract or crossover valued overseas audiences, thus, producers will cast white actors to maximize returns. This myth of ‘black doesn’t travel’ is a fallacious claim as African American actors’ such as Denzel Washington’s and Will Smith’s work is highly celebrated and consumed in markets across the globe. The expanding world market of US cinema creates a greater...
arena for non-white actors to flourish as different markets want to see themselves reflected, this can be seen in the immense success of the recent films “Black Panther” and “Crazy Rich Asians.” Familiarity and the lack of risk taking encompass the institutional practice of discrimination and contribute to the unhurried pace of diversification.

Despite changing US population demographics, the country still practices underrepresentation. Diversity is not just limited to race, but it also encompasses disabilities, which Hollywood continues to neglect. This issue can be seen in the film “Don’t Breathe” and the Marvel Character Daredevil, where the disabled lead characters have abnormal heightened senses (Perez). Disabilities are either shown as extraordinary or not at all. At the same time, disabled actors are rarely utilized due to preconceived assumptions of incompetence, a clear sign of discrimination. In 2012, the film “Argo” won best picture at the Academy Awards, but social scientist, Fouad Pervez, found many issues surrounding the highly acclaimed film. Perez believes “Argo” fails to deliver by not responsibly addressing a complicated subject matter, stating the film falls “into the common Hollywood trap of making Muslims into a monolithic Green Menace” once again. With a deficient overview of events preceding the Iranian revolution, “Argo” is very misleading as it ignores many political dimensions. The film reduces a very diverse revolutionary alliance into a vast crowd of radicals. Through the decades and in modern movies, multicultural characters often offer the “trouble in the text” (Beltrán). For example, in the popular films “The Fast and the Furious” and “Romeo Must Die”, both protagonist are biracial but their roles tend to raise tensions that must be resolved. This trouble of interpreting non-white characters into a film show Hollywood as a flawed system, with continual underrepresentation, it remains a white industry.

Whitewashing in Hollywood is as old as the industry itself. These occurrences are then met with an outcry by many minority and racial groups. Within the past decade, movies such as “Aloha” came under fire after Emma Stone was cast as a woman who in the original script has Hawaiian and Chinese heritage. Acclaimed director, Ridley Scott, found himself under scrutiny for employing white actors for the role of Egyptians in his film “Exodus: Gods and Kings.” An onslaught of complaints amounted over Johnny Depp’s casting as a Native American in “The Lone Ranger” and Jake Gyllenhaal’s portrayal of an Arab in Disney’s 2010 film “Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time”. Today, the public is demanding more authenticity. They want to see an Asian play an Asian, and a Native American play a Native American. With today’s impact of social media, it has become easier for anyone to voice their protest. After the 2016 Academy Awards, where for the second year in a row, no minority actors were nominated, the power of social media was evident as seen in the hashtag “#OscarsSoWhite” heavily circulated. Although, the turmoil circulating the hashtag seems to have slightly quelled the animosity with the academy the following year. In 2017, seven of the twenty nominees came from ethnic minorities, along with the film “Moonlight” winning best picture with a predominantly African American cast.

Although, there is a growing argument that trumpeting diversity undermines what the film is trying to illustrate in the first place and exerts unwanted pressure of exceeding expectations. When films heavily broadcast their diversity, often times, it falls short. The films “A Wrinkle in Time” with a minority director and protagonist, and a low score of 42% on Rotten Tomatoes, and the “Ghostbusters” remake with an all-female lead, and 5.2 out of 10 rating on IMDb, illustrate this problem. Both films hold poor ratings and underperformed at the box office. While it is true that the promotion of diversity should happen without
fanfare, many times there is no intention to do so, but instead the topic is constantly highlighted by interviewers and journalist. Additionally, these movies could have just been plainly created poorly. Movies deserve to be judged on its own merits as with Marvel’s “Black Panther.” While holding high acclaim and excelling at the box office, “Black Panther” also widely promotes almost all African American cast and strong female leads. This shows that as long as there is a strong story line, excellent writing and directing, adding leads of minorities does not hurt a film.

What people see on screen contributes to how societal culture and outlook is created (Erigha). With lack of diversity on and behind the screen, minorities are not able to manufacture their own on-screen depiction in mainstream culture. These depictions are crucial in orchestrating positive and progressive attitudes towards minorities. Hollywood has often failed to give accurate portrayals and has aided in fostering false stereotypes. In “Argo,” Iranians are made out as the easy villain instead of giving the opportunity to fill in the gap of differentiating civilians from their government (Pervez). Throughout the film the audience observes Iranians yelling and protesting violently in the street even the main premise illustrates the innocent Americans trying to get out of reach from the murderous Iranians. By the end of the film, the audience is left with little context about the Iranian resentment towards the United States or has forgotten the transgression of the US towards Iranians entirely. This film, and those like it, are particularly risky considering the present clash with Iran over nuclear weapon development and militaristic powers and the rise of Islamophobia in the United States. Beltrán also highlights how, in the films “The Fast and the Furious” and “Romeo Must Die”, the biracial characters often raise clashes between themselves and someone else. As they have through history, biracial characters offer the “trouble in the text”, as their characters create anxiety and hostility. Another instance is in the film “Don’t Breathe” and the Marvel character Daredevil, in which the portrayal of lives of disabled persons are misleading or inaccurate. With the two leading characters reduced to superficial roles that Hollywood keeps them in boxed. Film industries have not done a good job fostering a positive and accurate outlook on a certain group. Instead, their inaccuracies breed stereotypes and false depictions which create toxic communities.

The film industry is slowly addressing the issue of diversification, most notably in other entertainment outlets, such as Netflix and Hulu. Streaming services are in constant competition with each other to produce new content that appeals to the audience. Netflix’s reboot of “Queer Eye” became a phenomenon and launched the “Fab 5”, which encompasses five gay men, into stardom. It delighted its viewers and was even recently nominated for four Emmy awards. Also, Netflix’s “Orange is the New Black” obtained much success with a core of all female leads. There are many more countless shows on these streaming platforms that practice diversity, showing that audiences enjoy seeing people just like them on their screens. Netflix is also ramping up their number of foreign produced content, to not only appeal domestically but abroad. Streaming services have also made it important to stream network produced series that utilize minorities, such as “Jane the Virgin”, “Atlanta”, and “Power” all of which can be found on Hulu and Amazon Video. Network film and television companies can observe how successful these streaming platforms are performing and implement practices of diversity on and behind the screen. It is slowly becoming more apparent that audiences want to watch what reflects the growing diversified population.

Even with these changes of late, Hollywood has not come far enough fast enough.
Without executorial ideological changes, society will continue to see the unhurried pace of diversification in the industry. Studio’s need to take risks in creating new content, incorporating minorities creates a more realistic outlook on the changing demographics around us. It is apparent that agencies and studios have a lot of work to do. Measures that provide a steady pipeline of minorities in internships, intermediate management, all the way up to the executive level will ensure real change that ensures a more improved reality for those both in and out of the industry.

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The Flip Side of the Artificial Intelligence Coin:
Reviewing the Detriments of AI

When people use smart phone applications to look at the weather, find the best or fastest route to get to somewhere, or voice recognition functions, they are possible due to AI. AI is also used for anti-spam functions in their emails, Google translation, or a list of recommended videos or articles on a social network service/site (SNS) which has an algorithm to create those recommendations based on one’s search history, and so on. Steven Levy who writes for Wired describes that “today’s AI doesn’t try to re-create the brain. Instead, it uses machine learning, massive data sets, sophisticated sensors, and clever algorithms to master discrete tasks.” Even though AI is useful in daily life, the possible future implications could be a detriment to the human mind, human behavior, and human society.

