This journal of student writing is a collection of essays written for College Writing II classes at Marist College for the 2006-2007 academic year. Each teacher of College Writing II was asked to submit an outstanding essay from his/her class. Two editors then reviewed the essays, and works were chosen from each semester to be included in this volume.
Contributors
Fall 2006

Amy Wheeler won first place with her essay, “Wal-Mart: Lending a Helping Hand to the Demise of the United States’ Economy” written for Lynne Koch’s College Writing II class. Amy Wheeler is a sophomore communications major, with a concentration in journalism. She is a member of the Honors Program and the Emerging Leaders Program. She is an active member of band, *The Circle* and the *Generator* magazine. Last semester she was inducted into the National Residence Hall Honorary, and this semester she is co-editor of the literary magazine, the *Mosaic*. She is a freelance writer for her hometown’s local newspaper, the *Ballston Journal*, and she is a supervisor at the Marist Institute for Public Opinion.

Jenny Wiegand won Second Place for her essay, “The Cuckoo: Choral Criminal?” which was prepared for Judith Saunders’ College Writing II class. Jenny is the Daughter of Phyllis Keely and Steven Wiegand, and was born and raised in Garmisch, Germany. After graduating from Munich International School, she began attending Marist College in the fall of 2006. She is currently a sophomore at Marist. Though an Advertising major, she has always enjoyed writing and been interested in literature. She would like to thank Professor Saund’s for submitting her essay to the contest and for the support and guidance she has given her.

Florencia Lauria won Third place with her essay “The Queen’s Virginity,” which was written for Raphaelle Kosek’s College
Writing II class. Florencia Lauria is a sophomore at Marist College. She is an English major with both a literature and a writing concentration. She likes to be involved in campus activities. This semester she is acting as secretary for the Literary Arts Society and vice president for the International Club. She is also attending the NCHC conference in Denver, Colorado this fall. Florencia was born in Argentina, but has been living in Albany for the last seven years. She is very happy that her paper was selected for the e-Scriptor Contest.

Kelly Markowitz’s “Agricultural Production in Local Markets” and Lisa Subrizi’s “Parental Impact on Child Development” both tied for Fourth Place. Kelly was in Lynne Koch’s College Writing II Class, and Lisa was in Eileen Curley’s College Writing II class. Kelly Markiewicz started her freshman at Marist College and transferred to the University of Connecticut, where she now resides as a sophomore. She is studying Natural Resources Management and Engineering, and hopes to become an environmental conservationist in the future. Kelly is from Guilford, Connecticut and enjoys swimming, cooking, singing, and anything outdoors.

Lisa is in her sophomore year at Marist, and is majoring in Psychology with a minor in Spanish Language. She has been on the Dean’s List for the last two semesters, and is involved in extracurricular activities such as Psychology Club and the Student Programming Council. During the summer, she works for a division of Dunn and Bradstreet that conducts research on educational institutions. Aside from school and work, Lisa’s hobby is photography. During her senior year of high school she won “best in show” in the school’s art exhibition. She is looking forward to pursuing graduate level studies after graduating from Marist.
Spring 2007

Kaitlyn Carreau won First Place with her essay “The Need to Expand the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act,” written for Anne McCabe’s College Writing II class.

Vinnie Pagano won Second Place for his essay, “Should the Media Be Blamed For Violent Acts Committed By Young People?” which was written for Greg Machacek’s College Writing II class. Vinnie would like to thank Professor Machacek for submitting his essay. Aside from writing research papers, Vinnie also enjoys writing funny sketches and songs.

Ryan Foster won Third Place for his essay, “The Fear of Not Fearing,” written for Peggy Hach’s College Writing II class. Ryan Foster is a sophomore. He is currently majoring in digital media and has been taking pre-med courses. Ryan hopes to attend medical school after graduating from Marist College. He is twenty years old and grew up in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey. His interests include basketball and snowboarding.
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Wal-Mart: Lending a Helping Hand to the Demise of the United States’ Economy

By Amy Wheeler

The welcoming symbol of the blue and white Wal-Mart sign and its signature yellow smiley face is often a familiar and comforting beacon for consumers nationwide. In actuality, however, this simple icon is causing a drastic decline in the economic stature of the United States. The “everyday low prices” that Wal-Mart uses as a means to compete leave consumers with no other choice but to shop at Wal-Mart instead of the more expensive” Ma and Pa” stores.

Having to support themselves without a five-figure income, the average consumer is forced to seek out the lowest prices in any way possible and thus buy from Wal-Mart. The buying habits of
the American public, however, are not mirrored by their sentiments. In a recent Zogby poll, it was found that 56 percent of Americans now believe “Wal-Mart is bad for America” (Kirklin). One contributing factor may be that low prices force other companies to competitively lower their own prices, even though they may not be able to remain profitable. In addition, store workers are underpaid and overworked while employed by Wal-Mart and many overseas manufacturer’s working conditions are appalling.

Wal-Mart has contributed to the accelerating loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs to China and other low-wage nations. By squashing efforts of workers to unionize, Wal-Mart is able to keep exploiting its workers. Although Wal-Mart is the largest retailer and company in the world as of 2003 with more than $312 billion in sales annually and employs over one million people, Wal-Mart’s actions also cause unemployment of other workers (Fishman). Local businesses are often put out of business by the arrival of a Wal-Mart in their town. The failure of these hundreds of local
businesses come at a great cost to their owners and put thousands out of work, some of whom will then find lower paying jobs at Wal-Mart.

Due to its size, Wal-Mart is setting the standard for all other companies. When Wal-Mart leads, its effects ripple to other parts of the economy. One such instance that proves this ripple effect is the drastic increase in the outsourcing of jobs. Wal-Mart demands that suppliers accept such low prices for goods that their only choice is to outsource their work to low-wage factories overseas. This on-going practice has caused the exodus of millions of production jobs from the United States. Hundreds of American manufacturing plants have been shut down and their production has been shipped overseas, either partially or entirely due to the practices of big box stores like Wal-Mart. In addition, many other retail outlets have been forced to adopt Wal-Mart's methods in order to maintain competitive, thus making the problem even larger (Freeman).
Price competition and outsourcing of jobs has affected not only companies, but also their employees. Newell Rubbermaid, the largest producer of consumer rubber products in the United States, contributes much of their manufacturing output to Wal-Mart Stores. Since January 2001, Rubbermaid has been forced to shut down 69 out of its 400 facilities, and fired 11,000 workers due to the cheaper prices offered by manufacturers overseas. Wal-Mart is also the largest retailer of Levi Strauss, one of the leading manufacturers of jeans and denim products. During the past 18 months, Levi Strauss announced it will shut down its four remaining production plants in North America and shift the work to Ibero-America and Asia, resulting in the loss of several hundred jobs.

General Electric is one of the five largest companies in America and the major producer of appliances. GE’s biggest outlet for goods is Wal-Mart. During the last seven years, GE has fired more than 100,000 American workers in order to outsource jobs.
Most of this work is currently being outsourced to Mexico, China, and Asia in general (Freeman).

These stories are not isolated—there are hundreds of similar stories. Since July 2000, more than 1 million manufacturing jobs producing consumer goods have been lost in the United States (Freeman). Many believe that this loss of manufacturing capacity, including the intellectual and technical capability to create products, is a threat to the nation’s economy and national security. They fear that this loss of skilled workers means that the next consumer innovation, the next generation of products and the next investment will be made elsewhere. In addition, there is a direct relationship between the loss of manufacturing jobs and the fact that there are five million more Americans without health insurance today than in 2001, evidencing just how many people have lost their jobs because of big-box stores (United States).

Today, over 60 percent of Wal-Mart’s products are made in China. Their outsourcing is crippling manufacturing and spreading to other industries. Wal-Mart, because of its size and influence, is
determining the direction of the U.S. labor market’s movement. It was said that, “There is a simple truth that the working families of this nation understand … if we don’t make things we have nothing to trade and if we have nothing to trade we can never solve the trade deficit” (United States). People need to step back and remember the simple components of economics, with all evidence pointing to the fact that Wal-Mart’s economic practices are ultimately hurting the United States economy.

Wal-Mart not only affects the large picture of economics, but the local towns they barge into as well. In a country western song by Danny Green, he sings, “If we don’t wanna lose everything we hold dear, we don’t want another Wal-Mart here” (Green). Green’s sentiments remind us that when Wal-Mart comes into a town, businesses are forced into bankruptcy and the towns are left with empty buildings that are unable to sell. Many believe that when a Wal-Mart is built, small town quality of life is diminished to be replaced with a dead downtown area and a flourishing Wal-Mart supercenter.
A very important issue for small communities is the effect of Wal-Mart store construction on their environment. Prior to building, residents weigh the effects that the new population-attracting supercenter will have on their quality of life and environment. Wal-Mart claims to be environmentally friendly, but community opposition to Wal-Mart dates back to the early 1970s, when Vermont passed a law requiring regional planning commissions to consider the environmental and economic impact of large developments (Hudson and McWilliams). In many instances, Wal-Mart stores their fertilizer in the parking lots. When it rains, the contaminated water washes into a stream that provides public drinking water. In 1999, all new Wal-Mart construction was halted in the state of Pennsylvania due to environmental violations. In 2001, the EPA ordered Wal-Mart to pay a $1 million fine for clean water violations in Texas, Oklahoma, and Massachusetts. In 2004, Wal-Mart faced the largest ever fine on a retailer for clean air violations in Texas, Colorado, California, Delaware, Michigan, South Dakota, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Utah, with a fine of
$3.1 million by the EPA (Greenwald). Clearly, the devotion to the environment that Wal-Mart claims it has is somewhat lacking.

With the invasion of Wal-Mart into a town, small Ma and Pa stores that often offer much better service and more experienced employees are forced out as they are unable to compete with Wal-Mart. Not only are they unable to compete because of Wal-Mart unfair labor practices, they are also dealt a worse hand by the county in which they operate. Wal-Mart is given a leg up with subsidies by counties and cities, including tax abatements, income tax credits, and help with creating new sewer, water, and road systems. Nationwide, subsidies to Wal-Mart have amounted to over $1.008 billion (Greenwald). In a sample of subsidy deals for individual stores, subsidies ranged from $1 million to $12 million, with an average of about $2.8 million. In a survey of Wal-Mart regional distribution centers, they found that 84 of the 91 centers have received subsidies totaling at least $624 million. The deals ranged as high as $48 million, with an average of about $7.4 million (Bainbridge).
Independent businesses, on the other hand, receive little or no subsidies (Greenwald). Wal-Mart's defenders argue that the long-term benefits to local communities outweigh the costs of the subsidies. However, reliable data supporting this is almost impossible to find (Bainbridge). Because of the subsidies that are granted to Wal-Mart, monies that could be going to schools, police, firefighters, recreation, and other services are instead feeding a greedy giant. Wal-Mart has a tendency to move into a community to get aid, ruin local businesses, and then move out and build just outside city limits so that the community won’t be able to reap the tax benefits. This practice has left 26,699,678 square feet of empty Wal-Marts in the United States (Greenwald).

It has also been found that Wal-Mart plays one community against another when it comes to locating a new store. Just like any auction, the competition may lead cities to "over-pay" by giving Wal-Mart larger subsidies (Bainbridge). Overall, the subsidies granted to Wal-Mart make for unfair competition, and the ultimate destruction of small, local businesses.
It has also been found that Wal-Mart plays one community against another when it comes to finding a location for a new store. Just like any auction, the competition may cause cities to "over-pay" by giving Wal-Mart larger subsidies (Bainbridge). Overall, the subsidies granted to Wal-Mart make for unfair competition between cities vying to house the stores. More than that, this leads to the ultimate destruction of small, local businesses. As if this economic factor were not enough, Wal-Mart also contributes to unemployment. Wal-Mart has society under the impression that it consistently creates new jobs, and therefore is helping the economy. In actuality, however, Wal-Mart eliminates three jobs for every two that it creates ("Boycott Wal-Mart"). Because Wal-Mart's big-box stores employ fewer workers in proportion to their revenue than the smaller stores they replace, overall retail employment goes down, not up.

Despite claims that Wal-Mart helps the local economy, an often-ignored fact is that independent community-based businesses typically employ many other local businesses by using the services
of designers, cabinet shops, sign makers, accountants, insurance reps, computer consultants, attorneys, advertising agencies, and others. Local retailers and distributors also carry a higher percentage of locally made goods than Wal-Mart, creating more jobs and revenue for local producers (Krugman).

Wal-Mart also has also made highly publicized claims that it “gives back to the community.” However, in comparison to Bill Gates who has given 58 percent of his wealth to charity, the Walton Family has only given 1 percent (Greenwald). Every year Wal-Mart associates contribute more than $1 million of their own money to support communities and local non-profit organizations (Vargas). They also have the option of donating money from their paychecks to a program that aids other employees in times of crisis. In 2004, employees gave over $5 million to help fellow workers. The Walton family gave $6,000. Rather than donating to people in need, the Walton family chose to make $3.2 million in political contributions in an attempt to stop initiatives aimed at forcing the retailer to raise employee pay and benefits
(Greenwald). This is not the type of gift the community had anticipated.

Another way that the Wal-Mart infiltration has had a negative impact on towns is the rise in crime that accompanies Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart had ensured the towns that they would provide security, however, the crime rate in Wal-Mart parking lots is skyrocketing. It seems as though as soon as the consumer is out of the store, having purchased their items, Wal-Mart is no longer responsible for what happens. As revealed in a documentary by Robert Greenwald, inside the stores there are 4 security guards on patrol and 200 security cameras. Outside, these numbers are significantly less, with some stores having no outdoor guards or cameras. Also brought to light in this documentary is the fact that Wal-Mart has conducted research that they have refused to turn over to the court of law that shows crime rates drop to zero when golf carts in patrol the parking lots (Greenwald). This increased crime causes an increased cost of police-- just one more added expense the town is forced to take care of. It seems to me as though Wal-Mart is just
too greedy to pay a bit more money to provide safety for their customers.

Wal-Mart employs over 1.3 million people in the United States and more than 400,000 people internationally (Vargas). With numbers like these one would imagine that Wal-Mart workers would have excellent working conditions, great benefits, and are loyal to their job; however, in most cases the opposite is true. The images shown in Wal-Mart commercials are of happy employees stating the reasons why they love working at Wal-Mart. While some of these people may actually enjoy working at Wal-Mart, one must also realize there are other workers that Wal-Mart is not displaying, workers who are being forced to skip lunch breaks and rest periods without extra compensation, and work additional hours without pay (Pearson). These workers feel that they must comply because they desperately need their jobs. They also realize how replaceable they are as workers in today’s slumping economy (Greenwald). These harsh policies are by no means isolated incidents. Former Wal-Mart employees Michelle
Braun and Dolores Hummel are seeking as much as $300 million in damages in a wage suit, one of more than 70 filed against Wal-Mart in federal and state courts. These two women are suing on behalf of more than 186,000 current and former employees of Wal-Mart in Pennsylvania, who were forced to skip more than 33 million breaks and 2 million meal periods between 1998 and 2001 (Pearson).

President and CEO of Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Lee Scott, who himself alone made $27,207,799 in 2005, said, “Our policy is that we pay everyone for every hour worked.” Store managers disagree, however. John Lehman, who was a store manager for 19 years said, “The company doesn’t allow the stores enough payroll dollars in their budget to get the job done, and the job is enormous.” This leads to Wal-Mart deliberately understaffing their large stores. Store managers have also come forward to reveal how district managers encourage them to cheat workers out of overtime pay in order to remain on budget (Greenwald). Practices like these
coming from a large and wealthy company like Wal-Mart are unnecessary and disturbing.

