E-Scriptor
An Online Journal of Student Writing
Volume VII – Fall 2009
This journal of student writing is a collection of essays written for College Writing II classes at Marist College for the 2008-2009 academic year. Each teacher of College Writing II was asked to submit an outstanding essay from his/her class. Two judges then reviewed the essays, and works were chosen from each semester to be included in this volume. This year, a student has been included from College Writing I, and has won Special Mention for a superior descriptive essay.
Gail Goldsmith won First place with her essay “How Human Nature Creates and Sustains the Need for Organized Crime” written for Lynne Koch’s College Writing II class. Gail is a 19-year-old sophomore at Marist from Mechanicsville, VA. She is also a member of the Marist Fencing Club Women’s Sabre team and the Assistant Features Editor of The Circle.

Stephanie Nardi won second place for her essay, entitled "The Internal Conflicts of Holden Caulfield,” written as a term paper for Donna Baumler’s College Writing II course. Stephanie is a History major who is involved in Symphonic Band and Marist’s Literary Arts Society. She enjoys writing, spending time outdoors, practicing yoga, and drawing. She would like to thank Professor Baumler for her high expectations and guidance.

Melissa Sonier won Third Place for her essay, “The Truth About Trenches: All Quiet On The Western Front as a Lens to Understanding Trench Warfare in the First World War” written for both Eileen Curley’s College Writing II class and Kristin Bayer’s Themes in Modern History class. Melissa is a sophomore from the small town of South Deerfield, Massachusetts. She is majoring in Social Work with a minor in Psychology and enjoys the outdoors, reading, and being with friends in her free time. Melissa would like to thank both Dr. Curley and Dr. Bayer for submitting her paper and for helping her tremendously improve her writing.

Alyssa Bradt won fourth place for her essay “Affirmative Action in College Admissions” written for Marc Fisher’s College Writing II class. She is a sophomore from Saratoga, NY majoring in international Business with minors in Global Studies and Psychology. On campus, Alyssa is involved in Kappa Kappa
Gamma, Marist Ambassadors, the Financial Board, LINK, Resident Student Council, the Italian American Society, and The Circle. She is also hoping to study abroad in Australia next year. Alyssa loves the New York Jets, her chocolate Labrador named Cady, her Dad's homemade Italian food, going to concerts, and spending time with her friends and family. She would like to thank Professor Fisher for submitting her paper and making College Writing II an enjoyable class.

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Serena Bubenheim won first place for her essay “And the Star Spangled Buyer in Triumph Shall Wave” written for Greg Machacek’s College Writing II class. She is a sophomore majoring in Economics and International Business with minors in Math and Psychology. She is currently the President of SIFE, a global business club, and is actively involved in Campus Ministry. After Marist, she plans to get a Masters Degree in Business Administration from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania and then go on to pursue a career in finance with a global firm. She is from Upland, California and has one younger brother who is a freshman at San Diego State University.

Liz Wesley won Second Place for her essay “It’s for the Best?” written for Denise Loatman-Owens’s College Writing II class. Liz is currently a sophomore at Marist and is from Mountain Lakes, New Jersey. She is a Fashion Merchandise major and a business minor. Liz would like to thank Professor Loatman-Owens for submitting her paper into the contest.

Karishna Perez won Third place with her essay “His-Story or My Story?” Written for Mark Morreale’s College Writing II class.
Michael Malan won Fourth Place for his essay “The Sneakerhead” written for Mark Morreale’s College Writing II class. He is currently a Sophomore here at Marist College, lives in Midrise, and is a Business Major with a focus in Exercise Science. He enjoys working out, playing sports and having fun with friends on the weekends. Michael was very surprised to hear that received an award for this contest, because he did not even know his essay was entered. He is very happy to be here today and would like to congratulate the other winners.