First of all, AI can accurately solve a problem, but it could lead to an unwanted result given that it does not have a purpose unlike humans. Although AI is extremely good at using its programmed code to solve a mathematical or logic problem, it cannot yet use human intuition to see further into an issue. According to Stanley Fish, who writes for the New York Times, “The computer inhabits nothing and has no purposes and because it has no purposes it cannot alter its present (wholly predetermined) ‘behavior’ when it fails to advance the purposes it doesn’t have.” AI cannot behave in the way a person would since it does not have human intention. Though AI will be 100% reliable in the future without human intuition, when AI makes a decision, the decision will not be compatible with human expectations. AI may not understand a human’s intention when solving a problem and the result may counter one’s beliefs or values. For example, in the movie I, Robot, a robot witnesses a car accident where Detective Spooner and a little girl are drowning underwater. The robot does not save the girl but saves Detective Spooner instead after calculating their chances of survival. Detective Spooner says, “I was the logical choice. It calculated that I had a 45% chance of survival. Sarah only had an 11% chance. That was somebody’s baby. 11% is more than enough. A human being would’ve known that.” If the robot has human intuition, then it will try to save her first since the girl is more vulnerable to drowning than an adult. The robot cannot know what a human would do. That is a difference between a human and AI. AI can only understand facts which can be tested, but not a human’s intention.

Secondly, the convenience and efficiency of AI may take away abilities such as communication and empathy. For instance, a human becomes part of a machine’s process which does not require social interactions and empathy with others. Stephen Baker, of the Wall
Street Journal, claims that people must adjust the way they answer questions as the use of AI increases at offices, labs, and hospitals. When simply using a kiosk to check-in at an airport or a hospital, or to order food at a fast-food restaurant such as McDonald’s, people do not need to interact with an employee. People should be aware of being a part of a machine's process, in which they must deal with, conduct, or finish a process that diminishes their humanity. Less human interaction creates a new complication because people may become part of the machine process, a process which does not require much if any cognitive thought.

Social interactions are significant because they help enable and retain communication skills. Baker claims that people should acknowledge the impact of AI on the educational climate and its curriculum for students, especially on their social interactions. Furthermore, future generations might not be able to learn nonverbal communication which is an important part of a conversation with another person. AI also might not be capable of demonstrating nonverbal communications with its restricted facial expressions and body gestures. When future generations get used to interacting with AI, they lose sight of diverse nonverbal communication methods, and some of those methods have different meanings depending on the region, culture, or country. Without social interactions, they may struggle with learning how to express their emotions with others using verbal and nonverbal communication, or how to recognize others' emotions.

Even the simplest forms of AI, like smart phones, already deeply affect younger generations. Levy states that “now the machines are embedded in our lives.” Some lack social skills and empathy today, and have difficulty concentrating in class, work, or listening to what others say. Nonetheless, this should intrigue people to teach about AI to the next generation on how to treat or interact with AI, which may be like a new species to them. They should find a new way to communicate with others to reinforce social and emotional development through the internet or smart phones which can be a tool to mediate interactions in modern society.

Moreover, the development of AI may generate an unexpected concern where a human does not need to be creative, intuitive, or even social. It also may threaten the existence of what a human is and may change the greater human community. When AI not only develops incredible reasoning power but also human intuition, people may feel isolated and even powerless, thus impacting the structure of human society. Robert Jastrow, writer for Time, believes “By that time, ultra-intelligence machines will be working in partnership with our best minds on all the serious problems of the day, in an unbeatable combination of brute reasoning power and human intuition.” However, it has the potential to negatively influence an entire community.

People think that only they can have intuition and creativity, which are considered unique abilities that distinguish them from animals. According to Jastrow, “Computers lack the drives and emotions of living creatures.” Now is the time to deliberate the difference between a human being and AI, and how to prevent feeling isolated and powerless when AI acquires human intuition. Once AI acquires human intuition, then people will probably have nothing much left to do for themselves as AI will do almost everything in the future for them. They might feel depressed with the few options that are left, and overwhelmed as they are not competent enough to outperform AI with their now limited ability.

Though intuition can be an important part of any career, the very nature of what it means to be human is also at stake. AI can address some issues in where or how people work,
but some people may lose their job, or get a new job working with it. People presumably do not need to drive when a driverless car shows up. For this reason, the jobs involved with cars will disappear. AI may replace a receptionist at a front desk, an office or a facility, or a health professional who can make mistakes when diagnosing a patient or performing a surgery. In addition, a person or company that develops and owns AI technology could have too much power and abuse the advantages of AI. This scenario could change one’s motivation, view of life, or the entire structure of human society and it could become a vicious cycle for everyone.

Humanity has created uncountable and remarkable developments for their convenience and lives since they appeared in this world. No one can deny that AI will bring benefits to them in the future. Even though AI has not yet obtained human cognition and behavior, it has the potential to disrupt human society. In spite of the benefits of AI, humans should contemplate that AI might have disadvantages and people need to prepare to cope with that difficulty, but solve it as they have always done. It depends on their choice to be in control rather than be controlled, and their ability to appropriately make a plan to observe, respond, and react to an unpredictable future with AI.

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Barakat Oluwafunmilola Agboola is studying marketing here at UTSA. She is a first generation student who came to the US almost 10 years ago. She was born in Lagos, Nigeria and lived there for 8 years before relocating to the United States in 2009. Her family moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, lived there for 3 years, and then moved to Round Rock, Texas in 2012. She lived there until August 2018 when she moved to San Antonio for school. She graduated in the top 25% of her high school class of over 600 students in May 2018. She established a social awareness club in her high school that led a student protest of over 150 students for gun control. Barakat continues to stay involved in school organizations while in college. She is a member of Alpha Lambda Delta, an honor society. She is a participating member of Professional Businesswomen Society. She hopes to become a marketing manager in the future, but more importantly, she wants to be an adult making a positive influence in her community and the world. Barakat has many dreams but what is most important to her is to make the timid 8 year old girl that came to the United States in 2009 proud.

Racially Motivated Marketing and Its Impact

Around 1875, NK Fairbanks Company released an advertisement for their product, Fairy Soap. The poster showed 2 young girls, one white and the other black. The black girl wore tattered clothing, had uncombed hair, and looked unclean. The white girl had a nice dress on, had nicely styled hair, and was holding a bar of Fairy Soap. The white girl says, “Why doesn’t your mama wash you with Fairy Soap?” ("Timeline: Race and Advertising in America"). This was a time with different social norms but surprisingly, racially motivated marketing is still being implemented in modern times. According to the Wall Street Journal, marketing budgets make up “11 percent of total company budgets on average,” but sometimes, methods are used that benefit the producers and are sometimes harmful to the consumers. Many companies’ marketing strategies are racially motivated, and despite not being a bad thing on its own, it becomes an issue when people’s health and well-being are put in jeopardy. Racially-targeted advertising is still being used by marketers in modern times in things like cigarette and junk food marketing. This is a more serious issue than the vast majority of people believe it to be.

