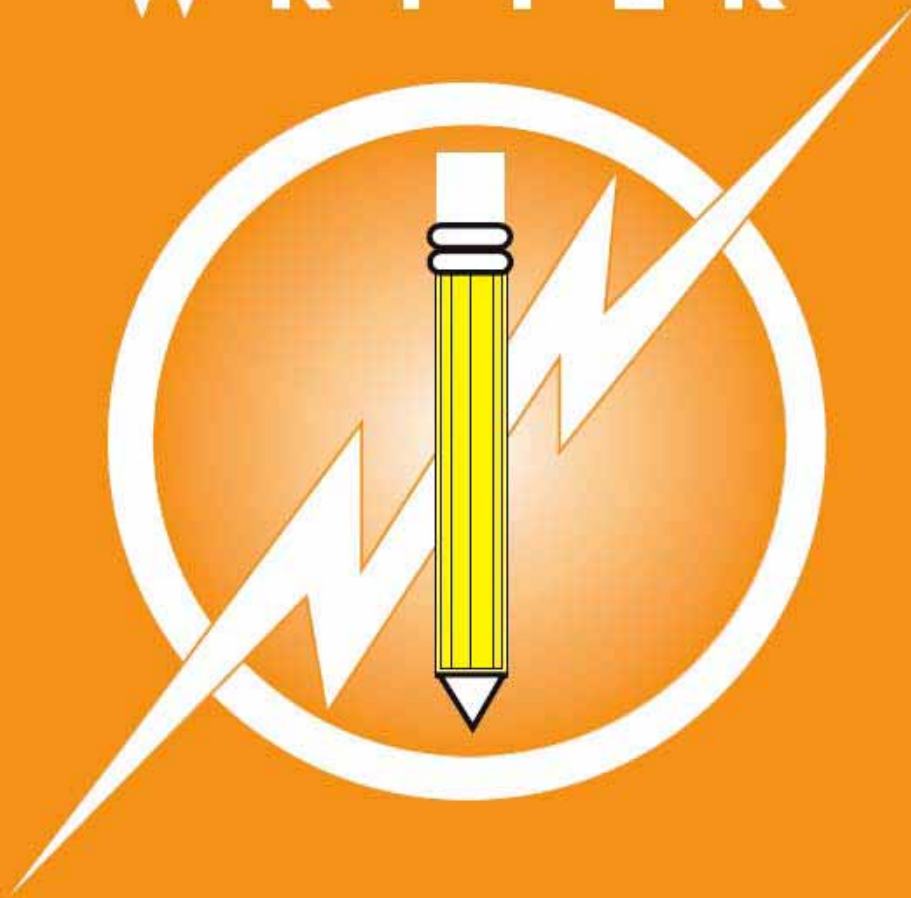


Vol. 7

CITY TECH WRITER



2012

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Volume 7 2012

**Outstanding Student Writing
From All Disciplines**

**George Guida, Guest Editor
Jane Mushabac, Editor in Chief**

Cover Art: Jonathan Myvett
Art Direction: Lloyd Carr

New York City College of Technology
City University of New York

Preface

City Tech Writer Volume 7 reflects a world that is, especially in these interesting times, very much with us. The work of student writers published herein concerns itself with ideas and issues of great moment, including morality, religion, evolution, neo-liberal politics, the legacy of slavery, hydraulic fracturing, cultural hybridity, marriage equality, foodways, higher education, genetic engineering, youth violence, and the psychological effects of economic hardship. In doing so, it demonstrates the breadth and depth of City Tech students' knowledge, as well as their tremendous capacity for communicating that knowledge. They deserve nearly all of the praise for what you are about to read.

I would be remiss, however, if I did not praise the many faculty members, working in a variety of disciplines, who have helped this group of student thinkers and writers build their stores of knowledge and hone their writing skills; and who encouraged students to submit their work. Choosing from the many strong submissions was not an easy matter. Many of the names of these dedicated faculty members appear in the table of contents, below the names of authors who produced work for their courses. Many thanks to them, and to those students and faculty members who sent in writing that, only by virtue of the astonishing quality of submissions, was not selected this time around.

Praise also is due to a number of other people who make *City Tech Writer* possible. Advertising Design and Graphic Arts Department Chair, Prof. Lloyd Carr, the journal's Art Director since its inception, as always coordinated the graphics, including preparing the cover (which features the sterling work of student Jonathan Myvett) for production; the Reproduction Center's Kiros Haile, who did a superb job of printing the cover, and Director of Campus Services Jeff Novak, who coordinated this support; and Chief Laboratory Technician Steve Caputo, and printers George Pompilio and Peter Pompilio, who produced the volume with care and competence. Many thanks to President Russell Hotzler, Provost Bonne August, and Dr. Stephen Soiffer for their continued support and encouragement; to the President's Executive Assistant Marilyn Morrison and Assistant to the Provost Imelda Perez for their great help and thoughtfulness; to English Department Chair Nina Bannett, for her concern and support; to Advertising Design and Graphic Arts Office Assistant Lucille Taylor, for facilitating the production process; and to English Department Office Assistants Lily Lam and Laura Kodet, for their attention to detail.

Of course it is Professor Jane Mushabac who deserves the lion's share of praise among those non-students responsible for this journal. *City Tech Writer* is her vision and her gift to us. I thank her for allowing me and everyone else involved to play our parts.

George Guida, Guest Editor

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Finding Collegiality in College: How to Increase Student Participation

Karl Garcia

During my first semester here at New York City College of Technology (City Tech), I simply chose to make it a boring “routine.” After finishing my classes, I would head straight home or do something else, which made life rather tedious. After that semester, I decided to make a change. I would be more involved and seek out the opportunities available to me. As my second semester rolled on, there was certainly a change in how time passed. Not only did I begin to feel more inclined to stick around after class, but also I came across organizations and groups that sparked my interest, such as the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Technology and Design Club. Furthermore, I was made aware of various beneficial opportunities such as prestigious scholarships, the Honors Scholars Program, and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS). By then, I realized that one of the most essential aspects of the college experience is involvement in the college; however, I felt that there was a lack of student interest when it came to college activities outside classes. But then, I thought, since City Tech is indeed a commuter school, perhaps the students here are simply busy with other commitments such as families or jobs. Notwithstanding the realities faced by other students, I am positive that there are students just like me who are simply unaware of the opportunities available to them. I believe that increasing student awareness of opportunities and events, as well as encouraging students to participate in activities outside classes such as student clubs or committees can improve the college community at City Tech.

Specifically, one improvement I feel should be made is further emphasis on the importance of student clubs. Club participation is a great way to promote communication among peers who share common interests and goals. From my experience, by being a part of a club, I learned more about various opportunities and received helpful advice such as what classes to take; however, when

compared to other CUNY colleges, I noticed that the lack of club participation is staggering. I surveyed 20 randomly selected students, and asked them various questions. One question I asked was, "What are City Tech's club hours?" Fifteen students either got the time incorrect or simply did not know. That can be calculated as seventy-five percent of students surveyed who were unaware of City Tech's current club hours! Sure, 20 students out of the campus' over fifteen thousand seems like an inadequate sample, but it does not make the results any less concerning. I believe that promoting student club participation will greatly benefit not only the student body, but also the school as a whole. Many students, especially freshmen, walk in with limited knowledge of what is going on around them as well as of the opportunities available to them. Clubs are great ways to connect new students to senior students who share common interests, and for the senior students to share their experiences with them in return. Furthermore, I realized from my own experiences that clubs strengthen the bonds between students and faculty, as the club's faculty advisor usually ends up becoming a mentor to club members, as well as serving as a door for all the members to meet the rest of the faculty in their respective majors. Being in the Technology and Design club, for example, has given me the opportunity to get to know the professors in my department, Computer Systems Technology, and has helped me tremendously. Another example would be the "Mock Trial Club" and "Paralegal Club" which has influenced the unity of the Paralegal Department among both students and faculty. My decision to join a club has been truly influential and has provided me with priceless insight. My desire is for students to know just how much it could benefit them, as it did me, and so many others.

Another area that suffers from a lack of student participation is the College Council. City Tech's College Council is responsible for various decisions that directly affect our students' lives. A recent problem is that, due to a lack of student participation, the council has been unable to make quorum, thus preventing the Council from passing any decisions. As a result of this, the faculty is thinking of removing the student representation from the Council. There is no reason this should be happening, for student interest in such important decisions should be a given. All of the students whom I spoke to about potentially losing a privilege were immediately interested. So how is it that there is a lack of participation? I believe that the problem is a lack of awareness. I simply did not know that the College Council even existed! This shouldn't be the reason for students to lose any more privileges. I believe that at a time when cuts are common and our rights are being compromised left and right, making the best use of our privileges is important.

Strong club involvement will make it easier to garner participants for college-wide events. The first step that I would take to implement these improvements would be to bring more innovation to the current advertisement effort. As an active student within the college campus, I am a witness to the hard work put forward by Student Life and college faculty to get students involved and aware of upcoming events; however, I feel that much progress can be made from exploring various untapped potential. For starters, we can take advantage of

the creativity and the desire of design students to show off their talents; creating an advertisement poster that students can connect to would be a great way to generate talk among the students. In addition, placing screens in high-traffic areas such as the sixth floor atrium lounge, where many students pass by or simply relax, will earn events and announcements much-needed exposure. I have no doubt that the students would not mind sitting to watch a video or two while they relax.

Also, being a part of the SGA, I know just how underutilized the college club budgets can be. As the year drew to a close, one of our goals was to simply encourage clubs to use their money. Why not put it to a creative use? For example, why not use the club budget to hold competitions between the various clubs? The “Club Fair” events, in which clubs to compete with one another for the title of “Best Table,” is a great start. Why not take it a step further and hold more in-depth competitions that would strike up interest among the student club members?

Another great step in the right direction would be to encourage professors to promote student activity on the college campus. The “Speech Competition” held twice a year usually has a great turnout rate, simply because the speech professors encourage their students to participate. Sometimes, a simple gesture is all it takes. In fact, this essay would have never happened if it weren’t for Professor Lansiquot, with whom I am working in Advanced Technical Writing, letting me know that the deadline for submitting this essay was extended. My initial reaction was, “Deadline? What deadline? Classes are over already?” Learning more from my professor, I was eager to address the important issues raised by the City Tech Student Government Leadership Award.

The constant that can make all this happen is technology. Technology is more than just a fad; it is an important component in the way we live our lives. City Tech does a good job in utilizing the Internet to make students’ lives easier, from the Electronic Student Planner (ESP) that helps students keep track of their major, to the Blackboard content management system to support students in their courses. In fact, this makes sense, since, after all, we are New York City College of Technology. Since we are, I strongly feel that there is no reason why our school website is so neglected and underutilized. I was excited to do research about which club I wanted to join, only to discover that the list on the website was sorely outdated. I was enthusiastic to be involved with SGA, only to end up addressing the wrong person in my email, due to an outdated roster. I strove to apply for the Honors Scholars Program, only to find out that the actual deadline was different from what was posted on the website. Updating the website is not only quick and easy, but also absolutely beneficial. Of course, this lack of information can definitely be compensated by simple diligence, but I still feel that such a problem may turn away a vast number of students who would otherwise be interested, while having an updated website can only help to invite students to participate. Whenever any student seeks to use any of the utilities provided for him or her, or any information regarding the school, the starting point is always the same—the school’s home page. This fact makes that one page

the single highest-traffic area when it comes to exposure. In fact, I have the electronic poster that says, “Computer Technology Design Team wins first place for innovation” embedded in my brain after seeing it so many times on the homepage. Why not take advantage of this? A simple box in the corner with recent events is all it really takes to grab the attention of students. Technology as we know it can only progress further, and we can benefit the most by progressing with it.

Every day, I am becoming more aware of how important seizing opportunities is. I started with a severe lack of interest and drive, with the whole “let’s get this over with as quickly as possible” attitude hovering over me; however, once I started being more involved, one accomplishment led to another. From being nominated to being a part of the SGA, to being accepted into the Honors Scholars Program, to being voted in as president of the club I initially sought to join, it has truly been a rewarding experience. None of this would have been possible had I not taken that first step. So, to engage its students, City Tech should embrace its own identity to, help other students take their first step in being involved by celebrating why some of us want to take in every experience here that we can.

The Internet is Serious Business

Kong Sang Yan

Man, isn't it strange that it was only 20 years ago that people used to just sit in front of their TVs, watch the news or the local programming, then head straight to bed? Nowadays the computer, or better yet the Internet, has replaced the good ole telly. Unlike the TV, on which you might just watch something and maybe, just maybe, discuss it the next day with friends, co-workers or perhaps even random strangers, the Internet has allowed us to instantly share our thoughts and ideas on the spot, without ever leaving our beds. Whenever there is a group of people sharing ideas, a community will be formed, and within that community will be users that try to ruin the whole experience for everyone. These users are called Trolls. Similar to the olden trolls, who hid under bridges and attacked goats, these modern Trolls hide behind proxies and usernames, to verbally attack other users, in order to entice an angry response. This is the art known as "trolling." Much like the animal kingdom, Trolls have evolved into separate species to fill in the various niches of the Internet. They are the Griefer Trolls, Controversial Trolls and the most common, the UMAD? troll. Within the Internet, as long as you don't give out your real-life information, anyone, and I do mean anyone, can antagonize others without facing retribution. This is a guide on how to classify and disarm Trolls.

I still remember my first confrontation with a Troll, more specifically the Griefer Troll. They are the rarest of the three Trolls. Griefer or "griefing" is an internet term used to define people who deliberately and intentionally harass other players in a massive multiplayer online game or MMO for short. In these MMOs, there are two criteria that affect your level of play. They are leveling and farming. I'm going to run through these criteria, how Griefer ruin it and finally how to avoid it. In a MMO, players level up in order to get stronger and they achieve this by killing monsters and/or doing quests, but during this phase, players also kill the monsters for their loot, which is known as farming. What a Griefer does is steal your kill, depriving you of EXP (experience), which is necessary to level up, and he also deprives you of the loot, which you can use and sell. The Griefer I met did just that; he waited until I was about to land the

finishing blow on the monster and, BOOM!, cast a magic missile and stole my kill. Unless you are higher level and/or stronger than the Griefer, chances are you won't get anything done, so the best option to do is to move to a different spot or change servers (think States in the US), so you won't encounter that particular Griefer. Be warned, though, that there are Grieferers in every server. Better yet, avoid MMOs altogether; they are a waste of time.

Controversial Trolls are a bit more common than Grieferers, but more uncommon than UMAD? trolls. I run into these every once in a while, but I've learned to ignore them, which, by the way, is the best way to ignore ALL Trolls. Now I'm not going to define what Controversial is since I'm assuming that if you're reading this, you know what Controversial means. Controversials are usually found on any online forums, but once in a while they branch out into reality, most notably Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church. In forums, users are able to create an account with their choice of usernames and post topics for discussions or reply to other users' topic. These topics can range anywhere from "What's your favorite sparkling scene from Twilight?" to "Check out my chiseled elbows, brah"; however, a user will post something that is not within the norms of that forum and intentionally start a flame war (users taunting, mocking, and insulting each other). Like the name implies, these Trolls provoke a response through means of controversial topics: for example, religion or sexual orientation. On a conservative, far-right Christian forum, Controversials might post a topic with the heading "I sure enjoy sodomy while masturbating to Glenn Beck " or "Sex is not for Procreation." These headings will no doubt accumulate pages of angry replies denouncing the Controversial, that is in the case when the moderator of said forum hasn't banned the user and/or locked the topic yet. The best way to proceed is to message a Moderator on the forum on the topic, and provide reasons to him why said topic should be locked. The other way, as mentioned previously, to relieve these trolls of their enjoyment from pissing off others, is to just follow the golden Anti-Troll law, which is to just IGNORE them; however, that is easier said than done, especially when they're talking about sensitive topics that you might feel strongly about, like religion or sexual orientation.

Finally we are at the core of Trolls, the most common of the trolls, also in a sense the least offensive (still quite offensive, though not to the extent of the Griefer and Controversials), the U MAD? Troll. Before I proceed, I have to admit that once in a while I become a UMAD? Troll. Before you guys gather in a mob with torches and pitchfork, just hear me out. There is a saying about how you emulate the people that are around you. I guess interacting with so many trolls on the Internet has turned me into one. In order for one to understand, I guess I will have to start from the very beginning. U MAD? is a phrase originally coined by the American rapper, Cam'Ron, while he was on Bill O' Reilly's show when discussing the affects of Rap on children. UMAD? is in a sense a bastardization of "you mad?" And that itself is a bastardization of "Are you mad?" And one might even go further and say that it is a bastardization of "Art thou angered, my brethren?" U MAD?s appear EVERYWHERE on the Internet, from social

network sites like Facebook to...EVERYWHERE. If you're online for more than 2 hours, you're bound to run into at least one. Unlike the previous examples of Trolls, it's extremely difficult to distinguish between UMAD? Trolls and normal people who just don't agree with you. UMAD?s are usually just messing around, to get a displeased response from the person getting trolled through means of arguing relentlessly (without taking into consideration the other side's argument, basically conducting a one-sided debate), pointing out unnecessary flaws (similar to grammar Nazis, but for the sake of the response they'll get), and basically just being total dicks to everyone with the intention of being dicks; however, there are regular people who do these things, not for the purpose of causing discomfort or anger in others, but because they genuinely feel certain ways about certain things. There are certain ways to differentiate these two groups. For example, let's say Person A is having a conversation with Person B; let's call them Amy and Becky. They are having a conversation about Denise's Chihuahua, and Denise is talking about how cute her Chihuahua is. Bernice might argue that her dog is in fact not cute. So far no harm is done, since everyone is entitled to her own opinion; however a UMAD? Troll might take a step further and say things like, "You call that a Chihuahua? Looks more like an anorexic furby" and/or "Yo, son, that dog is mad ugly, my dude, how you gone buy that ugly-ass dog, so ugly, SMH (shake my head)." Now Denise is obviously going to be furious with the UMAD? Troll and further defend her earlier statement with reasons why her Chihuahua is in fact cute, only to be shot down by insulting counter-responses by the UMAD?. In order to render these Trolls useless, you should give the opposite reaction of what they're expecting. Making fun of your grammar and spelling? Agree and say that you will improve. Of course, ignoring them is always a viable option. Just like that, you have taken a Trolls greatest treasure, which is your anger and frustration.

Even though this guide is a lighthearted take on Internet Trolls, trolling is not something that should be considered a norm in Internet culture. Trolling can be used as an excuse for being ignorant or just incredibly stupid. In my opinion the reason why most people troll is that there are no consequences. In this e-culture where everyone can remain anonymous, you are able to say things that you won't be able to say in real life, and because of that, the intensity and level of insult that is dished out will be stronger. It's a lot like a middle-school playground, where everything remains orderly under the supervision of a teacher, which is equivalent to the Internet's Moderator; however, once the kids are unsupervised, that's when things fall into chaos. One might say, "It's just the internet dude, don't take it so seriously," but there is a thin line between bullying and trolling, and if you're an impressionable 13 year-old boy or 16 year-old girl on the Internet, bullying and trolling is essentially the same thing, in a sense that they both provoke a negative feeling in the victim.

The United States Has Problems! How Neo-Liberal Policies Negatively Affect Ordinary American Citizens

Raymond Ly

Between widespread protest movements such as Occupy Wall Street, a debt-ridden federal government filled with politicians who care more about lining their pockets with money, and an increasingly disillusioned populace, to say that America is having problems is *the* biggest understatement of 2011. How did all of this come to be for a country that was supposed to be the “land of opportunity?” When a single mother is struggling to afford childcare while the nation’s wealth has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of the top 1% of income earners, it does not take a sociologist to know that there is something seriously wrong with this picture. Many of the issues that have plagued and continue to plague the United States can be traced back to the federal government’s tacit support of capitalist and neo-liberal policies, but as citizens begin to unite in protest of the massive inequality and the host of social issues they face, the wealthy are fighting back tooth-and-nail to hold on to their old ways.

The word “liberal” held a different meaning back in the late eighteenth century compared to its modern context and refers to a branch of economics pioneered by Adam Smith in his revolutionary work, 1776’s *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith espoused a belief that individuals were driven by their own self-interests and that politics and economics should have nothing to do with each other (Steger 2010, 3). The economy works under a system of “natural” laws and is guided by an “invisible hand” that will allow citizens to pursue their goals in a market that will serve the common good (Steger 2010, 3). For Smith, the market is incapable of failing, and a failing economy is *always* the fault of an over-meddlesome government. While Smith’s ideas were a force to be reckoned with during much of the nineteenth century, the twentieth century brought these same ideas into question, as economists increasingly felt that a small, uninvolved government was no longer viable in order for a nation to progress.

The Great Depression led to a wide range of changes for the United States, leading to a “golden age of controlled capitalism,” which lasted from the end of World War II in 1945 to roughly 1975. Operating under the belief that markets were by nature unstable, British economist John Maynard Keynes advocated that federal governments should undertake massive spending in times of economic crisis in order to spur the creation of new jobs and confidence in consumers (Steger 2010, 6). This was in direct opposition to Smith’s “classical liberalism,” which preached that the market would “eventually” fix itself. The resulting “golden age of controlled capitalism” was brought about by a strong middle class, who were able to afford what was being mass produced at the time. Wealth was evenly divided up by large corporations and their suppliers, retailers, and employees, who kept corporations in check thanks to the influential bargaining power they wielded and reinforced by the government (Steger 2010, 7). Many workers belonged to a union and “welfare states” began to emerge, spurred on by social programs such as Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “New Deal” and Lyndon B. Johnson’s “Great Society.” Unfortunately, like all golden ages, it was never meant to last, and so it came to end in 1975, due to a host of new problems.

Faced with rising costs of raw materials, inflation, unemployment, and increased competition from developing nations, corporate profits declined in the 1970’s, leading to the birth of a new ideology known as “neo-liberalism.” Neo-liberals re-invented the basic tenets of classical liberalism for a modern world, arguing that government regulation, massive public spending, and high tariffs were the culprit for the poor economy (Steger 2010, 10). The neo-liberal agenda persists to this day, and while it *did* lead to unprecedented growth during the 1990’s, it has resulted in a host of social issues that have exploded onto the public arena, leaving citizens with no choice but to fight back against the policies that continuously undermine their basic rights in favor of placating the wealthy.

The effects of neo-liberalism are best illustrated in Michael Moore’s humorous and scathing 1989 documentary film *Roger & Me*, which explores the devastating economic aftermath when General Motors shuts down their auto plants in Flint, Michigan and lays off over 30,000 employees. Moore, a Flint native himself, returns to his hometown after a failed magazine venture in San Francisco, to discover that General Motors is firing thousands of employees and outsourcing their jobs to cheap labor in Mexico, despite the fact that the company is experiencing record profits. The chairman of General Motors at the time was Roger B. Smith and the film chronicles Moore’s attempts to confront him about the Flint plant closings and layoffs, interspersed with interviews with the town’s residents commenting on the fallout of the company’s actions. *Roger & Me* is infamous for the depiction of a live rabbit being clubbed to death with a lead pipe by resident Rhonda Britton, who sells them as “Pets or Meat,” in order to make ends meet. Moore does eventually meet Smith, attempting to convince him to come to Flint and see for himself how bad conditions are but the chairman rattles off a meaningless apology and refuses. As neo-liberal policies favor a blind eye to what corporations do, General Motors was free to outsource its labor to Mexico simply because it would save money and produce profit, the well-being

of its employees be damned. The federal government *could* have stepped in, but, once again, neo-liberals frowned upon social spending. When then-president Ronald Reagan visited Flint, his advice was to find employment by moving somewhere else.

The situation in Flint, Michigan illustrates the growing inequality that continues to plague the United States, with macroeconomist Dean Baker citing four causes: anti-unionism, anti-inflation, the rising costs of health care, and the large number of jobs outsourced to second and third-world countries. Corporations outsource jobs, because it allows them to pay incredibly low wages. The United States's policies support this practice, by making it relatively easy for companies to establish new operations in developing nations with special trade agreements in place to prevent profits from being confiscated by that nation's government, as well as tariffs that would bar American manufactured goods from entering (Baker 2006). Employers in the United States have taken to hiring illegal immigrants for manual labor jobs as their status precludes them from a number of protections that are afforded to legal workers, allowing them to be paid below minimum-wage levels.

The Federal Reserve Board, or Fed, is responsible for keeping employment levels high and inflation low, but in recent years, it has gone to extremes in fulfilling the latter goal to the detriment of workers. In combating inflation, the Fed has tacitly kept unemployment at a level it views as "acceptable" and the people who lose out when they slow the economy down by raising interest rates are always at the middle and bottom of the wage distribution (Baker 2006). Unions have also lost much of their bargaining power, as employers have resorted simply to firing or replacing striking workers. Health care costs continue to increase with wild abandon, as insurance companies accrue massive administrative fees while utilizing various loopholes in order to avoid paying benefits to sick people (Baker 2006). Social mobility has also stalled, despite the fact that Americans continue to believe that any child growing up has a chance to become successful through simple hard work and ambition (Wessel 2005, 121). Data collected from 1963 to 1968 has shown that *only* 14% of sons who came from the bottom 10% of wage earners made it to the top 30% (Wessel 2005, 124).

There are a myriad of reasons that social mobility has slowed down significantly since the nineteenth century, one of them being a changing economy. Most Americans moved up the social ladder simply by relocating to urban metropolises, but by the twentieth century, the emphasis on education kept more people at home rather than going to work (Wessel 2005, 125). Economists have also pointed at income and race as possible causes in limiting social mobility. Parents with a high income can afford to make sure that their children are healthy, compared to those with lower incomes, and there are links between childhood health and adult health (Wessel 2005, 126). Surveys done by the University of Michigan also reveal that low-income Caucasians have a higher chance in climbing the social ladder, compared to minority groups, such as African Americans (Wessel 2005, 125). While most Americans are aware that

inequality exists, nothing has been done about it, with most politicians just paying lip service. In fact, they have tolerated it up until now under the belief that as long as there's a *chance* of moving up, then inequality is not as big an issue. This is no longer true, as evidenced by the large number of protest movements that are currently spreading throughout the country.