It would seem that Wal-Mart is trying everything it can to pay its workers less, including reducing their hours, in the hopes that it can shift its employees from 20 percent part-time to 40 percent. In an internal document that was leaked last year, a Wal-Mart executive said the corporation would “find ways to rid its payroll of full-time and unhealthy employees who are more expensive for the company to retain” (Gogoi). What Wal-Mart does not understand, however, is that by having low wages, poor working conditions, and prohibiting unions, they are actually losing money. Because of these conditions Wal-Mart loses employees consistently and then must spend more money hiring new ones. Wal-Mart is losing between $1.5 million and $2 million that goes into recruiting, interviewing, testing, and training new employees. In addition, analysts within the retail industry state that satisfied and well-compensated workers help generate bigger profits for their companies (Herbst). It seems that Wal-Mart needs
to weigh the consequences of the mistreatment and low wages they are offering their employees.

In addition to not being paid on time, Wal-Mart employees are not being paid as much as they should be. Research on this topic has found that Wal-Mart could increase wages and benefits significantly without raising prices, while still earning a healthy profit. This is because labor costs for its non-supervisory staff account for less than 7 percent of its total sales. To maintain a profit margin almost 50 percent greater than Costco, one of their main competitors, Wal-Mart could raise the wages and benefits of each of these employees by more than $2,000, as of 2005, without raising product prices at all. Bernstein and Biven’s stated: “To believe otherwise is to believe that Wal-Mart's price advantage comes completely from substandard worker pay and not through any cost efficiencies” (Bernstein and Bivens). Most companies raise productivity by mandating more labor or by equipping employees with advanced technology that will accomplish more in a shorter amount of time. Wal-Mart utilizes both of these methods,
which is why it is both successful and scorned (Striffler). Costco succeeds by offering fewer brands of each item, suppressing infrastructure costs, forgoing advertising and maintaining low employee turnover (Lyderson).

An overlooked result of the wages Wal-Mart employees earn is the subsequently lower wages of its competitors and stores throughout the region of Wal-Mart expansion (Bernstein). Once called a "weed" that "drains the life out of other plants," Greenwald asserts that Wal-Mart drives down retail wages $3 billion every year, which leads to major problems throughout the economy (Hudson). Defenders of the company argue that lower prices balance the effects of lower wages and lead to higher purchasing power for the American worker. They cite statistics such as: “When Wal-Mart enters a market, prices decrease by 8 percent in rural areas and 5 percent in urban areas” (Ghemawat and Mark). However, these supporters fail to address the rising costs of items unavailable for purchase at Wal-Mart, such as health care, housing, and transportation (See Chart A).
The average American citizen is paying for Wal-Mart; maybe not at the register, but definitely when it is time to pay his or her taxes. Because Wal-Mart does not provide its employees with a company insurance policy, workers are encouraged to seek government aid (Greenwald). The company spends less than half of what most firms do for health insurance, even in the retail industry (“Wal-Mart Non-Health Care Benefits”). Bernstein asserts that 46 percent of children with parents who work at Wal-Mart are uninsured or on Medicaid, in comparison to the 29 percent at large retailers and 32 percent for all retailers. Even with this knowledge, President Bush proposed in his most recent budget to cut Medicaid by $5 billion in addition to $5 billion in cuts to other programs for low-income people. In February of 2006, Congress passed a budget reconciliation that also included a $27 billion cut in Medicaid over 10 years (Bernstein). With these cuts in place, the burden placed on taxpayers because of Wal-Mart’s low wages will only increase. Additionally, Wal-Mart fails to provide a secure retirement benefit for its employees, offering plans that do not
guarantee workers a fixed monthly pension benefit and concentrate investment in their own stock. Ultimately, it costs taxpayers $1,557,000,000 to support Wal-Mart employees (Greenwald). If more people knew this, perhaps the inexpensive prices they are encountering at the register may seem less appealing.

The American Federation of Teachers, an openly anti-Wal-Mart organization, is seeking legislation to put a stop to Wal-Mart’s poor insurance plan. This legislation is similar to that of the Health Care Security Act of Suffolk County, New York, which states that:

Covered employers shall make minimum healthcare expenditures not less than $3.00 per hour per employee on behalf of their employees each year. No covered employer shall deduct any payment made from an employee's wages, salaries, or other compensation or reduce any employee's wages, salaries or other compensation
in order to finance compliance with this law.

(“Boycott Wal-Mart”)

At the beginning of 2006, the New York Times reported that lawmakers in 30 states were considering legislation that would require large corporations to increase spending on employee health insurance ("Wal-Mart"). With laws like this in place, the responsibility of its workers’ well-being would then fall on Wal-Mart, not on the taxpayers, who have no control over how much Wal-Mart employees are able to spend on health care.

Wal-Mart is also facing lawsuits in regards to the company’s working conditions. In 2003, federal authorities arrested 250 undocumented immigrants who were employed by janitor contracting services and hired by Wal-Mart in 21 states. Many of the janitors worked seven days or nights a week without overtime pay or injury compensation. In March 2005, Wal-Mart agreed to pay $11 million to settle the federal allegations. This was the largest immigration-related fine ever levied ("The Real Facts About Wal-Mart"). Wal-Mart is also facing the largest class action
lawsuit recorded in history. In 2001, six women sued Wal-Mart, claiming the company discriminated against females by systematically denying them promotions and paying them less than men. The lawsuit, Dukes v. Wal-Mart, has expanded to include more than 1.6 million current and former female employees. In 2001, while more than two-thirds of Wal-Mart's hourly workers were female, women held only one-third of managerial positions and made up less than 15 percent of store managers. This occurred despite women having had greater seniority and higher merit ratings on average than their male counterparts. In 2001, women managers on earned approximately $14,500 less than their male equivalents and female hourly workers earned on average $1,100 less than their male employees (“The Real Facts About Wal-Mart”).

Working conditions are not just a problem in American locations. Wal-Mart put forth a feeble effort to address concerns with the notorious human rights and working conditions at Wal-Mart contractor facilities in China. Charles Fishman, author of The
Wal-Mart Effect, wrote, “Of the 12,500 inspections [of overseas factories] in 2004, only 8 percent were surprise inspections.” The inspections that were announced in advance gave factory operators the chance to hide or fix violations before inspectors would arrive. Yet even among those 11,500 pre-announced inspections, Fishman explains: “at least 8,900 resulted in violations of Wal-Mart's own policies serious enough to suspend the factory, or put it on notice. That's a 77 percent failure rate” (“Internal Documents of Wal-Mart”). Instead of acting on these issues, however, Wal-Mart chose to ignore them.

One solution for the workers to combat poor working conditions and low wages would be to form a union, though Wal-Mart has ceased all union efforts. Wal-Mart has resorted to intimidating, coercing, and harassing employees to prevent them from making their voices heard within a union. Wal-Mart has even taken the extreme route of closing a store rather than acknowledging its workers' rights to a union, resulting in the elimination of hundreds of jobs. The manager of that particular
store said: “Wal-Mart is relentless in their search for union activity, and they try to squelch it, kill it” (Lehman). Store managers are required to report any sign of suspicious activity, and they are trained to identify people who are the strongest promoters of a petition. Associates are flooded with brainwashing material against unions and are under constant illegal surveillance. For every store, there is a $7,000 anti-union camera package, a $30,000 undercover spy van, a $100,000 24-hour anti-union hotline and a $7 million rapid response team with corporate jet available to them (Greenwald). These union-crushing practices are not uncommon, and federal labor law charges have been filed on behalf of Wal-Mart workers in 25 states. If the charges are true, these practices would indicate a criminal offense under the federal Taft-Hartley Act (“Wal-Mart Suppresses Workers' Democratic Right to Choose a Union”).
Although the prices at Wal-Mart may seem appealing, the effects of this business show that Wal-Mart is leading to outsourcing of jobs, a decline in small local businesses, and poor labor conditions, ultimately contributing to a decreased status of the American economy. Although Wal-Mart is not the only big box store criticized for its policies, it has become a symbol for much of what is wrong with employers. With 5,000 lawsuits filed against Wal-Mart each year, it is clear that Wal-Mart should not be considered one of the “most admired” companies, named by FORTUNE magazine (Vargas). President and CEO of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. said it best when he explained, “Wal-Mart Stores Inc. has generated fear, if not envy, in some circles. And that means it’s more important than ever that we focus on doing the right thing, and doing things right every time” (Greenwald). Wal-Mart, however, is not doing the right thing every time. Wal-Mart grew into the world's largest retailer by relentlessly cutting prices and wages, putting local retailers out of business and passing on the short-term savings on to the consumers (Hudson and McWilliams).
These practices, although they brought Wal-Mart to the top, will soon prove unable to keep it there, changing the way we see our economy forever.
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Chart A
Shares of Consumer Expenditures on Goods That Can Be Bought At Wal-Mart in Comparison To Ones That Can’t Be
(Bernstein)
The Cuckoo: Choral Criminal?

By Jenny Wiegand

Do ethics apply to animals? If they do, the cuckoo bird falls along the lines of the lowest scum on the planet, equivalent to a murderer with a history of bank robbing and kidnapping. Of course, it seems ridiculous to consider applying human ethics to animals, especially to a species considered the “most primitive of landbirds” (Feduccia 314). Even so, the cuckoo arouses dislike among humans due to its habit of laying its eggs in other birds’ nests. On the other hand, many people are very fond of the cuckoo, especially its famous call. Some appreciate this bird so much that they have eternalized the cuckoo’s well-known bisyllabic call in the form of a clock in their living rooms. Others are fond of the cuckoo because its call initiates spring. So it would seem that the cuckoo has the world divided in two: those who love
the bird for its role as harbinger of spring and those who dislike it for its exploitative behavior. Perhaps this explains the ambivalence and paradox in presentations of the cuckoo in folklore, mythology and literature.

The Cuckoo belongs to the family of the Cuculidae, including approximately 127 species. A species of this bird can be found almost anywhere in the world; however, most cuckoos prefer tropical and subtropical regions. The most commonly found type in North America is the Black-billed Cuckoo (Feduccia 316). Physiologically, the cuckoo is hardly a unique bird. Cuckoos are generally slender with dark plumage, usually brown with white undersides and some form of white markings on their long tail feathers. The Black-billed Cuckoo is even more slender than its cuculidae relatives with a weaker and less hooked-bill, and less-contrasting tail spots (Sibley 268). Overall cuckoos are very inconspicuous birds, due in part to their zygodactyl feet. Zygodactyl feet have digits two and three opposing digits one and four behind (Feduccia 316). This feature allows it to move
stealthily and perch undetected in trees and bushes. Perhaps this is why the cuckoo is so hard to detect. Indeed, many people who have heard the cuckoo’s famous call have never actually seen the bird itself. The cuckoo’s invisibility has given rise to verses such as in Shakespeare’s Henry IV, Part I: “He was but as the cuckoo is in June / Heard, not regarded” (1.2.7-76).

While the cuckoos are not necessarily distinguished by their physiology, they are indeed unique. Some cuckoos are brood parasites. This means that these cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of smaller, unrelated birds to be raised by host parents (“Cuckoo”). Two-thirds of the cuckoo species are non-parasitic breeders, yet this majority is overshadowed by the approximately forty-five species that use brood parasitism as their only means of reproduction (“Cuckoo”). Many consider the cuckoo a lazy creature for this very reason, as an English Nursery Rhyme (“The Cuckoo”) claims:

The cuckoo is a lazy bird,

She never builds a nest,
She makes herself busy, 

By singing to the rest. (lines 9-12)

A particularly famous example of this kind of parasitism is the European Cuckoo. The European Cuckoo female waits until an appropriate nest becomes available and then deposits one of her eggs into the nest of another bird (“Cuckoo”). These other birds are most commonly warblers or magpies (Anon par. 2). When the cuckoo female deposits her own egg into the host nest, she typically steals one of the host eggs to provide room for her own. The cuckoo’s malicious behavior does not end here. After this operation has been successfully completed, the cuckoo female rewards herself by eating the stolen egg (“Cuckoo”). Cuckoos get away with this because they have evolved to the point where they can lay eggs that mimic the color and approximate size of the host eggs. This makes it more difficult for other birds to detect the cuckoo egg among their own (Elphick, Dunning, and Sibley 334).

In Britain, cuckoos parasitize warblers because the warbler is a dim-witted bird that either does not realize it is raising offspring
the cuckoo’s offspring or simply does not care (Anon par. 2). In Spain, the cuckoo has selected the magpie as host for its offspring (Anon par. 2). Unlike the easy-going warblers, the magpies will often recognize the phony egg and eject it as soon as the cuckoo places it into the host nest. One would think this would end the cuckoo’s parasitism. But instead, the European Cuckoo has acquired mafia behavior. Magpies that accept the foreign egg and raise it as their young are left alone. But those magpies that are unwilling to put up with the cuckoo egg and eject it suffer “unfortunate accidents” (Anon par. 3). Magpies return to their nests only to discover that their eggs are destroyed or their nestlings are killed. All clues lead to the cuckoo as the culprit (Anon par. 3).

Since brood parasitism is a way of life for the cuckoo, it is no wonder that a lot of people, emotionally charged by human ethics, condemn the cuckoo for its behavior (Lai par. 20). In fact, humans’ dislike of the cuckoo can be seen in colloquialisms in many languages. The “cuckoo” often signifies “a coward and
fearful man” (Lai par. 2). In French, the term signals deceit, whereas the British associate the cuckoo with “faithlessness” (Lai par. 2). In Henry IV, Part I, Shakespeare refers again to the cuckoo’s brood parasitism: “Being fed by us you used us so / As that ungentle gull, the cuckoo’s bird / Useth the sparrow” (5.1. 59-61). Shakespeare points to the exploitative behavior of the cuckoo bird and uses it as a simile to describe abhorrent human behavior.

Most interestingly, perhaps, is the association of the modern day colloquial term “cuckoo,” used to describe someone who is crazy. The origin of this association can be traced back to the English folktale “The Cuckoo Bush Tale.” The events of this tale take place in the English village of Gotham. It is said that King John had planned to make Gotham village home to a new hunting lodge. Yet, the villagers of Gotham, indisposed to this idea, were determined to drive the king away. They did so by acting mad. They predicted that madness, thought to be contagious at the time, would be a sure way to drive the king out of their village. For this reason they performed a series of foolish acts, including an attempt
to eternalize spring by capturing a cuckoo. They built a fence around a bush known to be frequented by a cuckoo. Not surprisingly, the cuckoo simply flew away, thwarting the efforts of the villagers. “The punch line to the joke of the story comes when the Gothamites are made to say ‘If only we had made the hedge higher, she would not have escaped’” (Earp 4). This explains why today the term “cuckoo” is associated with madness and insanity. Perhaps this is why Ken Kesey selected the title of One flew Over the Cuckoos Nest for his popular novel about a mental institution.

Despite such powerful negative associations, there are people who admire the cuckoo for its call. The cuckoo’s bisyllabic call, known by most even if they have never experienced it firsthand, is of course how the bird got its name. The call distinguishes the cuckoo from other songbirds and makes it a particularly attractive subject to humans. Some simply appreciate the cuckoo’s unique call, yet others love the cuckoo and its call for their symbolic meaning. All birds, including the cuckoo, sing more and louder with the emergence of spring, as their vocalizations mark territory
and are used as a mating mechanism (Lai par. 18). In fact, the annual resurgence of the cuckoo’s call acts like the rooster’s call at dawn: the cuckoo’s call signifies the beginning of spring. In England it has become a tradition to report the first cuckoo call heard in spring in the *London Times*, as this report officially marks the commencement of the new season (“Cuckoo”). An English nursery rhyme states:

> The cuckoo is a merry bird,
> He sings as he flies,
> He brings us glad tidings
> And tells us no lies. (“The Cuckoo” lines 1-4)

Presumably, the “glad tidings” mentioned in this rhyme refer to the tidings of spring. The line “tells us no lies” indicates that the cuckoo’s call is accepted as an accurate report.