An example of marketing towards specific races is cigarette marketing towards African Americans and other minorities. According to Ross Petty, et. al, a professor at Babson College, in 1995, R.J.R. Tobacco Company made a mentholated cigarette that was marketed towards African Americans despite their higher rates for “tobacco-related illness and death.” Also, the company knew that 69% of black smokers preferred menthol cigarettes which is why they marketed the cigarettes to African Americans through “glamorous nightlife images” in Black magazines" (Petty 352). Eventually, because of protests, R.J.R. Tobacco Company withdrew the mentholated cigarette. More recently, a 2013 study of tobacco retailers in Washington D.C. showed that advertising for “little cigars and cigarillos” are found more in African American neighborhoods—in the same year, a study was conducted of tobacco retailers in St. Louis and it was found that “more tobacco advertising, including more menthol advertising” was found in areas with higher amounts of African American residents (“Tobacco Company Marketing to African Americans” 2). In fact, in a period of just 9 months, from...
June 2012 to February 2013, 61% of Newport advertisements contained at least one African American model (“Marketing Menthol” 5).

As stated in Figure 1 below, young black smokers preferred Newport cigarettes 46.9% more than their white counterparts in 2016 (CDC). Apart from African Americans, cigarettes are also being marketed to other minorities. For instance, the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stated that cigarettes are specifically marketed to Hispanics, American Indians, and Alaska Natives because of companies with names like “Rio, Dorado, and American Spirit” which can be identified with the previously stated minorities. This shows that there is a correlation between the amount of advertising published and the amount of consuming by the intended audience.

The American Lung Association also shows that almost 22% of American Indians/Alaskan Natives smoke compared to a measly 16% of Non-Hispanic Whites. This shows why big companies like “Dorado” market towards American Indians and Alaskan Natives. These studies and real-life situations only show the true bias towards minorities by cigarette companies. The impact of this information is the fact that African Americans are 20% more likely to develop lung cancer than white men (Cancer.org). Essentially, African Americans are exposed to more pro-cigarette advertising than white counterparts, which leads to them smoking more, which leads to higher rates of lung cancer.

Another type of marketing that affects the health of minorities is food marketing. Think about the last healthy food advertisement you saw. 9 times out of 10, the main actor or actors in the advertisement was not a person of color. For instance, the Activia yogurt ad, that most know well, features Jamie Lee Curtis and played on television screens for years. On the other hand, think of the last junk food advertisement that you saw. The actor or model in the advertisement was most likely a person of color. Similarly, Sprite partnered with Lebron James in 2014 and again in 2016. In addition, according to the CDC, as stated in Vox Magazine by Nadra Nittle, Hispanic and Black populations have the greatest “age-adjusted” rate
of obesity at 47% and 46.8%. Basically, an “age-adjusted” rate is a way to make fairer distinctions between different age groups. Obviously, other factors contribute to such high obesity rates, but advertisements and what we as individuals see in the movies, magazines, and other media influences our activities and lifestyles. In Nittle’s article, she interviews an associate professor of marketing at the University of San Diego’s School of Business, Aarti Ivanic. After being asked about food-based stereotypes, Ivanic goes on to say “African Americans used to live in the South. They eat certain kinds of foods and the diet is heavier in butter” (qtd in Nittle). What Ivanic means is that because African Americans generally eat more high fat foods, most junk food and beverage advertisements are targeted towards them and other minorities. Ivanic is not justifying the effects of racially biased marketing strategies, instead she believes “we need to rally around and be passionate about these issues” (qtd in Nittle). More specifically, “junk food made up a whopping 86 percent of ad spending for black-targeted television and 82 percent for Spanish-language television.” While healthy food advertisements, for things like water and fruit, made up less than 3% of ad spend on black television stations (Tousignant). The correlation between the amount spending that goes toward minority junk food advertising and the little amount of healthy food advertising towards minorities only shows that there must be a change towards more diverse food advertising towards minorities.

On the other hand, many claim that companies should not be scrutinized because racially targeted advertising has always been a marketing strategy. This is evident in the Fairy Soap advertisement that was referred to in the first paragraph and it was made over a hundred years ago. This claim may be true, but isn’t there a line that has to be drawn? According to a Vice Magazine article written by Dr. Nathalie Maréchal, “targeted advertising automates discrimination and normalizes it by seeming to take individual prejudice out of the equation.” In this specific statement targeted advertising through the internet is what is focused on. Racially targeted advertising only normalizes discrimination and if a line is not drawn, by companies being more regulated, it could cause big problems. In addition, we as humans are an impressionable species. Like Professor Ivanic stated as humans, “psychologically, we tend to associate with people who look like us” (qtd in Nittle). As a minority, I believe representation is important, especially in the media because it is something that is so influential in society.

According to the Oxford Research Encyclopedias, “Negative characterizations [of racial minorities] prompt shame, anger, and other undesirable emotions and lead to esteem problems.” So not only is the type of representation being displayed in advertisements of unhealthy products a problem, the lack of representation of minorities in advertisements of healthy products is also very important. Most minorities can relate with this sentiment, because most people feel most comfortable around and sometimes inspired by people like them.

In conclusion, we as a society have a long way to go regarding how we perceive and display people that don’t look like us. Imagine two kids growing up with the same dream. One white and the other black. One sees people that look like him in the media and around him achieving the dream he hopes for. The other does not see as many people that look like him doing what he someday hopes to achieve. Which do you think is more likely to achieve his goal? Racial representation and its quality is not only important for the dreams of children but the overall lifestyles of minorities as well.
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Joseph Hernandez was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. He is a firm believer in the virtues of skepticism.

Saving the Whales: The Case Against Cetacean Captivity

In every movement that successfully shines a light on a societal wrong in the hopes of effecting change, there comes a “tipping point,” a moment where some highly publicized event or piece of information shifts public opinion on the injustice in question past the point where the inertia of inaction remains in control. For those devoted to the cause of ending the cruel practice of cetacean captivity in marine parks for human edification, the release of the documentary Blackfish (2013), directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite, seemed like it just might be that tipping point. The film shocked and appalled audiences by detailing the noxious cocktail of depressing isolation and sporadic violence against humans that characterized the lives of captive orcas at parks like SeaWorld (Cowperthwaite). In its wake, SeaWorld and its fellow marine parks suffered a massive public backlash—and to my mind, having finally seen the film and entered the discourse over cetacean captivity half a decade after its release, the backlash was well-warranted. Marine parks should no longer be allowed to keep cetaceans captive as part of their businesses because such captivity no longer plays a necessary role in informing the public about cetaceans, continues to affect wild cetaceans by incentivizing captures to continue and is on the whole an unhealthy and unnatural experience for cetaceans to undergo.

That first point, that cetacean captivity has outlived its educational value, directly counterposes one of the main arguments for its continuance: that captivity plays a valuable role in bolstering human understanding of cetaceans. In a post-Blackfish 2013 interview with CNN, SeaWorld Vice President of Communications Fred Jacobs furnished his interviewee with two bibliographic documents that “[outlined] some of [SeaWorld’s] peer-reviewed contributions to the scientific understanding of killer whales,” claiming that “much of what is known about the killer whale’s anatomy, reproductive biology and capacity to learn was learned at SeaWorld and other accredited zoological institutions.” While Jacobs may have been playing up for PR purposes the centrality of captive whales to the research he cited in the interview, it seems quite true that without SeaWorld’s money, which is dependent on the presence of captive sea animals, places like the “Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute” would have been left in the lurch in their attempts to research things like “Ross Sea Killer Whale Vocalizations” or “Photoidentification of killer whales off Iceland, 1981 through 1986” (“SeaWorld”). In the interview, Jacobs also agrees with the characterization that SeaWorld makes an effort to “[rescue], [rehabilitate], and [return] to the wild hundreds of wild animals” across the world, which are similarly dependent on park revenue (“SeaWorld”). Cap-
tivity, it seems, is necessary to pay the bills for a host of morally off-setting activities in the cetacean sphere.