The United States would not be in such a rut if the federal government did more, but neo-liberals make it a habit of cutting social programs or simply letting funding erode, because it is their belief that having people pay for basics such as healthcare is better than providing free, "second-rate" services. These free services would not be so inferior if they just had the necessary funding. Childcare is another area in which the United States pales in comparison to countries such as Sweden. Low-income working parents spend more on childcare compared to college tuition, food, or rent; and many are qualified to receive a subsidized check that can help alleviate the costs, but very few do since the funds simply are not there (Lerner, 2007). Surprisingly, there was a proposed bill in 1971 titled the "Comprehensive Child Development Act," which was supposed to provide universal childcare for all American citizens, regardless of income. Although it passed both the House and Senate, then-president Richard Nixon vetoed it, opposed to "communal approaches" to raising children (Lerner, 2007). It seems that neo-liberals and conservatives often equate free services with socialism and insist that everything should be treated as little more than commodities.

Managing to *afford* childcare does not resolve the problem as the *quality* of the care varies from generally adequate to absolutely terrible. Studies such as the one conducted by researcher Jay Belsky have shown that quality childcare yields positive results but this can only be achieved if there is enough funding, something neo-liberals stubbornly refuse to support. What will really make parents reach for their pitchforks is that this problem can be easily solved by boosting funds by an additional \$18 billion. While this is a large sum of money, it all amounts to less than 5% already wasted away on keeping American troops in Iraq and other various countries (Lerner, 2007).

Perhaps the best evidence that supports Belsky's research is Sweden, a nation that prides itself on its numerous social welfare programs. Its childcare system has to be experienced to be believed, as parents are granted 450 *paid* days of leave to care for their newborn child. They are also legally allowed to work reduced hours until their child formally enters school at age eight (Shahmehri 2001, 204). Sweden's attitude greatly differs from the United States when it comes to raising children, viewing it as a social responsibility to be shared by not just the parents but by the government as well; however, neo-liberals view such a system as bordering on socialism. When it comes to daycare centers in Sweden, the amount of money that parents pay is dependent on income, so there is no excuse for not being able to afford it. Children also receive allowances, which are turned over to them when they reach age fifteen, so that they can learn financial responsibility (Shahmehri 2001, 206). Finally, employers are required by law to help reconcile both work and child-rearing responsibilities for both male and

female employees. In the United States, employers expect their employees to be grateful for receiving time off, and sometimes they won't even care if their child is sick, especially when there's money to be made. It is strange how politicians often tout the United States as one of the wealthiest and most progressive nations in the world, while the simple act of making sure a child is well-fed and taken care is unattainable.

It is clear that the United States is currently in dire straits, as the federal government has become so mired in petty ideologies that its leaders are unable to resolve the myriad of social issues plaguing its citizens. Many of these issues can be traced back to the actions of neo-liberals, who actively work to line the pockets of corporations while doing the bare minimum or outright ignoring funding for social welfare programs, under the belief that free means substandard. Although ordinary American citizens are now fighting back against the policies that exacerbate inequality and cut social services, the powers that be have stood firm in issuing reforms, and have in fact tightened their grip. It remains to be seen whether more drastic or extreme measures are needed to force change.

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A Crisis 30 Years in the Making: Neoliberal Policies and Economic Inequality in the U.S.

Claudia Charria

While it may seem that the current financial crisis in America is a recent development, say, of the past five years or so, the fact is that this crisis has been slowly building. Many of the current economic and social problems in American society today can be traced back to the political and economic policies of the past three decades. The global power elite successfully spread neoliberal ideologies beginning in the 1970s and managed to indoctrinate the average American, in order to complete their agenda. Since then, inequality in America has been growing steadily and the consequences are finally in full view. Take, for example, the housing market crash, the high rates of unemployment, and the growing levels of economic and social inequality. Neoliberals managed to take control of economic policy by using a favorite American word to gain access to people's psyche: free. "Free" and "freedom" have been a part of American identity since the time of the Pilgrims.

In their book, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction*, Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy (2010) define neoliberalism as an economic policy that favors a free market with little or no involvement from the government. Like classical liberalism, neoliberalism touts the virtues of a free, self-regulating market, in which competition is the great equalizer, and is therefore incapable of failing (Steger & Roy, 2010). Neoliberal policies include de-regulation of the market by ending government-imposed guidelines and regulations, liberating trade between nations by eliminating tariffs and creating free trade agreements, and privatizing public enterprises, like the railroads (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 14). On the surface, these policies may appear to be benign, but the reality is that they are harmful to the average American. By not allowing the government to interfere with the market, Americans have unwittingly agreed to policies that undermine labor rights and protection, reduce government spending on social

programs, cut taxes for the rich, and maintain high levels of unemployment. These policies are in direct contrast to the controlled capitalism policies put in place by Presidents Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Lyndon B. Johnson in post-World War II America. Programs such as The New Deal and Great Society allowed American society to flourish both economically and socially.

The 'Golden Age of Controlled Capitalism' in America is the period following the Great Depression and World War II that lasted from 1945 to the 1970s. During this time, the U.S. experienced unprecedented economic growth, thanks to the adoption of economic policies influenced by egalitarian liberals like John Maynard Keynes (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 7). Egalitarian liberals pushed for economic and social policies that reduce inequality. Less inequality allowed for more people with spending power, which is good for the economy. Keynes argued that the market was not incapable of failing, as was previously believed, and required government issued guidelines and regulations. Most importantly, the government should invest money in the economy during periods of slow economic growth, in order to create jobs and boost the economy (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 9). Using Keynesian macroeconomics as a guideline, presidents FDR and LBJ created programs that increased government spending, increased taxes for the rich, created jobs and social welfare policies, like social security and unemployment benefits, and passed pro-union legislation. The result was an increase in the Gross Domestic Product, which increased profits for corporations. These additional profits were in turn shared with employees. Wages increased and millions of people were able to enter the middle class.

Michael Moore's documentary, *Roger and Me*, about Moore's hometown, Flint, Michigan, is a 'before and after' example of neoliberalism. It opens with newsreels from the 1950s that show a booming economy. The town's Main Street is lined with shops full of happy people enjoying their newfound spending power. This spending power was the result of the Great Flint Sit-Down Strike. In late 1936, automobile workers organized a sit-down strike at a General Motors plant, to protest for higher wages. The occupation of the manufacturing plant ceased production and cut into GM's profits. Eventually, GM caved to the demands of the autoworkers. The positive ripple effects of worker solidarity and corporate concessions could be seen throughout Flint and the rest of the nation. Sadly, Flint's success came to a screeching halt in the 1980s, when GM closed down almost all of the manufacturing plants and moved production to Mexico. GM's profits skyrocketed thanks to cheaper production costs. The only thing skyrocketing in Flint were the unemployment rates, home foreclosure rates, and crime rates. The state and local governments attempted to rescue its citizens by practically selling the town to corporate America. These attempts failed miserably, and Flint continued on its downward economic spiral. The people of Flint asked themselves, "How could the Federal Government allow this to happen?" By the 1980s, the neoliberal agenda was in full swing.

The 1960s and 1970s in America were a time of change. There were many social movements and working class rebellions spreading throughout the nation. OPEC was created and the price of oil quadrupled overnight (Steger &

Roy, 2010). Capitalist European and Asian nations destroyed after WWII emerged from the rubble to give America economic competition. Inflation rose, economic growth slowed down, and corporate profits decreased. Neoliberals blamed the slowed economy on high international trade tariffs impeding free trade between nations, government over-regulation of the market, and exorbitant government spending on social welfare programs (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 10). The world's economic elite used this time to pervade the American psyche with the free market ideology, thus paving the way for average citizens to allow the changes in economic and social policies that are affecting us today.

In his essay, *Increasing Inequality in the U.S.*, economist Dean Baker explains how deliberate public policies are to blame for the current levels of economic inequality. Although there was slowed economic growth after the 'Golden Age', the GDP still grew approximately 3.1% annually between 1980 and 2005 (Baker, 2006). The difference is that the benefits of this growth went disproportionately to the richest 10% in America. The federal government's trade and immigration policies, the Federal Reserve's monetary policies, the passage of anti-union legislation, and increased healthcare costs are all to blame for the increase in economic inequality.

First, trade policies make it easy for corporations to move manufacturing overseas and not impose tariffs on imported goods. Immigration policies protect high-income workers by making it difficult for educated workers from other countries to enter the U.S., so that only low-income and low-educated workers are willing to take the risk of entering the U.S. illegally (Baker, 2006). This puts low-income American workers in competition with low-educated workers both here and in the countries where American corporations set up shop. In order not to lose their jobs, U.S. workers have to concede many benefits, but mostly they concede wages. Corporations make bigger profits and pay their CEOs huge bonuses, which contribute to the increase in inequality. Second, the Fed has focused mainly on keeping inflation down by raising interest rates. High interest rates slow the economy, which causes corporations to hire fewer workers, leading to an increase in unemployment. Unemployment disproportionately affects middle and lower-income workers (Baker, 2006). Third, anti-union legislation has undermined many of the protections awarded to workers during the 'Golden Age' (Baker, 2006). The lower wages that companies have paid their employees over the past 30 years have increased inequality. Finally, increased healthcare costs have also contributed to the level of inequality in the U.S. The lack of universal healthcare makes room for private companies to sell coverage with high administrative costs to employers. Employers pass the cost on to employees, but this cost hurts middle and low-income workers more than it does high-income workers, since it costs the same amount of money to insure a rich person as it does a poor person (Baker, 2006).

The economic inequality created by neoliberal policies has social consequences as well. During an interview with Helen Polychronakos for www.rabble.ca, social epidemiologist Richard Wilkinson proposes that the feelings of inferiority that arise from greater economic inequality are the source

of most social problems, including violence. De-regulated capitalism has created a culture of conspicuous consumption, and people have come to judge each other by their economic status. Wilkinson argues that most violence is triggered by people feeling disrespected, looked down upon and humiliated. Wilkinson also notes that economic inequality affects another social problem: environmental sustainability. For example, loosening governmental regulations allows for companies to be irresponsible towards the environment, by cutting corners when managing manufacturing waste. Increased pollution causes global warming, which then causes floods and/or droughts. The working class and the poor are the ones who pay the consequences. Wilkinson states that in more equal societies there is a bigger sense of trust and social cohesion, which makes it easier for legislation to be passed for the general human good.

Why is it that Americans are so tolerant of inequality? In his article, “As Rich-Poor Gap Widens in the U.S., Class Mobility Stalls,” David Wessel writes that Americans still believe that the U.S. is the land of equal opportunity, and that with hard work anyone can go from rags to riches. The reality is that even with social policies designed to give people of all classes a shot at success, Americans are no more or less likely to rise above, or fall below, their parents’ economic class than they were 35 years ago (Wessel, 2005). Wessel points out several factors that limit social mobility in the U.S. For one, the rich can afford a higher education. College graduates are more likely to marry other college graduates. They earn a higher combined income and can afford to send their children to better schools than the poor can. There are many studies that show a strong positive correlation between the level of education attained and income. Race is another factor that affects social mobility. One longitudinal study found that 17% of the grandchildren of low-income whites were likely to remain in the low-income class, compared to 42% of the grandchildren of low-income blacks (Wessel, 2005). Access to healthcare is yet another factor that limits social mobility in the U.S. The rich, along with working class people with good jobs and union protection, have healthcare coverage. Healthy children make healthy adults. Healthy adults are less likely to miss work due to illness (Wessel, 2005). Unfortunately, as described above, neoliberal policies have made healthcare a market good.

One would hope that neoliberal greed would not extend far enough to negatively affect our children, since investing in children is investing in society’s future, but it does. For instance, one can see how the neoliberal policies of less government involvement and less spending on social welfare programs affect children. In her article, “The Kids Aren’t Alright,” Sharon Lerner discusses the lack of affordable childcare in the U.S. She lists several ways parents manage work and family life. Most of the time one or the other must suffer. Parents who can’t afford childcare either don’t work, sacrifice grocery money for daycare money, pay for daycare using credit cards, leave younger kids at home with older siblings, or place their children in sub-par care. Although there are a few social programs that provide government-subsidized childcare, these programs suffer

from a severe lack of funding, long waiting lists, and low income caps (Lerner, 2007).

By contrast, Sweden has a more child-friendly culture. Government policies are in place to support families and children, as journalist Brittany Shahmehri found when her family moved from the U.S. to Sweden. Shahmehri writes about the differences between America's approach to childcare and Sweden's in her article, "More than Welcome; Families Come First in Sweden." She was happy to discover that the Swedish government provides subsidized, high-quality childcare for all children, regardless of income. Furthermore, employers are legally obligated to help employees, both male and female, combine parenthood and work. There is even an Equal Opportunity Ombudsman, who investigates cases where an employer is not making it easy for an employee to balance work and family (Shahmehri, 2001). This policy goes completely against the neoliberal policies in place in America, because it's the government forcing corporations to comply with the standard it has set. There is no quick and easy way to fix society's economic and social problems. However, it's refreshing to see that the average working American is finally beginning to learn the role that the neoliberal economic policies of the past 30 years have played in today's economic and social crisis. Occupy Wall Street protestors march for economic equality, students rally and protest tuition hikes, and union members strike for fair wages and health benefits. Unfortunately, those standing up to the economic and political elite need more voices in order to be heard, and to get the current administration to listen. Only then will the American people be able to usher in a new 'Golden Age of Controlled Capitalism' with more economic and social equality for all.

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Religion and its Function for Second Generation Korean-Americans

Songyi Ee

After the Korean War of 1950, a copious number of Koreans emigrated from their native land to the United States in search of a new life. The threat of communism was a push factor, and the promise of a better quality of living was a pull factor for these new immigrants. After about a decade, there was a wave of newly established Korean-American Protestant churches budding all across the nation, and they continue to grow at exponential rates today. The first and second-generation Korean-American immigrants never established a sense of home in America because of their exposure to both the Korean and American cultures. It is important to realize that the first and second generations of Korean-American immigrants have the dilemma of having to balance two cultures that push to be ingrained in their lives. This demographic not only acknowledges the American and Korean cultures they are exposed to, but also live it. This phenomenon brings me to my question of interest: How exactly does the Korean-American Protestant church, as a religious entity use syncretism (Wolf 1958) to create identity through “*communitas*” (Turner 2008) and appeal to a younger, liminal generation? How does religion facilitate the effort to form a truly social cohesion? The ability to *live* in two different cultures creates the desire to remain close to their roots, despite their displacement and/or American citizenship. Religion—specifically Christianity—plays a key role for providing a cohesive property and cultural identity to this particular group of estranged people.

In order to better understand this condition of liminality, the demographic of choice within the Korean-American community has been selected as college-age (17-30), second-generation immigrants. Let us refer to this group as Gen Y2. Gen Y2 is the optimal age group to observe because they were born in America. This group has automatic citizenship to the United States; however, their parents were born and raised in Korea and were displaced when they immigrated. The parents are naturalized citizens who did not go through years of childhood and adolescent education in the American system. The

parents are inherently Korean's by identity, appearance, and culture. Being born as Americans puts a greater pressure on Gen Y2s to assimilate to the American way of life. Gen Y2s must also simultaneously deal with the pressure to maintain an identity as Koreans because of the way they are raised at home, with their Korean, first-generation immigrant parents. Gen Y2s are expected to adapt fully to the American way of life by being educated and provided with jobs that are in sync with the American culture; however, Gen Y2s are raised with Korean traditions and morals. The Gen Y2's experience with the Korean values can be diluted, depending on the strictness or laxness of their parents' desires to instill them. This conflict of cultural identity inevitably causes a sense of liminality within the Gen Y2 population.

Methodology

For the purposes of pursuing an answer to the questions I have as to how the Korean-American Protestant church forms social cohesion through "communitas", religion, and rituals, I observed my own Korean-American church. As for my selection criteria, I have selected the New York Presbyterian Church in Queens, New York I have close relationships to the members of the church and I am familiar with the routines involved. Within the church I have honed in on the college group called the English Ministry. The English Ministry is primarily concerned with the English-speaking constituents of the entire church's body. The group is large, holding approximately one hundred Gen Y2 members. The English Ministry members are comprised of recently accepted college students, current college students, and graduate school students. The pastor who runs the service is also relatively young, in his mid-thirties. The service is held at ten in the morning every Sunday. My method of observation included sitting in the back row of the worship hall and jotting down field notes on the details of the entire service. I also read over the itinerary for the service and made note of the order of worship. Because this was a participant observation, I followed the ethical guidelines of anthropologists and made sure to receive informed consent. Informed consent is the process of receiving permission from participants to observe, record, and present one's particular findings to the public. Because the college group was significant in size, I decided that individual consent would be unnecessary and only asked the Pastor for permission. With his agreement I was able to carry on as an objective bystander during worship.

Liminality

Liminality is a word derived from the Latin word "limen" which translates to "threshold". According to ethnographer, Victor Turner, "the attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this

condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there...” (Turner 1969:327). This definition is an impeccable identification of precisely what the Gen Y2 population is experiencing. Gen Y2s are not fully Korean because they were not born as Korean citizens, yet they physically bear the appearance of Korean citizens. If they never spoke out-loud, no one would be able to distinguish and identify them as Korean-Americans. Gen Y2s are not completely American, because they are raised with some of the Korean values their parents teach them. Due to the Korean influence, their role in American society and their placement in society can seem ambiguous and liminal. Turner attempts to provide an explanation of how displaced people bridge societal disconnects. Turner prefers “the Latin term “communitas” to “community,” to distinguish this modality of social relationship from an “area of common living. “[Communitas] is rather a matter of giving recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society” (Turner 1969:328). Turner makes a bold, yet resonant argument, stating that humans have no place in society without their social cohesion. In times of being in a liminal state, Turner argues that “liminal personae” must form a network and work together to form meaning. He confirms this argument by saying “communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority...it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency” (Turner 1969: 338). Because the Gen Y2 population is comprised of a younger age group, this ability to form a “communitas” is very appealing. Younger people are more open to change and setting new precedents through social cohesion.

Religion

First, let us explore the religious aspect of the church and attempt to answer how rituals work to create a sophisticated meaning for the Gen Y2 population. According to the sociologist, Emile Durkheim, “the most bizarre or barbarous rites and the strangest myths translate some human need and some aspect of life, whether social or individual...All fulfill given conditions of human existence, though in different ways... [Despite the fact that] some can be said to be superior to others, in the sense that they bring higher mental faculties into play...these religions are to be respected no less than others” (Durkheim 1995:38). Korean-American Gen Y2s, in their liminal state, join a congregation to gain a sense of purpose in a place that is not their place of origin. The sense of purpose is felt both on an individual and corporate scale. Durkheim goes on to say that “religion is an eminently social thing. Religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities” (Durkheim 1995: 39). Durkheim makes two significant charges here. He first states that religion and the rituals involved are relative to the society participating in them, and second,

he states that religion is an expression of “collective realities” of the people involved.

This brings us to the line of reasoning that explains why Korean-American churches are a place where the liminal Gen Y2 population can find their place in society. Religion provides a means to thrive through a sense of belonging. Religion nullifies the notion of existing with no purpose or cohesion to another social group. Humans are nothing without society and essence. By making church attendance every Sunday a requirement for a “good Christian,” and going through the procession of service, the church is setting up a consistent, weekly ritual. This ritual maintains the flow of socializing because human beings are inherently communicators. Without constant communication, human beings would become misanthropic. A ritual as defined by Geertz “involves this symbolic fusion of ethos and world view, it is mainly certain more elaborate and usually more public ones, ones in which a broad range of moods and motivations on the one hand and of metaphysical conceptions on the other are caught up, which shape the spiritual consciousness of a people” (Geertz 1966:70).

Now, we can explicate Geertz’s definition of religion and see how his interpretation can further the notion of religion’s providing a sense of purpose for the Gen Y2 population. For the scope of this paper, let us ask how religion convinces its constituents that what they believe in is indeed reality. Geertz offers an impeccable definition that summarizes the mechanism of religion. He says religion is “(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Geertz 1966:59). According to Geertz, religion does not only provide a sense of purpose, but also explains why humans exist. Religion *convinces* people that they exist along the lines of their belief system by conveying “an aura of factuality.” This aura can only be convincing if religion can compel people to feel emotionally connected to its beliefs. For the Gen Y2 population, attending English Ministry every Sunday molds the concept of relevance required to solidify the emotional connection they feel towards God. Once they feel emotionally involved they therefore gain an understanding of their “general order of existence”. With their unified belief of originating from the same place spiritually, the Gen Y2 population is able to bond with those who also believe in the same ideology. This parallel understanding with one another allows for the Gen Y2 population to develop social cohesion.

Identity

Syncretism of the Korean and American culture is displayed by the action of praise in the English Ministry. This blending of two cultures begins to create an identity for the Gen Y2 population. Eric R. Wolf describes syncretism as a development of identity by saying, “Such forms develop historically, hand in

hand with other processes which lead to the formation of nations, and social groups which are caught up in those processes must become 'acculturated' to their usage. Only where such forms exist, can communication and coordinated behavior be established among the constituent groups of such a society. They provide the cultural idiom of behavior and ideal representations through which different groups of the same society can pursue and manipulate their different fates within a coordinated framework"(Wolf 1958:161). To portray how Wolf's definition of syncretism functions in the Korean-American church, let us refer to the English Ministry. During the English Ministry service, there is a thirty-minute long procession of worship. The worship may seem unconventional to the typical Korean Protestant custom; however, the English Ministry's service intentionally defies conventional standards in order to attract a younger demographic. The normative standards of Korean Protestant culture are minimalist. Emotional displays must be kept at a minimum; all hymns and songs of praise are to be sung in Korean. Soft sounding, classical instruments are preferred, such as violins, pianos, and organs, as opposed to electric and bass guitars. And everything during worship must be done with a somber look of respect. On the other hand, the English Ministry's worship is very contemporary and casual. The members of this congregation are welcomed to sing out-loud in English, clap, express their emotions as freely as they please, and enjoy listening to fellow members leading the time of praise with electric guitars, bass guitars, drums, and electric keyboards. Even though everyone in the room is ethnically and physically Korean, the English Ministry acknowledges the liminal state of the Gen Y2 population and works to give them what they lack in both worlds. The Korean side of the Gen Y2 population can remain close with fellow Koreans and experience social cohesion through the same beliefs and similar appearances, and the American side of them can speak English to one another and converse with one another about their lives, which they live as full Americans outside of church. Syncretism allows for the two different cultures to exist simultaneously, without overshadowing each other hence, temporarily allowing the Gen Y2 population to step out of their liminal state and experience social cohesion.

Developing and maintaining an identity is linked to the concept of comfort because knowing exactly who one is allows one to feel serenity and security. When an individual is capable of discovering answers and comprehending his situation, he feels content and free of worry. Without a confirmed identity, this comfort cannot be achieved. It is imperative for people to understand who they are and their purpose in order to successfully function in their respective societies. This identity may be as rudimentary as knowing one is a female and that one's job for the rest of one's life is looking after one's husband's cows, and it can be as complicated as knowing one has to go through all the stages of education, networking, and career building to be a fully functional person. Knowing who one is and understanding how to identify with a specific group of people is conducive to the mental, emotional, and physical stability of mind, body, and soul. Religion plays a key role in creating this sense of identity among the Gen Y2 population. According to Geertz, religion provides

“the worshipper [with] a certain distinctive set of dispositions (tendencies, capacities, propensities, skills, habits, liabilities, pronenesses) which lend a chronic character to the flow of his activity and the quality of his experience” (Geertz 1966:62). Geertz asserts that religion allows for a religious person to develop traits that can set them apart from others; thereby, developing a subculture that would support those who feel as if they are condemned to a state of liminality. Once a subculture or “communitas” is created, the young, liminal constituents within that subculture can all identify themselves as part of the culture and establish close relationships with other members.

The feeling of security and comfort plays a key role in providing purpose and identity for an individual and a group in myriad ways. In order for people to truly thrive in their society, and maintain happiness, they must be comfortable with who they are. Anomalies within every society become outcasts because they do not fit into the conventional standards of society. For example, misfits receive no comfort from their respective societies, so they resort to forming “communitas” in a world of their own in which they can find solace. This simple concept can be applied to the Korean-American GenY2 population. Geertz describes the comforting qualities of religion in the following passage:

As religion on one side anchors the power of our symbolic resources for formulating analytic ideas in an authoritative conception of the overall shape of reality, so on another side it anchors the power of our, also symbolic, resources for expressing emotions-moods, sentiments, passions, affections, feelings-in a similar conception of its pervasive tenor, its inherent tone and temper. For those able to embrace them...they are able to provide a cosmic guarantee not only for their ability to comprehend the world, but also, comprehending it, to give a precision to their feeling, a definition to their emotions which enables them, morosely or joyfully, grimly or cavalierly, to endure it.” (Geertz 1966:66) According to Geertz, religion becomes a source of reliance and comfort for any situation a person or group is faced with. It transforms itself into a foundation upon which those who feel liminal and out of place in their society can find common ground and socially bond with those unified beliefs.

The Korean-American church plays a unique role in providing a source of serenity, purpose, identity, and social cohesion for the liminal, younger, second-generation Korean-Americans. This paper is not meant to argue that religion is a panacea for the multitude of issues second-generation immigrants face. Its purpose is to instead explore the multi-faceted benefits religion can provide for such a liminal population. The Korean-American church has discovered a way to bridge the gap between the Korean and American cultures, in order to facilitate the assimilation process for the younger, second-generation Korean-Americans. It has been a venue of socialization that has adapted to become more contemporary and synchronized, to appeal to the Gen Y2 population. By becoming such a beneficial entity, the Korean-American church’s exponential expansion across the nation comes as no surprise.

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In the Kitchen

Alfredo Lopez

In the kitchen, bored,
I watch from a window
the evening falling
over a thousand desperate faces,
fast-pacing towards home,
after a long day at work.