Oliver Roe won honorable mention for his descriptive essay “Dangerous Solitude” written for Gloria Brownstein’s College Writing I class. Oliver is a lifelong Hudson Valley resident who enjoys vacationing in Cape Cod almost as much as he enjoys fine food, dystopian science fiction, and British comedy (which is to say, quite a bit). A junior at Marist, he plans to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in business administration (concentrating in finance) and to continue his already successful career in the field of outsourced process management, which is a much more interesting endeavor than its name implies. Thanks to Professor Gloria Brownstein for submitting this essay to E-Scriptor.
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Human nature’s need and greed for power, money, and control motivate underground financial institutions, which are often composed of alienated immigrant groups. Human nature creates and fuels organized crime by using crime syndicates as a middleman across the law. The natural reaction to forbidden fruit is of heightened interest; criminals take advantage of this predilection for desiring “forbidden fruit.” History has shown that huge profits can be made through the sale of items that are difficult to procure on the common market. Historically, human behavior seeks to circumvent obstacles that block the fulfillment of certain
cravings—especially when these cravings bring people closer to
the wild side, assuage desperation and confusion. Sometimes what
the government prohibits is not essentially bad if used in
moderation; psychological inclination towards abuse makes these
substances dangerous. During National Prohibition, which was
regulated by the 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act, Americans
who did not sympathize with the temperance movement were
willing to break the law to get alcohol and often participated in the
bootlegging business. Present day crime syndicates share the same
motivations—need and greed—with Prohibition-era counterparts.
Contemporary crime syndicates often employ legitimizing fronts
that allow them to expand their reach and financially improve lives
of their associates. Money is a driving factor in the prohibition and
sale of illegal substances. Human nature sustains organized crime
for both the suppliers and the consumers. As long as society
outlaws products and services that certain groups of the population
crave, they will have to turn to organized crime. Throughout
history we see human behavior and present-day crime syndicates.
Organized crime existed prior to the Prohibition era, but the socioeconomic environment underground. National Prohibition was a two-pronged force comprised of the 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act. The 18th Amendment banned the selling, manufacturing, and transporting of alcohol and the Volstead Act restricted drinking and possession of alcohol. Prohibition was a culmination of the temperance and religious revival movements. In the late 19th century, Americans saw an increase in public awareness of the temperance movement. Groups such as the Anti-Saloon League and Women’s Christian Temperance Union first tried moral and emotional exhortation towards moderation and sobriety, then switched tactics towards lobbying the government for increased regulation (The Columbia Encyclopedia: Temperance Unions). H.L. Mencken, a journalist at the Baltimore Sun, called Prohibition the attempt "to punish the other fellow for having a better time in the world.” (Kyvig 4). The temperance movement that advocated Prohibition was based in the middle-class, who felt it incumbent upon themselves to exhort the ‘lower classes’ towards
a higher morality. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen insightfully alludes to the human tendency towards advising, shepherding and meddling, and writing. She states, “We all love to instruct, though we can teach only what is not worth knowing,” (Austen 261). The temperance movement highlights a heuristic comprehension strategy of the human mind; to simplify a complex issue by polarizing the involved choice, as alcoholism was understood not as a disease, rather as a moral lapse. The temperance movement grew in tandem with the rising religious revival and they tied the idea of Prohibition to their hopes of a moral wake-up call for the populace. Prohibition was a culmination of these forces.

As American foreign policy began to dovetail with isolationism, increased immigration was a scapegoat for fears of imported crime conspiracies. However, America had its own brand of organized crime, which was ignored by the imaginations of those susceptible to paranoia, who favored blaming the unknown. The most prominent denizens of early American crime syndicates were outlaw gangs that developed out of armed enforcers in the
service of cattle barons or ranches, such as the post-war
Confederate resistance the James-Younger Gang (Kyvig 5). Before
National Prohibition, the primary profit modus operandi of crime
syndicates were gambling, prostitution, narcotics, loan-sharking,
political machines, strike-breaking, robbery, blackmail and
extortion. Capitalizing on fear, corruption, and vice, these groups
sought the “American dream” of wealth through crooked means.
When a version of the “American dream” is based in greed, this
can hardly be unexpected. The Black Hand, a Sicilian group
composed of small independent gangs specializing protection
rackets and controlled by individuals, chose Italians as victims and
preyed on their knowledge and fear of the Sicilian Mafia. The
Black Hand made money by extorting large sums of money as
insurance from businesses that property would not be robbed or
razed. As these entrepreneurial ventures required very little start-
up capital and generated high revenues, so many people, regardless
of socioeconomic predisposition, could find profit.
Showcasing “forbidden fruit” cues hunger. When the government passed the Volstead Act and the 18\textsuperscript{th} Amendment, Americans who would frown on narcotic usage or hiring prostitutes eagerly sought means to purchase alcohol. Bootlegging and running speakeasies were predominantly seen as crossing a legal boundary, not a moral one. Alcohol is hardly necessary for survival, but it had been a central component of societal function. Current business trends show how much profit an unnecessary, yet enjoyable, product can generate. By acting as enablers, organized crime syndicates came closer to public awareness, since bootlegging was in the gray area of legal and moral transgression and popular enough to build public relations rapport. Crossing the fluid boundary between legal and popularly accepted dealings were rationalized because it was “giving the people what they want.” The diffusion of responsibility influenced more people to participate.