Furthermore, captivity also has strengthened our devotion to the animals and thus to their continued existence. Without real cetacean specimens ready to display to the public, this line of thinking goes, humans would be much less likely to care about them at all. There is some merit to this as well. Jason Colby, whose piece “Cetaceans in the City” is anthologized in the book Animal Metropolis: Histories of Human-Animal Relations in Urban Canada, gives a particularly eye-opening example of a way in which marine park captivity has fostered new avenues in the human-cetacean relationship. In the late 1960s, an orca named Walter (later Skana) was brought to Vancouver and quickly became one of the biggest tourist attractions in town (Colby 285-86). Skana’s—and by proxy the orca’s—visibility in Vancouver became such that “the presence and actions of... captive orcas directly impacted the thinking and politicization” of those in the famous but then-nascent environmentalist organization Greenpeace, which called the Western Canadian city home (Colby 286). Colby contends that “it was no coincidence that the world’s first anti-whaling organization originated in a city with publicly displayed cetaceans.” The dynamic created between humans and cetaceans through captivity can thus be said to have helped to save the lives of many other whales through its place in helping Greenpeace “[turn] its focus to whaling in the mid-1970s” and play a key part in the “Save the Whales” movement (Colby 286).

However, the educational and conservationist role of marine parks does not justify the continued captivity of cetaceans, especially when one considers how the world has changed in the half a century since Skana first arrived in Vancouver. In their article “The Future of SeaWorld,” a trio of Oxford academics writing in the Journal of Animal Ethics suggest that in order for marine parks to retain their “unique selling point” of facilitating animal “interaction” without continuing the “ethically suspect [practice]” of captivity, they could “[invest] in virtual and augmented reality software that could enable the kind of engagement with marine life that” the parks use to educate and entertain their customers (Javanaud, et al. 136). Immersive virtual technology that can replicate the experience of “swimming alongside dolphins or whales” (or any other sea animal) in their natural habitat, paired with the scientific record that (partially captivity-funded) research has amassed on these animals, would actually produce a more educational experience than staring at an animal in a far-too-small tank could ever be. As labor-intensive as this might be for the marine park industry, if they truly care about the well-being of their cetacean charges—and keeping well in mind the windfall in revenue they could bring in through fancy VR that could be spent on research and whale-saving— it is an imperative endeavor.

Indeed, when listening to them speak, one would truly believe the marine park industry does care. In 2016, while announcing in a grandiose Los Angeles Times op-ed that SeaWorld’s orca breeding program would end “immediately”— although captive-born orcas have such pitiful chances at surviving in the wild that the park’s current orca population would have to remain incarcerated— then-CEO Joel Manby took a moment to remind readers that his parks “[hadn’t] collected an orca from the wild in almost four decades.” As true as that specific fact may be, the capture of cetaceans which end up in marine parks is by no means a thing of the past. Just last year in The Japan Times, Jay Alabaster reported on the world’s most infamous example of dolphin capture: the annual Taiji, Japan dolphin drive, where “a small fleet of modernized boats pursue pods of dolphins by banging on metal poles
placed in the water, creating a wall of sound to drive them into shore to kill or capture.” Alabaster goes on to say that “live catches have accounted for 70 percent of the revenue” from the drives, with the paying clients presumably in the market for a captive dolphin of their very own to showcase.

Wherever and by whatever method it occurs, the experience of capture represents a supreme violation of the cetacean’s spirit, a painful rupture that forever colors the animal’s existence. In a 2009 Humane Society/WSPA report entitled The Case Against Marine Mammals in Captivity, its three authors share the disquieting fact that should a dolphin survive the capture itself, “the risk of dying increases six-fold… during the first five days after a capture” due to residual trauma (Rose, et al. 35). But it is not only the cetacean who is abducted that suffers such a violent disjunction, but the cetaceans around them as well. In their study for the journal Proceedings: Biological Sciences, David Lusseau and M.E.J Newman enlist “[s]ophisticated tools for the study and analysis of social structure” in attempting an “analysis of [an] animal social network,” in this case one of bottlenose dolphins (S477). They discovered that some dolphins act as “brokers,” linking large numbers of dolphins together through shared relationships with the broker dolphin and by doing so “[playing] a crucial role in maintaining the cohesiveness of the dolphin community” (Lusseau & Newman S480). They also noted that the most prominent broker in the community they studied “disappeared temporarily during the study,” leading to the groups which that broker acted as a link for to interact less until they returned, at which point
interaction “became more common” (Lusseau & Newman S480). It is hardly a stretch to say that should one of these brokers be forcibly removed from their community, the delicate social arrangement of that community could be adversely affected, with commensurate effects on future birth rates, population numbers, etc.

Another argument by defenders of marine park captivity is that captive cetaceans do not view it as a negative experience on the whole but instead enjoy a rather good quality of life. This claim is easily combated by any survey of the facts. A sense of enjoyment on a bottlenose dolphin’s part at the adventure of captivity would not seem to square with the fact that “a similar mortality spike [as in the first five days after capture] is seen after every transport between facilities,” with the dolphins “never [getting] used to being restrained and moved between enclosures” and “the stress considerably [increasing] their risk of dying” (Rose et al. 35). Should the dolphin survive transport, there is the matter of the incredibly cramped space which captive cetaceans are expected to exist in. The authors of the Humane Society/WSPA report note that bottlenose dolphins have “home ranges [in the wild] exceeding 100 square kilometers” but are forced into pools that even at their “largest… [are] less than one ten-thousandth of one percent of their normal habitat size” [see fig #1 for comparison of a 100 sq. kilometer range with a 16-meter pool] (Rose, et al 21). A common rhetorical line of defenders is then that wild cetaceans only move such long distances in order to find food, and that “captivity, with its reliable and plentiful food supply, eliminates cetaceans’ need to range over large distances daily” (Rose, et al. 21). But a case shared by the report’s authors of orcas who traveled “40 kilometers north or south” from a fecund food source “in one night” only to return to that food source would support their assertion that super-long swims are not “only for foraging purposes” but rather a matter of the cetaceans’ “physiology… [having adapted] to this level of exertion” and so “[requiring] this amount of exercise for good health” (Rose, et al. 21).

Or take in case the concept of family bonds in orcas. In Blackfish, viewers hear the SeaWorld line that their orcas receive enough socialization through interactions with their fellow prisoners, and that the motley crew assembled at a given park consider each other “family” (Cowperthwaite). The Humane Society/WSPA report blasts this idea, calling such “social groups” amongst captive cetaceans “wholly artificial” creations comprised of a “mix [of] Atlantic and Pacific stocks, unrelated animals, and, in the case of orcas, races (transient and resident)” (Rose, et al. 22). Rather, orcas consider their families to be their actual family—or “pod” in whale jargon—members, who they are incredibly intimate with. In the book Killer Whales : The Natural History and Genealogy of Orcinus Orca in British Columbia and Washington, its three authors share the fact that each pod “produces a specific number and type of… discrete [vocalizations] which together form its dialect,” with “each pod of [orcas having] a unique dialect” that marks its members as of that specific pod (Ford, et al. 21). Even more central to orca socialization are “the bonds among females and their offspring,” which “are extremely strong and persist throughout the whale’s life” (Ford, et al. 23). Keeping this in mind, do SeaWorld at least honor the sacred link between a mother and her captive-born offspring? They do not: “calves [are] typically removed from their mothers to separate quarters after only three or four years, if not sooner” (Rose, et al. 22). One trainer interviewed in Blackfish relayed an anecdote showing the devastating effect of mother-child separation: after being separated from her baby, a mother orca began shaking, screaming and crying. In the trainer’s own words, there’s “nothing you could call that… besides grief” (Qtd.
in Cowperthwaite).