I write the words my mind wants to drown,
what my silence wants to scream:
“Unless it speaks,
The silence of the little girl sitting across me,
Will remain an immutable gesture,
Her resentment will only express itself,
In the sad glances she casts upon her parents
Who ignore her.”

Yesterday the same people discussed the same topics:
The screaming boss at work, the rising price of milk.
Their words, their grievances, speak of hopelessness.
My silence makes them think of me as an unbearable person;
I don't want to discuss their problems,
Or offer solutions to which they won't listen.
They've always preferred to drown in a sea of misery,
To feel hopeless.

I know that sometimes I behave as a child does;
Indifferent to their talk, I play with a paper airplane.

I look at the girl,
I look at her parents,

And understand,
That being an adult is not at all enjoyable,
And that I wish to keep inside me
The joy of being a child,
The unforgettable memory
Of flying a kite,
Alone under an endless blue sky,
Immersed in complete freedom.

A Visit to Torres Winery in Pacs del Penedès

Marilyn-Joy A. Macuha

On a recent vacation to Barcelona, my fiancé and I decided to plan a day trip to visit Torres Winery in Pacs, located in the Penedès wine region. The purpose for our expedition was two-fold: to nurture and educate our aspiring “wine-geek” selves; and to break the pleasurable and enviable monotony of idling in one of the most gorgeous cities in existence.

Aboard the chartered taxi, we watched as the striking modernist architecture yielded to the city’s seemingly barren outskirts. The morning’s *café con leche* could not overcome the rhythmic rocking of the automobile and the drabness of geography, and we were soon lulled to a reluctant sleep. In an hour’s time, we awoke to the car swerving as it expertly negotiated the sharp curves of the mountainous hillside; and, to our right, a breathtaking, almost otherworldly view of sprawling, lush green vines signaled the proximity to our destination.

The Bodegas Torres’ Visitors Centre is situated in the heart of the estate, a single-level structure that echoes the nearby picturesque Mas Rabell farmhouse of the Mas La Plana vineyard. (It was during the tour that we learned the significance of Mas La Plana on elevating the Torres name, beating renowned estates such as Chateau Latour in the 1979 Paris Wine Olympiad.) We pulled into the circular driveway and parked beside a made-made reservoir, built to collect the region’s sparse rainfall—just one of the many nods to the Torres’ commitment to environmentally sound practices.

The Visitors Centre, in its effort to position itself as a premier destination for wine enthusiasts of every level, offers a myriad of options: besides the standard winery tour, they offer an exclusive (read: pricier) “VIP” tour, an “Ecotour” that explores Torres’ preservation practices, wine-tasting courses, as well as themed brunches and dinners. We opted for the standard winery tour at 6,10€ per person (approximately \$8 USD).

We were seated in a fairly large auditorium, adorned in deep red velvet, to watch a presentation on the Torres family history. The audience was provided

with headphones in order to be able to listen to the presentation in their native language, whether it was English, Spanish, Catalan (the co-official language of Catalonia, in which Barcelona serves as its capital city), French, Russian, or Chinese.

According to the film, though the Torres family had been making wine since at least the 17th century, it was in 1870 that Don Jaime Torres established Bodegas Torres (the “house of Torres”), the wine company that would later come to be known the world over. He had returned to Spain from the Americas after establishing a great deal of wealth in the oil and shipping trades, and went into the wine business with his brother Miguel. The Spanish Civil War dealt a catastrophic blow to the winery, leaving it in ruins after being bombarded during an attack. Miguel Torres Carbó, a third-generation Torres, rebuilt the winery in 1940 and masterminded its evolution from bulk wine to quality varietal wine producer. Today, under the direction of his son, Miguel A. Torres, Bodegas Torres is comprised of a multitude of successfully branded products (including the renowned Mas La Plana), with extensive properties throughout Spain, Chile, and California.

At the film’s conclusion, we were led to an interesting feature of the Visitors Center, the “Tunnel of the Seasons,” which is a large, half-cylindrical room in which images of seasonal changes corresponding to the vine life cycle were projected onto the walls. The multisensory experience was replete with ambient temperature changes and vineyard aromas. At its completion, a four-car tram entered from our right, and we were ushered onboard for a guided tour (by way of multilingual recordings *à la Epcot*) of the winery itself.

Riding through the grounds, we were continually impressed with the Torres’ dedication to promoting Earth-friendly practices. Bodegas Torres was involved in organic viticulture since 1975, decades before “organic” became the industry’s buzzword. The vines are free of herbicides and pesticides; instead, Torres vineyards opt for the use of biological methods such as pheromone capsules that attract male moths, so that they are prevented from breeding with female moths, whose larvae would ultimately feed on the vine.

On the crest of one particular hill, we directed our attention to the massive crusher/destemmers. By force of gravity (and thus reduction of energy consumption), the must is funneled into large stainless steel fermentation vats. Temperature is strictly controlled—According to the Torres website, red wines are fermented at 26°C to 29°C (79°F to 84°F) for eight to twelve days, while white wines are fermented for two to three weeks at temperatures below 18°C (64°F), to maintain their youthfulness. The cap formed by the grape skins floating to the top of fermenting red wines is disrupted by pumping over, so as to further extract aroma, flavor, and tannins. Torres red wines also undergo malolactic fermentation, a secondary fermentation that converts the harsh malic acid into the softer lactic acid.

White wines at Torres are not typically oak aged, with the exception of rare white wines that are fermented in small oak barrels from the start. Meanwhile, all red wines are aged in small barriques—using calculated

percentages of French or American oak, depending on the particular wine profile sought—that are stored in tremendous aging cellars spanning the length of two kilometers (1.2 miles), at staggered depths. As the tram snaked through the underground tunnels, the lights brightened to reveal the stunning breadth of the amassed barrels. The dramatic sight left the audience, including myself, in complete awe.

We made our way back to the Visitors Center, after quickly passing the bottling plant and bottle aging cellar. A Torres representative who sat next to me pointed out the solar panels used to produce hot water for the bottling plant, the installations to collect rainwater, and the white sands laid on the earth above the underground cellars to reflect sunlight and counteract global warming (This last practice is known as the *albedo effect*). Clearly, preserving the environment and mitigating the effects of global warming are at the top of Bodegas Torres' priorities. In fact, they have made it their objective to reduce CO₂ emissions by 30% by the year 2020.

The Tasting Room at the Visitors Center was an austere setting composed of high wood tables blanketed with wine glasses. Our standard wine tour entitled us to one tasting, for which we were poured a meager serving of the 2008 Fransola, from Penedès, which was made of 90% Sauvignon Blanc and 10% of the native Parellada. It appeared bright, pale yellow, and presented with a fruity, complex nose. On the palate, it felt full-bodied yet pleasantly acidic, with oaky and vegetal notes.

Though it was time for us to leave, we decided to splurge on one more tasting: a 2006 Mas La Plana. We had become fascinated with this wine after its incredible buildup during the tour, and could not fathom leaving without a taste. Another aggravatingly economical pour could not take away from what we still recall as one of the best wines we have ever experienced. Bright ruby color in the glass, not quite inky, with a warm fragrant nose of ripe cherries and tobacco. On the palate it was complex and long lasting, allowing us to savor the evolving fruit and smoky flavors.

We exited by way of the wine shop that, at a quick glance, offered the entire spectrum of Torres products (which includes dessert wines, rosés, and brandies). We settled on purchasing a waiter's corkscrew as a souvenir (for a wine-geek can never have too many). As the backdrop of the picturesque vineyard faded away, we reflected on what we had learned, and sat in envy of the winemaker's life, at least until we fell asleep.

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The Impact of Online Restaurant Review Sites

Emily Yew

Introduction

Technology is improving itself on a daily basis, smartphone sales continue to rise, and the Internet is continuously providing numerous pages of desired searches. We live in a generation dependent on what technology can offer us, and use it to our advantage. In the hospitality industry, word-of-mouth is the key to success for long-lived business. Prior to the heavy use of the Internet, and the invention of online review websites, we dined at a restaurant based on good word-of-mouth, memorable past experiences, or genuine curiosity. According to the *2011 Restaurant Industry Forecast* by the National Restaurant Association, one-fourth of adults are likely to select their dining destination based on the user submitted review websites (Restaurant, Food & Beverage Market Research Handbook, 2011, p. 212).

Online communities are expanding, without a predictable peak, and the power they are obtaining, through the heavy traffic of online users, has become intimidating to hospitality operators. With the aid of technology, apps for review websites such as the mighty *Yelp* and *Urbanspoon*, are readily available to smartphone users, for free (Bly, 2010). A user taking a walk at Central Park could easily take out his or her smartphone, open an app, and review all restaurants located nearby with their ratings.

Convenience is what modern society pursues, and that is exactly what these review websites are offering. There is a growing impact of online restaurant reviews on consumers and business operators. How precisely have these review websites changed the restaurant industry and the way consumers choose to dine? What are the consumer and operators' reactions to the constantly growing online review community? What is the level of fairness and consistency that lies in these reviews that could be posted by anyone on the web? With the rise of review websites, well-reviewed restaurants are gifted with free advertisement. Meanwhile, consumers are offered ostensibly truthful insights from other diners.

The scale seems to balance. Consumers benefit from finding a restaurant that meets their expectations, and operators benefit from free feedback; however, what happens when popular review websites abuse their power, and makes questionable profits from featured restaurants on their site? There are always pros and cons with every new invention, and online review websites are no exception. The restaurant industry, as mentioned before, relies heavily on word-of-mouth, and we can observe this through the tactics restaurants create in preparation for restaurant critic visits. *The New York Times*, a highly respected newspaper company, publishes weekly restaurant reviews. Restaurants in New York post Sam Sifton's picture, restaurant critic for *The Times*, so the staff can identify him and provide him their best service and food. Sam Sifton is obviously an educated and knowledgeable individual in his area of expertise; therefore we can safely say his reviews are reliable and accurate. Compare that with review websites where *anyone* can post his or her evaluation of a restaurant. Any guest that walks into the restaurant could write a positive or negative review, contributing to the restaurant's reputation online. How can restaurants trust every review and adapt to changes, if the user behind the review could be a competitor or a bitter ex-employee? Restaurants are often defenseless in these situations. Through this paper we will discuss and explore how online restaurant reviews have changed the restaurant industry, and how consumers have been affected too.

Development and Main Functions of Online Review Websites

The beginning of the new millennium also marked the debut of many now well-known and well-received restaurant review sites such as *Chowhound*, *Yelp*, *Urbanspoon*, and *Menupages* (Vyoung, 2008). Review websites have been proven to be useful and beneficial, indicated by the volume of their use by consumers. Twenty-five percent of adults agree that they would most likely use a review site to choose a restaurant (Restaurant, Food & Beverage Market Research Handbook, 2011, p. 212). Generally review sites are driven by loads of user-submitted reviews. On the more popular reviews sites, one can almost find any restaurant establishment and its reviews, as long as the location is covered by the review site. For example, a large majority of NYC restaurants can be found on *Yelp*. Typically review sites are free for use, and that precisely draws the public's interest. They are free and simultaneously helpful and convenient.

Before the launch of review websites, when a diner has a complaint, whether about the food, service, or ambience, their only solution is to speak directly to a restaurant associate or write on comment cards (Shilcutt, 2010). Most of us who have dined in franchise restaurants have been given comment cards that are tucked inside the checkbook. More often than not, after filling out a comment card we wonder, Will they even take my opinion seriously? Even when you speak to the manager of the restaurant, how would you know that they truly value your feedback? In addition, most guests keep complaints to themselves. Can you recall a time when you sat through an unsatisfying meal but did not

mention a word about it? The chicken was a little too dry, maybe the music was too loud, or the server was speaking to you as though you were asking them to do you a favor. But when a staff member asks you how the meal was, you replied that it was good. These are experiences that I have personally sat through and surely many other diners have too. By keeping our complaints under our breath, we are not helping restaurants to improve. Restaurant operators are struggling to understand guest preferences, to continue generating business. With this no-win situation, the creation of review websites seemed to become the solution to the problem.

What initiated the thought of creating review sites for the public? “Yelp was founded in 2004 to help people find great local businesses like dentists, hair stylists and mechanics” (Yelp, 2011). What do these sites see themselves as? “CHOW is a new kind of food media. Not only is our subject matter different—about the parties you really want to throw, the meals you really want to eat, the gear you really want to have...” (Chowhound, 2011). When do the founders expect consumers to use their sites and obtain from them? “MenuPages.com is simple: Before you go there, you come here. We'll help you find the restaurant that's got the food you're craving in the neighborhood (and price range) you want” (Menupages, 2011). Lastly, what public role do they see themselves playing? “Urbanspoon is the world's leading provider of time-critical dining data, a major division of a very important multi-national corporation, and an all-around BIG PLAYER in the multi-billion dollar restaurant information industry” (Urbanspoon, 2011).

The Advantages and Influences of Review Websites

There are a number of advantages review websites offer, but to counter these advantages are disadvantages. The influence of review sites is technically immeasurable, but as noted by Rubicon Consulting, the most influential elements to a buying are word of mouth and web reviews (Vuong, 2008); therefore, the increasing use of review sites can be daunting to business owners. Meanwhile, that they offer business operators the opportunity to improve based on the reviews. A restaurant loses business when a user reads a bad review and chooses not to dine there. The same applies for users, they have the advantage of researching if the restaurant they are interested in is good, but they are exposed to possibly only a few biased reviews. The bad reviews they read could be posted by a competitor of the restaurant. The restaurant could be in fact, very good. Not every restaurant has hundreds of reviews from which readers can collect the general opinion. Some local restaurants may only have a small handful. Could readers pass a fair judgment on the restaurant based on a couple of diner experiences?

With the standpoint of consumers, review sites' advantages far outweigh their disadvantages. Visiting a review site is free. Downloading an app for the review site is also free. The consumer is starting off with something free of cost.

Let us say the consumer is interested in a particular popular local joint but is unsure about the quality of food. With a few clicks and taps on the keyboard, his or she is facing pages of diner experiences. There are recommended dishes, recommended times to visit the restaurant, and drinks you should not order. Or, a site could have pages of reviewers warning others against visiting the restaurant because the fish was not fresh, or the price was totally unreasonable. In another scenario, the consumer may have no idea where he or she wants to bring a date. Simply typing “romantic spots” in the search bar will yield loads of restaurant suggestions. The process is remarkably smooth and convenient. Why would people not use it? Forty-six percent of adults from the ages 18 to 34 have trusted the web to dine at food establishments that they have never visited before (Frumkin, 2007, p.26).

Editorial Reviews Versus User-Submitted Reviews

The quality and structure of editorial reviews and user-submitted reviews is doubtlessly different. To become a professional food critic, you may have to go through culinary school, train in creative food writing, obtain experience in the food industry, or most importantly have a passion for food (LifeTips 2011). To submit a review online, you need to make an account. Coherent English sentences or not, the review could probably still be posted on the site. Generally speaking, the quality of the reviews written by a food critic and an online user is incomparable. Food critics prepare research, follow guidelines, and to the best of their ability provide the fairest judgments. Users have the freedom to ignore all of the above and write vulgar reviews. There are always two sides to a coin, however. Most major newspapers only have one primary food critic who writes a weekly restaurant review, therefore the reviews are limited. More often than not, food critics have the preference of visiting more upscale restaurants, rather than the small neighborhood restaurants. Food critics follow a strict guideline that confines them from writing about any restaurant. Nevertheless, user-submitted reviews are more digestible to casual online readers.

“Knowledge of food and wine should be a perquisite,” says Rita Jammet, co-owner of restaurant La Caravelle, “Reviewers should be food writers who understand food,” Drew Nieporent, president of Myraid Restaurant Group corresponds when sharing the beliefs of restaurant reviewing (Walkup, 2004, p.105). Business owners find it easier to accept the professional restaurant critic’s reviews than an average diner. Although owners or chefs may not always agree with the restaurant critics’ reviews, they have a form of respect for them. Restaurant critics have culinary education or immense dining experiences. Thus, they deserve their power to judge a restaurant. Restaurant critics have confidence in their writing. They know if a dish is prepared poorly or beautifully. It is difficult to expect this from online reviewers though. They could criticize the dish but have no reasonable explanation.

Percentage of Consumer Use of the Internet for Dining Explorations

A growing number of restaurants have websites now, whether they are fine-dining, casual, or fast food establishments. Over 70% of these different types of restaurants own a website (Restaurant, Food & Beverage Market Research Handbook, 2011, p. 212). In today's modern society, people are more than likely to rely on the internet for researching and exploring. Consumers want to be assured that they will dine somewhere promising. In today's economy, most of us cannot afford an unpleasant meal. It is not always convenient to ask our friends or family for their dining suggestions. Thus, the idea of using a review site becomes the resolution. In the following graphs display a 130 person survey result I collected, through it we learn that it is not possible to overlook the power of review sites anymore.

The abundance of information online attracted a heavy traffic of thirsty readers whose opinions are easily swayed by those of others. More than 50% of the survey-takers expressed that they have visited a review website. Meanwhile, more than half the people have questioned the reliability of the reviews. Despite this we still find that readers easily accept reviewers' comments. To prove this statement, an astonishing 71% claimed they did or did not visit a specific restaurant due to the reviews on the site. Although half the survey-takers have questioned the authenticity of online reviews, more than two thirds of them has ruled for or against a restaurant on the basis of reviews.

Consumers' Thoughts about Review Websites

Some individuals find a tool to be remarkably handy while others do not, and review websites do not escape the natural difference of opinions amongst people. "I would rather rely on a professional newspaper or magazine reviewer with broader terms of reference than an amateur..." claims Bray (p. 97). Or as my friend commented, "It's helpful but not always reliable." In a discussion online, commenter Brill Galt stated that seeing personal stories written from different perspectives allow him to "find the diamonds in the rough" (USAToday, 2011).

Reliability and Fairness of Reviews

Cornell Hospitality Quarterly printed a study that proved review sites "tend to be fair and reasonable" (Hospitality Ireland, 2010, p. 11). Generally speaking, most reviews are reliable to some degree. Although some may be dubious, in a broader sense, reviews posted on sites are from diners who genuinely want to share their experiences. We all have visited excellent

restaurants where we naturally rave about to our friends or relatives or ones that we want to rant about to everyone. With the new age of technology, we naturally feed our thoughts onto websites instead.

With that being said, there is a small pool of reviews that are questionable. Floating amid the other valid reviews, there are reviews that should not have been published on the website because of the inaccurate or biased information. The Restaurant Association uncovered a review on a restaurant where the user discussed menu items that have never been on the restaurant's menu (Egan, 2007, p. 19). This is not a rare occurrence, either. Bruno Serato, the owner of Serato's Northern Italian restaurant shares that an unknown user posted a handful of negative reviews on different review sites (Kooser, 2007, p. 13). The reviews were inaccurate, and similar to the before mentioned case, the menu items discussed were never on the menu. The likelihood of these inaccurate reviews being posted by ex-employees with grudges or competitors is undeniably high.

Some online review websites such as *Yelp* proclaim that reviews submitted on their website go through a filtering process, to prevent unfair reviews from being posted. *Yelp* uses automated filtering software, which aids with filtering questionable reviews. This firewall inhibits dubious reviews from influencing the business overall rating (*Yelp*). However, even *Yelp* admits that the filtering system is flawed, "The filter sometimes affects perfectly legitimate reviews and misses some fake ones" (*Yelp*).

Through an experiment, I registered for an account at *Yelp*, a quickly growing online review site that is immensely popular in New York. Through discussions, many friends express their favor of using this site for their restaurant searches. I used a fictitious name to register the account and an email account that I seldom use. I was easily granted an account and from there on I could pick and choose restaurants to review. I chose a restaurant I frequented in Chinatown, and wrote an honest review. The review was posted under the restaurant almost immediately. I could have easily been an ex-employee who hated my boss and decided to write a rude review.

There are instances in which we visit a restaurant based on numerous raves online but leave feeling disappointed and confused about why the restaurant would have such great likability amongst users. Omie Ismail shares an experience of visiting the top-rated sushi restaurant in his neighborhood, and commented, "There's no nice way to put this—we were seriously disappointed. (Ismail, 2010)" The authenticity of reviews comes into question. A small Japanese Ramen restaurant opened a few streets from my home and is co-owned by one of my friends. As of the present, they have four out of five stars on *Yelp*. The reviews are mixed. Some reviewers bash the Ramen dishes. Meanwhile, there was a handful that gave five stars and rave about how wonderful it is. Looking through the list of reviews, I notice a number of the positive reviews were posted by our mutual friends. I approached two friends who both posted five-star reviews for the restaurant on *Yelp*. One replied, "As a friend I feel obligated to write a review. I gave him the five stars because he's my friend. I

don't think it really deserved five stars" (C. Cheng, personal communication, November 20, 2011). While another said, "I wrote the review because my other friends were writing one too. He didn't really deserve five stars but the food wasn't bad" (K. Cheng, personal communication, November 20, 2011).

We can fairly conclude that online reviewers could easily manipulate readers with their biased passes at restaurants. Although a majority of reviews are written in truth, there are a number of deceiving reviews that escape the "filtering process" some review websites rely on.

The Price of Getting Positive Reviews

We would naturally come to the assumption that once a reader posts an honest negative review, it would stay on the website. That is not the case with *Yelp*. In 2010 a lawsuit was filed against *Yelp* for extortion (Ismail, 2010). If a business received a negative review, this sends an alert to *Yelp* sales associates, to negotiate a deal with the owners (Ismail, 2010). For \$300-\$1,000 a month *Yelp* offers to move the bad reviews down or erase them (Ismail, 2010). According to the plaintiffs, if they declined, then some positive reviews disappear and negative ones dominate (Ismail, 2010). On the *Yelp* website there is a section called "Myths about *Yelp*," and nearly every myth listed related to the rumors of their sales tactics on removing negative reviews for profit (*Yelp*). *Yelp* defends itself in all of these situations and denies the allegations. Writer Omie Ismail challenges this denial and says, "I haven't heard *Yelp* definitely say that salespeople cannot change the order of reviews or suppress them..." (Ismail, 2010).

A sales associate for the franchise Red Mango said that in hope of boosting sales and increasing exposure, the owner of the new location pays *Yelp* on a monthly basis of about \$300 to list their shop first under search results. She adds that their shop does not always come up first in the search engine because *Yelp* alternates the order as they have other paid advertisers (J. Kam, personal communication, November 27, 2011). Simply put, *Yelp* can change the order of how restaurants are listed when searched, and business owners are willing to pay to appear on the first page. Although this is a not a form of changing user reviews, it is directly influencing readers' decisions. Readers are more likely to click on restaurants on the first two pages as compared to the ones after.

Jeremy Stoppelman, the co-founder and CEO of *Yelp* wrote an article on October 26, 2011 titled "Case Dismissed. (Again)," expressing his satisfaction for winning another lawsuit. The lawsuit was filed against *Yelp* by small businesses who claimed the injustice of *Yelp* rewarding or punishing businesses for advertising or not advertising with *Yelp*. Jeremy Stoppelman dismisses all allegations in his article, as usual.

Business Operators' Thoughts about Review Websites

Review websites normally do not influence consumers that are visiting upscale restaurants; therefore, upscale restaurants do not face the same impact from these sites (Frumkin, 2007, p. 39). Small business operators, though, are left “feeling frustrated and voiceless” (New York Times). In communities such as San Francisco, where *Yelp* began, this review site is noticeably impactful (New York Times). Meanwhile, that some business owners are facing a hard time adapting to the growing power of review sites, some are benefiting from it by creating accounts at review sites themselves. Some review sites such as TripAdvisor and *Yelp* allow business owners to open an account and market directly to their reviews. This has allowed owners to communicate with the reviewers and offer their explanation.

According to Eddie Ip, Assistant Manager of Asian Jewels Restaurant in Flushing, New York, comments through an interview that he frequently uses *UrbanSpoon*, *Yelp*, *CitySearch*, and other review sites to read reviews. He finds the websites helpful and improves his restaurant based on the suggestions posted. “I read my competitors reviews too and compare them with ours, then printed the reviews out and discussed them with the owner. It’s good to have feedback but sometimes there are reviews that are inaccurate and it’s frustrating because it hurts our reputation” (E. Ip, personal communication, October 23, 2011). This could be the case for many other business operators who visit the sites, improve based on reviews, but are often forced to accept deceitful reviews too.

Conclusion

The conflicting advantages and disadvantages to consumers and business operators online restaurant reviews pose has become a major issue in the hospitality industry. Gradually old traditions are slipping away as the new age of technology captures the general interest. Word-of-mouth has transformed into e-word-of-mouth. Asking our friends or family for dining ideas is no longer the first option, as major sites such as *Yelp*, *Chowhound*, and *UrbanSpoon* are only a few clicks from initiating. Preference for review sites rise with readers who are hungry for new information and dining choices.

Over-reliance on review sites may not, however, be healthy, as small percentages of reviews are proven to be questionable. To adapt to the new surge of online review readers, restaurant operators are forced to yield to review sites. What is happening behind the curtains with business owners and review sites is slowly leaking out to the public. The trustworthiness of review sites is now often dubious, but the general population continues to use them as primary sources for searching restaurants.

Ultimately, data shows that online reviews are generally positive and honest (World News, 2010). Through this research, I have become more aware of the accuracy of review sites, which also increased my use of it. I recently relied

on *Yelp* to find a promising restaurant to dine at with my friends. I chose one of the top-rated Korean barbeque restaurants, and hoped the experience would be as promised by the reviewers. I ordered two dishes many reviewers highly recommended, and they were as delicious as described. Over the course of the dinner I heard myself saying, "Thanks to *Yelp*, I found this restaurant."

Generally speaking, review sites are beneficial and helpful to the average diner, in spite of some drawbacks. In the long run, they will continue to receive attention from consumers. It is difficult to say if review sites ultimately assist or hinder business owners, but we see that they are beginning to collaborate through advertising for one another. Despite the frustration of some business owners, review sites and restaurants can coexist. We cannot expect anything to function perfectly. Thus, we can only accept the flaws of this tool that allows us to find restaurants at ease.