Bootlegging was easily incorporated into the business dealings of crime syndicates. The usual contacts in legal,
administrative, and justice departments were still useful.

Competition and prices could be manipulated and mergers could be formed with threats of violence, shootings and hijackings.

Violence did not, however, shock the public enough to stop patronizing speakeasies and alcohol distributors. As Prohibition boosted bootlegging, the resurgence and new capabilities of organized crime syndicates positively affected other business ventures. Loan-sharking found new prominence in Prohibition and further expanded in the Depression, during which the gross income from loan-sharking exceeded $10 million. After the end of Prohibition, robust crime syndicates did not wither, but rather redoubled efforts in other enterprises.

Glenda Williams—a psychology professor at Marist College—explains that human nature is comprised of traits and characteristics shared by all humans. Human nature’s caprice, weakness and contradictions have facilitated the growth, expansion and permanence of organized crime. The popular response to Prohibition legislation highlights the conflict between natural law
and imposed law. In thought and behavior, people must reconcile or choose between natural law and imposed law. Natural law is the internal moral compass, relevant rationalizations, reason, sense of intuition, and impulse of feeling. Imposed law is largely practical, dogmatic, and adapted to the masses. While each law often deals with separate aspects of a given situation, imposed law may run counter-intuitive to an individual’s natural law. While the imposed law of the land might ban alcohol consumption, an individual might reason that liquor would be a treat: the speakeasy would be a social occasion and no harm would be done to anyone. The legislation of morality makes the rebellious impulsive action more easily savored.

The most influential and predisposing factor in the rise and perpetuation of organized crime is human nature for both the participants of syndicates and the partakers of offered services. In *Wickedness*, Mary Midgely posits that human nature has equal capacity for virtue and for vice. She rejects the claim that we are the product of societal forces. Faulty cognitions, she reasons, are
the source of crime and criminal involvement. These faulty cognitions may result from mental disabilities or poor critical thinking skills. By not being conscious enough to realize possible ramifications of actions, criminals create their own problems.

Both organized crime and business gain efficacy from a similar philosophy and structure: earn money, adapt and streamline the organization towards that purpose. Henry Barrett Chamberlain—operating director of the Chicago Crime Commission—said in 1919 that, “modern crime, like modern business, is tending towards centralization, organization, and commercialization. Ours is a business nation. Our criminals apply business methods.” (qtd. in Kyvig 20). Such an organization fills a business need for certain population demographics. Bootlegging and organized crime do not, in most cases, offer essential products, but rather craved leisure and indulgence that Americans were ready and able to spend money on. Business trends show how much profit an unnecessary, but enjoyable product or service can generate. The natural yearning for the path of least resistance, as
well as enjoyment, also beckons both partakers and participants of organized crime. Early criminologist Cesare Beccaria discussed hedonism in *On Crimes and Punishment*, saying, “Man choose those actions which would give pleasure and avoid those that would give pain,” (qtd. in Pelfrey 7). Resistance to hedonism, mental strength, and moral conviction pay a lot less than involvement in a crime syndicate.

Criminal ingenuity towards the purpose of gratifying greed is seen in the case of lawyer George Remus who purchased distilleries, whiskey certificates, and pharmacies so that he could sell alcohol with the governments’ blessing (Nishi 17). He profited by $40 million before he was caught (Nishi 19). Remus is assumed to be the inspiration for Jay Gatsby, the bootlegging protagonist of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*—a novel widely considered to be a paragon for the Roaring Twenties’ zeitgeist. Gatsby’s bootlegging is not censured, but accepted, as it enhances his parties. The flaunted wealth of men like Remus was attractive
to immigrants and others who were left out of the prosperity of “The Roaring Twenties” for one reason or another.