The cuckoo’s call at the emergence of spring has given this bird the title of harbinger of this season. Many cultures have set cycles according to “when the cuckoo calls” (Lai par. 19). For example, Greece, China and Germany have used the cuckoo’s song
as a call to begin farming (Lai par. 20). Other cultures have bestowed the cuckoo with the life-giving powers of spring. This characteristic is especially rooted in Portuguese culture. As many cultures around the world assign the stork as a bringer of newborns, Portuguese folklore claims that the cuckoo brings infants from its winter dwelling. In Portugal, it has become custom to refer to children as “little cuckoos,” and it is not unusual to ask a pregnant woman if she has already made clothes for her “little cuckoo” (Da Silva 293). Much like Greece, China and Germany, Portugal celebrates the cuckoo and its influence upon human’s lives. Here it is custom on March 19th for a man to dress up as a cuckoo and allow himself to be captured by others “for the sake of agricultural and human fertility” (Da Silva 295-296). Similarly, in Romania, youths disguise themselves as cuckoos at Carnival and “ritually soil everyone they me[e]t”, to celebrate “the overall return of life force” (Da Silva 295-296).

Of all people who rejoice in the cuckoo, William Wordsworth is probably the most profound in expressing his
admiration of the positive aspects of the cuckoo. In his poem “To
the Cuckoo” Wordsworth addresses all of the notorious features of
the cuckoo:

    O Blithe New-comer! I have heard,
    I hear thee and rejoice.
    O Cuckoo! Shall I call thee Bird,
    Or but a wandering Voice? (lines 1-4)

Wordsworth addresses the cuckoo as “new-comer” referring to
both the reemergence of the cuckoo after winter and also to it’s life
giving powers and its role as the bringer of newborns in some
cultures. He also illustrates the inconspicuous nature of the
cuckoo, naming it “a wandering voice.” The first two lines of the
next stanza of Wordsworth’s poem, “While I am lying on the grass
/ Thy twofold shout I hear,” portrays the cuckoo’s characteristic
bisyllabic call. Wordsworth then goes on to welcome “the darling
of the Spring” and in the last two stanzas continues:

    O blessed Bird! The earth we pace
    Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;

That is fit home for Thee! (lines 29-31)

Wordsworth here recalls the most famous connotation of the cuckoo as the herald of spring and life. Furthermore, his reference to the world as a “faery place,” creates the allusion that the world is a fairyland, made magical because of the cuckoo’s appearance. This allusion emphasizes the awe-inspiring quality of the cuckoo and correlates with the belief that the bird has magical powers.

Wordsworth and Shakespeare, among other artists, have encapsulated the most famous features of the cuckoo in their works. These European writers have most likely been inspired by the European Cuckoo, a much more interesting subject of consideration because of ambivalent responses created by the unique qualities of the bird. An otherwise ordinary bird in terms of its appearance, the cuckoo has surpassed other songbirds in fame and admiration. This is because of its paradoxical nature as both brood parasite and harbinger of spring. Whether admired or
criticized, one must admit that the supposed criminal is quite ingenious.
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The Queen’s Virginity

By Florencia Lauria

Queen Elizabeth I was a notorious ruler of England who greatly expanded the role of England in the world. Through her determination and dedication, she advanced the country despite great political and religious factionalism. During her reign, English colonization grew, and the economy prospered as a result of transatlantic trade. Literature flourished at that time with authors such as William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, and Ben Johnson.

However, the Queen is not only remembered for her political performance. Today, many of the discussions concerning Queen Elizabeth I revolve around her virginity and her decision to remain unmarried. The “Virgin Queen” was aware of the importance that citizens place on the personal lives of their governors. She knew that by remaining single she would be able to maintain her
individuality as a ruler. The Queen’s decision demonstrates the importance she placed on her political status over anything else, even the possibility of committed love. She claimed only to love her nation, and she never let any other personal interest interfere with her complete devotion to the crown. Queen Elizabeth I abstained from becoming openly involved with any man and in doing so protected her popularity.

There are many possible reasons why the Queen chose to remain single. Elizabeth’s ambitious character led her to believe that having a husband would diminish her power. Many times throughout her reign, she gave the impression that she had settled upon a contender; but when it came to the final decision, “ambition and desire of power proved stronger than love, and she preferred continuing to occupy her lofty position by herself, alone” (Abbot 135). Elizabeth greatly prized her independence, quoted as saying “My Lords, do whatever you wish. As for me, I shall do no otherwise than pleases me” (Elizabeth I Quotes) to the Parliament on the matter of her succession. She was not about to take a
husband simply to secure a clear cut succession because she wasn’t concerned with assigning her power to anybody else. This is understandable considering it was her most precious possession. She knew at that time period if she were to take a husband she would become his subordinate. After all, her father had proven to be the perfect example of a dominant male who had no respect for women. Henry VIII had had six different wives. Elizabeth’s mother, Anne Boleyn, was his second wife. She was executed after being accused of adultery, although most people would agree that it wasn’t so much her behavior that brought on her death, but her inability to produce a male heir (Abbott 29). This affected Elizabeth’s perception of love and marriage. Her father had been disappointed that Elizabeth was a girl; the Queen must have yearned to prove her capability as a female ruler (Abbot 26).

Along with power, and perhaps as a measure of maintaining it, Elizabeth was also greatly concerned with her popularity. She knew that as a political figure, her personal life was intertwined with her title. As an “ever-cautious monarch” (Minogue), Elizabeth
worried about the repercussions that her choice in husband would have. She knew that if she married a foreigner, like Duke Anjou of France—one of her most serious suitor—the marriage would compromise England’s foreign policy. At the same time, marrying a fellow countryman could augment the infighting and factionalism. Depending upon the religious affiliation of her husband, either her Catholic subjects or her Protestant subjects would denounce the marriage (Black 43). The Queen “relied solely on the loyalty and faithfulness of her Protestant subjects to maintain her rights to the succession, and she knew that if she displeased them by such an unpopular Catholic marriage, her reliance upon them must be very much weakened” (Abbot 133).

One of her first suitors was Philip II of Spain. The Queen had many reasons to refuse this marriage including Philip’s previous relationship with her sister Mary, his nationality, and more importantly his Catholic religion. Elizabeth couldn’t consider the possibility of marrying someone who contradicted so many of the
demands of her subjects. She was very limited in her choices if she wanted to avoid severe political consequences.

A good example of this extreme desire to be popular is demonstrated in her relationship with Robert Dudley. Queen Elizabeth I “had apparently become infatuated with the charms of Lord Robert” (Black 43); and though she showed her favoritism towards him by giving him a number of important titles, such as Earl of Leicester, she never married him. Robert Dudley was different from all her other suitors in that he didn’t have anything to offer. Still, the Queen’s relationship with him was the most passionate one. Henry Sidney, the lord deputy of Ireland, once wrote an account of the flirtatious relationship of Elizabeth and Lord Robert: “‘She, Robert, and I being alone on the gallery, they began joking, which she likes to do much better than talking about business. They went so far with their jokes that Lord Robert told her that if she liked I could be the minister to perform the act of marriage, and she, nothing loth to hear it, said she was not sure whether I knew enough English’” (qtd. in Perry 164). It was
evident that the two had an intimate relationship, and “those closest to Elizabeth were in no doubt that she was in love” (Perry 162). Although by normal standards mutual love is an indicator that a serious relationship is possible, Elizabeth’s “heart coursed one way [and] her head another” (Perry 162). As a shrewd politician, she knew that marrying Dudley wouldn’t bring forth any political benefit. As a matter of fact, the marriage would’ve probably decreased the Queen’s popularity. Since Dudley was an Englishman, “Elizabeth would have gone down in estimation of foreign courts, and England’s standing within the international community would have been grievously diminished” (Somerset 133). Also, Dudley had a bad reputation. The two factors that most contributed to his unpopularity were that he was the son of an English traitor and that he was a married man. It was rumored all through England that Dudley spent far too much time with Elizabeth and not enough with his wife (Black 43). To further complicate the matter, his wife, Amy Robstar, was found dead at the bottom of the stairs in their home. Rumors circulated that
Robstar had been murdered. The people of England grew even wearier of the Queen’s favorite contender; “they had hated Leicester before, and they hated him now even inveterately still. Favorites are generally hated; royal favorites always” (Abbott 139). Even though the death of Amy Robstar was said to have been an accident, the Queen could not ignore public opinion that “refused to accept the accident theory” (Black 44). Her fear of unpopularity and public scandal obliterated any hope of marriage between the two.

The Queen had her “first bitter taste of [a] power scandal” (Black 2) when she was fifteen years old and living in her stepmother’s house. Katherine Parr was Henry VIII’s last wife. After his death, she had decided to make Admiral Seymour her husband. Seymour entertained a lustful affection for the young princess Elizabeth and had a habit of walking into her chamber when she was getting dressed (Erikson 70). This attention grew more and more provocative, and rumors eventually reached Katherine herself. The Queen decided it was time to put an end to
Seymour’s flirtatiousness. She talked to him and told him to refrain from spending time alone with the young princess (Erikson 72). Yet, one day Katherine caught Elizabeth in his arms. The account of what exactly Elizabeth and Seymour were doing when they were caught is not very accurate. Some say they were embracing, others claim that their doings were more scandalous (Erickson). Either way, Katherine was appalled by “the sight of her husband embracing her stepdaughter” (Erikson 74) and ordered that Elizabeth be taken away to live with her sister Mary. The scandal was enough to show Elizabeth “the importance of keeping a tight hold over her natural impulses” (Black 2).

Another possible reason the Queen chose to remain single was her strong devotion to the crown. In her “Golden Speech” in 1601 she addressed her subjects by saying: “There is no jewel, be it of never so rich a prince, which I set before this jewel: I mean your love” (Halsall). This implies that her one true love was not Lord Dudley, nor Admiral Seymour, nor any of her other suitors, but instead it was entire English nation. Aside from her power-
hungry personality, the Queen exemplified a grand devotion for the people she ruled. It is clear that “[h]er people were the objects of all her affection and regard. She should never have any other spouse. She said she should be well contented to have it engraved upon her tomb-stone ‘Here lies a queen who lived and died a virgin’” (Abbot 135). Her coronation could then be interpreted as the Queen’s marriage in which she professed her absolute commitment to the English people.

It is hard to say whether her title as the “Virgin Queen” should be interpreted literally or not. As previously noted, there were several rumors concerning the Queen’s “infatuation” (Black 43) with men such as Lord Dudley and Admiral Seymour; however, the seriousness of the relationships she maintained with these men remains unknown. She had sworn to her first parliament that “she intended to live and die a virgin” (Black 43), yet, in practice, Elizabeth’s actions were sometimes misleading; for example, “[she] visited Dudley in his chamber night and day” (Perry 158). Perhaps the reason she chose to cling to this notion of
virginity lies in the value of chastity at the time. Virginity was greatly encouraged in society. Women who lost their virginity before marriage “were the most dreaded of tragedies” (Erikson 71). Therefore, Elizabeth felt she had to maintain the impression of purity which allowed for her popularity. During this period of time, teachers such as the Spanish Humanist Vives were encouraged to teach the dangers of being unchaste. It was said that a woman who lost her virginity prior to her marriage had to deal with “[continual] gossip about her” (Erikson 71), something that Queen Elizabeth fervently wanted to avoid. Furthermore, virginity demonstrated honor, whereas the loss of virginity exemplified “weak character.” (Erikson 72) In an effort to avoid these stereotypes, the Queen attempted to stick to the accepted and valuable title she held.

Even though the Queen chose to lead a more prominent political life rather than a romantic one, she still had to deal with the bitterness of her decision. A good source of evidence for her regret regarding the decision is in her own poetry. In her poem “On Monsieur’s Departure” she writes, “I grieve and dare not show my
discontent/ I love and yet am forced to seem to hate” (Poetry Out
Loud). This poem is born out of an emotional experience. William
Wordsworth, for example, once said “All good poetry is the
spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” If this is true,
Elizabeth’s poetry is a reflection of her own frustration. The Queen
valued the advantages of remaining single, but like any other
human being she must have lamented not having a real and
committed relationship. Elizabeth was known to be irritable and
jealous; “[s]he envied others the love and domestic enjoyments
which ambition forbade her to share” (Abbott 155). Elizabeth
didn’t always seem content with her decision to remain unmarried,
and often became resentful of those who had what she did not. She
would go to great lengths to convince the young ladies of the court
to remain single as well (Abbott 156). These acts were brought on
by envy and a desire to be accompanied by others who shared her
plight.

Elizabeth was not just a stoic, harsh politician; she was also a
woman who craved attention. “Nothing pleased her more than
compliments” (Abbott 162) and this is perhaps another reason why she kept all the suitors waiting. She made it seem as though it were possible that someday she would decide to marry which is why she never lacked contenders, affections and gifts. The best example of how far Queen Elizabeth went in pretending her interest in marriage was her relationship with the young French Duke of Anjou (Hibbert 184). She made it seem as though she was truly considering marrying him. The terms of marriage were that “The Duke of Anjou was to be crowned King of England and be the country’s joint ruler; he was to receive an annual income of sixty thousand pounds; he was to be appointed Regent should Elizabeth bear a child and die before him; he was to be allowed to attend Mass in England and in public” (Hibbert 184). Yet, although talks had gone this far, “her heart failed her at last” (Abbott 148) and the marriage was called off.

Elizabeth’s ambition, her fear of scandal, her strong devotion to the crown, and her political shrewdness resulted in her ultimate virginity. For Elizabeth, power thwarted the concept of love.
However, it is apparent that even long after she had made up her mind, the fantasy of true love still taunted her. Perhaps Elizabeth wouldn’t be known as the Virgin Queen had her possible marriage to Dudley been less controversial. In any case, her political position diminished the practical importance of marriage. She realized that if she were to marry, she’d be forced to marry someone who pleased the whole nation. But why would the power-hungry Queen willingly agree to share her influence with someone she didn’t love, simply because they are compatible? She needed a man who satisfied the political standards, but also her own personal standards, and there was no such man. Knowing that she couldn’t have both love and marriage, the Queen chose to have neither.
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Local markets are becoming the driving force in today’s agricultural world. Recent technological advances, along with the rising awareness of older agricultural techniques, are piquing an interest in locally grown produce. Using a global scale as a contrasting perspective, large scale production is no longer the premier choice. The quality and freshness of local products are of a higher level because of the close proximity to customers. By removing the need for extensive packaging and transportation costs, both farmers and customers save money. Fresh, farm-to-plate food from local distribution is beneficial to consumer health as well. The time and concentration that farmers dedicate to their produce serves as their quality control. The nutritional value of local markets improves the well being of the consumer by helping to prevent and fight disease. The local market mentality is growing in appeal and becoming more well known in today’s society.
Restaurants have become more inclined to use local organic produce in their cooking. Food activists also support this idea. Agricultural production in local markets is changing the attitudes of today’s consumers and restaurateurs, who are becoming aware of the environmental, economic, and health benefits that they provide.

The environmentally-conscious and creative farming practices of local farmers set them apart from farmers using commercial methods. Although the practices vary from farm to farm according to their location and climate conditions, they all reflect the same ideologies. Rather than relying on artificial inputs like synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, genetically modified seeds, and preservatives, local farmers concentrate on ecosystem management. By using organic fertilizers, such as compost, green manure, and animal manure, they implement more natural agricultural methods that work with the environment. Over time, the use of these resources will help to preserve soil fertility and prevent pest problems. Local farmers also use unique soil-building
practices to keep growing conditions at their best, which increases productivity. A few of these methods include crop rotations, intercropping, symbiotic associations, cover crops, and minimum land tillage (Uniting the Organic World). The agricultural methods used in local farming markets have proved to be both successful and environmentally friendly.