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Voices in the Kitchen: Making the Human Connection Through Food

Aaron Monteabaro

I wasn't always so concerned with or enraptured by food. In fact, I distinctly remember taking a bowl of one of my mother's dishes, a frightening concoction of rice and cheese that would make even the dog think twice before consuming it—Though I actually remember liking it, I gave in to the peer pressure of my brothers and loathed it—and flushing it down the toilet. Perhaps that was some form of 6-year-old protest. I'll probably never know.

This wasn't particularly surprising, seeing as how my mother, regardless of her best efforts and good intentions, had a tendency to churn out near-abominable meals. One particularly devastating failure, that, to my regret as an adult, nobody in my family ever let her forget, was a meatball and rice dish swimming in some red sauce. Who knew that it was possible to overcook meatballs and undercook rice while simultaneously thinning a tomato sauce to the point of watered-down V8 juice. But then again, after working, raising three children, and putting up with my father, it's amazing she was able to feed us a hot meal at all.

That isn't to say that she had no talent in the kitchen, just that she was limited in what she could execute successfully. Indeed when she made a casserole, or any dish that appeared to be casserole-like, it was usually fantastic, bursting with flavors that would make even the fussiest chef need to re-evaluate the gastronomic quality of this generally looked-down-upon melange. Notable here is what she called enchilada pie; layers of flour tortillas, ground beef, enchilada sauce (usually red), cheese and olives, were cooked to a pie-like consistency; not too chewy, not too crunchy; not too salty, not too greasy. Fantastic, and easy, though somehow I never put in the effort to make it myself. I suppose there's a fussy part of me as well that thinks somehow that casseroles are

culinarily inferior; something down inside that says, “If you’re going to take the time to cook, it might as well be something more presentable than *that*.”

So as not to deny my mother credit where it is due, her tuna casserole was by far my favorite, a dish that I’ve since remade countless times and one that is always pleasing. Again, this dish was nothing of five-star credentials, but I’d take a heaping bowl of it doused, as I like it, in Tony Chachere’s Original Creole Seasoning (imitations are not acceptable) over some highfalutin, \$50-a-plate entrée (proceeds going directly to the ambiance of the owner’s apartment) any day. And her chili was the work of the gods, though certainly there is much room for argument there. Chili is, after all, like meatloaf: if you mother made it, she did it better than anyone else. (Oh, by the way, my mother’s meatloaf really *is* the best.)

My father, on the other hand, was actually a very good cook, when you could get him in the kitchen. I distinctly remember two specialties. The first was his red beans and rice, made with spicy sausage and mixed with a sauce of near-paste thickness that added no moisture but coated each fluffy little grain with an intense, creole flavor. I’ve since then begged him for a recipe, or at the very least a guideline, so that I might possibly recreate the flavor and, perhaps more important, the aroma. It wouldn’t take long for my tiny New York apartment to drown in that wonderful spicy sausage scent (Glade should really make it into a candle), and soon after my neighbors would be knocking down the door trying to either eat it up or make it stop. It’ll be a good day when I leave my house with every article of clothing smelling strongly of a smoky, salty Cajun kitchen.

Unfortunately, my dad isn’t a recipe kind of cook; he relies entirely on the acuteness of nose and tongue. The next time I go for a visit, I plan on prodding him until I get at least a morsel of his methods, something at least to get me started. In the end, it’ll be a good way for me to make sure his legacy lives on.

And the other dish, which has now achieved a legendary status to at least everyone I’m in contact with during the season, is corned beef and cabbage. While I’ve never actually gotten anything resembling a recipe for this one either, I have developed a stand-in version of my own. The tribute, in this case, is more in theory than in practice.

The recipe came from an old boss at a local butcher shop in Littleton, Colorado, called Tony’s. Even though I, like my father before me, only make it once a year (yes, the same time as everyone else, St. Patrick’s Day), I look forward to it for months, incessantly telling everyone within earshot of me of how I’m going to do it, what I’m going to do differently, how much I’m going to make; saying things like, “Man I wish I had time to brine my own brisket” and “Hey, do you want me to bring you a little ’cause I’ll never be able to eat all that?”

This is an odd combination of dishes, I know, especially when you consider that my father was only slightly creole at best and as far as I know not Irish at all. Of course, by those guidelines my mother would be related to Betty Crocker or the Hamburger Helper character.

I suppose I wasn't that different than most children, eating what I liked without giving it much thought, and raising hell when I went face to face with my arch-nemesis, onions. It seems more that I was never prompted to think of food as anything more than sustenance, and my parents had neither the time nor inclination to push me in that direction. In contrast, though, we did have a proposed time for at-the-table family dinner when I was young, a time that I believe contributed largely to the creation of my idea of manners both at and away from the table.

Everything is different now. The axis of my food world has shifted in a way that I could never have seen coming. I was literally swept off my feet. It all started with my now ex-partner, Mo.

It may be true that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. If so, I was an easy target for Mo, who had an already well developed passion for good, simple food – not so much of the culinary arts fashion, but the kind of food that's pleasing to the soul simply because it tastes, smells, and looks good; it was the kind of food you feed your children, and that makes their friends want to come over repeatedly for dinner.

The first time I met him, he sent me home with a goodie-bag of frozen entrees that he prepared the night before. These two unassuming dishes, enchiladas and stuffed bell peppers, changed my life.

Sound a little overly dramatic? Perhaps, but no single event has been more instrumental in shaping who I am today. Before then, I never knew that eating could be a spiritual experience, one in which the act is as satisfying to your soul as it is to your stomach.

Mo's enchiladas were a hand-me-down recipe from his mother, Betty Jean. We took a stew of meat, chiles, onions, garlic, and cumin, and simmered until it was so thick a spoon could disappear into the pot. Then we gently fried corn tortillas in a shallow dish of oil just to soften them a bit before piling the mixture on one, topping it with cheese, onions, and another tortilla, followed by more cheese and onions. A quick sauna in a hot oven, to melt and brown the cheese, ensued while we prepared the final accoutrement, a fried egg complete with runny yoke draped over the top like a handmade quilt. To say the combination was divine would be a gross understatement. To say it was healthy would be a lie.

Aside from the incredible flavor, the experience is what hit me in the gut. I realized that food involved *preparation*, the act of actually putting it together, and when I contributed to the final product, it tasted all that much better. It wasn't long before we began shopping for food and entire worlds of possibilities became apparent.

It was at that point I knew I'd fallen in love. Still to this day, the thought of trying a new dish or exploring a new culture through their food systems is enough to keep me awake at night with anxious excitement. It was as if someone had opened the door to the universe, and a limitless buffet sat before me, one that encompassed history, culture, innovation, inspiration, expression, emotion, and, most important, people.

Little did I know at that point that my father was actually quite the gastronomist. My mother and I had little difficulty, if any, in bonding. We were best friends, and we never needed anything to buffer our relationship. My father and I, however, were quite different, and escaping his grasp had long been one of my childhood goals. In retrospect, I know it was wrong to run from him. I never gave him a chance to get to know me, and I never attempted to get to know him. He was simply the voice of authority, something children often want to disobey.

But now the stage had been set for a proper reunion. After experiencing the joy of cooking firsthand, I had begun a new career as a food enthusiast. I got a job, much to my amazement and exuberance, at a local specialty foods store in Colorado. I was in the produce department, and I loved every minute of it. There is a certain atmosphere that food establishments foster that is just not found in other work settings. And I got to eat fresh vegetables all day long.

It wasn't long before I became enraptured with the meat department, fascinated with the process of going from whole cow or pig to that delicious looking steak on my plate. It sounds a bit cliché now, but before I'd ever heard the phrase, I wanted to know how my meat went from farm to table. So I worked my way that direction, starting out low and eventually ending up as an apprentice butcher. At this point I've had just about every kind of meat-related experience I can think of, but to be sure, just when I think I've seen it all, someone comes along and surprises me.

One Christmas, I decided I wanted to get my father something special. Food was my passion, and as I had learned through the much more open communication that comes with age, it was his as well. My plan was simple: I would pack a few good steaks and a whole lamb rib section in my car and drive it up to Wyoming where he lived, delivering the steak as a gift and cooking the lamb while I stayed there.

I still remember that windy, chilly afternoon in Wyoming. After slathering a light garlic and chive yogurt sauce on the meat, I cooked it on a smoker outside that could have doubled as a grill. It was no easy task, considering that the most important variable, the temperature, was in constant danger of wild fluctuation. Remarkably, the lamb came out magnificently. (I generally think of the lamb as having done the *real* work.) It was the first time I'd taken care to actually prepare, produce, and serve a main course in my entire life, and my father's joy was unrestrained. To counter, he roasted a butternut squash with pecans and brown sugar. My father, his new wife, and I ate the meal amidst the holiday calm at the very table we sat around when I was a child.

We bonded, and for a moment it was as if all previous tensions had disappeared. I can still count the number of heart-to-heart moments I've had with that man on one hand, and still have fingers to spare, but this was undoubtedly the most enjoyable for both of us. Food had repaired an otherwise worn out and tired family relationship.

Since the time food captured my attention, I have relied on it to express sentiments for which I can often not find words, as in the case with my father. And I happily use it today as a beacon to guide me through challenging or dark

times. It is the one area that has never let me down, never led me astray, never turned me away.

Just the other day, I was exhausted and a bit overwhelmed. I walked an extra few blocks just to pick up a burrito at my favorite spot on 45th Street, but it was closed. Wandering around aimlessly, I saw little else worth noting. Chipotle was there (in fact, I'd passed three on my way home), but I find their overly uniform flavors and foods to be disconcerting, and I'd much rather have my money support a local business. Then I remembered a small Hispanic chicken and rib place just down the street from my apartment. I'd always wanted to try it, but had yet to do so; it was the kind of place that could be passed without so much as a second glance. I decided it was time, and thanks to the crispy chicken skin, the fluffy rice, and the sweet, little woman behind the counter, that turned out to be one of the best nights I'd had in a long time.

How Live Sound Systems Work

Jesse Barnes

Imagine you're sitting in a beautiful Broadway theatre watching a thoroughly entertaining musical with vibrant lighting and pristine sound. What would happen if you took away the speakers and microphones and could only hear the sound coming from the stage more than 50 yards away? The show would lose much of its excitement. Most of the music would not be heard at all. You would have a lot of trouble understanding what was happening in the scene.

So how does the sound get from the actors and musicians on the stage to every corner of the theater in a way that is both intelligible and exciting? This may seem like a simple process, but it is very complex. Hundreds of sound waves are being manipulated in countless ways before they reach your ears.

Theater sound systems are designed to go unnoticed by the audience, but if something went wrong with the sound the entire performance would be ruined for most viewers. Because of this challenge, and the inherent physical limitations of sound waves, sound systems demand a high degree of skill from designers. Using tools and techniques like speaker positioning, digital signal processing, microphone placement, and sound measuring devices, a designer ensures that every seat in the house is receiving the sound from the stage as naturally as possible.

Before describing all of these technical concepts and how they are used I will begin by explaining the path that sound takes after it leaves the stage and before it reaches your ears.

An audio signal is a sound wave that has been converted to an electrical voltage by what is called a transducer. A typical sound system has two types of transducers: the microphone and the speaker. Microphones receive the physical pressure fluctuations of a sound wave and, using a sensitive electrical diaphragm, convert these vibrations into positive and negative voltages. This electrical current flows through copper wire to some processing equipment (typically a mixing console) where it is amplified and manipulated in various ways. The signal then travels along another wire to a power amplifier, where the voltage is increased enough so that it can drive magnetic coils inside a speaker. These

magnets then cause the cone of the speaker to move back and forth, to convert the electrical signal back to physical pressure—another form of transduction. The result is an amplified version of the sound wave that was picked up by the microphone.

You can trace this signal path through your home stereo. Substitute the microphone for a turntable needle and the processing equipment and amplifier for the receiver. The signal passes through copper wire to a pair of speakers. The only differences between this simple home setup and a Broadway show or touring rock-and-roll concert are the number of microphones, the number of speakers, and the amount of processing equipment.

The sound industry has more competing suppliers and manufacturers than any other entertainment technology field. With hundreds of microphone, speaker, processor, and amplifier types available, each suited to a particular use, sound system designers have to decide what equipment will be suitable for the show that they are designing. After the initial assessment of the event and the venue, they may begin by determining what microphones will be needed.

Since the microphone is the first piece of sound equipment in the signal path, it is often considered the most important. Technicians in the sound field have a popular adage: “Garbage in, garbage out.” A poor representation of the sound source from the microphone will normally result in poor sound delivered by the speakers.

There are three important specifications to consider when choosing a microphone: its pick-up pattern, its frequency response curve, and its sensitivity.

The pick-up pattern is the direction in which the mic will “hear” sound. There are three types of pick-up patterns: cardioid, or heart-shaped; omnidirectional; and figure-8 or bi-directional.

A cardioid microphone will have a zone of cancellation behind the microphone, so it will pick up sound best directly in front. This is the most common type of microphone used in live music, because it attenuates most of the sound that is not coming directly from the sound source. Almost every vocal microphone on the market has a cardioid pick-up pattern.

Just as it sounds, the omnidirectional microphone will pick up sound in a 360° field. With many different designs, these mics can be used for a variety of applications. An area or zone microphone can be placed on any flat surface to pick up sounds in the immediate vicinity. Often used in theatre when there are many actors on stage, it can eliminate the need to “mic-up” each individual performer. The lavalier or wearable microphone uses an omnidirectional pattern to amplify individual voices on stage. Because of its size and shape, the lavalier can be hidden in an actor’s costume, hair or make-up.

The figure 8 or bi-directional microphone will pick up sound directly in front or behind, but attenuate sound coming from either side. Live sound engineers and designers rarely have applications for this pattern. In recording studios it can be used when two singers want to sing into one microphone at the same time. They can face each other and sing into opposite sides of the same mic.

Microphones are usually designed with a specific frequency range in mind. Some are best for picking up the lower range of the audible spectrum and are used to amplify the sound of a kick-drum, bass guitar or some other low-range instrument. Other mics are tailored for vocals, and may have a slight increase in amplitude in the frequency range of the human voice. Most microphone manufacturers will illustrate this information with a graph known as a frequency response curve, which can be downloaded as part of a specification sheet from the company's website. Sound designers and engineers usually have an arsenal of microphones that they know will work well for specific instruments or vocal ranges.

A microphone's sensitivity is defined as the way it responds to fluctuations in volume level. An extremely sensitive microphone is not well suited for amplifying a very loud sound such as a trumpet; however, for some soft-spoken actors it can be very helpful.

You may now begin to understand how complicated the process of sound system design and implementation can be, but I have only scratched the surface. I have covered the first link in the signal flow chain, the microphone. Now I will jump to the end. As with microphones, speakers have a wide range of styles, which the designer must choose based on what the physical space requires.

When a designer is hired to install a sound system in a venue the first thing he or she must consider is the architectural and acoustical features of the space. How large is the room? How deep? How tall? Are there balconies? The goal of the design must be to deliver equally clear sound to every seat in the house. This is rarely easy. A large theatre can require hundreds of speakers. There may be obstacles like pillars, balconies, or walls. The sound designer may have to work around scenic elements, since the sound system is usually installed after all of the scenery has been built.

The physics of sound waves must also be taken into consideration. Sound is cumbersome and slow, traveling at 1160 feet per second. As it hits a surface it will bounce off in every direction. A system designer spends days taking measurements and making calculations before he or she can even begin choosing speakers for installation.

Speakers, like microphones, are designed for different functions. Sub-woofers, which deliver low-end frequencies, are the largest and heaviest speakers. Mid-range and high frequency speakers are often built into one box called a 2-way, or 3-way speaker enclosure. Speakers can be self-powered or amplifier driven. Self-powered speakers have amplifiers built in while non-powered speakers require a separate amplifier to drive them. Amplifiers, as explained in the signal flow section of this article, boost an audio signal to a high enough voltage to "drive" the speaker. Driving the speaker means giving the magnet inside enough power to make the cone of the speaker move back and forth, which reproduces the audio signal so that it can be heard.

Two types of speakers are most often used for live entertainment: the point-source and the line-array. A point-source speaker has a wide dispersion angle and is meant to stand alone or as part of a cluster of two or three speaker

enclosures. A line-array speaker has a very narrow dispersion angle and can be combined with many other speakers, to form an array and cover a large vertical area. Line-arrays are needed in venues with tall ceilings and multiple balcony levels.

In large theaters speakers may be required to fill in areas that the main speakers are unable to cover. These are usually patterned in concentric rings with the front-center edge of the stage as the center point. Since each of these rings of speakers needs to deliver the sound from stage at a slightly later time, they are called delay rings. If all of the delay rings played back sound at the same time the people in the back of the house would hear the speakers closest to them first. Sound from speakers farther away would arrive later and would be heard as an echo. For this reason a designer has to calculate the length of time necessary to delay each ring of speakers so that the sound arrives at the listeners' ears at the same time as the speakers over the stage.

I'm sure your mind must be swimming now. Delay is one type of processing that can be done to the audio signal before it reaches the ears of the listener. The next section will cover more processing and how it can be used in a live sound system.

To a layman the processing step in a sound system may seem like the most complicated. The equipment is often large and has many knobs, faders, touch-screens and buttons. All of these processors are made to control only a few parameters of an audio signal: gain or volume level, time, routing, and polarity. For the purposes of this article I will not explain polarity. It is a complex concept, which involves manipulating the positive and negative voltages of the electrical audio signal.

The most important piece of equipment for processing a signal in a sound system is the mixing console, or mixing desk. In many modern sound systems all of the processing is done inside this one unit. The digital sound console can replace a large amount of equipment that was necessary to include in a sound system when analog technology was the only kind available. The basic difference between analog and digital processing equipment is that in digital gear the electrical signal coming from the microphone is converted to digital information that can be manipulated in countless ways by computers before it is converted back to an electrical voltage to drive the speakers. The computers inside digital equipment do the majority of the processing work in a modern system.

Inside the mixing console the first sound parameter that can be controlled is gain. The term "gain" is usually used instead of "volume," because the signal is already at a certain level when it reaches the mixing console from the microphone. Mixing engineers add or subtract gain to set a level that can easily mix with the other audio signals coming into the console. This balancing of gain between all of the audio signals is the mix engineer's primary responsibility.

Equalization of the signal is achieved using gain levels. By filtering out or increasing the gain of certain frequencies in the signal the engineer can dramatically alter the sound. Gain is also used to separate sounds across the stereo field. By increasing the level to the left or right speakers, the engineer can

make it seem like a sound is coming from that side of the stage. This process is called panning.

Another way to control gain is by using a compressor, which sets a volume limit, called a threshold, above which sound will be attenuated. Compressors are used when a singer or instrumentalist has tremendous dynamic range. If they suddenly get very loud the compressor can balance out the sound with the rest of the performance.

Delay, as explained earlier, can be used to align a system by making sure all of the sound arrives in a location at the same time. Sound engineers also use time manipulation to create different effects. The term delay can be used to describe an echo effect, often added to the voice for a more dramatic sound. Reverberation is the natural effect created by a sound bouncing off of many surfaces in a space. When simulated digitally by modern processing equipment, reverb can make a voice sound more natural and is often necessary in small rooms when the engineer wants to create the feeling of a larger space.

When a sound system has many speakers in different locations, an engineer or system designer may not want every sound source to go to every speaker location. For example, if the engineer has a loud band with blaring horns he or she may not need to put the horns in the speakers directly in front of the stage. This is where routing comes in. It is a way of steering the sound signals where you want them to go, not just to the various speakers, but also to effects, equalizers, compressors, or other processors either inside the mixing console or through another cable to a different unit.

So now you can begin to understand what the mixing engineer is doing with all of those knobs and faders. As a mixing engineer myself I often feel like some audience members think there is just a large volume knob that can be turned up or down to control the sound. If only it were that simple. Hopefully this article will give its readers a better understanding of how complicated this business can be. Working in the field of live sound is a life-long learning experience.

“A New Architecture to Take Us Out of the Sterility of the Past...”¹

Richard Miller

After the end of the first Great War came a drastic shift in Western thought, and as a result, Western art as well. Ideologies began to lose their bombastic nature and instead sought to capture a more humanistic essence. No longer did the gods control our lives (the Existentialists); no longer did a narrative follow an associative path from point A to point B (the literary technique Stream of Consciousness); no longer was a building an empty shell with pretty ornamentation (the International/Modernist Style). Western architecture owes a great deal to its Classical forbearers—The extent of which is quite obvious in almost any public, government and not a few private edifices—but the modern age demands an architecture more attuned to its time. While still remembering techniques taught in the days of yore, while not shunning the work of the master builders of the past, can an architectonic style be created to suit the needs of today? In the years after the First World War, and unfortunately to this day, the answer has been “Yes” and “No.”

Look around the country and note each public or government edifice you see, and virtually each one of them can be classified as Classicist. For centuries after the European Renaissance, Western architecture has focused on recreating the “glory days” of the past. Any building that was meant to communicate a symbol of strength, stability, or solitude took its cue from the Parthenon and other temples from the ancient Greeks. With the advent of more sophisticated construction techniques, structural members such as columns became merely architectonic ornamentation, becoming both false and devoid of meaning. Public works began to be egregious shows of hollow monuments wrapped in ostentatious decoration. Just look at McKim, Meade & White, a firm that became known simply for its Classicist style, and not for any advancement in architectural theory or practice. While occasionally a meaningful piece of work

¹ Cesar Daly, *Revue Generale de l'architecture*, 1849, p. 26.

would be produced, most often spaces “supported” by decorated columns and pediments all clad in marble were the result. This was a firm that gave the people (the modern day aristocracy, who unfortunately determined the course of architectural style up to this day) what they wanted.

This nostalgia (or would it be more appropriate to say overzealous veneration?) for the past has also affected the residential field of architecture. One has to look no further than the numerous mansions and high-end residences of the contemporary period. For these, ornate crown and base mouldings are used, not to cover joints, but to display wealth. Decorative pilasters are not structural support, but are invocations of Italian Palazzos. The theory of proportion, which so came to define Classical architecture, became lost in a need to have the grandest-looking residence. The use of these elements morphed from a union between aesthetics and engineering (a truly beautiful union indeed for its time), to an avaricious compulsion. One need look no further than Ayn Rand’s novel *The Fountainhead* to see the apotheosis of hollow Classicism.

After the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the common practice of steel frame construction, new engineering and architectural feats could be achieved. Interior spaces could be opened up due to the structural steel grid, giving more freedom to manipulate space—the realm of the true architect; however, with this new technique came little change in architectonic features. The overzealous—and often unnecessary—use of the Classical column has continued to this day. If this element were to be used for its traditional, intended purpose, then there would at least be a hint of truth behind its use; however, for the most part this is a purely decorative element, as the edifice is supported by a structural grid. At the same time, the use of steel frame construction allowed architects to design almost without limitations in height. Yet, for quite some time buildings were limited in height to what was typical of the day. It was not until the 1930’s and the advent of the “second” Chicago School that skyscrapers became commonplace in major cosmopolitan areas. But even the “first” Chicago School was not free from the Classical influence. For many buildings in the Chicago style, the building itself was an ode to the past. The Chicago Building is a remarkable example of the Classical influence. The first few floors are reminiscent of the base of a Classical column. As it rises, the intermediate floors become the shaft, and the ornate top becomes the capital. Even in more contemporary times (the 1970’s), skyscrapers could not avoid the reaches of the Classical school. Using the former AT&T Building (now Sony Tower) as an example, the homage to the Classical column is again prevalent; however, unlike the Chicago Building, the AT&T Building’s top (an open pediment) is a blatant recollection of the past.

Along with the newly utilized engineering feats of the 1920’s and 1930’s came a new school of thought that revolutionized (albeit much later) architectural practice. The International Style (later the Modernist movement) came to “ban” everything that the Beaux Arts schools came to epitomize. Instead of using heavy ornamentation to justify a building, the Modernists followed a doctrine of “form follows function,” whereby *how* a space is used determines *what* the space will

ultimately look like. Later, this school also came to adopt a “less is more” approach, wherein architectural ornamentation was virtually banished. As would be expected from such a radical ideology, it was not well received in the United States until the Modernist boom in the post-World War II era.

Unlike the traditional Beaux Arts schools, the modernist movement sought to separate completely from the past and create an architecture for the present. One way that this was done was to place an emphasis on the structural aspect of a building (in a way, this can still be reminiscent of the Classical schools). The steel frame was often accented in a building to provide a sort of discourse between passers-by and the building proper.

In an effort to bridge the gap between the Modernist philosophy and the Beaux Arts doctrine, a sort of hybrid style was formed in the years leading up to the end of the Second World War. Like Modernism, Art Deco found inspiration in the purity of geometric shapes. Still, in order to appease the masses, hints (some more overt than others) of Beaux Arts influence were introduced to produce a highly distinct (if not confusing) style. One has to look no further than Manhattan’s Chrysler Building to see the dichotomy of Art Deco. The rectilinear profile of the main shaft of the building falls in to the geometrical influence of the Modernist movement. However, towards the top, ornamentation begins to take over and indeed become the focus of the structure. Four gargoyles are placed at each corner, and the top is a “crown” with the sunburst motif typical of Art Deco.

After the Modernist movement had its run in the United States, from the end of the War up until the 1970’s, the Post-Modernists—in what seems to be the architectural tradition of America—began to reject the tenets of Modernism, and sought once again to pay homage to the past. Again the creed was modern form, classical ornament—hollow theory. Each time an attempt has been made to recreate or mimic the past, (for many of the Post-Modernist, and even the Beaux Arts, projects are nothing more than copies of a glorified age), an architectural blunder is committed (AT&T Building) with few exceptions. The Chrysler Building’s theory was executed in such a way as to be a well-liked structure to this day. What seems to be obvious, is that the pivotal question, “While still remembering techniques taught in the days of yore, while not shunning the work of the master builders of the past, can an architectonic style be created to suit the needs of today?” is still largely unanswered. One thing we can be sure of though—the past will not go away quietly.