Societal organization affects human operation and therefore affects organized crime. According to Sigmund Freud’s theory of personality, discontent stems from the conflict of the three personality structures: the pleasure-seeking id, the moral superego, and the mediating ego. As repression creates tension, this cognitive dissonance mirrors the greater conflict between natural law and imposed societal law.

In his work *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud advocates for freer exercise of human nature; and by extension, looser restriction on crime:

One would think that a re-ordering of human relations should be possible, which would be remove the sources dissatisfaction with civilization by renouncing coercion and the suppression of the instincts, so that undisturbed by internal discord, men might devote themselves to the acquisition of wealth and its enjoyment….there are present in

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all men destructive, and therefore anti-social and anti-cultural
trends and that in a great number of people these are strong
enough to determine their behavior in society (Freud 1695).

However, if the individuals in question valued integrity
over pleasure and did not fall prey to contradicting
cognitions, repressed tensions might not erupt in socially
destructive ways. The aggression mentioned is further
discussed in *Civilization and its Discontents*, which waits for
some provocation or puts itself at the mercy of some other
purpose, whose goal might also have been reached by milder
measure (Freud 1697).

Much as it did in the early 20th century, organized crime has
adapted to the times, the needs of the consumer, and the abilities of
the suppliers. Loan sharking, extortion, gambling and prostitution
have continued, while drug trafficking, video pornography,
buttlegging (tax-free cigarettes), and bootlegged entertainment,
among others, have been added to the repertoire. Political
corruption, money laundering, and bullying have paved the way
for these activities, as have union fraud labor fraud and industry monopolies. We are all victimized as a result of political corruption and bribery. Legitimate business is undermined by bid-rigging, hijacking, robbery, and insider trading. Individuals are targeted for car theft, drugs, prostitution, bootleg entertainment, and credit card fraud.

Socioeconomic turmoil fosters organized crime by placing higher pressure on the individual and governing bodies. According to David L. Carter, permanent disruption of stability in the Balkans make it possible for organized crime groups to establish themselves in Albania and operate with the intent of forming a greater Albania and, in proportion to their economic power, securing the political influence and participation in the top administrative state bodies on the territory (Carter). On a smaller scale, control theory posits that delinquent acts result when a criminal’s bond to society is weak or broken, which may include circumstances such as concentrations of people with few social ties (immigrants, the mentally ill and destitute) and, among
adolescents, a lack of parental control (Pelfrey 16.) This accounts for the high immigrant involvement in ethnic-based crime syndicates, such as the Jewish Purple Gang of Detroit, during the early 20th century. In the present day, Albert Cohen, Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin ascribe organized crime on the street gang level to the collective situation of young lower class males placed in a situation where opportunities for advancement through wealth or status are blocked. This then results in attempts to gain status through behavior they can achieve (Hood, Sparks 82). Members of the crime syndicate also were served by this corporate identity. Focusing on one’s membership in a group diminishes insecurity, strengthens identity, creates connections, and gives the illusion of effectiveness and control (Staub 55). The most susceptible to the lure of group identity are the personally disenfranchised. The National Gang Youth Center Survey 2006 highlights minority involvement in organized crime. Across all area types, the majority of law enforcement agencies report that African American/Black and/or Hispanic youth predominate
among documented gang members. The most overwhelming demographic represented in crime syndicates are immigrants in dire financial straits (Etter and Swymeler 9).

The universality of human nature, the continuity of group identity, and the globalization of business perpetuate transnational organized crime. According to Yuriy A. Voronin, a Professor of Criminal Law at Urals State Law Academy in Russia, “Transnational criminal rings are becoming more and more powerful and universal, and their mobility is growing. The means of resources of any state are not enough to seriously harm them,” (Voronin 2000). How can bureaucracy, red tape, and government resources contend with greed, private wealth, and rebellious cleverness? Since transnational organized crime is a global security threat, their efficacy depends on accomplishing goals including weakening governmental institutions and destroying legitimate global business. Countries with an exponentially developing economy often exhibit increased crime. In a report for the US Department of Justice, J.O. Finckenauer suggests
multijurisdictional task forces comprised of agents from various agencies heighten awareness and report of aberrations on the state and local justice level, as well as improve communications and intelligence sharing. However effective these efforts might be against a single group at a single point in time, they would be directed against a veritable hydra, as transnational crime has evolved and spread far beyond the Italian Mafia/La Cosa Nostra—the most prominent syndicate from the 1920s to the 1990s. Other significant transnational groups include:

- Russian Mafia: comprised of 200 groups in 60 countries and involved in racketeering, fraud, tax evasion, gambling, robbery, murder, and arson.