By using continuous cropping with crop rotation, farmers can avoid the build-up of pathogens and pests. By planting different crops in a single space in order of their seasons, the farmer adds variety to land growth. The alternation of deep roots and shallow roots will help to improve soil structure. “The widespread adoption of management practices [such as crop rotation]...enhance[s] soil biological activity and thereby build[s] up long-term soil productivity and health” (Food and Agriculture Organization). These practices prepare the soil for both current and future development. Crop rotation also creates an increase in nutrient and energy cycling, which allows the soil to retain more water and nutrients for crop growth. Local markets continue to enhance
agricultural variety through their use of biodiversity within plant species. Farmers plant traditional or adapted seeds because of their resistance to disease and their ability to adapt to various weather conditions. They also want to keep environmental conditions and wildlife as natural as possible in the area surrounding the agricultural fields. This methodology promotes healthy growth with the absence of chemical inputs. Unlike the global market, local farmers do not excessively use agrochemicals, a production process that requires a large amount of fossil fuel. This helps to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to improve air quality. Local market production practices aid farmers through a continuously abundant harvest and helps to preserve the environment.

Global markets could learn a great deal about improving their own production. The environmentally-conscious methods used by local farmers both develop and protect the land that they depend upon for profit. If commercial markets continue to incorporate detrimental “enhancers” into their production, they hurt only
themselves. Without the use of fertilizers and artificial chemicals, they will avoid degrading their land and save money that would have otherwise been used to pay off damage or pollution expenses. Commercial markets may also avoid possible health risks from improper use. One of the key concepts in local agriculture is to provide ecological sustainability over time to help prevent problems in the future. “A farmer-friendly approach is essential to the successful implementation of change” (Thrupp 278).

Change then uncovers new solutions for current problems. By maintaining the natural processes in the soil with soil building practices of local markets, commercial farmers can work to prevent erosion. Without the use of synthetic fertilizers, the soil will be free of harmful chemicals that make it more susceptible to erosive forces. Instead, they will gain a greater ability to retain crucial elements like water and nutrients. Biodiversity will increase, and the amount of nutrients lost in the process will decrease. The overall process will help soil productivity and generate more business for the farmer. The soil retentive capabilities of a well-
managed ecosystem will prevent groundwater pollution. The main goal for local agriculture is to preserve the natural processes of the environment. By adapting to processes such as biodiversity, global markets will increase productivity through more efficient nutrient and energy cycling. The pesticides drive away natural plant pollinators as well as predators that can control the pest population. Therefore, farmers must avoid clearing and polluting the land that serves as their means for food and shelter. The use of natural processes in all aspects of agricultural production sets the farmer up for success in both the present and future.

Local markets keep the growing cycle natural by eliminating the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. By using soil building practices local farmers are able to increase soil fertility and fallow cycles. The land is not in continuous cultivation and as a result can take time to rebuild itself. Unlike global markets, local production does not introduce fast growing, high yielding crop systems. This process is unnatural, and the only gain is a high output. For global markets, the cost is not an object. Local markets
choose to use certain plants as natural pesticides to aid growth rather than create it. By turning towards natural fertilizers, such as compost and green manure, farmers will avoid soil erosion to prevent environmental degradation. This will preserve the environment to increase productivity over time, and “to save money is to make money” (Clay 8). Farmers will profit by increasing soil vitality and fertility through natural cycles, rather than focusing on yields alone. Local markets conserve the longevity of their agricultural fields and refresh the land. They avoid following the global method of clearing land, cultivating it to death, and finally abandoning it to begin the cycle again somewhere else. The elimination of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers helps the farmer gain in profit and environmental resources.

Food transportation from local markets is able to bring the freshest food to consumers. Farmers are not forced to send their fresh produce through the web of complex marketing organizations for distribution in the global market, as seen through Chart A. This
decreases the amount of time that food is spent in distribution.

Global markets move through at least two wholesale facilities, sometimes as many as four. By limiting the amount of times goods are loaded and unloaded, the possibility of damage goes down, handling costs decline, and the quality control factor for freshness improves. Local markets pride themselves on the fact that they move right from farm to plate. They use farmer’s markets as their outlets for distribution, allowing the customers to travel to the source and buy their produce directly. This is becoming more popular among restaurants because chefs like to monitor the quality of their ingredients by buying them fresh. As stated by Food Network T.V. personality Mario Batali in *New York Magazine*, “one of the most important things a chef wants to do is to minimize the distance between dirt and plate” (qtd. in Fishman 120). Freshness is key for both professional chefs and everyday consumers. Transportation of goods from local farms assures customer satisfaction by providing the freshest option.
The local market production system helps to prevent global warming through its environmentally conscious practices. The short travel distance to farmer’s markets is beneficial for quality control because farmers transport to their immediate locale rather than across the country. Close proximity helps to reduce the amount of pollutants that are emitted into the air as well. Low fuel use equals low emission of greenhouse gases, which helps to prevent global warming. Local farming utilizes other methods for pollution control through their farming practices. With practices like minimum tillage, crop rotation, and the increased integration of nitrogen-fixating legumes, farmers can increase the return and storage of carbon to the soil. The carbon helps to reduce the greenhouse effect and global warming. “Carbon sequestration has the potential to offset fossil fuel emissions by 0.4 to 1.2 gigatons of carbon per year, or 5 to 15% of the global fossil-fuel emissions” (Lal 1623). Fossil fuel emissions are decreased through carbon sequestration and the limited use of agrochemicals. As a result, farmers reduce their reliance on non-renewable energy use. The
overall production system of local markets proves to benefit the environment on a large scale.

Local markets are influencing chefs across the country. One of the most influential figures is Alice Waters. Waters is a principal food figure in the United States and is well known by her immediate consumers in the San Francisco Bay area. Her activism in the free speech movement of the 1960’s led her to different kind of revolution, a “delicious revolution.” In 1971 Waters opened her restaurant, Chez Panisse, emphasizing the use of local, organic ingredients in her American-based menu. She developed a network of local organic farmers for fresh produce in her seasonal dishes, which change according to the availability of ingredients. Waters’ passion for food was kindled on her first visit to France during her junior year of college, where she was surrounded by open air markets. All of the food was delivered straight from the countryside; no packaging or processing was involved. Waters wanted to spread her new knowledge of freshness and quality to the United States. Chez Panisse successfully reflects her goal of
turning consumers towards locally grown ingredients instead of fast-food that is shipped thousands of miles. “It was an epiphany, people really eating something right out of the ground. It’s not just food, but a way of life” (Farrell 18). Waters spreads these messages as one of the primary voices in the slow food movement, which works to save global food culture from the high productivity, low quality food prevalent today. Her support for local farming in the San Francisco Bay area has successfully displayed the influence of sustainable agriculture on today’s society.

Alice Waters did not limit her fresh food vision to her restaurant menu, but further expanded it to the Berkeley Public School system. She opened the “Edible Schoolyard” at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School and also established the Chez Panisse Foundation. The “Edible Schoolyard” consists of a one-acre garden and kitchen classroom where the students take classes on the history and anthropology of food, along with botany and earth sciences. Waters wants to push school systems towards
healthier food rather than the artery clogging fast-food alternative. She is fueled by her belief in the connection between food and quality of life. The choice to eat healthy needs to begin at a young age. Waters had this idea in mind when she integrated her locally grown, healthy eating program into the school system. Once completed, “The Edible Schoolyard will be a 17 acre campus, with ivy-covered buildings, an organic garden, an outdoor bread oven, a commercial bakery, groves of olive, fig and citrus trees, and flower and herb beds” (Doughty, 210). Waters wants the garden to be the centerpiece, a place to be utilized rather than solely for visual pleasure. The students are able to grow their own organic produce on site, study it in the classroom, and enjoy the benefits of their hard work with their healthy additions to the cafeteria. They learn to make appropriate eating choices outside of the classroom by growing and cooking with fresh, seasonal ingredients in their everyday learning environment. The “Edible Schoolyard” concept later expanded to 16 city schools made up of about 10,000 children with the Chez Panisse Foundation. Both programs seek to fight
child obesity and future diabetes by incorporating local, nutritious foods into their diet. The kids are able to understand where their food is coming from because they take part in each step of the process: planting, picking, growing, and cooking. The “Edible Schoolyard” and the Chez Panisse Foundation spread Alice Waters’ fresh food vision to both adults and youth.

Local produce is the healthy option to enhance our well-being and avoid health issues such as Type II Diabetes. Local food activists like Alice Waters are fighting to make the nutritional benefits of eating locally more well known. She is substituting junk food and processed or frozen cafeteria food for fresh ingredients grown in gardens on-site. With local agriculture in general, the consumer has the reassurance of knowing the origin of the produce, the quality of the ingredients, and the farmer that produced it. This is due to the close proximity of farms to target consumers. The usual hundred or thousand mile journey from industrial growers to the local grocery store is reduced to minutes or hours. The nutritional content of the crops is maintained as a
result, for the dietary benefits decrease with time after harvesting.

Local markets have sustained their reputation of having the best quality of goods. This fact should be considered more important than quantity in one’s diet. This is especially recommended when it comes to fats and carbohydrates. Local foods help prevent Type II Diabetes and further health issues that may result, including cardiovascular disease, end-stage renal disease, and blindness.

According to New York Times bestselling author Jo Robinson, “grass-fed beef has two to six times more omega-3's than factory farmed, grain-fed meat. Omega-3 is a ‘good’ fat that helps our cardiovascular system, our brain function, and may help prevent cancer” (Sustainable Table). Minimally processed whole grain products and high amounts of fiber also lower the risk of contracting the disease by reducing glycaemic and insulin responses. Unlike many global industries, local market food is fresh and unprocessed, helping to prevent Type II Diabetes and other health issues.
The institution of “open-air” markets, such as the Union Square Greenmarket in New York City, is making local produce more accessible to the urban consumer. The Union Square Greenmarket was established in 1976 by Barry Benepe and is now the largest in NYC. At first, the availability of fresh ingredients was limited for those who did not live near an agricultural community. Benepe wanted to provide an outlet for local farmers to sell their goods directly to consumers in the city market. Hudson Valley farmers were previously being pushed out of business by the wholesale industry. Benepe took this into mind when he formed the bridge between the local and big-city communities. Upstate farmers now travel into the city four times a week, from April to September, marking the popular farmers’ market season. Around 250,000 customers await the arrival of fresh produce. The consumers were not the only ones who profited from the market; the farmers’ increase in business allowed them to charge more affordable prices for their produce and increase support for local agriculture. The markets “have not only saved the small regional
farm but fomented a revolution in how New York City chefs cook and New Yorkers eat” (Fishman 120). The Union Square Café is one of the many restaurants that takes full advantage of the availability of fresh Greenmarket produce. The café was established in 1985 by Danny Meyer, an avid enthusiast of open-air markets. He chose the location of his restaurant because of the close proximity to the Greenmarket, where he can buy fresh ingredients daily. The key to his menu is freshness, taste, and variety, three things that go hand in hand with the open-air market ideology. Meyer adapts his menu to the changing seasons and the availability of produce. At certain times of the year, he is able to choose from the 1,000 varieties of fruits and vegetables that are now available; from purple carrots to more than 300 types of hot peppers. With a little notice, the farmers will even set aside pre-ordered baskets of produce for awaiting chefs. Open-air markets like the Union Square Greenmarket are making local produce more available to the city society.
Now that society is realizing the benefits of local agriculture, commercial production may start to experience a steady decline. More traditional farming methods, such as crop rotation and the use of organic fertilizers, are providing both economic benefits for the farmer and environmental benefits for the land by working with nature’s natural processes. The global market can learn from and adapt to these methods since they have already proven to be successful. The elimination of synthetic pesticide use will help farmers to preserve their land and ultimately save them money from possible damage or pollution. Furthermore, local market strategy protects the environment by cutting out the middle man in the distribution process. The close proximity to customers cuts down the travel distance, which upholds quality and freshness, and saves the farmer from packaging and transportation costs. On a larger scale, limited transportation distances and soil building practices cut down the emission of greenhouse gases that cause global warming. Local market mentality is growing in public appeal. Restaurant owners and food activists are making quality
ingredients their first concern. They buy fresh from the source at open-air markets where they are guaranteed to find the highest quality produce. Local market goods are the healthiest options because their environmentally conscious practices create produce with a higher nutritional content than the commercial market. Today’s consumers are now realizing the benefits of local agricultural production, environmentally, economically, and health-wise, which is changing the overall attitude of society for the better.

Charts

Chart A. Marketing Structure for Fresh Vegetables
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Parental Impact on Child Development

By Lisa Subrizi

As suggested by Sigmund Freud, childhood environment and experiences have a significant proven effect on the psychological development of children. Sigmund Freud’s psychodynamic theory suggests that childhood experiences impact the development of children. Childhood experiences involve memories of parents and of their home environment during youth. According to Freud, these unconscious memories shape both personality and behavior as children grow. Most of Freud’s other developmental theories directly correlate to unconscious desires and instincts as major factors in development rather than external influences; however, many studies have shown direct correlations between aspects of child development and parenting styles.

A study done at the University of Wisconsin defined competent parents as possessing qualities such as openness to
communication, sensitivity, partner support, and direct involvement in the lives of their children (Bogenschneider et. al. 345). The study showed that proficient parenting promotes the likeliness of child success and achievement. Statistics consistently illustrate that, “Those with competent parents perform better across a variety of domains, including psychological development, prosocial behavior, and academic competence” (Bogenschneider et. al. 345). It is suggested that able parenting is something reflected in self-evaluation, and that those parents who perceive themselves as proficient raise more successful children. Conversely, Boganschneider also suggests that parents with a poor sense of their own abilities are more likely to subject their children to abuse (346). Theories on the impact of parental fitness on all aspects of child development place responsibility on parents to shape the psychological, behavioral, social, and emotional aspects of their child’s personality.

A study from Iowa State University suggests that the manner in which a parent was raised directly corresponds to his or her own
adopted parenting styles (Simons et. al. 91). Although following the parenting styles from their own childhood may not be purposeful, parents seem to unconsciously adopt the parenting strategies used by their own parents. Parents raised in abusive homes may find no other way to punish their children than the abusive methods of their own parents. “Past research has provided evidence of a link between having been the victim of abusive parenting as a child and subsequent use of harsh discipline with one’s own children” (Simons et. al. 91). Conversely, parents who were raised by able parents are more likely to use successful strategies when raising their own children.

One model for effective parenting draws aspects of parenting into two distinct categories: parental warmth and involvement and parental control (Simons et. al. 92). This model suggests that there must be an appropriate balance between these two aspects for effective parenting and in order to heighten child success. Warm parental involvement has proven to spark positive child outcomes such as “high self-esteem, academic success, and psychological
adjustment” (Simons et. al. 92). When analyzing aspects of parental control, it seems there must be a proper balance of firmness and warmth when attempting to direct child behavior. If parents seek control by using harsh disciplinary action, negative outcomes such as “delinquency, low self-esteem, and academic failure” are likely to result (Simons et. al. 92). This study presents a hypothesis that an appropriate balance between parental warmth and parental control creates a highly effective parenting strategy in order to produce favorable child outcomes.

Diana Baumrind, a prominent psychologist who studied effectiveness of parenting styles, defined three distinct styles, which yield very different child outcomes. The spectrum of parenting styles ranges from the most lenient to the most harshly controlling, categorizing the three styles as permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian (Nevid 361). Permissive parents, although often comforting and kind with their children, do not set firm limits or expectations for their children. Baumrind suggests that setting limits for children is a key aspect in successful
development, and that children raised by permissive parents often develop into impulsive youths who lack self-control and discipline (Nevid 362). On the opposite end of the spectrum lies the overly harsh authoritarian style parent. This style of parenting encompasses an overly rigid and controlling attitude towards children, as well as demanding “unquestioned obedience” to rules (Nevid 362). Authoritarian parents offer little comfort and warmth to their children, often disregarding the emotional needs of their children. Those raised by authoritarian parents often have negative outcomes, including poor academic performance, lack of initiative, lack of self-confidence, “and [they] tend to be conflicted, unhappy, and unfriendly toward peers” (Nevid 362). Baumrind suggests that the proper balance between permissive and authoritarian is defined within the authoritative parenting style. Authoritative parents set reasonable limits for their children, yet do not demand unquestionable obedience. “The parent is the authority figure, firm but understanding, willing to give advice, but also willing to listen to children’s concerns” (Nevid 361). Children raised by
authoritative style parents are more likely to develop into independent, well-adjusted members of society.