Though Art Deco managed to bridge the gap between the orderly Beaux Arts phase and the radical Modernist phase, what still should be brought to attention is something that is rather disturbing. Despite producing world-renowned architects and designs, the United States has failed in producing a distinct “American” style (the sole exclusion to this would be Frank Lloyd Wright’s “Prairie School”). This failure to innovate is directly related to an equally disturbing psychosis in America: the reluctance to acknowledge our own period in history. What then becomes obvious is that unless we get over this

“fear” of the future, neither a distinctly “American” style, nor a truly reflective style of our times, can develop.

*My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!*

Don't Be a Fool, School is Cool!

Deirdre Stokes

“We Real Cool”, a poem written by Gwendolyn Brooks, depicts a day in the life of seven young men, who drop out of school and spend their time “drinking gin, singing sin, and lurking late.” In eight short lines Ms. Brooks examines the fate of these young men and how their lives are affected by their carefree lifestyle. At certain moments in the poem, one senses the freedom these young men experience as they abandon the rules of society and make their own. It isn't until the last line, “We die soon,” that we understand how hopeless and lost these young men really are. It is at this moment that the poem takes on a tone of sadness and despair, as we realize they are not free but prisoners of their own design. Although they may have temporarily escaped the drudgery and boredom of a conventional society, they have also robbed themselves of the opportunity for a meaningful existence. Being undereducated, unmotivated and uninspired leaves these troubled young men with limited possibilities and a strong likelihood of dying young.

Although this poem was written in 1960, the ill-fated future of young men who drop out of school and spend their days unproductively remains the same. This poem begs the reader not only to empathize with these seven young men but also to develop a desire to reach out and help other young men just like them. This paper will examine a crucially important method of saving lost young men, discussed in three *New York Times* articles written from 2000-2001: “Reading, Writing and Rehabilitation,” by Juan Forero; “Inmate Education is Found to Lower Risk of New Arrest,” by Tamar Lewin; and “Bringing College Back to Bedford Hills,” by Robert Worth. I will also interview Mr. Maurice Lacey, M.S.W., M.S. Ed., who is the Executive Director of Faith Mission Crisis Center, an Adjunct Professor at Hunter College School of Social Work, and an advocate for prison education.

In his article Juan Forero relays the importance of reaching school-age inmates who have previously been ignored and forgotten in correctional facilities. Studies indicate that high school dropouts are at a higher risk for poverty, criminal activity, and shortened lives. In 1996, the Legal Aid Society

filed a lawsuit to expand educational services on Rikers Island, New York City's central jail complex, which resulted in the Board of Education initiating a variety of programs. In 1998, a Federal Judge ruled that a plan be initiated to offer classes to all eligible inmates, since teenage inmates not in general population seemed to be the ones most ignored. While at Rikers, he interviews three school-age men who were facing major charges and are also recovering from gunshot wounds and /or serious illnesses. Previously, these populations of inmates, which include violent offenders, inmates suffering from HIV/AIDS, and inmates segregated for safety issues, have been excluded from participating. These men became eligible to participate, and were typically grateful for the experience. One young inmate, Derrick Johnson, shared with Mr. Forero that school was not easy because he often had to study under very challenging circumstances. Later, Mr. Johnson, who studied for six months and passed his high school equivalency test, contacted his teachers and admitted, "It was the best experience I ever had." Mr. Forero also included feedback from experts such as Barbara Woodhouse, a University of Pennsylvania law professor, co-director for the Center for Children's Policy, Practice and Research, who is often widely considered a prison education expert. Ms. Woodhouse believes that education in the prison system is necessary and crucial. Ms. Woodhouse states, "It is impossible to overstate the importance of education to young people who have gotten in trouble with the law. Acquiring their high school degree can mean the difference between returning to society and playing a positive role as a citizen or becoming a career criminal." Many people share her sentiment, most notably the teachers at Rikers Island Horizon School. Ms. Dolores Edwards Sullivan is a beloved teacher and a staunch advocate for prison education. She is confident and encouraged that, given the right opportunity; these student inmates can learn and ultimately pursue higher education.

In this article, Mr. Forero also reveals that there are financial, political and logistical problems regarding prison education. For instance, because Rikers Island's four high schools cost \$11.7 million annually, they are not politically popular, and therefore, parents of children who are not incarcerated are concerned that these revenues could be allocated to public education. In addition, the prison staff at Rikers Island have their own concerns, since prison is primarily about security, not education. For example, because of various security issues, classes are routinely cancelled and student inmates must remain in their cells in order to maintain safety and security

Robert Worth's article, "Bringing College Back to Bedford Hills" is an in depth piece that explores the educational program at this all-women facility. Mr. Worth states simply, "The Bedford program emerged from what most inmates see as a terrible injustice: the collapse of government support for prison education." In 1996, inmates all over the country lost federal and state funding for educational programs. Congress succumbed to pressure from its constituents to reduce amenities in prisons and cease funding higher education. It was a decision that left the female inmate population at Bedford Hills devastated. Eighteen months later, after seven inmates met with Superintendent Elaine Lord

and prison volunteer Theodora Jackson; a higher education program was restored to Bedford Hills. A great deal of the success of this program can be attributed to the collaborative efforts of these seven inmates, presidents from a dozen colleges, and celebrity support. When this article was printed in May 2000, the annual budget was \$480,000; however, most of the inmates believe that it was Ms. Lord's unrelenting support and dedication that made their program possible. Ms. Lord believes, "[I]n order for people to understand why have college at prison, you need to focus on children." The mother-child relationship is a great motivator for rehabilitation, and educating prison mothers may go a long way in preventing children from becoming future prisoners.

To truly appreciate the necessity for higher education in prison, however, one must look to the inmate. As Worth explains, studies indicate, "Only 7.7 percent of the inmates who attended college while at Bedford ended up in prison again, compared with 29.9 percent of those who did not. There was also no significant difference in race, ethnicity or crime committed between the two groups." Mr. Worth reports that other studies demonstrate that recidivism rates are down 30% as a result of G.E.D programs, and that number increases by 10-12% when bachelor degrees are attained. The women at Bedford Hills admit that acquiring an education is far from simple, since participating in an educational program does not preclude them from their other responsibilities. Also, a vast majority of women remanded to prison do not have high school diplomas and also have language barriers. Still, Worth says, these women are inspiring and have had a positive effect on the inmate population. One inmate states, "It makes you think about your actions—you don't want to blow school." This inmate, Vineice Walker, received her B.A at Bedford and later went on to pursue a Master's degree in English literature; moreover, there are former inmates who choose to continue their education after they are released from Bedford Hills. With the help of Ms. Rubenstein, the former director of the prison's college program, they are able to do so. At the College and Community Fellowship program at CUNY's Graduate Center, Ms. Rubenstein helps these women complete their degrees. As for the women who will spend many years or the rest of their lives in prison, the Bedford Hills program brings them hope. The women at Bedford Hills realize that furthering their education in no way changes the fact that they may have committed horrible crimes. Still, as inmate Rosalie Cutting stated it, "You can't undo what brought you here; however, there is an irony: I bloomed in a very dark place."

In Tamar Lewin's article, "Inmate Education Is Found To Lower Risk of New Arrest," the author includes an interview with Stephen J. Steurer, of the Correctional Education Association, who stressed cost-effectiveness. "We found that for every dollar you spend on education, you save two dollars by avoiding the cost of re-incarceration. Furthermore, according to a study for the Board of Education, inmates who participate in some form of education or vocational training are less likely to return to jail within three years after their release. Additionally, Nancy Grasnick, the Maryland Superintendent of Schools, believes that "a study like this is just going to strengthen, so much, the notion that it is in

society's best interest, both morally and financially, that these individuals get an education." Studies are now able to quantify the benefits society and the individual experience as a result of educating prisoners.

I had the distinct privilege to interview Mr. Maurice Lacey, and discuss his views on prison education. In addition to being the Executive Director of a crisis center in Queens, Mr. Lacey is also involved with several organizations engaged in prison reform, such as the Correctional Association, The Center for Nu Leadership and The Drug Policy Alliance. He is an unwavering proponent for prison education and believes that "prison education is the number one way to reverse the current trends in recidivism." He boasts that prisoners who receive a college education have a 95% success rate for not returning to prison, and in some cases, certain prisons have reported their success rate at 100%. Mr. Lacey also believes that prison education should be federally funded because it not only benefits the individual but society as a whole. Education increases the probability that prisoners will return to their communities as positive role models as opposed to thugs. Educated ex-offenders will be able to make a positive contribution as hard-working, tax-paying citizens, thus improving the economy. Funding previously allocated for prison costs can be used for housing, education and healthcare; moreover, since poverty often plays a factor in criminal behavior, education may prove to be a necessary weapon in our battle against crime.

Mr. Lacey thinks educational programs enable men and women to feel socially connected to the world beyond the cellblock. Many inmates have suggested that they feel disconnected and alienated. Education is a method that should be utilized to unify these individuals with their communities. Direct connection through education eliminates the need for engaging in further criminal activity. Studies have demonstrated that formerly incarcerated individuals who received higher education have made significant contributions in social work. "Their progress and success also serves as a beacon of hope for many men and women that remain in prison." Mr. Lacey believes that education, in and out of prison, is the key to endless possibilities.

The articles cited in this paper were highly supportive of prison education. The interviews with the inmates and other persons of interest were both thought-provoking and motivating. Mr. Lacey's dedication and attention to prison reform and education is, in a word, inspiring. He is a devoted clinician and educator, who has devoted his career to assisting individuals and families in crisis. I believe that when Ms. Brooks wrote "We Real Cool," she hoped that society would begin to recognize, acknowledge and hopefully assist the many young men like those seven at the "Golden Shovel." Imagine, if you will, your life without the benefit of education. Imagine the limitations, the possibilities lost, and imagine the terrible price of lost lives. It would be difficult for me to imagine a sudden end to education and learning. I suppose this may be how an inmate feels. It is one thing to imprison the body, but to imprison the mind is incomprehensible. To grow, we must learn. To change, we must be taught a different way of life. Prison education is a crucial component to rehabilitation.

Education strengthens society and the individual, and must be supported at all costs.

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The True Meaning of 7: The Loss of Perfection that Leads to Inspiration

John D. Green

9:45pm....a cool summer's night...the phone rings and my mother answers it...I'm in the room watching Family Guy reruns....and she screams...."NOOOOO".....I rush in as water fills her eyes and drips down her face and she looks up at me and says 2 words, "he's gone"...my body begins to tremble...my hands begin to shake....and in my head I said *it's not possible*....I run to the window I look out and people are coming up the stairs and I dash into the bathroom and lock the door and drop to the floor crying my eyes out...then I climb to my feet, unlock the door, and make my way down the stairs...with every step I hear another voice...I can't believe this is happening...*it's not true....it can't be true*...the next thing I remember; I'm in the limo wearing a black suit and sun glasses....the door opens....I touch this cold steel box....it's lined with white satin pillows...I touch his hand....but he doesn't touch back...I close my eyes and I think back to the phone call and I begin to feel the **POP POP POP POP POP POP POP**.....9mm steel piercing his body and him hitting the ground....I look up and think, where am I?...the place where concrete plaques are called memorials....a place where lifeless rock aligns with thriving grass....his 6-foot deep eternal home is ready....I said let's make it 7....7, the month of his birth....7, the day of rest....7, the number of angels...7, the number of plagues....7, the last day my life was normal...7, the number of bullets that went through his body....7, the number of months kept by the promise I made to him that I've been in school....and where do all these 7s take me?...well, to the 7th floor...in the 7th week of school...to section 6377....I say to myself this poem everyday..."out of the night that covers me...black as the pit from pole to pole...I thank whatever Gods may be...for my unconquerable soul...in the fell clutch of circumstance....I have not winced nor cried aloud...under the bludgeoning of chance...my head is bloody, but unbowed....beyond this place of

wrath and tears...looms but the horror of the shade...and yet the menace of the years...finds and shall find me unafraid...it matters not how strait the gate...or how charged with punishment the scroll...**I am the master of my fate...I am the captain of my soul**"....so I leave you with these two quotes....perfection is unattainable...but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence...and second, the change you want to see in the world...because **YOU** make the difference....you choose your own destiny...what legacy will you leave?....I promised my brother that I would change and that I can make a difference...and just as Superman left his mark so did Andre....he left this earth before he turned 21. □Don't live your life with regrets....if you do, it means that you've made mistakes that you are not willing to learn from.

*Poem by: William Ernest Henley (**Invictus**)

Morality Today in America: Problems and Solutions

LiJin Zheng

Morality lies at the heart of human civilization. It is a defining characteristic of life in society. It is the foundation for people's happiness and it motivates people to contribute to society in positive ways. The need for morality can be understood by considering the consequences of immorality. Immorality may lead to long-lasting effects. In discussing the role of morality in modern American society, it will be helpful first to identify the sources of certain problems of morality, and then to consider possible solutions. We will examine three problems of modern society that obstruct a moral life for Americans—racism, the pursuit of money, and misperceptions of people's true motivations—and entertain possible solutions to these problems.

Problem number one is racism. Stereotyping and a self-perpetuating traditions lead to misunderstanding and create many problems. I once witnessed the following incident in a subway station. A black man was begging for money from a white lady. The lady not only refused him the money; she cursed him with a racial slur. The beggar didn't say anything; he just walked away. After that, the lady went to a convenience store to buy water. A bundle of money dropped out of her pocket, but she didn't notice it. The beggar stepped forward, picked up the money, and returned it to the lady. The lady seemed surprised and must have felt embarrassed. She didn't say anything, but she handed the beggar a five-dollar bill. This incident illustrates the importance of morality in social life. The beggar repaid the lady's immorality with morality, thereby removing the obstruction to a charitable social act.

The roots of racism lie in history and stereotyping. During the period of slavery, blacks would often act lazy or stupid as a form of passive resistance against

slavery.² They might deliberately break tools or work slowly. Less often, they resorted to actual violence. As a result, blacks came to be stereotyped as lazy and violent. This stereotype encourages some whites to harbor critical views of blacks even today. This lady may have believed that the black man could find a job if he really wanted, but that he was too lazy. She may also have been afraid that he would engage in violence. What can be done to break such stereotypes? The answer lies in education, and in social activities that integrate the races. Curriculum in the schools can emphasize the positive contributions members of racial minorities have made to society. Government and community organizations can create opportunities for diverse communities to interact socially.

A second major problem of morality in America is the ubiquitous, relentless pursuit of money. Even as child in China, I was often told by my parents: “To have a better life, you must earn lots of money.” When I didn’t do my homework in primary school, my teacher told me, “Do your homework and get good grades, so you will be able to earn a lot of money in the future.” In conversations with my brother, he said to me, “I will be a success before you because I am older than you, so I can make money before you can.” I was led to conclude that money offers a better life, that the goal of academic study is money, and that money is equivalent to success. Money becomes the goal that most people strive for, and the fight for money drives people’s behavior; however, as the saying goes, “money is the root of all evil”. People expose their weaknesses when they have a chance to get money. The pursuit of wealth makes people greedy, selfish, sly and tricky. Even the pursuit of a minimal basic income can lead people to engage in dishonest business practices, particularly when times are hard, as they are today. To get money people need power, and to get power they need to abuse others. In other words, when people pursue money for its own sake, they run the risk of becoming evil. Evil is the opposite of morality.

The pursuit of money can even undermine the purpose of education itself. People come to believe that the purpose of education is to obtain a high-paying job, rather than to obtain knowledge.

While we can't stop people from thinking about money, we can provide them with adequate opportunities to advance themselves and prosper in ethical ways. Education is one key. Course offerings in ethics, particularly in business ethics, should figure more prominently in the general education component of higher education. Of course, the increased availability of job opportunities for those who don’t have an academic degree, which might come from philanthropic or government sources, would be another key.

People’s actions that appear to merit disapproval sometimes appear less objectionable if one contemplates their motivations and origins . On a Facebook

² See e.g. Richard N. Current, T. Harry Williams, Frank Freidel, and Alan Brinkley, *American History* 7th ed., vol. 1 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), excerpted in Heather Robertson, *Bridge to College Success* (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1991, pp. 70-77).

posting I saw a picture of a 15-year-old girl holding hands with her 1-year-old son. People called her a "slut". They did not know that she was raped at the age of 14. The same posting showed a man people called "fat"; no one knew he had a serious disease causing him to be overweight. Yet another old man was called "ugly" because no one knew he experienced a serious injury to his face while fighting for our country. There is a perceived high rate of criminality among African-Americans. This point of view is expressed explicitly in a song "Hell Yeah" by Dead Prez, which emphasizes that some African-American people keep committing crimes, such as fraud. Based on such sources, people might tend to think that African-Americans actually prefer such a lifestyle, because it affords them free food and an easy life. But Dead Prez's point is actually an expression of anger that African-Americans are treated unfairly due to discrimination, low-paying jobs, and failures of the welfare system. What this suggests to me is that people often are incapable of perceiving the truth behind what they have seen. Part of the solution to this problem is to encourage people to do more reading, such as "*Black Theater*," by James V. Hatch, a book of plays about African-American life. Knowledge is the remedy to misunderstanding. These topics should constitute robust elements of the higher-education curriculum. Outside the classroom proper, public lectures offer another possible way to increase people's awareness of morality.

The consequences of immorality pose seriously threats to American society. Racism causes Americans to act unjustly towards one another. The pursuit of wealth makes people dishonest. Misperceptions of people's motives lead to prejudice. Such problems are obstacles to a moral life. To overcome them, American society must turn toward education, both inside and outside of school, an increase in integrated social activities, and a more liberal distribution of wealth and opportunity. Today's Americans have the means to create a better, more moral society.

With the Repeal of “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” We are on Our Way to Full Equality

Cami Dreyer

Gay rights have been steadily marching forward for the past hundred years. But if you were gay and enlisted in the U.S. Military anytime after 1994 to the present day, chances are you marched silently and kept your sexual orientation to yourself—if you wanted to keep your job, that is. 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' or DADT, is the policy enacted in 1994 that prevented openly gay men and women from serving in the military. During the 18 years that the policy was in effect, approximately 13,000 service men and women were fired and removed from active duty (Balan 2011).

Recently, on September 20, 2011, this policy was repealed, allowing gays to serve openly in the armed forces. Ultimately, this is a human rights issue, and arguably the most important civil rights issue of the times we currently live in. Repealing “Don't ask Don't Tell” sets a precedent under which civil rights discrimination based on sexual orientation can be legally (and successfully) challenged. I think this story is also important because people need to understand that in modern times laws can and will be made that explicitly discriminate against people. The policy created a situation wherein a person sworn to defend the Constitution and the country could only do so by being dishonest about a core part of their being. Thankfully, this is no longer true. With the repeal of DADT, we have taken a huge step on the road to full equality for gay and lesbian citizens not only in the military, but also the world over.

In an article by for the *Los Angeles Times*, Phil Willon quotes Michelle Benecke, co-founder of the Service Members Legal Defense Network, “If you can come out in the military, you can come out anywhere.” The military has historically been a disadvantageous place to be gay. According to Carrie Anne Platt in her article “Gays in the Military,” “Supporters of this policy argue

that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly would be bad for troop morale and damaging to unit cohesion, which could significantly diminish military performance and put other soldiers at risk. They also point out that the military operates under its own rules and regulations, making it immune to state and federal anti-discrimination laws” (Platt 1003).

In order to better understand the importance of the repeal, it is necessary to include some key dates in history. The first soldier to be dismissed for homosexual conduct was Lieutenant Gotthold Frederick Enslin in 1778. The Navy was the first faction to order systemic investigations into allegations of homosexual conduct in 1919. Many sailors were entrapped, court-martialed and sent to jail. By 1942 all United States Army recruits were being screened for sexual orientation. The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) made it standard practice to exclude all lesbians and gays from all branches of military service. Over thirty years later, in 1982, the Pentagon officially declared that “homosexuality is incompatible with military service.” Don't Ask Don't Tell was enacted by the 1994 Defense Authorization Act. In 2005, there was a failed attempt to overturn DADT. Finally, in 2010 President Obama announced that his administration would work to reverse the law (Platt 1005).

The dismissal process often had nothing to do with the military service's “asking” or the soldier's “telling.” It created an atmosphere ripe for witch hunts and persecution of those thought to be gay. In an article for CNN, Christopher Wolf describes how one soldier was persecuted because his AOL email account led Navy officials to suspicion. Judge Stanley Sporkin threw the case out and had this to say: “The court cannot understand why the Navy would seek to discharge an officer who has served his country in a distinguished manner just because he might be gay,” and that the case “vividly underscores the folly of a policy that systematically excludes a whole class of persons who have served this country proudly and in the highest tradition of excellence” (Wolf). There are currently an estimated 66,000 LGBT service members in the U.S. Military (Thompson 2011). “Military service is very much a part of what we brand as citizenship in this country,” said Bridget Wilson, an attorney in San Diego. “To no longer be barred from that—it’s a powerful thing. Having openly gay people in the military will create change, as more and more people see them and realize ‘Oh, you’re just one of us’” (Wilkens).

With Don't Ask Don't Tell officially history, the question (especially for the gay and lesbian community) then becomes, “Now what?” With this important hurdle surmounted, we see that there is still a ways to go. Under the Defense of Marriage act, the government is only bound to recognize a marriage between a man and a woman. There are a few states which now support marriage equality—New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, and Washington, DC. Service members who are legally married in these states still have no benefits, no acknowledgement and no support from the Military (Balan 2011). That means, no healthcare for spouses and no notification of next of kin. How would it be to have your husband or wife fighting a war overseas, for them be critically injured and have no notification given to you? That is why the next battle in this fight is

clearly against the Defense of Marriage Act. Not wasting any time and not even two months after the repeal of DADT, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted in favor of the Respect for Marriage Act, an important first step in repealing the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. Sen. Dianne Feinstein had this to say: “There are 131,000 legally married, same-sex couples in this country who are denied more than 1,100 federal rights and protections because of this discriminatory law. I don’t know how long the battle for full equality will take, but we are on the cusp of change, and today’s historic vote in the committee is an important step forward” (Defense 2011). During the signing of the repeal, President Obama said, “It was a great five-star general and President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, who once said, ‘Though force can protect in emergency, only justice, fairness and consideration, and cooperation can finally lead men to the dawn of eternal peace.’”

By repealing Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell today, we take a big step toward fostering justice, fairness and consideration, and that real cooperation President Eisenhower spoke of” (“Remarks”). The reverberations from the abolition of DADT will likely ripple out and make gay marriage a civil rights benchmark that people and the history books will remember. With the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, we are on our way to full equality for lesbians and gays, not only in the military, but in all factions of life in the United States and possibly, eventually, the world over.

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What Else is Evolving from Evolution?

Tanja Zivkovic-Culjak

Evolution, in nature, has been responsible for the “design” of all living things, and, as such, has proven to be a successful strategy. Darwin’s main observations regarding biological systems can be summarized in these two statements: Individuals in the population vary, and these variations are heritable [3]. These observations convinced Darwin that species could change. He introduced the idea of a process through which evolution could occur, and named it “natural selection.” While natural selection directs the course of evolutionary change, variation provides raw material for the ongoing process. The idea of quantifying this process, and applying the biological principle of natural evolution to artificial systems, was introduced more than four decades ago, and has seen impressive growth in the recent years.

Evolutionary algorithms are computer-aided problem solution systems, based on the principles that can be observed in the evolution of living organisms. The basic idea is to generate a solution to a problem by evolving the existing set of solutions. This is done by the constant introduction of new “genetic” material into the population, and by applying the so-called genetic operators that are computer equivalents of the natural evolutionary mechanisms. There are several types of evolutionary algorithms: genetic algorithms, genetic programming, evolution strategies, and evolutionary programming. Their main differences lie in:

- The representation of individuals.
- The design of the variation operators.
- The selection/reproduction mechanism.

Genetic algorithms are the best-known class of evolutionary algorithms. They are used so extensively that often the terms genetic algorithms and evolutionary computation are used interchangeably. All these techniques share a common conceptual base of simulating the “evolution” of individual structures through processes of selection, mutation and reproduction.

The earliest instances of evolutionary algorithms appear in the late 1950's and early 1960's, programmed on computers of evolutionary biologists, who were not actually trying to find a problem-solving technique, but, rather, modeling some aspects of natural evolution. The field, however, remained relatively unknown to the broader scientific community for almost three decades. This was mainly because there were no powerful computer platforms at that time. The work of Holland, Rechenberg, Schwefel, and Fogel slowly changed this picture. A milestone in the field of evolutionary algorithms came in 1975, with John Holland's book *Adaptation in Natural and Artificial Systems*. This was the first attempt to systematically present the concept simulating processes of biological evolution, as a problem-solving strategy. The reasons for faster advancements in the 1980's were better computer performances and the application of evolutionary algorithms to solve real-world optimization problems. John Koza (1993) developed a variant of genetic algorithms called genetic programming. In his approach, instead of encoding possible solutions to a problem as a fixed-length character string, he encoded them as computer programs. Recently, their rise, fueled by the exponential growth of computing power and the development of the Internet, has led to an explosion of applications in areas of study as diverse as stock market prediction and portfolio planning, aerospace engineering, microchip design, biochemistry and molecular biology, scheduling at airports and assembly lines. The research in evolutionary computation is ongoing, and there is practically no field it has not touched yet.

Genetic Algorithms are search and optimization methods based on Darwin's principle of Natural Selection, which is often referred to as "the survival of the fittest." These algorithms are the most popular evolutionary technique, due to their conceptual simplicity, the ease of programming them, and the small number of their parameters to be defined. The main difference between genetic algorithms and other evolutionary algorithms is the representation (genome). Usually, the genome is a fixed-length binary string, and with such a data structure it is possible to represent solutions to almost any problem. Genetic algorithms are well suited for finding solutions where there is a large number of potential solutions, and the optimal solution cannot be solved by conventional methods. Genetic algorithms may be utilized in solving a wide range of problems across multiple fields such as science, business, engineering, and medicine.