Perhaps the starkest example of how torturous cetacean captivity ultimately is comes in a scene from Louis Psihoyos' The Cove, a 2009 film detailing the efforts of a team led by Psihoyos to film and expose the violence of the aforementioned Taiji, Japan dolphin drive. One of the film’s main characters is veteran dolphin trainer-turned-activist Ric O’Berry. O’Berry was the trainer who actually helped to capture the five dolphins who played “Flipper,” the fictional bottlenose whose charming televised antics helped to usher in the age of cetacean captivity. However, a heartbreakingly anthropomorphizing moment shifted his worldview entirely. Years after the show’s conclusion, Ric continued to look after one of the “Flipper” dolphins, who he had grown quite close to. However, one day, the dolphin had finally become so extremely dissatisfied with continued existence in captivity that she simply refused to take her next breath—possible in dolphin physiology, where breathing is voluntary—and “committed suicide in [Ric’s] arms” (Psihoyos). The upshot of all of this is clear: captivity is not a natural state of affairs but rather a continuous circumscription of cetacean autonomy and sociality.

I still remember my first visit to the SeaWorld park located in my hometown of San Antonio, Texas. It was my eighth birthday, and while most of my attention during the visit was devoted to worrying about my agreement to ride the “Steel Eel” roller coaster, the day also marked some of my first introductions to real, live sea animals, in all their rubbery and smelly glory. Most prominent amongst them, naturally, was the orca—Shamu!—whose show I saw in its classic incarnation, with the trainers still allowed to get in the water with the orcas. At the trainers’ behest, the beautiful beasts swam and slid about for a rapturous audience whose fervor was only heightened by the dutiful dampening Shamu gave us with his huge show-ending splash. The entire experience—even the scary rollercoaster ride—made for a halcyon childhood day. But years on, knowing what I know now, I don’t know that I could ever bring myself to go back. Until the park is completely free of captive cetaceans, I will continue to vote with my wallet by choosing to patronize Six Flags Fiesta Texas instead.
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Brittny Thomas is a sociology major at UTSA. She is from Sherman, Texas, a small town near the Texas and Oklahoma border. She comes from a very big family, but there is nothing she would change about it. She plans to find a career that involves working within the criminal justice system but has a primary focus on sociology, so she is strongly considering criminology. Throughout her life in college, she plans to continue growing as a woman and learning more about herself as well as others. She is forever thankful for the opportunities that she has been given at UTSA and will continue to push herself to be the best she can be and be a role model for those around me.

Today’s Children are our Future

If it is so beneficial for children to have an early education, then why should someone be denied the opportunity to obtain one just because of financial situations? According to DoSomething.org, an organizational website that promotes positive change in society, “children who are from the wealthiest 20% of the population are 4 times more likely to be in school than the poorest 20%.” Head Start is a program that helps to alleviate this distinct line between the children of the wealthier sector of society and those of the poorer sector. Although many Americans are skeptical as to how beneficial the program is to a child’s intellectual growth, there are more positives than negatives impacting their lives including situations involving their health, gaining access to early childhood education, and rebuilding family relationships.

In cities like San Antonio, Texas, there tends to be a deep need for the Head Start program because the poverty rate is currently in the range of 15 to 17 percent, which is higher than many other major cities including Austin (11.7%), San Francisco (8.8%), and Denver (12.1%). The debate pertaining to the real effectiveness of the program, though, still remains alive. According to a Health and Human Services Department’s recent study, “the major federal preschool program, does almost nothing to improve a low-income child’s educational trajectory” (Quinton) and this created a major blow to many people’s outlooks on it. Disappointment and frustration continued to arise as new studies regarding unfavorable outcomes of the program began to appear. In 2010, the Head Start Impact Study was conducted and presented further the pessimistic aspects of the program. In this study, researchers discovered that “Head Start largely failed to improve the cognitive, socioemotional, health, and parenting outcomes” (Lips and Muhlhausen). Although there is doubt regarding the educational aspect of things, there are still many benefits to the program that go unnoticed. Former San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro was a major advocate for expanding the Head Start program in his city because he noticed that the benefits outweigh the negatives. In fact, in 2012 he pushed for the city to raise sales taxes to the maximum allowed in the state of Texas, which is 8.25 percent, in hopes to put more money into saving this project. His platform for this debate was to help the children and he claimed that if his proposal were to be passed, it would take place for “eight years [and] serve 22,000 4-year-olds during that period” (Quinton). His ballot passed and the taxes were raised. Although the primary purpose of this program is to provide the younger children with an education, there “is [still] so much evidence that model preschool programs are highly effective”(Bailey) especially in regards to things such as access
to medical and health care as well as improving family relationships. So the real question is; why put families at an even higher stress level in regards to allowing their children the opportunity to get an early education by reducing the amount of money put into this project?

One of the major areas that Head Start benefits families and children the most is giving them direct access to health care. By providing children and their families with dental, medical and even mental health support, the program is moving our youth in a direction that may have been impossible without help. Because of how difficult and expensive it is to access health care, thousands of children have to go without it due to being in low-income families or facing other situations such as homelessness. By offering health services to children in financial hardships, the younger generation is able to get immunizations, be given medical attention when needed, and have their checkups every few months like the children who already have health insurance. As mentioned earlier, not only are the children given medical and health assistance, their families are as well through what is called the “two-generation support services”. These services are primarily for (but not limited to) “to all enrolled families” or “families who set personal goals around a health need” (NHSA). It is very important for the children of lower income families to receive the proper health care because it not only benefits their physical growth, but it also helps them be more comprehensive and have a less likely chance of being enrolled in a special education class later in their life.

The families who typically find themselves using the Head Start program as an outlet to obtain the medical and healthcare they need are minorities due to the higher rate of poverty that their race is generally associated with. As stated through the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, “These higher uninsured rates reflected limited access to affordable health coverage options among groups of color” (Artiga, et al). When people look at the enrollment of children based off of their race, it becomes apparent that some races are more qualified for the program because they tend to be in the poorer sector of the American population. For example, in the figure below it is apparent that the two individual races that have the biggest gap between those with and without help from Head Start are the Native American population (31% difference) and the African American population (23% difference). The races with

![How Head Start Affects Each Race and their Health Coverage](image)

Source: Head Start Program Information Reports
the lowest gaps are the Hispanic population (8% difference) and the Asian population (11% difference). Although there are clearly major gaps between which races are more likely to be provided help and those are not, the important thing is that children are being helped when they are in serious need of it. In the diagram, it did not matter what the race was, the highest percentages always coincided with families being provided health insurance through Head Start. Every day, there are thousands of children who are able to live their lives and be provided with care because of this program no matter the color of their skin.

The roles that parents play in their children's lives is very essential to their growth and development intellectually, emotionally, and mentally. Head Start provides parents with different ways to become more involved by giving them “homework” that consists of different activities to do with the children on a day to day basis as well as giving them projects to do within the facility. Rachel Schumacher, a noted expert within the realm of early childhood education, widely expresses her feelings towards the program in her article “Family Support and Parent Involvement in Head Start: What do Head Start Program Performance Standards Require?” She believes that one of the Head Start programs primary focuses regarding the parent and child relationship should be to “assist parents in being their children’s advocates in the transition from Head Start into other programs”. Children look up to their parents as their role models, so having the Head Start program be such a vital part in the lives of millions of families is bringing people closer together. By providing the children with constant support and giving them that foundation of trust, the family’s relationship can prosper and have a positive impact on the child’s attitude and behaviors. Studies have proven that when a child and their family have a tighter bond, the child is more likely to graduate high school and enroll in college or become more successful than someone of a broken family. This has been said to occur due to the increased support system and strong motivation that the loved ones provide. Families should always want to see their children prosper and grow and with the help of separate programs within the realm of Head Start, they are able to make it happen and contribute to their success.