Beyond specific parenting styles, the environment in which a child is raised greatly impacts many aspects of development. Creating a stable, consistent, and comfortable environment will assist children in defining a personal sense of identity as they mature. Unstable family structures, such as those containing alcoholic or divorced parents, can create chaos and lack of comfort in the mind of the developing child, impeding the quest for personal identity. Although drastically different situations, both alcoholism and divorce within the family structure can result in similar feelings of worthlessness, confusion, and loneliness (Wood 3). Creating a stable and comfortable environment is a key aspect of successful parenting, along with the proper use of parenting styles.

In families with alcoholic parents, a negative impact on the developmental aspects of the child cannot be avoided. Barbara Wood defines the issue of “codependence” in alcoholic home
environments, suggesting, “Spouses, parents, children, even friends and colleagues of addicts, may suffer a progressive psychological, emotional, and spiritual deterioration that mirrors that of their chemically dependent loved one” (1). Children of alcoholics often take the confusion and stress attributed to the chemical dependency of their parents and turn this pain inward, blaming themselves for their parent’s illness (Wood 2). While growing up in an alcoholic home, children are often “emotionally abused, frequently neglected, and often physically victimized,” causing the child to feel pain, fear, and helplessness in their own home (Wood 3). In being raised by alcoholics, children face many problems and destructive patterns caused by their dysfunctional parents. Alcoholics are often unable to care for themselves, forcing their children to assume parental roles and mature far more quickly than they should. In this forced maturation, children miss vital time for self-reflection and quest for personal identity (Wood 8). Among many psychological and behavioral issues, children of
alcoholics often experience feelings of worthlessness and emptiness caused by their unreliable and unstable parents.

Many studies show that divorce has a negative impact on the psychological development of children. The hypothesis of one major study of diverse family structures states:

In both traditional and nontraditional families, supportive, involved parenting and cooperative coparenting would be associated with children’s positive social, psychological, and academic adjustment, whereas more problematic parenting and coparenting would be associated with poorer adjustment outcomes. (Bronstein et. al. 269)

This hypothesis states that if divorced parents are able to work together harmoniously to raise their children, they can still create favorable child outcomes. Although initial claims said that “children from divorced families are more likely to experience behavioral, social, emotional, or academic problems than those growing up in households with two biological parents,” the hypothesis allows for adjustments in the theory for different household situations (Bronstein et. al. 268). The problem with divorce lies in parents who cannot set aside their issues and create
a united force in raising their children. Further problems may arise when the issue of remarriage occurs; “comparisons of children in remarried families with children from nondivorced two-parent homes have tended to show that remarriage results in more problematic outcomes in one or more areas of functioning” (Bronstein et. al. 268). It is more favorable to raise children in a household with married biological parents; however, if situations of divorce and coparenting do occur, it is crucial for parents to set aside personal issues to create a stable and comfortable environment for their children.

A study on the effectiveness of parenting suggests that children have a similar impact on their parents as parents do on their children. This reciprocal impact is referred to as “goodness-of-fit” between parent and child, suggesting that the specific behavioral characteristics of children affect the capability of parents (Bogenschneider et. al. 348). This idea counters earlier claims that parents help shape the behavioral characteristics of children. Perhaps the impact of parental competence on behavior
development is congruent with the impact of a child’s behavioral traits on the effectiveness of parenting. If the behavior of a child creates parenting stress, the parent will experience a loss of confidence in rearing the particular child, “a mismatch between characteristics of the parent and the child may be manifested in higher levels of stress in parenting a particular child” (Bogenschneider et. al. 348). Evidence shows that parental stress, due to child behavior or other causes, directly impacts the abilities of parents by hindering their ability to remain sensitive to the needs of their children. A stable relationship between parent and child both creates an able parent and aids in proper development of the child.

It has been reported that not only do successful parents offer their children fruitful means of identity development, but children also offer rewards such as affection to loving and involved parents (Simons et. al. 92). Some individuals view becoming a competent parent as an incentive for receiving a sense of self-worth and stimulation from their success; “Thus individuals enter parenthood
with a comparison level that suggests the availability of certain rewards in the parent-child relationship” (Simons et. al. 92). Parents who receive satisfying rewards from their children are more likely to be attentive and willing to meet the needs of their children. Parents who have a distinct idea of the needs of their children, while setting clear expectations are less likely to use harsh discipline or abusive punishments. Successful parenting directly corresponds to a stable parent-child relationship containing mutual understanding and effective communication.

The earliest child development theory by Sigmund Freud, called the psychodynamic theory, suggests that childhood experiences and environment unconsciously impact child development. Competent parents who are intently involved in the lives of their children without becoming harsh or controlling are more likely to raise children with positive outcomes. The specific behavioral characteristics of a child can affect the competency of the parents. A good fit between parent and child, and the creation of a stable and comfortable environment which sets firm limits for
children is more likely to produce psychologically, behaviorally, emotionally, and socially successful children.
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Meat products were a standard part of my diet for the first seventeen years of my life. I never had an objection to eating an animal. Yes, I knew that a turkey or a cow had to die so that I could enjoy my Thanksgiving dinner or pepperoni pizza, but I never really grasped the connection between a living bird and the chicken salad on my sandwich. However, after learning more about slaughter practices in the United States, this connection was made. Unfortunately, this connection brought me no assurances of pleasant farm life for animals, but rather knowledge of the gruesome details of slaughter, especially for poultry.

There are, of course, some rules governing animal slaughter. However, although The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act
(HMSA) of 1958, United States federal law, protects farm animals from basic inhumane slaughter practices, this legislation excludes poultry. Therefore, the billions of birds killed each year have no federal protection from cruelty. Because the current slaughter methods cause unnecessary suffering, and the poultry industry has failed to voluntarily adopt more humane methods, it is imperative that birds receive the same legal protections as other animals. Ethical conduct demands that legislators expand the protection of The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act to include poultry.

Legislation governing the humane slaughter of animals has existed for almost fifty years. However, during this time, poultry slaughter has been exempt from these regulations. Alice Thaler, who worked for the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) supervising meat and poultry slaughter facilities, explained that legislators first enacted The Humane Methods of Slaughter Act in 1958. This act pertained only to slaughter facilities that supplied meat to the federal government, but was extended in 1978 to include all federal and state slaughter facilities (Thaler). The
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Animal Legal and Historical Center website lists the text of the HMSA. This act states that, with the exception of ritual slaughter, “in the case of cattle, calves, horses, mules, sheep, swine, and other livestock, all animals are rendered insensible to pain by a single blow or gunshot or an electrical, chemical, or other means that is rapid and effective before being shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut” (“Humane Methods of Livestock”). It may appear that all animals would be covered by the HMSA. However, according to an article by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation’s largest animal welfare association, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) does not interpret the word “livestock” to include poultry (“Still a Jungle out There”). Since the act, therefore, does not explicitly mention poultry, birds do not have to be made insensible to pain before slaughter. This means that the nine billion chickens, turkeys, and ducks, that are slaughtered each year, over 95% of all land animals killed for
human consumption, have no federal protection from inhumane
slaughter practices (Humane Society, “Still a Jungle Out There”).

Now, almost fifty years after Congress first enacted the
HMSA, action is being taken to include poultry in the HMSA. In
2005, the HSUS in conjunction with East Bay Animal Advocates
and five individuals sued the USDA contesting the USDA’s
interpretation of the word “livestock” and exclusion of poultry
from the HMSA. They objected to this exclusion not only because
of the inherent cruelty in the current slaughter practices, but also
because the current techniques place poultry consumers at a higher
risk for contracting food borne illnesses (Humane Society, “Still a
Jungle Out There”). The complaint filed by Corey Evans and
Geneva Page on behalf of the plaintiffs states that the poultry
consumers are “injured by the USDA’s decision to exclude
chickens, turkeys, and other birds from the protections provided by
the HMSA of 1958…because they increase the risk that [they] will
become ill from consumption of poultry products or secondary
contamination.” According to an article by Rod Smith in the
weekly agribusiness newspaper *Feedstuffs*, the USDA contested the suit, as did the National Chicken Council, a non-profit trade association for the chicken industry. The National Chicken council stated that the HMSA “clearly and expressly applies only to livestock such as cattle and not poultry” (qtd. in Smith). However, these contentions failed to stop the suit from moving forward. According the HSUS press release “Suit Seeking Humane Slaughter for Billions of Animals Allowed to Proceed,” on September 6, 2006 a federal judge ruled that, despite the challenges by the USDA, the suit be allowed to continue. This complaint has not yet been resolved. The HSUS “Petition for Poultry” website details that, in addition to the suit, the HSUS is lobbying for legislation to expand the protection of the HMSA to poultry. In addition, the HSUS organized a “Petition for Poultry” asking the United States government to include poultry in the HMSA and is currently collecting signatures from the American public (“Petition for Poultry”).
Despite the ethical conflicts and human health concerns that correspond with current slaughter methods, the USDA and some members of the poultry industry believe adding poultry to the HMSA is unnecessary. In an article for Poultry Science, one of the top ten Agricultural, Dairy, and Animal Science journals in the United States, Alice Thaler states that the USDA has not introduced legislation governing the humane slaughter of poultry because compulsory legislation is not needed if the industry voluntarily treats poultry humanely. The USDA believes that the poultry industry has motive to utilize humane slaughter methods because it is in the commercial interest of the industry to treat birds in a humane manner. The article “Treatment of Live Poultry Before Slaughter” in the September 28, 2005 Federal Register states that although there are not legal statutes governing the humane treatment of poultry, the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) says the poultry must be treated in a way that adheres to good commercial practices. Therefore, this article states that poultry should be handled humanely because “under the PPIA,
poultry products are more likely to be adulterated if, among other circumstances, they are produced from birds that have not been treated humanely, because such birds are more likely to be bruised or to die other than by slaughter” (“Treatment of Live Poultry”). Poultry products that are adulterated in this manner are more likely to be condemned (“Treatment of Live Poultry”). Therefore, the USDA believes that the poultry industry has sufficient motives to treat poultry humanely.

Members of the poultry industry maintain that common slaughter methods are humane. According to Thaler, at the time the HMSA was enacted, electrical stunning was a common practice in the poultry industry and was considered a humane method of slaughter; therefore, government officials believed legislation was not needed. Nowadays, many still consider these techniques humane. The National Chicken Council stated that they were currently studying the issue of expanding the HMSA to include poultry, but maintained that the “the current methods of stunning and slaughter are both effective and humane” (Lobb). If poultry
companies and the USDA deem these methods to be humane, then, in accordance with the USDA’s stance, legislation governing the treatment of birds during slaughter is unnecessary.

However, despite arguments that current slaughter practices are humane, these practices are actually very cruel and inefficient. If these practices were used on livestock protected by the HMSA, they would be illegal. An article in *Poultry Science* by Mohan Raj, a senior research fellow in food animal science at the Bristol University School of Veterinary Science, states that in the most common current slaughter systems, birds are removed from their crates and then shackled on a mechanical conveyer belt before being passed through a water-bath stunning system. Daniel Fletcher, a poultry and food scientist at the University of Georgia reports that after stunning, the birds’ necks are cut and the bodies enter a scalding water tank to remove feathers.

There are several aspects of the current systems which cause needless suffering for the birds. As mentioned, the HMSA dictates that animals must be “rendered insensible to pain…before being
shackled, hoisted, thrown, cast, or cut” (“Humane Methods of Livestock”). The suit against the USDA states that the current poultry slaughter process allows for live shackle, and often does not efficiently stun the birds, allowing the animals to have their necks sliced by mechanical blades, and even sometimes be immersed in scalding water, while still conscious (Evans and Page). Gene Bauston, now Gene Baur, the president and co-founder of the Farm Animal Sanctuary, The United States’ premiere farm animal protection organization, reports that live hang is cruel because poultry are hung upside down when shackled, and that this position is abnormal for birds. Bauston also notes that birds face discomfort in shackles that are too small because of ensuing bone compression. A study by faculty of the Applied Animal Biotechnology Laboratories of the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center and the Welfare Biology Group of the Roslin Institute in the United Kingdom showed that male broiler chickens, which are larger than female broilers, struggled more when placed in standard sized shackles. The researchers
suggest that this struggling occurred because of discomfort due to shank compression (Satterlee et al). Live shackling causes the birds undue pain and distress. The HMSA outlaws this activity for other animals, as it is considered inhumane. Yet, the common poultry slaughter methods forces poultry to endure this practice.

Electrical stunning using a water bath is also inhumane and often ineffective. In order to successfully induce unconsciousness, a significant electrical shock must be administered to the bird. An article in *Poultry Science* by S.F. Bilgili, a professor and extension poultry scientist at Auburn University, reports that in Europe it is recommended that chickens are stunned with a current of 120 to 150 mA per bird. This voltage will ensure that the birds are stunned instantly and permanently. However, as higher stunning currents often cause greater carcass bruising, in the United States, slaughter facilities commonly use a lower current of 25 to 45 mA per bird (Bilgili). If poultry are not stunned efficiently, they may be paralyzed but not desensitized to pain. According to Bilgili, “insufficient currents may physically immobilize the bird, but may
not prevent perception of pain, stress, or discomfort by the animal. Hence, if the bleeding is not rapid, birds may regain consciousness prior to scalding” (Bilgili). The Humane Society of the United States reported in their article “Still a Jungle Out There: The HSUS Takes USDA to Court to Ensure a Humane End for Birds” that if birds are not sufficiently stunned, they may be conscious when their necks are sliced by mechanical blades, or regain consciousness while bleeding out. In addition, birds may still be conscious when they enter the scalding tanks, thus drowning in the scalding water (Humane Society, “Still a Jungle Out There”).

Even if slaughterhouses desire a sufficient current to irreversibly render the birds unconscious, it is difficult to ensure the birds will actually be stunned by this level current. Bilgili reports that the size, weight, sex, and feather cover of individual birds influence the degree of shock received by water bath stunning methods. In addition, many stunning systems are “communal brine-baths” where several birds are simultaneously connected to the same electrical circuit. This communal stunning
makes it difficult to ensure that each bird receives the desired shock capacity (Bilgili).

Additional animal welfare issues related to water bath stunning systems exist in addition to insufficient shock strength. According to Mohan Raj, birds which pass through stunning tanks often receive shocks before being stunned because their wings touch the water before their heads. Pre-stun shocks are more common with turkeys because their wings extend below their heads when hung upside down (M. Raj). Raj reported that in 1991, a study in the United Kingdom showed that an average of 43% of turkeys received pre-stun electric shocks. This percentage went as high 87% at one facility (M. Raj). Raj did mention that precautions can be taken to reduce the occurrence of pre-stun shocks; however, a study showed even with these precautions 6% of turkeys still receive these shocks. In addition, these measures only apply to tanks where one bird is stunned at a time, and these forms of tanks are not always used (M. Raj). Finally, as birds are not included in the HMSA, and no statute demanding humane
slaughter exists in the PPIA, stunning systems are not mandated or regulated in the United States (Bilgili). This means there is no way to ensure that poultry are stunned effectively, or even stunned at all.

In the United States now, there are no laws in place to ensure the humane treatment of poultry. The current system relies upon voluntary compliance. However the current methods of slaughter discussed are not humane. The techniques used in poultry slaughter, such as live hang and, as poultry are often stunned inefficiently, slaughtering without rendering insensitive to pain, are considered illegal and cruel for other animals. More humane methods of slaughter, such as Controlled Atmosphere Killing, do exist. Nevertheless, the poultry industry has failed to implement these practices. As the current methods are not humane, and humane methods already exist but are not widely implemented, voluntary compliance is clearly ineffective.