In a genetic algorithm, the population consists of organisms that are usually composed of a single chromosome. Each chromosome represents one complete solution to the defined problem. The genetic algorithm must create the initial population, which is comprised of multiple chromosomes or solutions. Chromosomes contain genes and these genes are usually initialized to random values based on the boundaries defined. Each chromosome in the initial population must be evaluated. This is done by evaluating the "fitness" of each chromosome, determined by a function, and is specific to the problem the genetic algorithm is supposed to solve.

In order to create a new, improved population, the genetic algorithm must incorporate mating. Determining the specific chromosomes that will mate

involves determining each individual chromosome's fitness. The chromosomes are selected from the old population, mate, and produce children or new chromosomes. These new children are joined with the existing population, and so on. Mating works by taking two parents, selecting a "splice" from their gene sequences, and joining it to create the offspring. This allows the new chromosomes to take traits from each parent. Consequently, this method can lead to the problem of no new genetic material is being introduced.

Mutation brings in new genetic patterns to the population by creating a new, somewhat random sequence of genes into a chromosome; however, as in nature, it is unknown if this mutation will produce a desirable or undesirable attribute. Nevertheless, natural selection will determine the fate of the mutated chromosome. If the fitness of the mutated chromosome is higher than the general population, it will survive and likely be allowed to mate with other chromosomes, but if the genetic mutation produces an undesirable feature, then natural selection will ensure that the chromosome does not live to mate. The mutation level must be kept low in order for the algorithm to work, because if a mutation level is too high the program will be performing nothing more than a random search.

Before applying a genetic algorithm, a method of representing the solution needs to be defined. Encoding presents the solution in the form of a string that contains the necessary information. There are many methods of encoding; the common ones are binary encoding, permutation, and value encoding. The method chosen depends on the nature of the problem. *Binary encoding* is the most common method of encoding. Chromosomes are strings of 1s and 0s, and each position in the chromosome represents a particular aspect of the problem. *Permutation encoding* is a method wherein every chromosome is a string of numbers. *Value encoding* is used in problems with more complex values, such as real numbers, where binary encoding is not sufficient. An example is Schulze-Kremer's genetic algorithm where real-valued numbers were used to represent the "torsion angles" between the peptide bonds that connect amino acids. The fitness function quantifies the optimality of a solution (chromosome) so that that particular solution may be compared against all the other solutions. There are many different techniques, which a genetic algorithm can use to select the individuals to be copied over into the next generation. With *Elitist selection* the fit members of each generation are guaranteed selection, while with *Fitness-proportionate selection* more fit individuals are more likely, but not certain, to be selected. The *Roulette-wheel selection* can be represented as a game of roulette, in which each individual gets a slice of the wheel, but more fit ones get larger slices than less fit ones. Some of these methods are mutually exclusive, but others can be and often are used in combination.

When the fit individuals have been selected, they must be randomly changed, in hopes of improving their fitness for the next generation. There are two basic strategies to accomplish this: mutation and crossover. *Mutation* in a genetic algorithm causes small alterations at single points in an individual's code. The second method is called *crossover*, and consists of choosing two individuals

to swap segments of their code to produce artificial “offspring.” Common forms of crossover include Single-point crossover, uniform crossover, and multipoint crossover. With *single-point crossover*, a point of exchange is set at a random location in the two individuals' genomes, while with *uniform crossover*, the value at any given location in the offspring's genome is either the value of one parent's genome at that location or the value of the other parent's genome at that location, chosen with 50/50 probability.

The basic algorithm on its own will not produce anything valid if the details of the program are not properly and adequately determined. The following steps of the genetic algorithm in its basic form are general enough to fit most modern implementations, including commercial software:

1. Randomly create an initial population (generation 0) of N chromosomes and evaluate the fitness function for each of the chromosomes.
2. Iteratively perform the following sub-steps on the population until the termination criterion is satisfied:
 - a. Execute each individual in the population and evaluate its fitness using the problem's fitness measure.
 - b. Select one or two individuals from the population with a probability based on fitness (with reselection allowed) to participate in the genetic operations.
 - c. Create new individuals from the population by applying the following genetic operations with specified probabilities:
 - i. Reproduction: Copy the selected individuals into the new population.
 - ii. Crossover: For each pair of parents, perform crossover on the parents at a randomly (perhaps uniformly) chosen splice point (or *points* if using multi-point crossover).
 - iii. Mutation: Create one new offspring for the new population by randomly mutating a randomly chosen part the individual bits.
3. Compute the fitness values for the new population of N chromosomes. Terminate the algorithm if the stopping criterion is met or if the budget of fitness function evaluations is exhausted; else return to Step 2. If the run is successful, the result may be a solution (or approximate solution) to the problem.

Among the many fields where evolutionary algorithms are applied, let's focus on medical applications, for a while. Most medical decisions are based on clinical tests, which create huge amounts of data. Often, a single decision must be made, based on this data (e.g. benign or malignant). Evolutionary computation has powerful techniques for searching complex spaces, such as those that contain medical data. Depending on the task that it needs to perform, evolutionary algorithms in medicine can be divided into three groups of functions:

- *Data mining* involves the analysis of data stored in databases, to discover associations or patterns; and, then, clustering records, based on similarity, or creating a predictive model. The two most popular applications are diagnosis and prognosis. In both cases, a patient's information is gathered and interpreted, but with prognosis the objective is to predict the future development of the patient's condition. Prognostic systems are frequently used as tools to plan medical treatments.
- *Medical imaging and signal processing* utilizes evolutionary-computation techniques in different ways. In some cases they are applied to improve the performance of other signal processing algorithms, while others use evolutionary algorithms directly, to extract useful information from the large amount of data.
- *Planning and scheduling* tasks involve the assignment of resources, and the sequence in which they are applied. An example is the problem of scheduling a patient for undergoing different medical procedures and seeing different physicians, optimizing both patient waiting time and the use of medical devices.

In order to obtain high-resolution three-dimensional (3-D) images of the human brain, two-dimensional (2-D) slices are processed to produce a 3-D object reconstruction. Genetic algorithms have already been proven successful in such tasks, but a new member of the genetic algorithm family, called parallel genetic algorithm, has been demonstrated to be even more efficient. The novelties, in a parallel genetic algorithm, are that several isolated subpopulations self-evolve in parallel, and periodically make exchanges of their best individuals. The basic form for the parallel genetic algorithm can be described in the following steps:

1. Define a suitable representation of the genetic operators, then generate randomly a population of solutions and divide them into several subpopulations; decide a migration strategy for sharing individuals between the subpopulations.
2. Execute steps 3 and 4.
3. Perform self-evolution based on the chosen genetic operators: selection, crossover, mutation, and local hill-climbing.
4. Send the best individuals to the neighboring subpopulations based on the migration strategy, and receive their best ones and replace the worst ones of the subpopulation.
5. Determine whether the stopping criteria are satisfied; if satisfied, stop the iteration; otherwise go to Step 2.

In the parallel genetic algorithm, the chromosome consists of three 2-D matrices whose elements are the descriptors of a wire frame. The result of these chromosomes going through the algorithm will be surface evolution.

Although a huge number of applications of evolutionary techniques have proven to be successful, the fact remains that we are still far from utilizing all the

aspects of natural evolution. That said, some important differences between evolutionary algorithms and the natural process of evolution can be distinguished:

- Natural evolution works under changing environmental conditions, while in evolutionary algorithms, environmental conditions are often static.
- The long-term goal of evolution is constant evolving of the population. In contrast, evolutionary algorithms often aim to find a precise solution.
- In natural evolution, many criteria need to be met at the same time, while most evolutionary algorithms are designed for single fitness criteria.
- The *co-evolution* of species, such as in predator-prey interactions, is not included in the algorithm.
- Genotype-phenotype mapping in nature has evolved over time, while mapping is usually fixed in evolutionary algorithms.
- Topics, such as multi-cellular individuals, are usually not modeled in evolutionary algorithms.

With all this taken into consideration, these algorithms have a long way to go, since science has just scratched the surface of their endless possibilities. The fact is that they are already working all around us, shaping our technology and improving our lives. Consequently, in the future, we can expect them to be present in an even higher multitude of applications. We cannot predict the future of evolutionary algorithms, as we cannot predict the outcome of their operations, but we can observe that they expose ideas to a kind of natural *selection*, producing results that are beyond our imagination. Furthermore, the solutions they come up with are often more efficient, more elegant, or more complex than a human engineer would produce. All this progress was inspired by Charles Darwin's insight, where evolution is seen a problem-solving technique of enormous power; and however incredible it may seem, evolution works!

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The Practice of Tooth Darkening in Southeastern Asia and the Pacific

Gale D. Matthews

In western cultures, it is becoming more and more common for people to take extra time and effort to whiten their teeth. For some it has become an obsession, likely perpetuated by the impeccable smiles seen on the faces of the rich and famous. While the notion of ‘the whiter the teeth, the better’ prevails in the western half of the world, the process of darkening the teeth is commonly practiced in Southeastern Asia and the Pacific Islands. There exist a couple of methods that can achieve the desired darkening effect, often differing depending upon the region. While it predominately functions as a cosmetic enhancement, tooth darkening is also believed by some to improve the health and spirituality of the individual practicing the technique.

The Vietnamese have been chewing *trau-cau* for thousands of years, beginning in 2,879 BCE. *Trau* is a betel, a leaf with a bittersweet taste from the piperaceae tree, while *cau* is an areca nut, a seed from the areca palm. Chewed together, the leaf-nut concoction stains the teeth with prolonged use. This staining is due to the red pigment that acts like a dye found in the flavorful juice that is released when dissolved in the mouth. To quicken the desired effect of black teeth, some Vietnamese apply black lacquer, though this technique is primarily used by older women.³ Similar to *trau-cau* chewing, many of those living in Southeastern Asia and the Pacific chew *pan*, consisting of a mixture of betel nut, betel leaf and lime. *Pan* chewing is said to be a custom with more than 200 million adherents. The psychoactive effects it produces, coupled with the red saliva it makes in the mouth, makes *pan* a popular method of staining the teeth a reddish-black shade.⁴

Trau is considered a sort of counterpart to our fluoride, and is prized for its teeth-strengthening properties and the good breath and healthy colored lips it

³ The Vietnam Project: California State Fullerton, 2011.

⁴ Kadam, Ganacharu, Mahendra Kumar and Gurunath, 2009.

gives the user. The Japan Society of Aesthetic Dentistry has been quoted as saying, “*Ohaguro* had the effect of protecting teeth from cavities and periodontitis,” with *Ohaguro* being the Japanese term for the darkening effect.⁵ It has been speculated that in Laos, the usage of black lacquer on the teeth protects from the damaging ingredients present in betels.⁶

Tooth blackening occurred in Japan beginning in the Heian Era (794-1192 CE) and was practiced by the various classes of nobler men as a visual display of their respect and loyalty to Buddhist spirituality. Black was considered to be a color exhibiting strength. While men blackened to show their nobility, women chose to darken their teeth for aesthetic reasons. Women used *Ohaguro* to enhance their beauty and their desire to marry. The black color indicated devotion and unity.⁷ This practice began around 1000 CE and originated as a symbol among young girls who had reached maturity. Young men began blackening centuries later, starting around 1400 CE. For them too, it indicated their maturity and transition towards becoming an adult. Beginning in 1700 CE, women who were considered to be of the marrying age used *Ohaguro*. Women of a lower social class would wait until they were engaged before blackening their teeth. Within the next two hundred years, *Ohaguro* would become outlawed by the government.⁸ Elsewhere in Asia, the shade of the teeth is considered by some to be indicative of determining your soulmate, as is common in many rural areas of Vietnam.⁹

In Japanese culture, *Ohaguro* was practiced by lacquering the teeth with black ink. This black ink was produced when iron dust was burned and dissolved in tea, along with a rice soup called *kayu*, sake, as well as *ame*, a sweet type of candy. Though the mixture had an unpleasant odor, it became useful for dyeing teeth, as well as textiles.¹⁰

Thai dancers who danced for the court also chewed betel for their teeth to exhibit a striking contrast against their skin. The “burnished gold” look was an alternative to another tradition, the whitening of the skin through the use of chalk. To give the body a golden color, turmeric was applied to the body. The pigment in turmeric is responsible for giving commercially produced curry its golden color. Teeth that were already dark from betel chewing would appear to compliment the bronzed color of the skin.¹¹

Researching the custom of tooth blackening may lead one to question whether its purpose extends beyond cosmetic reasons. While it is well known that tooth whitening has no true health benefits and often times damages teeth, it would be fascinating to determine whether the blackening technique practiced in

⁵ The Vietnam Project: California State Fullerton, 2011.

⁶ Ballit, 1968.

⁷ The Vietnam Project: California State Fullerton, 2011.

⁸ Snow, 1999.

⁹ The Vietnam Project: California State Fullerton, 2011.

¹⁰ Snow, 1999.

¹¹ Lim, Smith and Dissanayake, 1999.

Southeastern Asia and the Pacific islands lives up to the qualities it is said to possess. Examining various tooth darkening processes allows us to recognize that desirable traits can vary greatly among different cultures.

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The New God

Emmanuel Grullon

The way we eat has changed more in the last 50 years than it has in the last 10,000. And the image of farming continues to be shown as if it were agrarian, when in reality nothing could be further from the truth. Genetically engineered organisms consist of biological techniques that manipulate an organisms' genetics by introducing, modifying and eliminating specific genes then transferring them to other bacteria, viruses, and animals in such a way that would never happen naturally. Nature allows cross-breeding when it comes to corn plant with corn plant, wheat plant with wheat plant, pig with pig, horse with horse, human with human, but never horse with corn, never pig with human and wheat with other produce, what genetic engineers call, a "better breed" or "better crop." The way they do this is by invading the cells of an organism with bacteria and viruses, which is the only way a gene can be transferred and not rejected by an organism. This is how our foods are being processed today.

First introduced in 1994, when it was F. D. A. approved and could be sold to markets, genetically modified food was sold with minimal knowledge and with no labeling, so that the public wouldn't be aware of the changes in their foods. The use of genetically modified organisms is becoming a frightening trend on our planet, especially in the United States. "If people let the government decide what foods they eat, their bodies will soon be in as sorry a state as are the souls of those who live under tyranny," Thomas Jefferson once said. In order to regain control of our food supply, the health of our bodies as well as the health of Mother Nature's, we must educate, boycott and form new policies against companies like Monsanto, our international leading company in the selling of G. M. O. seeds since 1994.

By 2010, Monsanto took over crops such as soybeans, 93 percent of which were genetically engineered, along with 78 percent of cotton, 70 percent of corn and 80 percent of canola; and now with alfalfa joining the ranks, organic foods are going to be almost impossible to attain. Monsanto's goal is to get 100-percent crop yields, so scientists have come up with ways to make crops more resistant to external factors. For example, if a farmer grows tomatoes, and one

day it gets so cold overnight that half of his tomatoes freeze up, he loses 50 percent of his business. But because of G. M. O. technology, because of Monsanto, scientists can take a gene from a species that can resist very cold weathers, like an Artic Flounder, and insert it into tomato seeds, and now those tomatoes can survive temperatures they couldn't survive before. This practice may sound ideal, but who is to say that such manipulation should be allowed to occur in a natural process? Who is to say that our natural bodies can take in something so unnatural, something that creates new allergens, toxins, new diseases and nutritional problems and deficiencies?

It was in 1989 when a dietary supplement, L-tryptophan, which was very popular in the 1970's for insomnia, premenstrual syndrome and depression, led about a hundred people to die and about ten-thousand to be ill and disabled here in the United States. Many across the country were going to their doctors, reporting symptoms of hair loss, memory loss, muscle weakness and spasms, deep muscle pain, as well as a restless prickling sensation in their limbs. Doctors were not able to diagnose their patients, because it was an uncommon mixture of symptoms and they discovered a new disease had entered into our world, which was later called Eosinophilia Myalgia Syndrome (E. M. S.). This syndrome was caused by the insertion of a new genetically engineered bacterium called Strain V to L-tryptophan, to increase its efficiency.

In March 1999, York Laboratory, a lab that conducts yearly evaluations of food allergies in the United Kingdom, found that when the U. K. was first introduced to G. M. soy imported from the U. S., food allergies increased by 50 percent, it also included skin conditions such as eczema, and other symptoms such as irritable bowel syndrome and other digestive problems. In 2007, *The Washington Post* reported a study conducted by Centers of Disease Control and Prevention about food allergies increasing in the United States by 18 percent in children under the age of 18, from 1997 to 2007. It is gene transfers that create new food allergens and diseases. For example, a gene inside of a flower that you are allergic to is transferred into another organism that you are not allergic to. Because that organism that you are not allergic to now contains the bacterium or gene from the first flower, you are now allergic to that new organism as well.

Monsanto claims that because of G. M. O., pesticide use has decreased drastically, but studies show that instead of spraying pesticides on plants, they've come up with an alternative to kill off insects. Scientists found bacteria in soil called *Besillius Thuringiensis*, better known as B. T. soil, and have been able to genetically engineer this bacterium into seeds to produce their own pesticide, which can be compared to walking mosquito repellent coming out of your pores on a hot summer day. When these G. M. O. seeds were first introduced into the Philippines in 2003, farmers and workers around these crops started to developed reoccurring skin, respiratory and intestinal problems, and adverse changes in their immune systems from the B. T. toxins that their corn released. These G. M. seeds were also created to deliberately self-destruct after their first crop. Furthermore, there are concerns that these G. M. seeds can spread onto other neighboring plants and destroy them as well. It is believed that these patented

seeds will lead to food dictatorship, forcing the farmers to buy more seeds from Monsanto every farming season. This technology locks two billion farmers into Monsanto, not allowing them to subsidize organic seeds like they have in the past 11,000 years. No civilized society should tolerate that.

Many studies and journals from around the world have linked G. M. O. products to sick and dead livestock, and to toxic and allergic reactions in humans. In 2009 Dr. Elena Ermakova, a M. D. practitioner in family and women's preventative health, conducted a study with female rats and G. M. soy. According to her study, over 50% of the G. M. soy-fed female rat's gave birth to babies that died within 3 weeks, compared to only 7% of the babies of non-G. M. soy fed rats. Rats, female and male, who ate G. M. corn developed adverse changes in their kidneys, livers, hearts, adrenals, spleens and blood cells in just 90 days. This is extremely troubling, because this is what we are feeding ourselves. We could be the next victims.

The American Academy of Environmental Medicine, an organization of physicians, also has major concerns, and have linked many genetically modified organisms to infertility, immune system problems, accelerated aging, disruption of insulin and cholesterol regulation, gastrointestinal problems and organ damage. And because of this, in 2009 the AAEM took action by informing and urging doctors from all over the country to prescribe non-GMO diets to all of their patients.

Many say that there isn't enough food in the world to feed everyone; however this is an inaccurate statement. The average American throws away \$500 worth of food a year, while many people die from starvation across the world. Global hunger and famine is more of a political issue than it is an issue of food scarcity; it is more about the absence of land reform, social and bias inequality, and scarcity of jobs. Brazil is the third largest exporter of food in the world, yet it has about 30,000,000 people with not enough to eat. In 1990, Brown University calculated that if all foods were equally distributed throughout the world, they would feed over 6 billion people a vegetarian diet and 2.6 billion a meat-rich diet. The profit-driven Monsanto's supposedly good deeds aren't effective and aren't targeting the problem, but their carelessness continues to swell their purse. In fact, genetic engineering is not doing anything to help the famine-stricken people across the world, and that is due to the unequal distribution of wealth.

To promote, distribute, and sell genetically modified organisms to human beings, to animals, and ultimately to our planet is not science, it is terrorism. What Monsanto has been doing in the past two decades, in some respects, can be considered slow genocide; they are poisoning our planet. We should be able to eat the foods that nature has given us to eat, not the foods controlled by genetically modified seeds. And so I am here fighting and spreading the message to you all, in hopes that you too spread the message to others. I urge you to stand up and band together with me. We can start by calling and/or emailing President Barack Obama at action.foodandwaterwatch.org, then by clicking on the TAKE ACTION menu. You can also call the White House at (202)-456-1111, or fax a

letter to them at (202)-456-2461, or mail a letter to Tom Vilsack, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, at 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250, or send him an email at mail at agsec@usda.gov. We need to take action in our own lives and in the lives of our loved ones. We need to boycott genetically engineered foods every chance we get, and believe me, we get plenty of those here in North America. If it is not labeled "Organic" or "non-GMO." do not buy it. In dairy products, watch out for G. M. Bovine Growth Hormone, in labels look for "No rBGH" or "rBST" or "artificial hormone-free." We must also change policies and agricultural regulations for the safety of ourselves and of our environment, for the U.S. government has been very haphazard in this matter. This won't be easy, but was it easy for our Americans who fought for independence in 1776? This is a revolution we are blindly facing today. They dumb us down, they think that we should not and do not need to know, and they think they know more than nature itself about what is best for us. But through knowledge we will gain power. I say, "Fight against genetically engineered foods and for real food!"

Regulating Hydraulic Fracturing

Radesha Barnes

As the world advances, so does the demand for natural resources such as gas, oil, and coal; however, the extraction process of these natural resources poses a threat to the health of local communities, and therefore can be regulated by local governments. In the past the law has given local governments the authority to restrict, or at times ban oil and natural gas productions that were found to be harmful to local communities. Chemical Specialties Mfrs. Ass'n v. Jorling, 611 N.Y.S.2d 663(A.D. 3 Dept.1994) and Washington v. Dutchess Quarry & Supply, 673 N.Y.S.2d 183(A.D. 2 Dept.1998) are two of the many cases that use zoning ordinances to regulate the oil and gas extraction industry. Zoning ordinances are laws made by a local board of directors, to protect the safety, welfare, and health of a community. In recent discoveries of natural gas is made through a process called Hydraulic Fracturing, drilling companies have also generated a new controversial legal issue. Hydraulic Fracturing, also known as Fracking, is done by injecting more than a million gallons of sand, chemicals, and water into wells thousands of feet below the surface. This combination causes the Marcellus Shale (where gases are found) to crack and release natural gas. While the end product of Fracking (Shale Gas) is safe to the environment, the process itself is detrimental to the health of local communities, because the gases release toxins and contaminate the drinking water. Because Hydraulic Fracturing threatens the health, safety, and welfare of the public, local governments have the power to regulate the operation of oil and gas producers.

Past legal disputes have used zoning ordinances to regulate manufacturers from extracting natural resources in local communities. Many of these cases are similar to Hydraulic Fracturing. For instance, in the case of Chemical Specialties Mfrs. Ass'n v. Jorling, 611 N.Y.S.2d 663(A.D. 3 Dept. 1994), the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation regulated an industrial company because their products were using high levels of pesticides (DEET), which posed a threat to a local community; his regulation was challenged by industrialists. The New York Supplement states, "The Supreme Court, Albany County, Cardona, J., annulled regulation, and Commissioner appealed id.at 663."

The Supreme Court felt the Commissioner's decision to regulate the industrial company did not have a rational basis. Once appealed, "The Appellate Division held that: (1) Authority to restrict use of pesticides included authority to prohibit distribution, sale or use of pesticides; (2) regulation had rational basis; and (3) regulation did not automatically revoke registration of products affected by ban id. at663." Because the pesticide (DEET in this case) posed a threat to the health of the community, the Commissioner's decision to regulate industrialists was accurate because it was in the town's best interest. All in all, the Commissioner's amendment to limit the percentage of DEET manufacturers were allowed to use was denied by the Supreme Court of Albany County, but later deemed just by an Appellate Court. Although this case does not directly speak of drilling, it does demonstrate how zoning ordinances are significant when regulating oil and natural gas companies infringing on local communities.

Another case that used zoning ordinances to regulate oil and gas operations which is relevant to the issue of Hydraulic Fracturing, is the case of Washington v. Dutchess Quarry & Supply, 663N.Y.S.2d 183(A.D. 2 Dept. 1998). In this case, the town of Washington commenced action to enjoin the ongoing operation of sand and gravel mine, for this was prohibited by the town's zoning laws. Although the Supreme Court of Dutchess County denied the injunction and the town's motion for summary judgment, the town appealed the decision. The Appellate Division held that "(1) town zoning law was not superseded by Mined Land Reclamation Law (MLRL); (2) operation of mine without necessary permit was thus not legal nonconforming use exempt from town zoning ordinances; (3) provision of zoning ordinances prohibiting expansion was proper exercise of town's police powers to limit expansion of nonconforming mine use id.at183." This case was modified under Zoning and Planning laws of the town of Washington which states, "while a locality may not regulate the mining process, it may utilize its zoning ordinances to prohibit mining in its jurisdiction id.at183." Even though this case uses zoning ordinances to ban mining manufacturers, it is a perfect example of how to ban Fracking through zoning ordinances.

In retrospect, because Hydraulic Fracturing conflicts with town zoning ordinances, it gives local governments the authority to regulate oil and natural gas operations. This authority is given to protect the health, safety, and overall welfare of local communities. As mentioned earlier, there are many ways for local governments to regulate Hydro-Fracking through zoning ordinances. In the case of Chemical Specialties Mfrs. Ass'n v. Jorling, id.at663, zoning ordinances were used to restrict the use, sale, and distribution of pesticides to protect a local community; an Appellate Court confirmed that decision. In Washington v. Dutchess Quarry & Supply, id.at183, an example was given in which a town used zoning ordinances to ban mining manufacturers from mining within its jurisdiction. While there are some cases that may only restrict oil and natural gas producers by using zoning ordinances, there are others that can ban oil and natural gas extractions completely.

Loneliness and the Fragility of Life, Then and Now

Emile Gay

John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* explores the connection among man, loneliness and the fragility of life. We're born alone and we die alone, but in between we strive to form bonds that bring meaning to life. We grow up preparing to become successful adults, with lucrative careers, so that we can obtain a high social standing within or outside our network of friends and family. The feeling of belonging that comes with our social standing makes us feel accomplished and adequate, and fills the void of loneliness. But what happens when things go wrong? Can we still hold on to our social standing? Do we still feel like we belong to something bigger that fills the void? Or are we destined to live a life alone, lacking hope and full of despair. Through the main characters, Lenny and George, Steinbeck seems to capture the image of a life lost in despair, but still clinging to hope. It's this hope that many people have put in place of the success that once gave them the social standing and acceptance they desired. The hope is there to ward off feelings of loneliness associated with the lack of social standing.