- Yakuza: a Japanese crime syndicate, focused on undermining legitimate business. Human trafficking, prostitution, and gambling are their other means of mayhem.
• Triads: Hong Kong-based criminal societies, that control the black market. They are also involved in money laundering and drug trafficking.

• Thailand-based Jao Pho has a high involvement in political corruption and illegal business practices (Finckenauer 1).

Throughout Prohibition and the consideration of human nature, the only hint of a solution is to provide for the underpowered groups who feel that they do not have any voice, efficacy, or place in society. This will not alleviate the major players, the greedy, and the deviant. This guiding idea would only weaken grassroots recruiting. The constancy of human nature assures the future of crime to some extent.

Since crime is a personal choice and as constant as the negative aspects of human nature, legislating morality may not thoroughly solve the problem. Current debates on legalization of drugs and prostitution suggest that, if legalized, these activities
would be out in the open and that organized crime’s control would lessen. Conversely, legislation declaring these illegal would foster criminal ingenuity, as seen in the knife-handle flasks, false bottom trunks, and bootlegging modus operandi of Prohibition. Education, career enrichment, and full realization of legal opportunities would be a positive influence against crime. We can slow the success of organized crime through giving voice and opportunity to the disenfranchised and those likely to be attracted to organized crime. By understanding the factors that incline the participants and partakers towards organized crime, therapists and law enforcement can better predict or change these patterns. There is a rampant lack of stress on personal responsibility in society and its effects are broadly apparent.

Organized crime rose to accommodate certain aspects of human nature, such as: greed, weakness, and opportunism. When the opportunity for crime arises, the individual has a free choice between criminal and non-criminal behavior. If the payoffs for a criminal act are greater than the retribution it will bring, the
probability of crime increases (Hollins 8). Organized crime is—historically and currently—a very profitable enterprise. Organized crime pays enough for many to take that greed-filling incentive and take up crime. While organized crime is a business model based on supply and demand, societal conditions that increase public acceptance are not enough to carry and expand the business of organized crime. There must be enough loopholes in the law, corruption, and bribery in criminal justice sectors to insure “cooperation.” Following the Capone idea of “give the people what they want”, the public must continue to demand drugs, venues for gambling, and high interest and no questions asked loans. Syndicates become more difficult to collapse as they incorporate legitimate business ventures in to increase contacts and credibility. Organized crime would be an exceedingly complex puzzle to solve, as the solution would have to address the proliferation factors of the criminal justice sector, consumers, economy, and members of the network. As long as the law prohibits what certain people place a high premium on, and so long as there are the weak-
willed, the irresolute of character, the undiscerning and the willfully deviant, organized crime will continue to hold sway over American society, politics, and economy.
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The Internal Conflicts of Holden Caufield

By Stephanie Nardi

Holden Caufield’s mental instability creates internal chaos for the young man as he struggles to find his place and purpose in life. Through J.D. Salinger’s novel, Catcher in the Rye, Holden joins the time-honored tradition of young adults commencing the quest for their own truths and self identity. While this period is typically marked by minimal rebellion and confusion for most teenagers, Holden’s troubled state turns his adolescence into a time of severe turmoil. Immature and sexually frustrated to no end, Holden is experiencing typical emotions but at an extremely high degree of intensity. The young man feels an atypically forceful desire to reside among children and revert back to his own childhood. At the same time, Holden resents adult society and is
unwilling to take part in the fallaciousness it expects from its members. This confusion causes Holden to turn to himself for reassurance and truth rather than seeking support and guidance from what he believes to be a dishonest world. Holden’s deeply rooted emotional and mental discrepancies result in a lonely, gaunt boy wandering not just New York City, but the world searching for an elusive sense of self-identity and an unattainable complacency with the harsh encumbrance of the world he struggles to occupy.