Furthermore, excluding poultry from the HMSA prevents slaughterhouses and slaughterhouse workers from facing penalties
if they do in fact treat poultry brutally. In one such instance, slaughterhouse employees who were caught on tape torturing chickens did not face any criminal charges. In July of 2004, Donald McNeil reported in The New York Times that slaughterhouse workers at a Pilgrim’s Pride plant in Moorefield, West Virginia were caught on tape by an undercover investigator from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) torturing chickens. The workers were shown “jumping up and down on live chickens, drop-kicking them like footballs and slamming them into walls, apparently for fun” (McNeil). McNeil reported that the supervisor saw the workers throwing 114 chickens against the walls in seven minutes and allowed the workers to continue. The undercover PETA agent also described other acts of torture such as “workers tearing beaks off, ripping a bird's head off to write graffiti in blood, spitting tobacco juice into birds' mouths, plucking feathers to "make it snow," suffocating a chicken by tying a latex glove over its head, and squeezing birds like water balloons to spray feces over other birds” (McNeil).
Despite evidence that these workers abused chickens, the workers never faced legal consequences. The article “National Briefing Mid Atlantic: Chickens Sentenced, Kickers Not” which appeared in the January 12, 2005 issue of The New York Times reported that the workers and supervisor involved in the incident were fired by the plant but were never charged with a crime. The prosecutor stated that the actions did not necessitate charges because “these were chickens in a slaughterhouse” (qtd. in “National Briefing”). The HSUS reported that actions similar to those seen in the Pilgrim’s Pride plant were discovered in slaughterhouses in Maryland and Alabama. None of the workers or slaughterhouses involved in these cases faced legal action either because poultry are not included in the HMSA and therefore, these abusive actions are not illegal (“Still a Jungle Out There”).

In addition to animal cruelty, there are several other problems with current slaughter methods. For one, these methods are economically inefficient. Electrical stunning causes bruising, discoloration, and broken or dislocated bones (Bilgili). According
to Bilgili, high stunning currents result in more hemorrhages on the deep breast muscles in broiler chickens. However, high stunning voltages have been shown to reduce other types of damages more frequent at lower voltages (Bilgili). These types of damages may lead to adulterated products that are condemned. If poultry are stunned insufficiently and are not killed until they pass through the scalding tanks, inspectors are more likely to condemn the carcasses, as the September 28, 2005 Federal Register states that “poultry showing evidence of having died from causes other than slaughter are considered adulterated and condemned” and that poultry must stop breathing before entering the scalding tanks (“Treatment of Live Poultry”).

Live hang also leads to bruising. A study reported in *Poultry Science* stated that “It is clearly important to limit [struggle] in shackled fowl to reduce carcass down-grading and too maintain meat quality be reducing the incidences of bruises, red wing- tip and broken bones and by insuring greater muscle tenderness” (Satterlee et al). This same article reported that a 1998
study indicated that, out of downgraded broiler carcasses, almost one out of five was downgraded due to a surface bruise. In 1998, over half a billion poultry carcasses in the United States had bruising (Satterlee, et. all). The HSUS reported that in 2005, 5 million poultry carcasses were condemned because of bruising and contamination (“An HSUS Report”). Since this method of slaughter results in such a high level of bruising, it is inefficient when compared to slaughter methods that decrease bruising.

The current method of electrical stunning followed by mechanical neck slicing places slaughterhouse workers at risk for injury. With this slaughter method, slaughterhouse workers must handle poultry while they are still alive. According to a report issued by the Humane Society of the United States, workers must hang conscious birds on the shackle line. The birds thrash about when hung, and this thrashing “jeopardizes the safety of workers” (Humane Society, “Human Health Implications”). A report by the Human Rights Watch, an organization that investigates human rights issues around the world illustrates the dangers of live hang.
As workers “grab birds by their feet and sling them on to fast-moving metal hooks... The birds, weighing approximately five pounds each, fight back by pecking, biting, and scratching the hangers... Then, as workers finally hoist the birds onto the hooks, the chickens urinate and defecate out of desperation, often hitting the workers below” (Human Rights Watch). The HSUS report also stated that during live hang, the slaughterhouse facilities are kept dark in order to calm the birds. This darkness increases the likelihood that workers will fall or cut themselves because the darkness aggravates the already wet conditions that exist in the poultry slaughter facilities (Humane Society, “Human Health Implications”). In addition, the line speeds in poultry slaughterhouses are very fast. According to the HSUS, workers must hang about 23 birds per minute in the shackles; this rushed speed increases the chance that workers will become injured (“Human Health Implications”). In their report, the Human Right’s Watch stated that in 2000, one out of seven poultry slaughter workers was hurt on the job. Finally, because of dust
from bird feathers and contact with live poultry and with feces, workers are at risk of contacting disease or of developing visual and respiratory problems ("Human Health Implications"). These health issues correspond with the animal welfare issues. Adopting alternate slaughter methods that kill poultry before processing would end the need for live hang and reduce many of the problems associated with working with live birds.

Slaughterhouse workers are not the only ones to suffer health implications from the inhumane slaughter practices of the poultry industry. Current slaughter methods place poultry consumers at risk for contacting food-borne illnesses. A report by the HSUS stated that birds inhale when in pain ("Still a Jungle Out There"). Therefore, during stunning in water baths, "chickens can defecate and inhale water, contaminating carcasses," thus increasing the likelihood that poultry consumers can contact bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli when consuming undercooked poultry (Humane Society "An HSUS Report:). A study by Gregory and Whittington of the University of Bristol School of Veterinary
Science showed that out of 20 birds subjected to electrical stunning in a water bath tagged with a radioactive substance, 35 percent had the substance in their tracheas, and 15 percent had the substance in their lungs. The researchers concluded that the birds found to have the substance in their lungs inhaled some of the water (Gregory and Whittington). This conclusion indicates that some birds stunned in water bath systems do inhale water. The researches warned that this could be hazardous to meat hygiene in commercial settings (Gregory and Whittington). If poultry were killed by a method that did not require water bath stunning, there would be less of a chance of carcass contamination because birds would not be able to inhale water during stunning.

Despite the popularity of the electrical stunning and neck slicing, poultry slaughter methods that address the problems of live hang and electrical stunning do exist. One such method is Controlled Atmosphere Killing (CAK). This method would fit the mandates of the HMSA is the act were to be expanded. The HSUS reported that in CAK birds are not removed from their transport
crates when they arrive at the slaughterhouse. Instead, the birds are brought into a chamber with either 90% argon or 30% carbon dioxide and 60% argon mixed with the air; here the birds die of anoxia (“An HSUS Report”). These two mixtures of gas are satisfactory for killing birds. According to Mohan Raj, if the carbon dioxide concentration is too high, birds show an aversion to the room and exhibit head shaking and gasping. There is some gasping and head shaking with a mixture of 30% carbon dioxide and 60% argon, but this behavior is much less severe than with higher levels of carbon dioxide (M. Raj). Mohan Raj emphasizes that it is important that the birds remain in the room long enough to be killed, as birds that are only stunned using carbon dioxide not only exhibit severe head shaking and gasping but also regain consciousness shortly after leaving the chamber. CAK reduces many of the animal welfare, economic, and human health problems associated with electrical stunning and mechanical neck slitting.

Some organizations argue that current methods of slaughter are just as humane as CAK. For example, according to an article
by Alex Davis that appeared in the Courier-Journal of Louisville, Kentucky, in March 2007 a spokeswoman for KFC announced that KFC’s Animal Welfare Advisory Council had been studying CAK since 2003 and had not found this slaughter method to be more humane than water bath stunning. However, CAK eliminates the need for live hang and prevents inefficient stuns, both of which cause welfare concerns for birds. In CAK, birds are not removed from their crates and handled by workers until they are already dead (Humane Society “An HSUS Report”). Therefore, birds do not experience the stress of being hung upside down or the pain of being shoved into inadequately sized shackles. Birds also do not face pre-stun shocks or possible consciousness during bleed out or scalding (Humane Society, “An HSUS Report). Mohan Raj states that in CAK systems “the evidence strongly suggests that chickens and turkeys can be killed very humanely.” A study by Theo Hoen and J. Lankhaar of Netherlands-based Stork Foods poultry processing division found that with CAK, “animal welfare will be drastically improved.” Some large corporations also support CAK.
An article by Andrew Martin in *The New York Times* reported that in March of 2007, Burger King announced it would favor slaughterhouses that use CAK instead of the traditional method of slaughter. Few slaughterhouses in the United States use CAK, and the majority of these are turkey slaughter facilities; however, Burger King officials said they hope their move will encourage more slaughter facilities to switch to CAK (Martin).

In addition to improvements in animal welfare, CAK results in higher quality products. With CAK, birds are dead before workers place them in shackles. Therefore, the bruising associated with struggling in the shackles will not occur. An HSUS report on the implementation of CAK systems reported that some studies have shown CAK can reduce bruising by up to 94 percent and reduce bone fractures by up to 80 percent (“An HSUS Report”). The study by Hoen and Lankhaar concluded that with CAK, “meat tenderness and drip losses will improve. The blood spots, especially those on the thighs and breasts caused by stunning and hanging, disappear altogether… from a technological point of
view, broiler killing in a controlled gas atmosphere is considered to be the optimal process.” A study on slaughter methods of 7-week old Peking ducks by faculty of the Division of Food Animal Science at the University of Bristol in England reported that “gas or controlled-atmosphere killing of ducks, whilst they are still in their transport containers, would eliminate some of the welfare concerns associated with the conventional electrical waterbath stunning systems, without adversely affecting carcase and meat quality” (Raj, et. all “Carcase and meat quality”). As bruising can cause poultry products to be considered adulterated, CAK may reduce the chance that inspectors will condemn carcasses.

CAK reduces some of the human health concerns related to the common method of electrical stunning. CAK improves working conditions in poultry slaughter facilities. CAK does not require live hang; therefore, workers will not risk injuries caused by struggling and pecking birds. In CAK, workers do not come in contact with live birds, reducing the risk that they can contact bacteria from working with live animals (Humane Society, “An
A report by the HSUS stated the Canadian Food Inspection Agency found that dust is reduced in slaughter facilities because live birds are not placed on the slaughter lines (“An HSUS Report”). Thus, CAK would reduce the risk that workers will develop visual or respiratory problems due to dust and mites from bird feathers. Consequently, CAK not only benefits animals, but also slaughterhouse workers. In addition, consumer welfare is improved with CAK. In electrical water-bath stunning systems, some poultry breathe in contaminated water. Birds killed by CAK are not stunned in water-baths, thereby eliminating this form of contamination and reducing the risk that consumers will contract a food-borne illness (Humane Society, “An HSUS Report).

Installing a CAK system requires an original input of capital; however, a HSUS report “An HSUS Report: The Economics of Adopting Alternative Production Practices to Electrical Stunning Slaughter of Poultry” found that the cost of CAK system installation will soon be recovered in increased profits. The HSUS reported that one slaughterhouse that switched to CAK saved
enough money in annual labor costs to make up for the implementation costs. The HSUS estimated that a plant that slaughters one million broiler chickens every week would increase annual revenue by $1.87 million if the wholesale price for chicken was $0.80 per pound because of improved product. This report also concluded that most plants would make back the initial investment within one year because of increased revenue (“An HSUS Report”).

There are many instances of animal abuse in the meat processing industry, and amending the HMSA will not remedy all of these abuses. However, expanding the HMSA to include poultry is an important step toward reducing the suffering of birds killed in slaughterhouses. More humane methods of slaughter that fit the mandates of the HMSA already exist. One such method is CAK. CAK would not only address many of the animal welfare problems associated with traditional slaughter methods, but it would also improve safety for workers and consumers and increase the quality of poultry products.
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Should the Media Be Blamed For Violent Acts Committed By Young People?

By Vinnie Pagano

When playing the video game, *Grand Theft Auto III*, or listening to a Judas Priest CD, are you overwhelmed with feelings of violence and hatred? Do you feel it necessary to inflict pain and suffering on others, or start a massive riot by shooting a group of individuals, or yourself for that matter? There are many people in this country who tend to blame the greater part of the violent behavior of today’s youth on the media. The cause of such unruly actions committed by children and young adolescents, they feel, is the video game manufacturers, television programs, and/or musical artists. I, on the other hand, do not agree, and feel that the media does not play a part in causing the violent acts committed by children and teenagers.

Many would argue that the exposure to violent media has increased greatly over the past few years; and the amount of time spent viewing such acts has also grown as well. According to the American Psychiatric Association, “the typical American child
watches 28 hours of television a week” (Osofsky 2). The American Academy of Pediatrics confirms this fact by stating that as of February 2005, “the average child spends about 1,023 hours in front of the T.V., and only about 900 hours receiving an education.” It states moreover that, “sixty percent of television programs now contain violence” (Gavin 1). Fifty percent of a child’s free time is spent watching T.V. or movies, playing video games, listening to music, etc. This research has found that therefore the “average American child will view 200,000 violent acts on TV by age 18” (Gavin 2).

However, blaming the media alone is too simple a claim to make. One must take into consideration that there are many ways in which one could prevent such “violent” images from being seen by children and adolescents. The responsibility should not fall on the movie maker, musical artist and/or video game manufacturer, but rather on the parents. Television, movies, music and video games all require ratings. It is the parent’s responsibility, especially those with young children, to pay close attention to and understand these ratings. TVguidelines.org outlines and describes all of the ratings that one would see on television. The lowest rating is TV-Y, which is for all children. This rating means that it
is appropriate for all children, even ages 2-6. It also means that no frightening images will appear. TV-Y7 is aimed for older children. This rating means that the program is for children ages 7 and above. One important thing this rating includes is that, “It may be more appropriate for children who have acquired the developmental skills needed to distinguish between make-believe and reality” (TV Parental 1). Kidshealth.org shows that most children from ages 2-7 can not yet differentiate between reality and fantasy. A program with this rating may be for children under the age of 7, but the decision is left up to the parents (Gavin 1). Next is TV-G, which means “General Audience”. This rating ensures that the program is suitable for all ages. It does not, however, mean the program was made for children, but parents may let younger children view it. There is little or no violence on shows with this rating. TV-PG means “Parental Guidance Suggested.” At this level, the content starts to become a little more unsuitable, but can still be viewed by younger children with a parent present. TV-14 insists “Parents Strongly Cautioned,” rather than suggested. At this rating, parents are asked to exercise better monitoring of their children because most of what will be shown will not be appropriate for anyone under the age of 14 (TV Parental 1).
Finally, there is TV-MA which comes as no great surprise which designates a program specifically designed for a “Mature Audience Only.” Anyone under the age of 17 may not be able to handle the content which includes the following: “graphic violence, explicit sexual activity, or crude indecent language” (TV Parental 1).

Aside from the ratings, which are clearly displayed at the beginning of every television program, there are other ways to keep a child safe from viewing too much violence on T.V. Controlyourtv.org has a section which describes a way that a parent can make it physically impossible for a child to view any specific channel on their television that they wish. What one does is simply block the channel(s). A parent can do this by “creating a Personal Identification Number (PIN) code using the analog set-top box’s remote control, or V-Chip, (which is included with a basic cable package) or keypad,” (Cable 1). How hard is it for a parent to create a code that is too difficult for a child to figure out? Sure, parents cannot monitor every little thing their child does, or be with them every minute of the day; but there are parents, however, who claim that they do not “have enough time,” or lack the ability to lock the channels they don’t want their child to view. If they are completely unaware that their 7-year old is in the living
room watching *CSI: Miami* or *Law & Order: SVU*, then maybe their interest in their kid(s) is much less than it ought to be.

An opponent might also point to the increase in the rate of crime over the past decade. Law enforcement agencies in the United States arrested about 2.8 million persons under the age of 18 in 1997. Of that number, an estimated 2,500 juveniles were arrested for murder and 121,000 for other violent crimes. According to the FBI, in 1997, 19% of all arrests involved juveniles, 14% of all arrests involved murder, and 17% involved violent crimes (Hatch 3). According to the Department of Justice, “by the year 2010 the number of juveniles who will be arrested for violent crimes will double” (Hatch 4). These statistics are presented as the result of children watching too much television, playing too many violent video games, and listening to too much violent music. There are other factors, however, which I feel contribute to violent behavior of children and young teens.