Loneliness can be described in many ways, some of which include, a) destitute of sympathetic or friendly companionship, support; b) remoteness from places of human habitation; desolation; bleakness (Wikipedia.Org). c) an unpleasant feeling in which a person feels a strong sense of emptiness and solitude resulting from inadequate levels of social relationships (Dictionary.Com). Steinbeck would have agreed with any of these definitions. Through the characters in his book, Steinbeck also explores the bond between poverty and loneliness. He gives us a glimpse of how the fragility of life is connected to this loneliness, how's it's displayed and how it can affect a man's thoughts and actions.

The major reoccurring themes in this book are the fragility of life and being alone in one way or another. Every character shows signs of being alone, because something is missing from their lives, and that something is their version

of the American dream, their piece of mind, and rightful place on the social ladder. Without decent jobs to sustain them, a community people are left wanting, and if the situation continues, this wanting can easily turn to hopelessness, despair, and feelings of inadequacy, which inevitably will lead to loneliness.

The book takes us through a few days in the Life of Lennie Small and George Milton, starting with their journey to the new job, through the end of their friendship. Lennie and George are two ranch hands who travel together, looking for jobs. They don't have a home or a family, but they have each other. Lennie is a big strong fellow, who's slow, and George is his friend, who takes care of him since his Aunt Clara died. It's obvious from the start of the book that George is discontent with the arrangement, but he's not going anywhere. Scowling at Lennie, he says, "God, you're a lot of trouble, I could get along so nice if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl" (7). It must be challenging for George, caring for this big guy, who acts more like a baby than a grown man. They're not family, but somewhere along the road they have bonded like cousins, maybe even brothers, and although George at times lacks patience for Lennie, at other times he shows compassion, like when he realizes he has hurt Lennie's feelings and says, "No look- I was jus' foolin', Lennie. 'Cause I want you to stay with me (13)."

Although George feels he'd be better off alone, he really can't say for sure. The fear of being alone and even leaving Lennie alone is too much for him to deal with, so he doesn't leave his friend. This bond between Lennie and George is very important, and it can be analyzed in many different ways, as friends, as child and guardian, or as caregiver and one in need of care. Anyway you look at it, they need each other to have their existence. After all you must have someone to care for, to be a caregiver. Lennie is slow but quite a big fellow, and he himself could represent the fragility of life. Someone so big and threatening in appearance can be so simple-minded and harmless, yet has the strength to protect or destroy. I think it's fitting that Lennie's character is as large as life, but he needs George to take care of him and in some ways protect him. It can be a great thing, life, full of good times, love, laughter and a feeling of protection, like how Lennie travels with and protects George. They share their dreams and good times together. Life, and Lennie alike, can also suck the wind out of your sail and leave you stranded in the deep. Like why the two men are traveling at the start of the book, because Lennie in his simple-minded desire to enjoy life and its beauty, scares a little girl so badly that he and Lennie has to hightail it out of Weed and seek out a new job and home. This was yet another moment in their lives when something gets in the way of George obtaining his dream. Their pairing in many ways represents dreams, dependency, the fragility of life and loneliness, and although these themes can be analyzed easily in Lennie's and George's experience, it is displayed in less obvious ways in some of the other characters' lives.

The story begins with the pair traveling to their new job, in Soledad, California, because Lennie got himself into some trouble in Weed. Lennie was

touching a little girl's pretty dress, because he just loved to touch things he liked, and the girl was scared, started to get upset and cry, which scared Lennie so that he held on tighter, terrifying the little girl. She ran off telling all sorts of lies about the encounter, which forced the men to hide and run out of town, giving up their jobs in the process. This was also a sign of the fragility of life, an indication that life and Lennie could be disastrous, as George put it, "All the time somethin' like that-all the time. . ." (11), while reminding Lennie why they had to leave Weed. Some people say life happens, but George could say Lenny happens, and the same man that in so many ways was his life, was also taking it away from him.

The men spend the night under some trees along the bank of the Salinas River near Soledad, and soon arrive at the ranch where they meet their new boss, his son Curley, Curley's wife, and some other farm hands, Carlson, Candy, Slim, Whit and Crooks. Each of the characters has their own story to tell and in some way adds to the reoccurring themes of the book. Interestingly, the boss is one of two characters that is not given a name in this novel. He's brought in to interview, hire, and give the men basic instructions, and after that he doesn't make an appearance. He's absent, in a way, on his own ranch and in his workers lives. I believe Steinbeck had a reason for making him scarce. The story is set in the harshest time in US history, the Great Depression, which is said to have begun with the stock market crash in October 1929, although that was just one of the events that led to the worst decade in our financial history. During these times many Americans were unemployed and hungry. It became common for people to become itinerant workers, traveling to find a job, then moving on to the next one. The idea of the American dream was beginning to become more and more elusive. How can a man desire to have a house and family if he can't find a decent job and a place he can call his own? This was the simple symbolism in the boss. He was both the boss and the job, but his lack of presence in the book symbolizes the lack of good, secure jobs, the lack of opportunity, and the fading reality of the American dream. That's why Steinbeck chose not to name him; the lack of a name was similar to the lack of economic stability.

Other signs of loneliness and the fragility of life are present in the relationship between Candy, the one handed swamper on the ranch, and his dog, described by Steinbeck as, "a dragfooted sheep dog, gray of muzzle, and with pale, blind old eyes" (24). Candy later speaks of his dog with the highest of regards saying, "[H]e was the best damn sheep dog I ever seen" (44). The dog was his friend, companion and the one he held the tightest bond with; the dog was his life. The dog is old and frail, but he sees it for what it used to be. Steinbeck reminds us life is fragile, by killing the dog. Carlson, another ranch hand, complains of how bad the old dog stinks, and timing would have it that another character in the book, Slim's dog, Lulu, just had puppies and he agreed that Candy could have one of them. After little hesitation Candy gives in and watches Carlson lead his old friend and companion out of their bunk room to be taken away and shot. After Candy agrees to let Carlson put his dog to sleep his realities are reached. He's alone, and he wonders if his life is over, and at the first

chance he gets he tries to avoid the feeling. He hears Lennie and George talking about their dream and he asks if there's room in it for him, "I ain't much good with on'y one hand. . . Tell you what—S'pose I went in with you guys?. . . I ain't much good, but I could cook and tend the chickens and hoe the garden some. How'd that be (59)?" This is shortly after he lost his dog, his friend and companion, and he's making a bid to spend his life with two strangers that he's only known for a day, in an effort to avoid being alone.

Evidence of inevitable loneliness is also present in the character of Curley's wife. When we first meet her, she is trying to find her husband and stumbles on the new workers. She immediately tries to hold a conversation with them. Unfortunately for her they have been warned about her friendly ways. The men mistake it for her flirting and giving them the eye. Later we find out that she is lonely, in the house alone all day. "Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in while?" she says. "Think I like to stick in that house all a time (77)?" Even though she is married, she is alone. Even though she lives in a house with Curley and his father, she is alone. She is lacking the fundamental love that accompanies marriage, and that will prevent her from being fulfilled. She ran away from home and met Curley the same night her heart was broken. She was awaiting a letter from her knight in shining armor, a man who was in movies at the time, and it never came. She blamed her mother for taking it and she vowed not to be alone again, and in trying to avoid being lonely she made a critical error, she jumped into the arms of the first person that was willing to hold her, not the first person that would fulfill her and prevent her from being alone. She made the same mistake as her husband, just for a different reason, she married not for love, but for fear. She admits, "I wasn't gonna stay no place where I couldn't get nowhere or make something of myself. . . So I married Curley. . ." (88). She had left her home and the family she knew, and she didn't want to go back, but she didn't have a way out of her loneliness. Curley was her way out, but sadly it was really her way into a different type of loneliness. Her American dream was living happily ever after, but it soon becomes obvious to the reader that she has never had a happy moment with Curley.

Curley is first introduced to us early on, and immediately brings tension to the scene. When he sees the new men for the first time he turns defensive and quick tempered. Later we're told that he's pretty handy and used to be a lightweight boxer and he liked to pick fights with bigger guys just to do it. It seems to me like he was trying to prove something to somebody. You see I think his father was all business. Running a ranch must be difficult, but to run one during the Great Depression had to be even harder. Banks were failing and unemployment was higher than 20% of the work force. Growing up in such harsh times was hard enough. Now imagine a father who is trying to be successful in feeding his family. The last thing he has time for is to coddle his children. Better they grow up fast and can help, than they become a burden. I'm sure Curley sensed this, but like all children, they hunger for their parent's attention and approval. When acres of farmland have been engulfed in a drought and jobs are at an all time low, how can he move on and make his father and

himself proud? In being aggressive, picking fights and always trying to prove himself, Curley attempts to fill the void his loneliness created. His loneliness stemmed from the inability to achieve his American dream of moving out and becoming a man on his own. He tried through boxing, and it didn't work; he even tried to get married and that didn't work. After the first meeting between Curley, George and Lennie, Candy explained, "Seems to me like he's worse lately. He got married a couple of weeks ago. . . Seems like Curley is cockier'n ever since he got married (27)." Most people grow calmer when love enters their life, but Curley didn't because he got married in a desperate attempt to achieve part of his dream. He wanted to feel whole, and achieve that social standing that we think is necessary to be successful. The fact that he was so antagonistic to most of the characters in the book shows his disgust for the pursuit of happiness, and his inability to achieve his American dream. So he tries to take down anyone even if they are not a threat to him. Curley is the reality of the time.

The book continues, and Lennie and George let on about their dream to more of their new coworkers, even including some details about the specific place they have in mind. In the process they get a few of the ranch hands to show an interest in their venture. Slim gives Lennie one of the puppies, which he accidentally kills, and unfortunately the same fate meets Curley's wife after she tries to befriend Lennie. Enjoying playing in her soft hair, he loses control and accidentally breaks her neck trying to calm her down after he scared her. George finds out what happens, and before Curley comes to exact his revenge, steals Carlson's gun and shoots Lennie in the back of the head, as the two gaze off on the river and remember their dream. In killing Lennie, George was killing a friend, but also the American dream. Part of George's dream included Lennie, and might have even been designed with him in mind. He could have let Curley kill Lennie, but he knew it was his dream and his right to take it away. After all these years of sharing and talking about their dream, his friend and dreams were lost. Lennie symbolized many things to George, like his freedom to move around fearlessly, no one would dare trouble him. But Lennie really symbolized innocence. Like a little child, all he wanted was to pet and play with nice soft things, things he liked. The reader and George hoped he will stay out of trouble, but whenever he gets what he has hoped for and wanted, almost every time he destroys it. The mice, the puppy, and Curley's wife were all indicators that their dream was doomed. You have to imagine Lennie would destroy it as he does everything else.

Steinbeck's book was published in 1937, well into the depression, and some of the symbolism that he used can still be applied in today's America. The fragility of life displayed in his book can be seen in many of the characters and their relationships. Particularly when it comes to the loneliness brought on by years of pain, suffering, hopelessness and despair. Americans today can relate because although we are not in a depression, we are facing a change in the tides of our economic health that threatens to throw this country into a depression like no other. The average American has seen his or her bills and expenses increase more than their wages have in the last few years, while many others have been

jobless over that stretch of time. Part of enjoying life involves being a responsible adult, contributing to society, and achieving and maintaining a certain quality of life, and to do that you need a good, secure job. The years of suffering and hopelessness that Steinbeck's characters endured during the Great Depression gave them a feeling of loneliness that can easily be understood by the millions of Americans today who are unemployed, struggling to obtain or hold on to their American dream. Some of us are lucky enough to have an alternate dream, one that is easier to obtain and that keeps us scratching and surviving. That way we can hold our heads high while we try to reach our rightful place on the social ladder. In the end we all want to be accepted, and viewed as successful, and we need to feel accomplished in order to do so. We need to acquire our version of the American dream, which for most of us includes a job we can depend on to keep us fed, provide us with a nice home and maybe a few extras. For others it might be finding that special someone to spend life with, but whatever it might be the American dream can be a nightmare in depression or dreams of the lonely, because our economy still isn't ready to give so many Americans the bare necessities they'll need to contribute to society. Without having that feeling of success people will feel inadequate and useless, as Carlson viewed Candy's dog. These feelings tear us down from within and create the loneliness felt and exhibited by George, Lennie and so many others in *Of Mice and Men*. The fragility of life displayed in his book can still be appreciated today, because so many are still suffering trying to reach their life's goal to have a better life.

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The Enslaving of the Nation of Benin

Kerrisha Fyffe

“Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds.” These are the words taken from a line of the famous Jamaican reggae artist Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song.” The writer of an online article on mental slavery stated, “Mental slavery cripples its victims, making them ineffective, self destructive, self-hating and dangerous. A mental slave will not investigate nor research history or current events but accepts and believes what is told to him, whether true or not.” A people, a nation that was a victim of the horrendous crime of slavery, were the people of the West African nation of Benin.

The consequences of this crime, as I will show, were both physical and psychological. Enslavers hoped their victims would be completely altered and that they would be a people cut off from their roots with no identity, no culture, no past, and only a brainwashed future. The sole purpose of a slave was to submit to their masters and do what was instructed. The process of physically enslaving a person was accomplished through the process of mental slavery as well. The tactic used by the European colonizers resulted in one of history’s major, successful slave trades. The Transatlantic slave trade connected the continent of Africa with North and South America.

The country of Benin was one site that provided the bulk of slave labor to the New World. Its city of Ouidah housed many forts belonging to the Portuguese, French, Dutch, Spanish and English, each engaged in massive slave trading, with the Portuguese being the principal traders. Today, the city of Ouidah has a rich history, honoring its ancestors as well as educating its present and future inhabitants and those who thread upon its soil, about the grave sufferings of its forefathers at the hands of their fellow men.

The city of Ouidah was connected to the New World of the America because of the great demand for labor on huge American plantations. The New World’s first attempt at slavery was with the Native Americans, but this did not work, as many died from overwork and from Old World diseases. The second attempt to fill the demand for labor was through the introduction of indentured

servants, which also failed as quickly as it began. The Europeans then turned to African slave labor, which met the demand for cheap labor for their plantations. African slaves were immune to Malaria, which plagued the inhabitants of the New World during that time. The Transatlantic slave trade proved to be the best and the most successful solution.

I often wonder what led to the success of this era of the slave trade compared to the others in history. Upon visiting the country of Benin, I was privileged to go on a tour of the city of Ouidah.

I was enlightened to the journey my ancestors travelled in the process of becoming a New World slave. I discovered that each step of the journey was designed not only to enslave these people physically, but also to mentally bind them to conditions that they were going to endure for the remainder of their lives.

People that were sold in to slavery were taken by their fellow Africans and sold to the Europeans as captives or prisoners of war. This was a common practice among Africans and Arabs during that time. Olaudah Equiano, an African slave who wrote his memoir entitled *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, wrote that the practice of kidnapping people as slaves was popular in Africa; he and his sister were victims of this practice, which changed the entire course of his life. The journey into slavery began with the capture of the soon-to-be slaves taken from their families, clans, and villages, whether as prisoners of war, or just simply kidnapped as victims of raids to meet the demand for slaves.

Those that had committed crimes were also sold into slavery; however, the desire for acquiring slaves was so great that even people who committed petty crimes that would have otherwise been given a lenient punishment fitting the crime sentence, were sold as well. They were taken in chains from their point of capture to Place Chacha, which was the site of the old slave market, where the slaves were auctioned under a big tree, planted in 1747 by one of the Dahomey kings.

Chacha Place was named after Francisco Felix De Souza, a. k. a. "Chacha," a Brazilian slave trader who was given the job to manage the slave trade on behalf of the Dahomean king. He was given the alias "Chacha," because he was considered fast and efficient in the buying and selling of slaves. Here at the big tree, the slaves were stripped naked and examined like goods, from head to toe. They were examined to see if they had good teeth and sturdy body structure, if there were any deformities, and if the women were good for child bearing. The same way in which we examine and squeeze and poke and prod a piece of fruit or vegetable or meat before placing it in our shopping cart for purchase is the way the slaves were treated before being purchased at the hands of various traders, whether French or Portuguese or British, in exchange for guns, mirrors, alcohol and other items. They were then branded in their flesh with a hot iron bearing the initials of his buyer, to the pain, shame, and embarrassment of all those around.

They were chained at the neck and hands and then taken to the Tree of Forgetfulness, a tree along the slave route around which they were forced to

walk, in an effort to forget where they were coming from. The nation of Benin is actually the birthplace of the Voodoo religion, so this tree was selected and converted by the voodoo priest as the place where the people would forget their past when the ritual was carried out. Men were instructed to walk around this tree nine times. From this point, still chained at the neck and hands, they were taken to an area known as the Box Zomayi.

Most times they were taken to this area late at night, so they would not see where they were going and could prepare themselves somewhat for what was ahead. This box was a holding point where they waited to be transported to the ships headed for the New World. In the small, tightly closed box, many were packed together, regardless of gender, age or size, and locked up in total darkness and bound, so that there was no opportunity to escape. This inhumane type of lockdown was designed to disorient and confuse these people and acclimate them to conditions aboard the slave ships. Zomayi means “where the fire is not there,” and here the slaves were kept for three to four months, as they awaited the ships that would take them away from their native land.

Many died in these horrendous conditions, especially the very young, the old and the feeble. Those that did not survive this segment of the journey were buried in mass graves; those who appeared sick or like they would not make the three-month journey aboard the ships were buried alive as well in these mass graves. They were left there until death claimed their abused bodies. Today, a memorial known as Memorial Zoungbodji has been erected in their honor,.

Those that survived this ordeal were then taken down to the coast to be loaded onto the ship heading to the Americas. Here The Door of No Return marks the end of the slave route, where the slaves would forever leave their homeland.

Aboard the ships, the slaves were packed like sardines in a can, and were to stay in that position for the three-to-four-month journey. In his memoir Equiano described the conditions in the belly of the ship.

[T]he stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had to be permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship’s cargo was confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produces copious perspiration, so that the air soon became unfit for respirations, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died—thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, of the purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable, and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.” (684)

As many as half of these slaves taken on these ships did not survive the journey. Some committed suicide by jumping overboard when they got the chance, preferring the sea to claim their bodies rather than their evil captors. Others died of starvation, illnesses or just the effects of the deplorable conditions aboard. They were flogged and beaten severely for displeasing their enslavers, for not eating or simply for trying to obtain food to nourish their starving bodies. A typical ship was packed with one thousand slaves, with only 500 arriving alive in the Americas.

The journey to the Americas so traumatized these people that the majority continued to live in slavery, not attempting to escape or to be freed for fear of once again experiencing such torture and abuse. They continued to accept the physical and mental abuses and destruction of their self-esteem by being told they were nothing, not human and only made and built for hard labor, to be used like animals for another man's pleasure and wealth. Their men were humiliated, embarrassed and devalued, as they stood helpless and watched themselves and their families living like animals or torn apart; as they watched and heard the sexual acts committed against their women, not being able to defend them. Women were treated as objects of sexual fantasy for their captors. Aboard ship, men were sometimes chained face down while women were chained face up so that they were easily accessible by their captors for sex. Some committed suicide; some brave ones attempted to escape; while the majority just simply accepted their fate.

Even on the plantation in America, the dehumanizing and brainwashing of these people continued to the point that they believed they were nothing and that their skin color determined their future or their status. House slaves and mulattoes (Mulattoes were the offspring of European men and African slave women) were viewed by their fellow slaves as higher class or more important than field slaves. In modern day Benin, the brainwashing continues. The descendants of Felix De Souza are still regarded as important, upstanding members of society. The Beninese people are brainwashed into viewing Felix as a merchant and inventor of palm oil rather than the man at the center of the destruction of their nation. The long-term effects of slavery on that nation are evident all over the country. There still remains a lot of poverty, corruption within the dysfunctional government, bribery in the business world, distrust among communities, an underdeveloped nation with lack of resources, superstitious beliefs and customs built on fear, and the belief that whites are superior to blacks.

There is still hope, however, for the nation of Benin. The Door of No Return became the Door of Return for some. A handful of the slaves taken to the Americas returned to their homeland of Benin, bringing with them a new culture in food, music, religion and knowledge of their ordeal on the journey to the New World and the life they experienced there. The city of Ouidah was developed as a walking history book and a tourist attraction. The nation does its best to preserve its history and to inform its generations of its past, so that they will have a

direction for the future. Slavery end over a hundred years ago, but its effects live on in a people that are still struggling to emancipate themselves from mental slavery.

A Functionalist Perspective on Education

Eraldie Donaus

At the beginning of our sociology course, we discussed the theoretical perspectives in sociology. According to the functionalist theory, each aspect of society depends on the others and helps society function well as a whole. The word “function,” defined as “an activity, a role, or a purpose natural to or intended to someone or something,” is present a lot in the functionalist theory, because, according to those theorists, all social institutions existing are there to serve people. They have a function (purpose). For the functionalists, society is set up to help people, to serve them, and to satisfy their needs. In this view, society is relatively stable. Aware of what functionalism is, let’s apply this theory to education and see how a functionalist might analyze City Tech.

The functionalist theory focuses on the ways education serves the needs of society. Functionalists first see the manifest function of education, which is obvious and intentional. They also point to the latent functions that are not intentional and not obvious.

The primary function (manifest function) of our college is to provide us with an education and to pass on knowledge and skills. It is obvious that when a student is going to school (a social institution), the main purpose is to study a major and get a degree.

When you are interacting with other people in an environment, you can’t ignore them. Even though you are not going to school to make friends, socializing with others along the way is inevitable. People will obviously talk to each other in class or work together as a group. Those kinds of interaction can become professional in the future or can remain personal. Also called networking, socialization with others is therefore one of the latent functions of City Tech. Another latent function of our college is to provide job opportunities. At City Tech, not only do we have students looking for education, in order to get a job after earning their degrees, we also have a lot of other people already working in the school. They are the maintenance people, the security guards, the

professors, and all the other employees working in the different departments of our college. Without all those City Tech employees, it would not be possible to get our education. A school cannot function with students only. A social institution cannot function without maintenance people. The different components of a social institution, while having different functions, contribute all to the overall well-being of that institution.

As I mentioned earlier in this essay, all social institutions are made up interconnected parts that have to work well together. City Tech is no exception. First of all, the different parts of our college depend on each other. All of them are working towards the same goal, which is to provide us with an education. City Tech would have been unable to function well if no freshmen department existed to welcome new students in the college. When freshmen entered our school, they would not know what to do. The same thing applies for transfer students. A transfer department has to be there in order for the transfer student to know how to do so. Without the help of counselors, students wouldn't know which courses to take, to satisfy their major requirements in order to graduate. We can't dissociate one department from another, because they all have a specific purpose. They are all important. Thanks to them, students know exactly how to function in our college. Thanks to them, students know what to do to get the education they are seeking. If all of the departments in our college work efficiently, the outcome will be order, stability, and productivity (education). If, on the other hand, the different departments in our college don't do their work on time or don't do them the way they are supposed to do them, that can lead to a dysfunction at City Tech and again, the whole school will be affected. In our sociology course, we learned that when there is a social dysfunction, there is pressure that can lead to social change. Let's analyze now how a dysfunction in our college can affect the other parts and the college's ability to meet its main goal, which is to provide us with an education.

Let's take for example a dysfunction in the Financial Aid Office of our college. Let's say the financial aid Office doesn't work efficiently, because there are not enough people to serve the students; therefore, students have to stay in line for minutes, sometimes hours. That would be a dysfunction. You can't stay in line for hours, to discuss your financial aid status, when you are in college, because you are too busy for that and you don't have time to waste. Thinking that they will be done on time, sometimes students use some minutes they have to spare before a class to go to the financial aid department. They are usually disappointed, not because the line is always long, but also because the employees working in that department can't work fast enough to meet their schedules; therefore, students can be late to class. If you are one or two minutes away from being served, not all students will leave the line just to be on time for class. The ones who leave the line can say they will come back later, and the same thing might happen to them again. Lateness can affect students, because they will miss some of course material. A student's lateness affects also a professor because no professor wants to be distracted while explaining something. If a lot of students are running late for class everyday because of the financial aid

dysfunction, our school will be affected. Let's be more specific. If you often miss a lot of material in your courses, your GPA will be affected at the end of the semester; therefore, you will not be able to graduate, and you will be frustrated. Or you may drop out of school because of that. The school's image in that case will be affected. A lot of other students will drop out of City Tech because of its new image. Others who wanted to come to our college will be scared to register. If there are not enough students or no students at all at City Tech, our college will be unable to meet its main function, which is to provide us, students, with an education.

What “Smile Pinki” Means to Me

Eva Loutsky

“Smile Pinki” is a touching documentary that explains the burden of a physical deformity and how modern medicine can correct the deformity. The film stirred memories and feelings in me from my childhood in my native country of Romania, and how cultural attitudes influence the way we deal with some medical issues.

I was born in a region of Romania known as Transylvania, a land where three cultures have converged: Romanian, Hungarian, and German. I feel the “fingerprints” of all three cultures on my attitudes. Perhaps the significance of these cultural impressions was clarified during the two decades I spent in Germany. Some of those years were spent as a volunteer in a German-Romanian project dedicated to helping children with disabilities at a Romanian orphanage at Badacin.

The difference in attitudes toward disabled children displayed by teachers at the Academy for Social and Special Education while I volunteered was in stark contrast to those that were common place during the communist regime in Romania. Under communist control, children were locked away from public view and suffered inhuman conditions. These included overcrowding, unheated rooms, unsanitary conditions, neglect, and little medical assistance.

Of course, Romanian citizens were ignorant of the communist policy of hiding “imperfections” from the world, turning helpless children with disabilities into social outcasts. Once the communist government in Romania collapsed in 1989, social progress began with the help of free countries, especially Germany, and a transformation of Romanian orphanages began. The disabled children that survived the communist regime are now adults, 22 years later. One consequence of communist rule was an ideology that deterred Romanian dentists from treating oral problems at the orphanage. Today, German dentists go to Romania twice a year, to treat the oral disabilities suffered by the former orphans.