Despite all of the controversy surrounding how beneficial the Head Start program truly is, it is a common belief that every child should be given the opportunity to have an education no matter their family’s income. In 2012, over $49 million dollars were contributed to the Head Start program in San Antonio “for the purposes of improving program quality and helping prepare children to succeed in school” (Tenorio) and since then the program has helped millions of children in the city. By making people more aware of the contributions that the program has on the children of our society, we may be able to expand their perspective on the matter. Giving every child an equal opportunity no matter their race, gender, family income, etc. would be a huge step for our country. Head Start continues to push for this by providing children of low-income families the opportunity to get an education, offering health care, and helping families become stronger together. Even if the educational aspect of the program is not always fulfilled, these children are at least getting many other benefits out of it; therefore, this program should continue to prosper and grow.
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Fernanda Flores is pursuing a bachelor’s in Environmental Science after switching from biology because of her broader interest in the application of science to resolve environmental problems. In addition, she has always enjoyed being outdoors and interacting with nature. After graduating, her goal is to help transform our communities into becoming more sustainable, ensuring a safe future for succeeding generations to be able to enjoy of our beautiful planet in a safe manner. Before moving to San Antonio, she had the opportunity to live in and in Sao Paulo, Brazil, for a year and in Mexico City, Mexico, for seven years. Living abroad has given her the opportunity to not only learn a different language and experience a different culture, but to engage with people who have different ideas and interests. This opened her eyes to a diverse worldview and has resulted in her interest to pursue a master’s degree abroad. Learning and expanding her horizons through a variety of experiences has always been her goal, resulting in my overall enjoyment of challenges. She is passionate about people, the environment, wildlife, and a variety of sciences.

Effects of Poor Toxicity Testing

When presented with the words “chemicals” or “toxic” most individuals will commonly associate the words with hazardous materials most likely found in laboratories or in contained areas. While such relations are admittedly true, these words cover a much larger scale that includes a variety of products found in Americans’ homes. Specifically, simple products such as toothpaste, detergents, plastic containers, hairspray, among others are considered to have toxic chemicals as their ingredients. Notably, a ‘toxic’ is defined as a “chemical that can harm living organisms” (Karr 42). In other words, those innocent objects of daily use just mentioned, contain ingredients that have the capacity to harm humans and other organisms, and while the use of such chemicals is regulated by assigned federal agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), many of these threatening chemicals are still found in the consumer market. Due to the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency failing to adequately test popular everyday products for harmful chemicals, Americans have been faced with high levels of health issues within the past fifteen years.

As mentioned above, the EPA and FDA work together to ideally ensure the safety of all chemicals found in the consumer market and have developed a standard to test chemical’s toxicity—also known as its ability to cause harm – before it enters the market. Unfortunately, there is still a lack of accuracy when testing chemical’s toxicity, which may lead to expected results in humans to be erroneous, directly harming the health of Americans who were previously exposed to such chemicals. For instance, most of the chemical’s tested by the FDA – which are found in food, cosmetics, drugs, and other products fabricated for consumption – frequently require animal testing. Such procedure consists of exposing a variety of animals to the chemical being tested, carefully observing any visible reactions presented by the tested organism. Based on such observation, scientists can determine the dosage in which the chemical is considered safe or discard the product due to the test’s failure to prove a safe level of consumption. However, there is no flawless evidence that humans will respond equally to
a chemical previously tested on animals, adding weight to the claim that the chemical testing method performed by the FDA and EPA is inadequate due to its reliance on data merely obtained from non-human organisms.

As a matter of fact, such lack of concordance between animal testing and human exposure has been recognized by a variety of specialists in the field. For instance, former researcher of biomedicine in the University of West England, May J.E., acknowledges such phenomenon stating that “lack of predictability of human toxicity from animal trials has been cited as a concern” (66), further mentioning how the issue of poor concordance has been reported previously in other studies. In other words, even after performing the required chemical tests on animals there is still a remaining hazard that the use of such chemical is harmful to human health—a detail that the federal agencies’ chemical’s testing system decides to ignore. Another aspect that further confirms this testing method’s inaccuracy is identified by current professor and Director of the R. Samuel McLaughlin Centre for Population Health Risk Assessment at the University of Ottawa, Daniel Krewski, who states that “test animals are often exposed to higher doses than would be expected for typical human exposures, requiring assumptions about effects at lower doses or exposures” (Krewski 51). Krewski’s statement is thoroughly significant because while it is important to test a chemical’s effects based on different doses, it is unethical for the FDA and EPA to expose the population to a chemical whose dosage is merely presumed, with little evidential support. Finally, toxicity tests only observe the ultimate notorious effects caused by the toxic sample, meaning it is not possible to correctly identify the process of symptoms that may arise from the chemical’s exposure prior to its final outcome. The fact that such numerous flaws in the toxicity testing system federal agencies rely upon is concerning.

Within the past three years, after the recent reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act—(TSCA) which manages chemical safety in the United States—, the FDA and EPA toxicity testing has begun to move away from relying on animal testing to in-vitro testing, which involves testing a chemical’s toxicity on cells, tissues, or organs. Admittedly, results obtained from such testing method can be much more specific, however, the test’s results can be easily altered which also leads to a similar lack of accuracy as the one presented by animal testing. According to May, in-vitro tests are particularly delicate since “the interactions of cells with their surrounding environment can greatly affect shape, cell function and gene expression” (66), demonstrating how such test’s result can be imprecise. Once again, purely depending on results from such testing method to determine whether a chemical can be considered safe is a hazardous risk. In fact, the FDA itself states that “a key challenge is ensuring that in vitro testing accurately reflects in vivo [animal testing] outcomes in humans” (“Product Testing”), admitting the association’s awareness on the issue and failure to implement a more accurate toxicity testing standard that insures the proper safety of chemicals Americans are exposed to.

Consequently, the FDA and EPA fail to supervise a great number of chemicals and products entering the market, allowing the passage of many chemicals that have not been properly tested to end up in daily use products such as makeup, shampoo, cleaning products, food, and more. For instance, the FDA, which is the assigned agency meant to regulate ingredients found in cosmetics, by law cannot approve cosmetic products before they are in the market; they can only get involved if there is evidence that demonstrates any harm from the product once it is in the market (“Product Testing”). According to the FDA itself “[the]
manufacturer or distributor of a cosmetic is legally responsible for ensuring that a marketed product is safe when consumers use it according to the directions in the labeling” (“Product Testing”). In theory, such requirement is efficient when the manufacturer truthfully demonstrated their product’s ingredients to be absolutely safe through proper testing before it enters the market, resulting in the risk level of individuals being exposed to cosmetics with no toxicity levels to be low. Nonetheless, the risk of chemical ingredients in cosmetics entering the market through little reliable testing exists, and while the FDA is able to regulate such ingredients that have demonstrated to be unsafe after being allowed into the market, many individuals will already be suffering of effects caused by previous exposure to the ‘tested’ ingredient.