While Hatch has addressed the fact that the rate of crime had seen a steady increase in 1997, he has also, however, managed to overlook that within the next couple of years these statistics changed. One would assume that a large number of these kids who appeared to be out-of-control are reflected these official crime
statistics. In fact, there were fewer juveniles who were arrested for violent crimes. According to a study done in 2000 by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, “in 1999, no more than 1 of every 290 children between 10 and 17 years of age was arrested for violent crime” (Synder, 6). There was also the possibility that many of these arrests could have have been committed by the same juvenile. The study also found that “only about one third of 1% of juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17 years were arrested for a violent crime in 1999” (Synder 6). One can also agree that not all children in America have had what one would call, an “average” upbringing. Many children in the U.S. either witness or are victims of domestic violence in their home. Several studies have found that in 60% to 70% of families in which a woman is battered, children are also battered” (Osofsky 2). A child’s home life is a crucial component and a reflection as to how that child was brought up, and how he/she will act in the future. According to The Royal College of Psychiatrists, there can be long term effects to receiving and/or witnessing violence in the home. “Children tend to copy the behavior of their parents. Boys learn from their fathers to be violent to women. Girls learn from their mothers that violence is expected, and something you just have to
put up with” (Royal 1). Equally disturbing: “an estimated 2.7 million referrals of child abuse or neglect (representing approximately five million children) received by public social service or child protection agencies in 2001. Of these referrals, a little less than one million children were confirmed to be victims of actual abuse or neglect. That means about 12.4 out of every 1,000 children up to age 17 in the United States were found to be victims of maltreatment in 2001 alone” (Department 1). Information like this, while sad and unfortunate, helps provide an alternate explanation as to the increase in crime rates over the past several years.

While domestic violence remains a problem for many children, negligence is also another key factor in the way a child acts or behaves. Child neglect is another major issue for the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data Systems (NCANDS). The NCANDS defines child neglect as “a type of maltreatment that refers to the failure by the caregiver to provide needed, age appropriate care although financially able to do so or offered financial or other means to do so” (Department 1). The NCANDS says that, “approximately 903,000 U.S. children who were victims of abuse and neglect in 2001, 59.2% suffered from neglect alone,
including mental neglect.” Prevent Child Abuse America estimated that, “1,291 children in the United States died in 2000 as a result of maltreatment, and that 45% of these child maltreatment fatalities were attributable to neglect” (Peddle 15). With so much domestic violence and child neglect, it would not be hard for one to see how so many children could cause so much trouble and commit so many crimes. There are many cases which I feel support the fact that the root of the problem lies not on video games, or music, but on parents.

On April 20, 1999, in Littleton, Colorado, two students Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, murdered 13 and wounded 23 of their students and faculty at Columbine High School. The video game, Doom received the majority of the blame for this incident because apparently the two boys played this game and murdered their classmates in an attempt to copy it. One aspect of this case, however, remains a mystery to me. It was stated that the Simon Wiesenthal Center, an internet hate group tracker, discovered a copy of Harris’ website which displayed a version of Doom. It had been customized so that the two shooters had an infinite amount of weapons and the remaining people were left defenseless. Harris and Klebold submitted the customized version of Doom on a
videotape as a class project and shortly after, acted it out in real life, terrorizing and killing several students and faculty members, (Shin 1). If these two submitted this as a class project, then where was the teacher? Surely there must have been no one supervising the class or paying attention that day, otherwise something like this could not have gone overlooked. I am not a teacher; but I can be certain that if a student handed in a videotape of him imaginatively enacting a massacre and pretending to kill his classmates, I would report it to someone immediately. Why were these boys not taken to psychiatrists, or taken seriously for that matter? Another question I to ask, how did these boys obtain these weapons and somehow keep them hidden from their parents? Did their parents have no idea these boys were being bullied? How were they not aware of this? If anyone should have taken action, it should have been the parents. It is their job to know what their child is doing, not anyone else’s. Unfortunately, as it turned out, it wasn’t the parents who took action, but the two boys. No one would listen to them, not even their parents. This incidentally, could be considered a form of neglect on the parent’s part, and it led the two boys to end the lives of many of their classmates, along with their own.
Much like the case of Columbine, there are many others kids who suffer from either domestic violence, are going through the normal hormonal difficulties of adolescence, or in most cases receive little or no attention and care. They may turn to rock ‘n roll, heavy-metal, T.V., or video games as a means for escape, but this does not grant them as being the cause of said problems.

Another specific case that deals with this issue occurred in 1980. Two teens, James Vance and Raymond Balknap, apparently shot themselves at a nearby church playground in Nevada after listening to a Judas Priest album. The parents of the teens sued Judas Priest by claiming that listening to the album led the two to commit suicide. The lawyers for Judas Priest argued against this accusation, and provided evidence that demonstrated that the boys had suffered from a troubled past.

“The two youths had lived ‘sad miserable lives’ and the problems that led to their deaths began ‘long before any connection with heavy-metal music’” (Rohter 1).

The attorney also said that, “The risk that ideas may cause undesirable behavior in a small and unstable segment of the population is a small price to pay for a free society.” Both young men were high school dropouts with criminal records, and both
had problems holding jobs. Each also came from a family with a 
history of domestic violence and child abuse and had received 
counseling” (Rohter 1).

The parents’ attorney argued that there were subliminal 
messages on the CD which told the two to end their lives. There is 
substantial evidence that proves this to be false as well. Bill 
Curbishley, the manager of Judas Priest stated, “I don’t know what 
subliminal messages are, but I do know there’s nothing like that in 
music. If we were going to do that, I’d be saying, ‘Buy seven 
copies,’ not telling a couple of screwed-up kids to kill themselves” 
(Rohter 2).

Most likely, the teenagers were headed towards a life of 
vioence regardless of the song. The two drank beer and smoked 
marijuana the night they made the pact to kill themselves. Alcohol 
and drug abuse are not regular activities one would find on an 
agenda for an 18-year old with hopes of a promising future. They 
also had “difficulty holding jobs,” which may have had something 
to do with the “substance abuse.” They were “high school 
dropouts” and both held “criminal records,” which is surely not 
something one would brag about. The problem usually starts in the 
home and in most cases by abuse from parents. The case of the
two teens in 1980, I feel, can relate to the two teens in 1999 who shot their classmates at Columbine High School. Aside from blaming the popular video game *Doom*, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, were also suspected of listening to Marilyn Manson CDs, whose lyrics may have elicited such outrageous actions, (Rohter 2). Banning heavy-metal music won’t solve the problem though. Once heavy-metal is out of the picture, eventually they will find something else to blame for violent acts: video games, Dungeons & Dragons, pinball, Pokemon cards, etc. It will never stop. Maybe if parents finally decide to eliminate all possible “mind corruptors” they will finally realize that the root of the problem could be them. The bottom line is that some parents always seem to look for an outside source as a cause of a problem with their children, when really all they have to do is look inward.

As A famous comedian put it:

Then they blame it on heavy-metal ya know? I don’t know if you remember that, but from that old incident there, some years back, Judas Priest, one of the head bangin’ bands, somebody played a song and after they killed themselves and so they blame suicide on heavy-metal. If it’s murder they tend to blame rap these days. But, it’s never the parents...did
ya ever notice this? Parents apparently play no part in the
development and outcomes of these kids? Parents. Ya know
they can raise a kid apparently eleven, twelve, thirteen,
fourteen, fifteen years, if he turns out f***ed up, boy they
had nothing to do with that. ‘Must be those kids at the
parking lot he hangs around with’. Parents gotta be among
the most full of s*** people in the world. If the kid turns out
to be a loser, they had nothing to do with that. But boy if
he’s a winner? They got a scholarship or something like
that? Man, they’re the first ones out there raising their hands
trying to take a little credit. George Carlin

Though George Carlin, is just a comedian, he brings up a good
point. With the incident that faced the two trouble teens, the
parents threw the blame onto the Judas Priest CD, when really they
were the cause of the behavior. The parents abused their children
prior to them even listening to the album. He makes a remarkable
generalization about parents; and that is whenever a child fails, the
parent claims to have played no part, but when the child succeeds,
they use it as an opportunity to show what great parents they are.
This quote can also be related to the kids at Columbine, and how
because these kids committed such an awful crime, the parents seemed to have nothing to do with it and didn’t know anything.

I would like to add, from personal experience, that these games, T.V. programs, music lyrics, do not elicit unruly behavior. I feel that I had an average childhood, and I never received any kind of abuse. I can think of a prime example as to how the media has had little to no effect on the way I act or perceive things. I enjoy a wide range of music such as: hip-hop, R&B, blues, even rock n’ roll or heavy-metal. I even listen to Judas Priest. Judas Priest has released 15 albums in the U.S., and one in the U.K., and has sold over a million copies of each one, (Judas 1). I do not see the connection between violent music and kids going out-of-control. Violent music would have to have an affect on everybody if it were that harmful, and that would mean at least 15 million people who purchased a CD by Judas Priest, have either killed themselves or somebody else. Music does not just set off a person and make them do horrible things. For example, last summer my best friend and I went to Ozzfest. We saw bands such as: Lacuna Coil, Hatebreed, Disturbed, and System of a Down. Even just the names of some of these bands probably wouldn’t bring thoughts to one’s mind of unicorns or giggles. One might conclude by
listening to such bands and viewing their mannerisms and
demeanor, that their songs do not promote positive activity,
abstinence from sex, peace, and upbeat attitudes towards women,
authority figures and the government. Disturbed, has become very
popular more recently with the success of *The Sickness*, an album
released in 2000. These are some of the lyrics from the song *Down With The Sickness*:

“Drowning deep in my sea of loathing
Broken your servant I kneel
(Will you give in to me?)
It seems what's left of my human side
Is slowly changing in me
(Will you give in to me?)

Looking at my own reflection
When suddenly it changes
Violently it changes (oh no)
There is no turning back now
You've woken up the demon in me

Get up, come on get down with the sickness
Open up your hate, and let it flow into me
Get up, come on get down with the sickness
You mother get up come on get down with the sickness
You f****r get up come on get down with the sickness
Madness is the gift, that has been given to me...” –Disturbed

One might easily conclude that these lyrics pose negative images and thoughts. One would be right. This, however, had no effect on my friend and me. We didn’t once during the five-hour concert ponder on what this deafening music meant, or what we thought of it. We didn’t try and diagnose or dissect it. We didn’t become so deeply wrapped in the songs that we lost consciousness, or were sent into a blind rage. We didn’t scream at the top of our lungs, throw fists, or pull out switchblades. In fact, we had earplugs wedged in our ears because we felt that the music, while enjoyable, was far too loud to be heard without plugs from the thirteenth row. At one point we decided to leave during Hatebreed to grab some fries and a slice of pizza. We laughed and talked about funny memories, like the time we broke into a fit of laughter for no reason at all, and it lasted almost 15 minutes. It was almost ridiculous to think that we were laughing about a time that we were laughing. We then returned to our seats to enjoy the rest of the
concert. Another point which George Carlin makes is how rap music has been the primary source of blame in music for the behavior of many teenagers today. My brother and I have listened to rap since we were thirteen. Not once can I recall an instance where upon listening to a rap album, we both felt it necessary to purchase a “gat” and start a drive-by, or strangle a bunch of puppies while selling dope and drinkin’ a forty after pushing our 93-year old grandmother down the stairs. We just liked listening to the beats and catchy rhyme schemes.

Opponents have also argued that these five video games: *Halo*, *Doom*, *Bully*, *Grand Theft Auto III*, and *Manhunt* are the most dangerous video games sold in electronic stores. CQresearcher.com released a chart which displays the average age of video game players. The chart showed that 25% of players were 50 years and older, 44% were from ages 18-49, and only 31% of players were under 18. This chart clearly shows that adults are the majority video game players. It also stated that the average gamer is 33 years old, and the average age for game purchaser is 40, (Glazer 5). While some make the claim that many under age children are purchasing these violent video games, they overlook the fact that the average player is an adult. Even so, if a child has a
game that is too violent for him/her, it is the fault of the parent. A
parent may know a child is playing a game, but a good parent
knows what game is that they are playing and makes sure that it is
not something that is inappropriate. *Halo 2*, for instance, the
XBOX 360 smash sequel to *Halo*, which was released in
November of 2004, has become immensely popular, (Microsoft 1).
It has gathered such a wide audience that a website, called
bungie.com, was created for those who play online. This site
allows for gamers to check their own statistics along with that of
other gamers. I visited this site, and as of Saturday, March 17,
2007 at 1:04 p.m., there were 21,584 players online. I then visited
the site a second time on Thursday, April 5, 2007 at 11:38 a.m.,
and there were 236,340 players, (Bungie 1). Obviously there were
214,756 more gamers playing on the Thursday morning. I think it
would be accurate to assume that most children from ages 6-17
were in school on that Thursday. One can only make the
assumption that either 236,340 mothers believed their child was
“sick,” or 236,340 mothers just don’t care.

Another example which refers to the claim that video games
influence the behavior of a teenager occurred on June 7, 2003 in
Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Devin Thompson, a 19-year old,
slaughtered two Fayette police officers, Arnold Strickland and James Crump along with emergency dispatcher Leslie “Ace” Mealer. *Grand Theft Auto III*, a product of Rockstar Games released on October 23, 2001, was alleged to be one of the games which Thompson played frequently. It was reported that after he was convicted of the murder, authorities revealed that Thompson had uttered the following statement, “Life is a video game. You’ve got to die sometime,” (Kampis 2). If one were to turn on the news on any given night, it is almost a guarantee that one would see a story about someone who was either murdered, committed suicide, raped and/or assaulted. A statement like this shouldn’t completely have everyone up in arms because it is essentially based on fact. Sadly, there are thousands of people who die each day, but it does not take a video game to help one come to this realization. One can only assume that Thompson, being 19, watched the news occasionally and maybe stumbled across a story in which somebody was murdered, maybe in the same manner which he chose to kill his victims. Many people were immediately quick to suspect video games as the source to this problem upon learning of this statement, but they did not however, think to consider the possibility that there was something psychologically
wrong with Thompson. If the average child may be unable to
differentiate fantasy from reality only from ages 2-7, then clearly
there must have been some kind of chemical imbalance in his
brain. Thompson was 19. That means he was above the age of 15,
which is the age at which most states allow a child the opportunity
to obtain a driver’s permit. They can operate a motor vehicle with
a parent present. He was over the age of 16 and 17, which
depending on the state, he could have received a license by passing
a driver’s exam. He is also over the age of 18, which allows him
to vote. What these people are basically telling us is that this boy
couldn’t handle playing a video game for a few hours without
going berserk, but he can pick the leader of the free world? I find
it extremely difficult to understand how someone who is old
enough and mature enough to drive, vote, and even serve in the
U.S. military, cannot sit on their couch and play \textit{Grand Theft Auto
III} for a few hours.

Along with the sale of millions of Judas Priest CDs, one
should also take into consideration the amount of video games sold
as well. The game \textit{Bully}, which is one of the top five most
“harmful” games, sold an estimated 1 million copies and \textit{Doom 3}
sold about 3.5 million copies. \textit{Grand Theft Auto III}, the alleged
game that “led” Devin Thompson to brutally murder two police officers and a dispatcher, sold approximately 11 million copies in 2002. *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* sold around 13 million copies. *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* sold about 14 million copies. By 2003, all three games reached a total of $15 billion of games sold. Finally in 2006, *Halo 2* sold 2.38 million copies in the first 24 hours, which translated to about $125 million. In November, the sales of video games rose to approximately $849 million, an 11 percent increase from the same month last year, and up 77 percent from October, (Video 1). I own, *Grand Theft Auto III, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* and *Halo 2*. I started playing *Grand Theft Auto III* when I was 14. I am currently 19 and I still play *Grand Theft Auto III* along with the other games I previously mentioned. As a player of these games I can be certain that I do not pose an imminent threat to society. No matter how long I play, be it 4 hours or 20 minutes, I’m perfectly normal after playing. Much like having the heavy-metal music blasting in my ears for several hours at Ozzfest, I never once had the urge after playing *Grand Theft Auto III* to hijack someone’s car, shoot a few hookers or gun down pedestrians in my ’99 Chevy Lumina. One must also keep in mind that these sales statistics are
estimations and the numbers are still growing. With the staggering amount of video games being sold, one can only come to the conclusion that there must be around 1 billion people who are running loose and tearing up the streets because they purchased one or all of these five games.