While the German educators recognize that people with disabilities have same rights as others, many Romanian workers and managers at health facilities do not share that philosophy. Unfortunately, decades of communist control has

left a negative residue in these people about those with disabilities. As a result, many Romanian citizens treat people with disabilities as lower-class people. Sadly, learned values and beliefs do not change easily.

Although any disability can potentially be a source of stress in a person's life, facial deformities are one of the worst because people greet face to face, and our facial appearance is a powerful first impression. Cleft lip and cleft palate not only influence the physical impression we make on others, but also affect speech and eating behavior. Furthermore, physical deformities can create incidents of social rejection that affect one's emotional health and self-esteem. Fortunately in free societies, heightened awareness and greater compassion provides more opportunities to correct oral deformities such as cleft lip and cleft palate.

“Smile Pinki” is a wonderful story about compassion, modern medicine, and the ability to transform a person's life from a state of hopelessness and isolation to happiness and social integration.

The Biography

John Zaun

My subject for this project is twenty year old-female “K.T.,” who was born and raised In Tifton, Georgia. Now living in Queens, New York, she has witnessed a very large cultural change coming from a small southern town and now living in a much more urban area. K.T. is of Cherokee and Romanian descent, with her father’s side being one hundred percent Native American Cherokee, and her mother’s side being one hundred percent Romanian. K.T. takes great pride in resembling her mother in looks, while almost fully imitating her Grandmother’s short-tempered attitude. The middle child of five children, K.T. has a lesbian younger sister, a homosexual younger brother, and two older brothers who each are married and have one child, both males. K.T. herself is currently in a relationship, and is bisexual.

K.T. is not a religious person, and while raised Christian, her family has never labeled themselves as one type of Christian. She is quick to explain that her local church growing up was Pentecostal, but she has also gone to Roman Catholic, Protestant and Episcopalian churches for Sunday worship. Her family stopped attending weekly worships when she was entering High School, and she has never been confirmed or received communion. K.T. jokingly calls herself an “A and P Christian,” explaining that A and P means Ashes and Palms—the only days on the religious calendar she will intentionally go to church being Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday.

K.T. is currently unemployed, as the job market for experienced banking underwriters has thinned severely, with the financial industries downsizing across the country. Prior to losing her job, K.T. was making fairly good wages underwriting for a bank which specialized in mortgage loans and refinancing. Her job revolved around number crunching, proofreading, and pure paperwork. K.T. clearly is upset as she talks fondly of her last job at this bank, which hints to me that this is the type of work she really enjoyed. She points out that she had her own office “at the age of nineteen” and was “already making more than her thirty year-old brother.” The loss of her job is clearly a major down point in her young

life, as she fights back the tears from recalling how proud of herself she once was while working in that particular business.

I would assume based on speaking to K.T. that the loss of her job is one of her biggest struggles in her life. She continues to find support from her family, and survives on state aid. K.T. views her current situation as a motivational factor in pursuing an eventual career as an accountant, “once she gets back on her feet in banking and underwriting,” to support herself through college. K.T. feels that a degree in accounting would propel her to the front of the job market in the banking industry, at least ahead of basic underwriters with no experience and no degree, and ensure this tragic job loss never happens to her again.

K.T.’s biggest asset, she feels, is her strong sense of pride. She refuses to ever quit on a job or task, regardless of how difficult it may be. K.T. has a great dislike for any situation wherein someone has done a better job than she has, and always strives to “put one up on” anyone who feels they could do better than she. K.T. feels that this pride and stubbornness will be a major factor in her future success. K.T. just plainly and simply does not and will not quit. K.T. also acknowledges, however, that this as a weakness – particularly in the workplace environment. She understands that her pride gets in the way of teamwork, or allowing a coworker to do his or her job without her interfering. K.T. is too stubborn and prideful to share her workload with other people; she prefers to do it herself, so that she knows it will be done properly – or at the least, properly done in her eyes. Employers have often scolded her for not allowing others to accomplish their duties without her intervening in some fashion. K.T. struggles with herself in this manner, and even when she realizes she is displaying this behavior again, K.T. finds it very difficult to stop herself from continuing on with said behavior. K.T. is quick to point out that this behavior due to pride and stubbornness is very similar to her Grandmother’s.

The Story

When asked to tell me a story that is personally meaningful to her, K.T. seemed to draw a blank. She thought and thought, but struggled to come up with a story. After prompting her to give her mother a call to get an idea, her eyes lit up. She did not need to make the call. My request to call her mother for an idea made her realize how important and influential her mother has been to her life; how vitally important her mother has been to her growth as a human being; and how her mother’s role in her life overshadows almost anything else.

Her story begins with her birth. She was born with a rare bone disorder that improperly aligned her feet, making them face almost completely backwards. For much of K.T.’s childhood, she was put through many surgeries and was forced to walk in tight metal braces, to keep her feet in place until they slowly began to adapt and align properly. This disorder caused K.T. to cope with a severe pain for much of her childhood. Her mother had to spend many waking

hours in the middle of the night, offering as much comfort as she could to the pain-stricken K.T., and devote many extra dollars from her already small weekly check to getting K.T.'s feet set properly.

Medical bills were a big issue for K.T. and her family at this time. Such surgeries and constant doctor appointments were far from cheap, and the rest of K.T.'s family was still very young and also required a lot of the financial support. K.T. recalls how they used to eat cereal with water in the mornings before school, as they could not afford milk. "A teaspoon of sugar and you'd never know the difference," K.T. says. She tells me how potatoes were the main dish for many nights at dinnertime, that a big sack of them could be had for the same price as one package of meat good for a single meal. K.T. recalls all the many creative methods her mother would use, to make a bland potato become a new meal every night.

K.T. explains that there were several months at a time where she could not walk or stand after surgery; that her mother would carry her to and from the bathroom, the dinner table, and even up the stairs in school to K.T.'s classroom. Despite the pain, despite all the surgery and the braces and the many other struggles K.T. was going through, her mother knew the importance of education and refused to let her miss more than what was absolutely necessary. K.T. remembers despising her mother making her go to school anyway, but now giggles at how ignorant she was as a child of the importance of an education, regardless of any personal issues one may be going through.

As K.T. got older, the braces were finally no longer required, and there were no more surgeries needed. K.T.'s feet had finally been properly aligned permanently, just prior to fifth grade. Her mother never left her side or tired of all the efforts. K.T.'s mother never gave up, and wouldn't let K.T. give up. She was there through nights of pain and agony, through the gut-wrenching notion of her child potentially never walking properly, and through the even more gut-wrenching notion of her child being cut open and practically dissected at the ankles time and time again. She displayed a perseverance that to this day K.T. will always keep in her heart. K.T. was quick to tell me how she could only hope that she could show such love, devotion, and perseverance to her children when she had them.

As a child, K.T. didn't realize how much her mother was going through in order to ensure that K.T. could walk normally in her adult life. Looking back on it now, she smiles and shows a proud fondness for her mother's efforts. K.T. can't help but think what her life would have become had her mother not gone through all she did to make sure K.T. could grow to be a normal adult woman. K.T. will forever look upon her mother with a loving recognition of knowing her mother had suffered just as much as she did, albeit in a more emotional manner, than the physical manner in which K.T. did.

Personality Analysis Via Psychoanalysis

Utilizing all I have learned about my subject, K.T., through her short biography and stories that she finds important, I am going to apply what I know of psychoanalysis to explain and describe focal points in K.T.'s personality. The key traits and behaviors which make K.T. who she is as a person will hopefully take shape and be further explained through this method.

K.T. points out on her own how she is a prideful and persevering young woman. She insists this behavior is largely influenced by her Grandmother, who is the same way. But in hearing her story of her childhood medical problems, and through the personality theory of psychoanalysis, I would have to disagree. I would then need to make the argument that her prideful, stubborn, persevering personality is, clearly a manifestation in adulthood of all she went through as a child with her medical problems. The pain and emotional strain placed upon her by these medical issues pushed her, subconsciously, into believing she can arise unscathed from nearly anything; that she can indeed persevere through the worst of the worst and come out better because of it; that she should be proud of all she can do, because at one time, many doctors did not think she would ever be physically capable of many things.

The extra attention and comfort received by her mother while K.T. was just a child, while for a good reason (her medical troubles), likely could have led to K.T. feeling a bit more self-entitled and competent than her coworkers, as she expressed when speaking about her job. The extra attention she was shown over her other siblings could easily be the driving factor in why she feels no one can do a job as well or as correctly as she can, that she must be the best at doing it or the scale on which the work is judged must be flawed – because in her opinion, there is simply no way someone else could be doing the job better.

K.T. missed out on a lot of her early childhood. She was not allowed to run and play with the other kids. She could not climb trees or play soccer; she couldn't play jump rope or hop scotch, or any of the various child activities in which many of those same-aged children participated. Her medical condition restricted her immensely, especially in terms of physical activity; therefore, she could easily be compensating for the loss of physical activity as a child with her frequent and perhaps over use of the gym. K.T. spends hours on a treadmill, and she clearly is in no dire need of weight loss. She just simply finds such behavior fun and a way to relax her mind. A healthy behavior for sure, but likely overdone and attributed to the inability to participate in such physical activity and exertions as a child.

K.T. is a short-tempered woman, quick with a snotty remark made back to anyone she feels was speaking "less than perfect" about her. This behavior has impacted her past relationships and limited her chances at long-term love. I can attribute this behavior also to her subconscious lashing out at anyone who doesn't show her the same lavish affection displayed by her mother while K.T. was still a child. The amount of attention she was shown as a child due to her medical condition, again, likely has lead to her feeling more self-entitled and deserving of

better; to the point where any criticism causes K.T. to put up a defense and turn the table, lashing out at the person delivering the criticism, as opposed to accepting the criticism as constructive or friendly, regardless of its source.

K.T. has a lot of failed relationships, which can be attributed to many reasons: poor attitude or improperly lashing out at her lover, cheating, or displaying other self-destructive, relationship-ending behavior. As a big part of psychoanalysis explains an innate desire to seek a mate similar to the accordingly gendered parent, K.T.'s lack of a father or male adult figure in her childhood could indeed be a major contributing factor to her self-destructive behavior in relationships. She has no model of what a man and woman should be like as a couple other than what she's seen on television or read in books; having grown up with no father, K.T. also has little concept of the type of man she wishes to have a life with. That concept can also explain her tendency for bisexuality. K.T., having grown up with no father figure present, grew a deep attachment to her mother beyond what is considered healthy through psychoanalytic theory. Rather than seeking a man similar to her father, she sometimes finds herself seeking qualities in a woman that remind her of her mother figure.

Having interviewed K.T. thoroughly, and having applied what I know about psychoanalysis to her story and biographical, a larger picture of who K.T. is as a person and what her personality is like begins to take shape. The major points of who she is as a person are explained well through psychoanalysis of her interview. But the limitations of applying only one theory to explain K.T.'s personality also become clear. I personally believe any one theory is too confining to explain anyone's personality as a whole; however, it is indeed possible to see how psychoanalysis can explain the subconscious motivations of a person's behavior, personality, and the person as a living, breathing, social entity.

Regret

Annese Afridi

Regret: "a feeling of sadness, repentance, or disappointment over something that has happened or been done" (dictionary.com). There are many people who reminisce and feel regret, wishing that there could be a way to go back in time and change everything. As a child, all I wanted was to move fast forward into the day I would be known as and treated as an adult. As a teenager, I tried to show my parents that I was an adult and should be treated and spoken to like an adult and now that I am, in fact, a full-grown adult, all I want is for my parents to embrace me with open arms and treat me like when I was ten years old.

There are those times as an adult when all we want is to go back to holding our parents' hands and walking around the neighborhood without a care in the world. There are hundreds of regrets that I may have, but there is one regret that I think about daily. I think about the time I was twelve years old and stared at my calendar, crossing off each day of every month and every birthday to when I'd turn 18 and finally begin my life, feeling empowered about making my own decisions.

It's late at night; I am exhausted from school and work, and I find myself alone. My family is physically there but not really there emotionally. This is what happens most of the time when people rush into being an adult. What most of us do not know is that as children, we look at our siblings and parents and want what they have. The excitement of making our own decisions and doing fun things like adults do is merely an illusion. Although we want to go out late, drink, party, and have serious relationships, there are heavy responsibilities that come with these adult privileges. Today, as an adult, I live with my parents, but I can never have the sweet emotional relationship I had with them when I was a child. This is one reason why I regret wanting to be an adult so soon.

I never realized how quickly time flew by. I was not ready for what came with being an adult. Someone said, "You always want what you don't have." That is absolutely, one hundred-percent true. I was a child who was

ungrateful and wanted to be an adult, and now that I am an adult I want to go back and be a child again. There is so much that, as an adult, I want from my parents. I want them to hold me tight; I want them to tell me that I made a mistake, and it's okay. I want my parents to embrace me like their little child and not as a twenty-year old adult. As of today, all I can do is reminiscence about my childhood and regret rushing into this journey of growing into an adult; I wish I could once again have an innocent mind like I had as a child.

I can still remember the warm summer breeze hitting my face as I bent down on the boardwalk to feed the ducks in Central Park. I looked to the side and saw my father smiling at me with his gleaming, white teeth; he held my hand tightly, so I wouldn't fall into the lake. I remember when my mother dressed my siblings and me with the same warm blue Scooby-Doo cotton pajamas, and all of us would play Scrabble or play Nintendo until we'd fall asleep. Those experiences that can never be repeated. To see my siblings and me in the same room today would be impossible.

After I turned twelve and all my siblings went off to high school and college and began to have their own personal lives, I felt envious and frustrated. I was the only one at home with nothing to do. All I wanted was to grow up and begin to make my own decisions the way my parents and siblings did. I wanted my parents to stop nagging me every second about brushing my teeth or eating the right foods, and, today, all I want is for my mother to yell at me and say; "Annesa, don't touch the cookie before you eat your vegetables." Today, I am twenty years old, a grown woman who wants to crawl up into her parents' bed and listen to stories that might lull me into a deep, peaceful sleep.

Growing Up Between Two Different Cultures and Finding Our Own Identities

Leyla Dawouda

In “No Name Woman”, chapter one of her memoir *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (published in 1975), Maxine Hong Kingston tells us the story of her aunt, whose name was unknown to her. Her mother begins the story with, “You must not tell anyone,” to emphasize the severity of the story. Kingston learns from her mother that her aunt killed herself in the family water well, because she became pregnant after committing adultery. As an adult, Kingston reflects back on her mother’s stories and comes up with some hypotheses that explain why the villagers got mad at her aunt and why she was considered a ghost. Kingston uses her imagination to create stories that could explain her aunt’s suicide. Kingston’s point of view on her aunt’s story differs from her mother’s, because in a way her mother wants to teach her a lesson whereas Kingston struggles to fit in “solid America”.

Kingston’s mother hates the fact that her sister in-law got pregnant and shamed the family. Kingston remembers her mom telling her, “Don’t let your father know that I told you. He denies her. Now that you’ve started to menstruate, what happened to her could happen to you. Don’t humiliate us. You wouldn’t like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful” (343). In this passage, Kingston talks about her mother’s fear. She wanted to protect the honor of the family above everything. Kingston’s mother, like the rest of the villagers, considers her aunt’s act to be frivolous. The young Kingston’s mother told her every little detail about how the villagers treated the aunt, so that she would be self-conscious about dating and the consequences of getting pregnant. As an adult, Kingston becomes aware of what her mom meant by, “You wouldn’t like to be forgotten as if you had never been born.” She discovers that in the “old Chinese culture” there’s no such thing as honoring blood ties when it comes to tradition. For example, Kingston’s aunt was still part

of the family until she got pregnant by a man other than her husband. Then even Kingston's father denies his little sister.

Even though Kingston was raised in California, her mother was still a typical Chinese mother who wanted her children to live according to the Chinese culture. Kingston explains, "Whenever she had to warn us about life, my mother told us stories that ran like this one, a story to grow up on. She tested our strength to establish reality. Those of us in the first American generation have had to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fits the solid America" (343). She refers to China as the "invisible world," because even though she had never been there, China has a lot of influence on her, since her parents always talked about it. Kingston calls America "solid," because she knows it well; it is the place her parents migrated to and the place where she was born. As a child it was difficult for Kingston to live in a family of immigrants, because what they believed was so different from what Americans believed. Kingston wanted to live a peaceful life as an American, but her parents' background prevented her from doing so.

Kingston's aunt's story creates an irony, because the mother did not expect the young Kingston to become curious about her aunt. The young Kingston wants to know more about her, but she can not talk about her because her aunt's name is taboo in the family. "If I want to learn what clothes my aunt wore, whether flashy or ordinary, I would have to begin, 'Remember Father's drowned-in-the-well sister?' I cannot ask that. My mother has told me once and for all useful parts. She will add nothing unless powered by Necessity, a riverbank that guides her life" (343). In this passage Kingston realizes that she knew absolutely nothing about her aunt. Despite the fact that they were living in California, Kingston's parents were still typical Chinese. Kingston can not ask her mother about her aunt because of the relationship they had. As a good girl she must obey her parents without asking any questions, as if she were a robot.

Kingston wasn't really the good girl her mother wanted her to be, because she went against her mother's warning and created stories about her aunt. The adult Kingston states, "My aunt could not have been the lone romantic who gave up everything for sex. Women in the old China did not choose. Some man had commanded her to lie with him and be his secret evil. I wonder whether he masked himself when he joined the raid on the family" (344). Kingston takes into consideration the role of Chinese women in society and comes up with the theory that maybe her aunt was forced to have sex. She can't imagine that her aunt was a person without heart who would kill her own baby. Kingston points out the fact that in the "old China" nothing was considered as a waste but women definitely were. Unlike her mother and the villagers, Kingston tries to be creative and understand her aunt's feelings. While her mom speaks coldly about the raid in the village, Kingston is positive about the fact that some man had forced the aunt to have sex, and probably the same man was part of the raid. By taking her aunt's side, Kingston goes against the family.

Being born in America, Kingston's point of view differs from her mother's because she knows that even though her aunt went against the

“roundness” of the village; it’s just the way that the story has been told and the time period in which she was born that made her look culpable. Kingston explains one of the reasons why her aunt was bullied by the villagers: “If my aunt had betrayed the family at a time of large grain yields and peace, when many boys were born, and wings were being built on many houses, perhaps she might have escaped such severe punishment. But the men—hungry, greedy, tired of planting in dry soil—had been forced to leave the village in order to send food-money home. There were ghost plagues, bandit plagues, wars with the Japanese, floods. My Chinese brother and sister had died of an unknown sickness. Adultery, perhaps only a mistake during good times, became a crime when the village needed food” (349). Kingston believes that her aunt was unlucky. She was born at a particular time of Chinese history where girls were considered a waste. Adultery became a crime when people were starving in the village. Perhaps, if Kingston’s aunt had been born in a different time period, her punishment would not have been that harsh. Because there was no food in the village, the villagers were stressed out and got mad at every little mistake.

According to Kingston, the aunt was intelligent enough to know what kind of future was awaiting her innocent child, especially in this economic situation. Kingston stated, “She may have gone to the pigsty as a last act of responsibility: She would protect this child as she had protected its father. It would look after her soul, leaving supplies on her grave. But how would this tiny child without family find her grave when there would be no marker for her anywhere, neither in the earth nor the family hall? No one would give her a family hall name. She had taken the child with her into the wastes” (351). Even though the mother and the villagers portray the aunt as being irresponsible, Kingston thinks the opposite. She talks about the possibility of her aunt killing herself and her baby, to protect the baby’s father and the baby itself. The aunt knew that if she left the baby behind the villagers would consider her (Kingston thinks that her aunt’s baby is a girl) an outcast and punish her for her mother’s mistakes. The aunt thought about the child’s loneliness and decided to stay forever with her baby. Kingston, unlike her mother and the villagers, thinks that her aunt is a splendid woman who died protecting what she loved the most.

In “No Name Woman” both Kingston and her mother are great storytellers. Kingston’s mother tells her aunt’s story in a harsh way, so that it can serve as an example to the young Kingston, but all she does is awaken her daughter’s curiosity. Unlike the mother, who tells stories according to tradition and does not question the traditional role of women in old China, Kingston uses her imagination, and through her stories, she does question the role of women in Chinese society. She notices how the villagers in old China supported the men but not the women. Kingston imagines her aunt as being free, something that the villagers were not because they were always bound to the “roundness” (349) of their traditions. Kingston tries to find the similarity between herself and her aunt. She was not the typical Chinese girl her mother wanted her to be, because, just like her aunt, she went against the warnings. Even though Kingston’s mother tells her stories to grow up on, the young Kingston at one point gets confused. She

wants to fit into “solid America” whereas her mom wants her to be related to old China. Between her mom’s confusing stories and her experiences as a Chinese American, the young Kingston struggles to differentiate reality from fiction.

The Story Behind My Name

Jacqueline Henry

Jacqueline Elaine Henry, nickname, Nanny/Brownin. She is I, and I am she. Born on the first of November, 1966, in the busy city of Kingston, on the island of Jamaica, to Verna and Kenneth Henry.

As a child growing up, I was never really fond of my name. To begin with, I thought the name Jacqueline was another boring name that people just looked past. I often wonder why my parents didn't give me one of those cute, girlie names like Tina, Latoya, Aisha or even Karen. To me, only pretty girls carried these names. I also thought Elaine was old, not for a young girl like me. I simply didn't like my names.

As a young teenager, I gave myself an alias name. I would tell anyone who didn't know me that my name was Michelle. I liked it because it was common. I used Michelle as my name, occasionally, until my late twenties. I even received some mail under that name at one point.

I really started to like the name Jacqueline in my late teenage years. It was played in some songs that people liked. It became popular. In these songs Jacqueline is the pretty girl, with the sexy body, who gets the man or is a man's desire. I started to feel pretty and sexy . . . I started to own my name. I began telling some people my real name. People call me Jacque sometimes, which I really like. I asked my parents why I was given the name Jacqueline. My father said, "I just liked it."

Elaine is my middle name. I didn't like it as a child growing up either. Where I come from, only much older women had that name. Now as an adult, I still don't like it. To make things worse, I worked for a woman with the same name, who always talked down to me, but that's another story.

One day, I asked my mother how she came up with that name. She told me, as a young girl, she had a classmate who was very pretty. She had beautiful hair, and she loved to smile. My mother admired her. My speculation is that my mom wished she looked like Elaine. She made a promise to herself that whenever she had a daughter, she would name her Elaine, and so she did. She

said she heard that the original Elaine lives in England. I'm just happy it's not my first name.

I am affectionately called Nanny, which is my nickname. My mother told me that one time, when I was a baby on the bed, my oldest brother Courtney, who's six years older than I am, came into the room, slapped the bed with his hand, and asked, "Wahpen Nanny?" I guessed he learned the name from going to school, where he was taught about the National Heroes of Jamaica. Nanny is the only female heroine. She was a warrior who fought and died for the liberation of the Jamaican people. She was the leader of the Maroons. The Maroons lived up in the mountains. They were very dark skinned people with thick hair. Nanny was feared by many. Today, in Jamaica, Nanny is on the five hundred dollar bill. I love my nickname because it represents greatness.

People who have known me from way back call me Nanny. That name has influenced me. When I was younger, people would say I was feisty, or, in Jamaican dialect, they would say, "Yuh too facety," and I would shrug. I would tell them, "Mi ave a plaasta fi every sore," meaning anything that was said or done that I didn't favor, I had a counterargument or counteraction. As a young teen, my male teacher, Mr. Parchment, once told me I was "witty." I never forgot the meaning of the word. And yes, I fought a lot, but I was a shy tomboy. My friends and I hopped trucks whenever they drove by, played football and cricket in the rain, rode self-made skates that were put together by small plies of wood and small iron wheels that came from old toy trains. We climbed trees to pick fruits and went to cane fields to cut sugar canes, but we were chased away sometimes by the ranger on his horse who protected the fields. We thought it was fun!

My children, except my daughter, call me Nanny. Sometimes my friends call me Nanny of the Maroons, or Nanny Granny, which really doesn't bother me because we all know what's in the name or the story behind the name. Isn't it funny how when I was younger I wanted a name that was popular? Even though I had the name Nanny since I was a baby, I've never heard anyone else with it . . . until one night when it got me into serious trouble with my son's father.

I was in my early twenties. It was Saturday night. The street dance in my neighborhood was off the chain. Reggae music was blasting. Both sides of the street were blocked with dance-goers. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. My friends and I were laughing, dancing, drinking. It was pure fun. Then the music stopped abruptly, and the disc jockey blurted into the mike and proclaimed, "Nanny come check mi now." My friends, as well as I, were curious as to why the D. J. called me, since I did not know him. I didn't move from the spot where we were standing. I pushed the command to the back of my mind, but I was still curious. A few minutes later, Maxi appeared. He is the father of my three sons. He stood around seven inches taller than I, and is a year older, with a thin build. He is light skinned and good looking. He was well known around the neighborhood, because his family owned a couple of race horses which made them money.

Maxi whispered in my ear and commanded that I leave the dance with him. I was upset because I wasn't quite ready to leave, but I obeyed because I didn't want any drama. I had to say goodbye to my friends. When we were a little distance from the dance, the argument started. I tried so hard to explain that I didn't know the D. J., but out of nowhere I ended up with a busted lip. Jealousy got the best of him.

A couple of days went by as I investigated the D. J. and this Nanny he called. To my surprise, he had a girlfriend who had the same nickname as I. Maxi apologized, but I still didn't speak to him for about a month. So much for an uncommon name!

“Brownin” is a slang name used by Jamaican men to describe women with a lighter complexion. This once caused a controversy in Jamaica. A D. J. who goes by the name of Buju Banton sang about loving his Brownin' most of all. The women with the darker skin tone were offended. This caused a stir. Buju had to create a remix about how much he loved and respected women with dark complexion. His remix was accepted.

I have grown to appreciate my names because my parents must have had good intentions when they gave them to me.

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