In order to further illustrate the FDA’s lack of adequate chemical supervision, there have been several studies that reveal that many chemicals found in today’s market that have not been properly tested. For instance, in the year 2013, more than 10,000 chemicals were allowed to be added to human food out of which 90% were considered to be food additives (Netlner 85). Moreover, an investigation performed by current Chemicals Policy Director of the Environmental Defense Fund, Thomas Neltner, revealed that many of these food additives previously approved by the FDA rely on non-reliable toxicology testing. Specifically, Neltner’s results reveal that “almost two-thirds of chemical additives appear to have been declared safe for use in food without the benefit of being fed to an animal in a controlled toxicology study” (90), exhibiting a high exposure risk since the effects of many of these food additives have not been observed. Nevertheless, the FDA considered such faulty evidence to be sufficient for the chemical to receive safety approval. Ultimately, the FDA holds the blame for such phenomenon since the administration failed to profoundly analyze the procedures and results of the performed toxicity tests on all chemicals, which is association’s designated responsibility.

The FDA and EPA’s recently mentioned failure to correctly test and analyze chemicals toxicity, leads to the passage of products that directly affect individuals’ health, such as their ability to cause disruptions on the endocrine system after chronic exposure. Although such event may seem trivial, it is in fact a tremendously concerning issue since it has the ability to affect the entire American population severely. This is due to the fact that many of the mentioned endocrine disruptors are found in ingredients contained in sanitary and cleaning products, cosmetics and even plastic containers. Nonetheless, higher quantities of such can be easily observed in a variety of cosmetic and personal care products. According to former researcher Beatrice Bocca, from the Italian National Institute for Health in Rome, “a personal care product use survey of more than 2300 people, performed in 2004, showed that the average adult uses nine personal care products each day, with 126 unique chemical ingredients” (447), demonstrating how easily individuals are exposed to products that will potentially affect them in the future. For instance, some of the most common invasive chemicals that make their way into cosmetics and products of personal health are toxic metals which have proven to lead to a variety of health repercussions due to their direct effects on the endocrine system such as defects in the development of the reproductive system, “reproductive impairments” (Nicolopoulou-Stamati 376), metabolic disorders, infertility, and even cancer of the reproductive system in both sexes—outcomes which could be easily be avoided by the FDA and the EPA correctly prohibiting such chemicals.

In addition, a further concern of Federal Agencies allowing such ingredients to be
found in products of daily health care is that human exposure to these hazardous chemicals begins at an early age, which leads to the chemical’s health effects to display at a younger age. While many of these products are considered to be safe due to manufacturers keeping the chemical’s concentration low, such minimal concentration can lead to their accumulation in the body which can ultimately result in a combination effects between several endocrine disruptors found in the same individual (Nicolopoulou-Stamati 373). Many of these chemicals found in cosmetics are absorbed by the skin and their accumulation in the body due to chronic exposure is not considered by toxicity testing. Such event is alarming due to the fact that many pregnant women who expose themselves to these “harmless” products (such as clarifying lotions and sunscreen) will pass on the products effects to their children. For instance, pathologist at the University of Athens, Polyxeni Nicolopoulou-Stamati claims that “there is evidence that prenatal and infant exposure [to endocrine disruptors], e.g. through breast milk may be associated with cognitive, mental and behavioral effects such as lower IQ indices… as well as with negative effects on the normal development of the reproductive system” (375). Which affirms how easily the American society is exposed to toxic chemicals without individual’s awareness at a young age.

Another consequence regarding the FDA and EPA’s failure to properly analyze chemicals is the fact that Mercury, a well-known chemical attributed to having a dangerously high toxicity, is still allowed to be used as an ingredient in a variety of products. Many tests have revealed that exposure to such chemical can result in the failure of body organs, damages to the nervous system, body tissues and the cardiovascular system, and affecting the immune system as well. In fact, pharmacologist at the University of Queensland Australia, Faheem Maqbool affirms such event by concluding that “the questions whether nervous effects of Hg contact are caused due to immunotoxicity have been proven in various experimental findings” (39). However, even after the presence of several reliable studies that have revealed the dangerous effects of Mercury, the FDA still allows its use in minute concentrations, instead of successfully banning such.

Therefore, the trusted Federal Agencies’ failure to completely ban highly toxic mercury from the market has led to its current presence in a variety of products, leading to humans exposing themselves to the mentioned disastrous health effects from a very young age, allowing a dangerous accumulation of the chemical in the body to occur. Specifically, some of the products that expose children to mercury are diapers and teething powder, which have led to many young children to develop Acrodynia (Maqbool 39). Moreover, it has also been revealed that many pregnant women who use creams on their body (declared safe by the FDA) have displayed results on Mercury in their body, whose effects are also passed down to their children and can result in fetus malformation or damage to the nervous system. Interestingly, the FDA recognizes the possible effects from exposure to such established minute concentrations when stating that “Mercury compounds are readily absorbed through the skin on topical application and tend to accumulate in the body. They may cause allergic reactions, skin irritation, or neurotoxic problems” (“Prohibited and Restricted Ingredients”). Based on such statement given by the official FDA, the association not only recognizes its negative effects but it also mentions the chemical’s power to accumulate and how it is easily absorbed, which are both alarming characteristics of Mercury exposure. Nonetheless, even after the substantial data that reveals the high risk on mercury intoxication and the FDA’s acceptance on the matter, Mercury is still allowed in consumer’s shelves; the FDA is clearly failing to prop
erly protects American’s overall health in the long run.

Ultimately, Americans are being constantly exposed to harmful chemicals without being entirely aware of the possible consequences. Such exposure leads to a wide range of health issues that must be avoided; by the FDA and EPA developing a more accurate method for testing everyday chemicals to properly determine if the product’s ingredients require any regulation, a solution to the current issue is introduced. Moreover, by allowing the current faulty toxicology testing system to continue, the federal agencies are only risking exposure of the American population to acute health effects— which are easily preventable through proper chemical testing. Nevertheless, Americans have still been presented with a variety of health issues, for the past fifteen years, due to the federal agencies’ deficient toxicity tests performed on chemicals found in a variety of household products entering the consumer market.

Works Cited


Kathryn M. Jones is a native Texan from a small town south of San Antonio. She began college at Yale University, moved to San Antonio a few years later to study briefly at several local universities, and then abandoned college for a successful career as a paralegal. She enjoyed her legal career, but regrets waiting thirty years to resume her studies. Ms. Jones is pursuing a degree in history, with minors in professional writing and museum studies. After graduation, she will commence her second career as a freelance writer. She has four grown daughters and lives with her husband in downtown San Antonio. Besides her academic interests, she enjoys her five dogs, travel, reading, genealogy, and the arts.

Malintzin’s Choices: Traitor, Victim, or Woman with Agency?
Camilla Townsend’s Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico concerns the clash of Spanish and Mesoamerican cultures from 1519 through the following decade, as seen through the life of Malintzin, an enslaved indigenous woman who served as a translator to conquistador Hernàn Cortès during the Conquest of Mexico and beyond. The book explores Malintzin’s life before she was given to Cortès as a slave; her role as a bridge between the Spanish and different Mesoamerican cultures during the Conquest and through the time of her death in approximately 1530; the lives of her children, including Cortès’ son Don Martin Cortès; and her own legacy. In a larger sense, the book also explores the common Mesoamerican indigenous experience in this era.”

However, Malintzin’s story is the remarkable story of an extraordinary indigenous woman’s life. Rejecting mythical, one-dimensional depictions of Malintzin as either a calculating traitor or a helpless victim, Townsend attempts to define the real woman. Townsend explicitly states that she seeks to determine first, whether Malintzin “change[d] the course and nature of the conquest,” and second, how Malintzin saw her role in the Conquest. Townsend unequivocally asserts Malintzin’s vital importance to the success of Cortès’ Conquest; yet she also notes: “There were many potential Malinches.” Although she was unique, other translators likely would have emerged. As to the second question, Townsend admits the answer is more difficult to ascertain, but concludes that “there had to have been moments of triumph or glee, moments of agony or self-effacement, and moments of putting one foot in front of the other in a rather prosaic way.” In other words, Malintzin was a complicated woman – neither whore nor saint – who chose to exercise agency when faced with difficult choices in the chaotic world of the Spanish Conquest, rather than allowing events to roll over her.