Finally, there is one more case which I feel is necessary to support this allegation that the media alone should not receive the bulk of the blame for the violent behavior and outcome of teens and young adolescents. In April 2007 in Blacksburg, Virginia at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University a 23-year old South Korean Cho Seung-Hi, a senior at Virginia Tech just a few weeks shy of graduating, murdered 32 people, along with himself, leaving 15 severely wounded. The interesting part of this story is that Cho held two separate shootings at two different times. He was able to shoot two students at West Ambler Johnston Hall dormitory around 7:15AM, and then proceeded to kill 30 more at Norris Hall, about a half mile away from his first shooting only about two hours after his first attack, (BBC 1). This massacre at Virginia Tech, was labeled as the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history. This incident also sparked the debate as to whether video games were the source to Cho’s rage. The video game that was
attacked in this case was *Counter-Strike*, an online game in which a “team-tactical shooting game that puts players in the heavily armed boots of either a counter-terrorist or terrorist” (Benedetti 1).

Jack Thompson, a crusader, activist and attorney, is a man who refers to video game players as “knuckleheads,” and calls video games, “mental masturbation.” He is an active voice and always seems to be loudly shouting his opinions blaming the video game industry and manufacturers. Jack Thompson also started trouble in the case of Devin Thompson by suing Rock Star, the company that created *Grand Theft Auto III*, and in Columbine with accusing *Doom* of being the source of error. He always tries to find a connection between video games and teen violence, but has never really succeeded. It comes with no great surprise that when a 23-year old senior from Virginia Tech shot 32 people on campus, including himself, Thompson found this as another perfect opportunity to make his case. He began once again angrily bashing video games and deemed them as the root to all problems. He said that Cho had used *Counter-Strike* as a “training tool” and “he might not have killed somebody but he wouldn’t have killed 32 if he hadn’t rehearsed it and trained himself like a warrior on virtual reality” (Benedetti 1).
A sociologist at the University of Southern California, Dr. Karen Sternheimer, and author of the book *Kids These Days: Facts and Fictions About Today’s Youth*, disagreed with this claim that video games were the cause to the problem. She brought to light several good points to support this argument. One, she felt that there wasn’t much skill needed to do what Cho did. She pointed out that many students witnessed Cho just firing aimlessly in each classroom for about a minute or so and even shooting victims at point-blank range. Naturally, if one had “trained” and “rehearsed” for a long period of time, then surely the outcome of that training should have been displayed in his actions? Does shooting a person at point-blank range require months of rigorous online video game training? Secondly, she made a statement which helps support my previous idea as to how this is virtually impossible considering the number of video games that have been sold. “One thing that people often don’t realize is that in the years since video game sales have really exploded, not only have youth violence rates decreased but violence rates in the U.S. have declined precipitously” (Benedetti 2). She also brought up the fact that one of the previous most deadliest shootings in U.S. history occurred at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, where “Charles Whitman
climbed to the 28th-floor observation deck of a clock tower and opened fired killing 16 people before police gunned him down” (Worst 2). This occurred in 1966, “not even Pong had been invented at that time” added Sternheimer. This makes a lot of sense considering that video games weren’t even around during that period of time. Finally, she talked about how Cho was a 23-year old male living in America. What 23-year old male living in America hasn’t played a video game? Jason Della Rocca, executive director of the International Game Developers Association, also agreed with Sternheimer and feels that in all these cases, video games are used as a scapegoat for the problems because people want “a simple solution for a massively complex problem” (Benedetti 2). Hal Halpin, president of the Entertainment Consumers Association, says there are “more than 30 million gamers in the U.S. alone” (Benedetti 2). He has organized a group which helps represent the interests and needs of those who play video or computer games. He has been trying to make the claim that it is not the games, it is the people are damaged. “We are normal people, we just play games” (Benedetti 2). This quote by him demonstrates my point that there are many average people, including myself, who just play video games for
fun. This goes along with people who watch movies for fun, listen to music for fun. We have no intention of anything else, but purely entertainment because we have the mental capacity to understand that what we are doing/watching/playing is fake, and should not be mirrored in reality.

Another important factor to consider is that Cho suffered major psychological issues. Cho sent a package to NBC News in New York with pictures of himself holding his weapons and taking on various poses. He also sent a tape of his final thoughts, in which he makes the claim that he is some sort of “avenging angel” who was against the “‘Christian Criminals’ who have raped, sodomized, humiliated and crucified him and others he describes as the ‘Weak and Defenseless.’” He also compared himself as being martyred on the cross, like Jesus Christ (Thomas 1-2). One can only think that someone with these thoughts must have either not received a “usual” upbringing or had some sort of chemical imbalance. Cho’s parents and his sister moved from South Korea to the U.S when Cho was 8-years old in 1992. It was stated that, Cho’s father “rarely spoke, except to say how proud he was to have his children in college” (Thomas 2). It was also noted that Cho’s Uncle Kim told reporters that Cho’s mother seemed to
mention Cho’s sister a great deal, but didn’t really talk about her son at Virginia Tech. One possible reason for this is the fact that Cho was a quiet boy growing up. Cho’s sister testified in the aftermath of the shooting that she was devastated saying how she remembered “when Cho had been just an 11-year old boy, good at math, basketball, quiet...” (Thomas 9). It was also noted that Cho received bullying in his Christian youth group as a child, mainly by rich kids. Cho’s boyhood pastor was “worried” about him being bullied as a boy. “I felt him a little autistic and advised his mother to take him to a hospital. But she did not agree with me” (Thomas 9). This statement made by his pastor shows how, even as a child, it was easy to sense a problem, but no one took action. One would only assume if Cho’s mother really cared about her son, she might have taken the pastor’s advice a little more seriously. If Cho really had a slight autism, then it just goes to show the failure on the part of Cho’s parents. How could parents be unaware of autism? Several students and professors also commented on Cho’s “strange” and “weird” behavior as they called it. They had said that Cho, “imagined a supermodel girlfriend named Jelly, and as her fantasy lover called himself ‘Spanky.’ Other times he called himself ‘Question Mark’” (Thomas 1). He never hurt anyone, but
“there were signs.” He scared his fellow classmates and English professor by submitting plays that were dark, moody, and seemed to contain a lot of death. It was also reported that Cho would aim his cell-phone camera at other women in the class from underneath his desk and he almost “never spoke in class himself.” (Thomas 3). Lucinda Roy, the co-director of the creative writing program, offered to help work with him one-on-one, but Cho refused. Roy claimed that she “alarmed red flags around the Virginia Tech bureaucracy,” including “the Division of Student Affairs, the Cook Counseling Center, the Schiffert Health Center, and the Virginia Tech police,” but it was later discovered that Roy in fact did not try and contact these departments but rather “suggested she would take Cho ‘under her wing’” (Thomas 3). A few of Cho’s suitemates did, however, recognize Cho’s problem and took it seriously. At one point Cho mentioned to Andy Koch, a suitemate, that “he might as well kill himself.” Anna Brown, a fellow classmate of Cho’s feared his actions and also recalled walking out of class and joking to her friends that Cho was “the kind of guy who might go on a rampage killing...he was just off, in a very creepy way,” she added (Thomas 5). Immediately after students were notified of the shooting, and discovered who the gunman
was; their reactions were not a great shock. Anna Brown, the same student who found him “off” said that when it was found out that Cho was the gunman, “I just started bawling, I started crying. I had this gut feeling that it was him” (Thomas 9). Andy Koch was also not stunned to learn that his suitemate had committed this horrible crime. Cases like these really make me wonder if people, mainly adults, honestly care at all about many young children and teenagers. With so much evidence that proved Cho to be crazy and unstable, one has to wonder how something like this could have happened. There were so many signs and so many people felt he was “strange,” or “weird,” or “off,” but nobody did anything.

In conclusion, to blame violent acts committed by young teens and children on T.V., video games, and/or music is simply unjust. There are many precautions that can be taken in terms of televisions, such as parental controls. If the media is not suitable for a child, then it is up to the parent to decide whether or not they want their child to watch it; and whatever happens is their responsibility. People should start to examine a child’s background more often to determine that child’s home life, rather than the games they played or the music they listened to. An average child could potentially listen to a rap album or go to a rock
concert and not wind up buying a trench coat and shooting up a local high school or university. Parents need to receive more of the blame because chances are they are the ones who are not paying close attention to what their child is watching. They are the ones who may be subjecting them to home violence on a daily basis. They are the ones, who only want to be a part of their lives when that child has done something worth rewarding, in which case one could see that it would be easy to have the mentality to go crazy and do something drastic just to be noticed, even if it means it is the last thing they will do.

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The Fear of Not Fearing

By Ryan Foster

The time: the dead of night. The setting: your house. You have stayed up to the late hours of the morning watching the end of a frightening "slasher" movie because you know your mind would never rest without seeing the ending. Yet as you make your way up to your room, you travel through your house turning on and off lights because of your reluctance to travel through the dark hallways, and pass the pitch black corners of the rooms. Finally, you make it to your room, the sacred abode, in which you fling yourself into bed, head under the covers, quickly turning the lights off. Lying there motionless, quietly listening to the silence, for the monster/killer that will never come. Franklin D. Roosevelt's remark "Nothing to fear but fear itself," certainly comes to mind. Humans have a tendency to
invite "Fear" into situations that would otherwise be normal. Although the concept of fear is often greeted with a most unwelcoming gesture, humans are none the less enthralled by it. We crave fear.

To better understand why fear, a feeling which is supposed to be unpleasant and cause nervousness, can be desired, it is necessary to understand how fear affects the body. Fear is defined as "a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc., whether the threat is real or imagined" (Fear). When this occurs the body reacts by creating the chemical known as adrenaline. It is a "hormone secreted upon stimulation by the central nervous system in response to stress, as anger or fear, and acting to increase heart rate, blood pressure, cardiac output, and carbohydrate metabolism" (Adrenaline). It heightens reaction time and strength as a basic "fight or flight" measurement. However, the release of this chemical also produces a natural high for the body which is very enjoyable. It is precisely similar to the feeling of elation produced by alcohol.
as it forces the body to create adrenaline (Alcoholism, Alcoholism and Sleep). It is this chemical which makes a person genuinely want to be afraid.

The reason adrenaline forces humans to want to be afraid is because adrenaline is an addictive drug. After a person's adrenaline depletes it leaves them feeling bored and depressed. Soon enough they crave the feeling of elation and the rush of energy generated by the chemical and drug. These thrill seekers go in search of extreme sports or other events, and are known as adrenaline junkies (Meadows). If a person can become addicted to this adrenaline rush, then there is no reason a regular person can subconsciously resist the desire to produce this level of stress while watching of movie or reading a book because it will result in some degree of a natural high.

The human desire to be afraid is not just scientific. The concept of fear is also welcomed on a mental level. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a theory taken from his paper *A Theory of Human Motivation*, which prioritizes the needs of a
human being into categories. In order to for a human to be truly complete that person will attempt to satisfy the parameters of these categories. The top category, the one relevant to the topic of fear, is known as "self-actualization." This category is the area in which a human attempts to reach his or her full potential by experiencing certain feelings. In "self-actualization" there was the topic of spontaneity which focused on the human desire to feel alive, and experience excitement (Boeree). Since this sensation can be produced by being afraid or tense. It is only natural that humans subconsciously desire to be afraid.

An example of attempting to achieve self-actualization, and the human desire to feel alive, although disturbing as many would consider, is the practice of self-mutilation. These poor individuals who cannot find a way to cope with their problems often begin to lose their sense of reality and feel "numb" to the world. It is then through experiencing pain that they once
again find balance, and regain a sense of feeling. They
temporarily feel alive again (Self-Injury, Cutting).

An alternate form of achieving self-actualization by being
afraid or tense is putting oneself in a situation where they
become afraid or tense. There is no better time to be filled with
adrenaline and fear, yet equally consumed by excitement then
during a sport like snowboarding. When one is speeding down
the mountain, barely in control and losing balance to the slick,
icy powder beneath the board, and the wind pressing against
one's face, the blending of fear and excitement become one. It
is the fighting of gravity and environment in order to prevent
falling while risking mild to moderate injury. Yet when a
person, likes myself, is in the moment, it is that same struggle
and fight which is most enjoyable. It is well worth the risk. The
experience of spurring down the mountain, both legs strapped
to the board with no stop or off button produces an
unexplainable sense of satisfaction. It is the feeling of
excitement and danger that people cannot gain otherwise. It is the feeling of being alive!

There are other reasons for which a person would be willing to voluntarily put oneself through horrifying experiences like frightening movies. To brave the harsh waters and test one's mettle has always been a popular motivation of my own. The desire to prove that I am not afraid, and can keep my composure can be an important factor for entering a frightening situation. It happens every time a person steps on a roller coaster. There is an inclination to twist and turn at blinding speeds and heights simply to prove that he or she is not afraid.

Other situations like watching a horror movie or reading a ghost story, although suspenseful, can also provide physical relief from the real world or expand one's imagination the same way a child dreams of lands far far away. A desire to escape normality, I often question what I would say and do if I were presented in the same situations as these fictional characters.
These tales give a sense of mystery, and excitement. At times my readings often send a chilling cold through my body, and make me pause briefly, only to find my nearest sweatshirt. Then I press on, continuing to read, to experience the concoction of excitement and fear.

There are other reasons to want to view gruesome images or put oneself in a stomach turning situation. Experiencing disturbing scenes and sights is also a part of the human conscious. There are times when what is presented in front of one's eyes is so grotesque, but one would never consider looking away. In an essay by Stephan King, "Why we Crave Horror Movies," he comments that people go to have fun, although what may appear on the screen is nothing less than seeing others tortured or violently killed. This offers a chance for "irrationality and even outright madness to extend so rarely." It is in these rare circumstances that our emotions have the opportunity to become unlocked, no longer restricted by the expectations of society (King).
Since unlocking these emotions is a process that comes from viewing these films, it is necessary that occasionally we allow ourselves to experience the full spectrum of our emotions. Every so often a person must let out a scream and jump off the wall. Stephen King states "Our emotions and our fears form their own body, and we recognize that it demands its own exercise to maintain proper muscle tone" (King). Like the body itself, where muscles require exercise to stay physically healthy and functional, so must our emotions be felt and expressed in order to be mentally healthy.

However, some of our emotions are not all considered good. Humans want to be afraid and expose themselves to disturbing images and thoughts occasionally. At birth children possess both the ability to love and destroy. It is society which encourages particular emotions, promoting feelings considered good and denouncing those considered bad. However, these negative feelings do not merely go away. They are held back, both consciously and subconsciously repressed, resurfacing
momentarily as a passing thought only to be ignored (King). It is the smirk on one's face after hearing a gruesome joke. It can be found in horror movies, where death and torture occurs frequently and people do not look away, but rather stare contently, curious to see what monstrous event happens next. These are things that appeal to the dark, normally untouched regions of the mind.

Fear is not an emotion that should be met with disdain. It is a portal allowing all people to feel things in ways that are otherwise impossible. It can heighten experiences and allow those to feel more alive than ever and can produce a sense of self-satisfaction. There is no reason to be afraid, rather the only true fear people should have is never allowing themselves the chance to come out from under the protection of the bedcovers in order to expose themselves to the darkness, to enjoy the mixture of fear and pleasure sure to be lurking in one of the dark corners of the room.
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