Humanizing Malintzin is the first step in rehabilitating her reputation as a traitor to her people. Townsend begins by exploring Malintzin’s pre-Conquest life: her possible parentage by a nobleman father and a concubine mother; her role in such a household; her early life in a Nahua village near the Coatzacoalcos River; and her bondage into slavery to the Chontal Maya sometime between the ages of eight and twelve. This portion of her life

1 Camilla Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 8.
2 Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices, 5.
3 Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices, 6.
4 Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices, 8.
concludes when the Maya give her to Cortés as a slave. Townsend next debunks the narrative of Malintzin as mere victim by fully exploring her role in the Conquest in an equally exhaustive manner. Finally, Townsend concludes her study by showing how Malintzin demonstrated agency in securing her future on her own terms: selecting a noble Spanish husband, demanding her own encomienda, and becoming a respected member of colonial society, in exchange for her agreement to travel with Cortés on a dangerous mission to the Honduras.

Since Malintzin left no written records of her own, Townsend extracts and compiles Malintzin’s story from a variety of primary and secondary sources. Townsend gleans information from one source and compares it to details found in other sources, then consults more general ethnographic studies regarding the Nahua before reaching her own conclusions. For example, in determining the place of Malintzin’s birth, she cites studies such as James Lockhart’s *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries*. She supports her contentions with witness statements found in Spanish court records on Malintzin’s son and daughter which mention Malintzin’s origin, including “Expediente de Martín Cortés, niño de siete años, hijo de Hernando Cortés y de la india doña Marina” and “Méritos y servicios: Marina, 1542.” Additionally, she uses witness statements from Cortés’ residencia, the Spanish Crown’s investigation of Cortés after the Conquest.

Through the coalescence of these sources, Townsend deduces that Malintzin was born in the altepetl of Olutla in the region of the Coatzacoalcos River. Similarly, Townsend mines her many sources to determine Malintzin’s relationship to Cortés, both as his interpreter and as mother of his son; the meaning of her marriage to another Spaniard; the nature of her relationships with her children; and the reasons she was held in high esteem by Mesoamericans and Spaniards of her time. Concurrently, Townsend examines the indigenous Mesoamerican experience in central Mexico against the overarching narrative of the Conquest of Mexico. Townsend provides believable explanations for the choices Malintzin made, explanations which are supported by other secondary sources. For instance, in Colonial Latin America, Mark A. Burkholder and Lyman L. Johnson state that enslaved persons in Maya culture were at the bottom of the social hierarchy and that enslavement could become heritable if an enslaved person was not ransomed by family.

Although Malintzin had no choice but to go with Cortés, her seemingly willing participation in the Conquest can be explained, in light of the Burkholder/Johnson statement, by her hope to

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5 Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices, 230.
6 Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices, 231.
7 ibid.
8 Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices, 232. At page 228, Townsend notes that she uses both English and Spanish editions of del Castillo’s work.
9 Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices, 231. At page 229, Townsend explains that when she disagrees with Dibble and Anderson’s translation of Nahuatl, she provides her own translation. At page 282, she elaborates further on using published versus original documents and published translations versus her own translations.
find a way out of perpetual slavery for herself and her future children. Further, in The Olmecs, Richard A. Diehl discusses the physical environment of the tropical lowlands of Mexico, “a very dynamic environment, constantly changing in response to natural and human-induced causes.” Malintzin, a product of that environment, adapted and evolved in response to the challenges she faced, first as a Maya slave, then as a Spanish slave, and later as a free woman. Likewise, Burkholder and Johnson, who barely mention Malintzin beyond stipulating that she gave Cortés a “tremendous political advantage,” conclude that conquistadors who survived had these qualities in common: “endurance, physical courage, audacity, and cunning.” Townsend demonstrates that Malintzin possessed these qualities in abundance.

Townsend’s thorough and effective analysis of sources, combined with entertaining and highly readable prose, produces a compelling book. Readers will hunger to learn more about Malintzin and her fellow Mesoamericans, will yearn to dive into these sources to attempt to match Townsend’s scholarship and analysis with discoveries of their own. Unfortunately, although Townsend provides an excellent bibliographic essay with selected information on Malintzin, Mesoamericans, and the Conquest, she deliberately omits a comprehensive bibliography of all the works she consulted and used in her book. The list of abbreviations used in her footnotes includes Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. archives; published collections of Spanish and Nahuatl documents; Spanish chronicles of the Conquest; and anthologies. The footnotes encompass an exhaustive trove of primary and secondary sources, but a detailed bibliography would permit additional assessment of her sources.

Despite this flaw, Malintzin’s Choices is a significant contribution to historiography on the Mesoamerican people before, during, and after the Conquest, as well as on the woman Malintzin. Townsend has apparently spent a lifetime researching Mesoamericans in the Conquest, learning the Nahuatl language, consulting both published primary sources and original documents in several countries, and studying many secondary sources which touch on all aspects of the Conquest. Townsend’s Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico is an engaging and well-written masterpiece of research, an indispensable resource for students who seek to further understand the history of the Conquest of Mexico.

12 Burkholder and Johnson, Colonial Latin America, 51, 67.
13 Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices, 278. Townsend notes she did not wish to lead students astray by including sources which she has read but debunks.
14 Townsend, Malintzin’s Choices, 227.
Bibliography


The Writing Program

Program Description and Course Offerings

The Writing Program, a stand-alone unit, reports to the University College. Annually, it offers approximately 340 sections of the two required core curriculum writing courses, WRC 1013 Freshman Composition I, which focuses on informative researched writing, and WRC 1023 Freshman Composition II, which focuses on persuasive researched writing. The Program also teaches WRC 0203 Integrated Reading and Writing, WRC 3013 Writing for Legal Studies, and, in conjunction with the Honors College, WRC 4123 Cook. Eat. Write. Repeat. Each semester, The Writing Program also offers discipline-specific sections of freshman composition. Current disciplines incorporated into selected sections are communication, quantitative literacy, and science/pseudoscience. The reading and writing assignments for these sections relate to the particular discipline. In addition, the Program enhances all its freshman composition sections with quantitative literacy projects.

The Judith G. Gardner Center for Writing Excellence (The Writing Center)

Another component of The Writing Program is The Judith G. Gardner Center for Writing Excellence. Since its inception in 1999, The Writing Center has evolved from a converted classroom in the McKinney Humanities Building, staffed by volunteer student and faculty tutors, to a multi-faceted physical and online facility with an associate director and twenty-five paid tutors representing multiple disciplines. The Writing Center is located in the John Peace Library, as a component of the Library Commons, with a satellite location in the Frio Street Building at the downtown campus. Continuing its expansion, The Writing Center has added class visits, orientations, and workshops, and has developed partnerships with the Graduate School, the Scholarships Office, the Office of International Programs, Residence Life, athletics, and the Greek Council, resulting in specifically designed writing workshops for these clients.

Looking Forward

Since its inception as an independent program, The Writing Program has grown into a dynamic, integral part of the UTSA community. As the Program continues to develop, its goal is to produce students whose writing and critical thinking skills, as well as their understanding of teamwork and personal responsibility, will give them a competitive edge in the local, state, national, and global spheres.