Holden’s primary internal obsession is a desire for the preservation of childhood innocence and purity. Children demonstrate a nature that is untainted by the corruption of society and Holden idealizes their perfectly naivety. As Bryan notes in his essay in the Modern Language Association, Holden is “hypersensitive…to the fragile innocence of children” (Bryan 1065). Although Holden himself no longer possesses such innocence, he is adamant about protecting the quality in others. His most precious fantasy is that of becoming a catcher in the rye in which he prevents children from falling off of the edge of a cliff
and pushes them back into a field of purity (Freedman 408). The edge of the cliff provides him with dramatic view of the contamination that society imposes upon youth as they grow. While his vision may be romantic, it is apparent that Holden borders on an unhealthy fixation with the necessity of innocence. Instead of acknowledging the process of growth as essential to the development of a person’s character, he sees it as a perversion of good. Reiman, a professor at Duke University, observes that Holden’s younger sister, Phoebe, is presented as the archetype of childhood purity and innocence (Marks, Reiman, Martin, and Bhaerman 507). Holden delights in her quirks and fancies and is obviously taken by her naïve, untainted nature. The small reminders of innocence around her room such as the notebook covered with a fictitious middle name, give Holden a feeling of complacency that he rarely finds (Bryan 1071). Holden is obviously terrified of the imminent maturation of his sister; he believes that it will deplete all of her fun-loving and care-free qualities. He strives to protect Phoebe and her innocence she
exhibits at all costs. This preoccupation with the preservation of purity is one of Holden’s driving forces and contributes to his discrepancies with the same world that is the thief of the innocence he so desperately covets.

In an attempt to control the havens that provide Holden with a sense of comfort, he maintains a strong desire to resist change of any kind. The places that he loved during his childhood are of utmost importance to him. He derives a great degree of security from familiar places that remain unchanged and is greatly disturbed when displays of animosity occur within these personal asylums. His home provides him with a strong sense of regularity. As Holden navigates through his house during the night, his full awareness of the inner workings of the apartment and the typical practices of his family provide him with a level of comfort and ease. An even greater source of reassurance is the American Museum of Natural History. The building is filled with scenes that are frozen in time and Holden admires it for “its permanence” (Barlow 66). As a someone who fears all dimensions of change,
Holden uses the museum as a reliable escape it is the ultimate satisfaction. A particularly favorite scene of Holden’s is the mummy display (Bryan 1068). He experiences a strong attraction to the preserved ancient bodies. Frozen and consistent, the mummies represent Holden’s ideal stagnation. Unfortunately for Holden, the places he cares about so deeply do not always provide the desired consistency. Red, curse words are scrawled across the walls in both his elementary school and his beloved museum (Edwards 558). Barlow’s article in the Education Digest calls to attention that in an attempt to preserve his childhood perceptions of these locations, Holden tries to scratch off the words in a frenzy, only to come to the disturbing realization that it is impossible to eliminate both the words in front of him and the type of people who engage in such unnecessary acts of destruction (Barlow 67). Holden’s ideas of an unchanging and steady world are unrealistic but provide him with a desire and an escape from the flux that is within his own life.
The immaturity that Holden exhibits throughout the novel proves to be detrimental and contributes to his overall fragile mental state. An unnecessary level of narcissism, judgment, and self-righteousness dominate much of Holden’s character (Coles 221). He holds himself in the highest esteem, referring to himself as the ultimate source of knowledge. Holden is under the impression that he alone possesses a supreme degree of insight and intelligence. Believing that he knows what is best for the world and himself, Holden is unwilling to take any advances toward self-improvement—a definite indication of immaturity (Edwards 554). He quickly dismisses the rational and sound advice two of his teachers offer because “Holden measures it against impossibly absolute standards” (Seng 207). Holden’s belief of his superior intellect ironically demonstrates his lack of self-awareness. He also finds it imperative to irrationally judge almost every person he comes in contact with. The assumptions and criticisms Holden makes are derived solely from his brief assessment of the person’s appearance. These judgments are unfair, prejudiced, and a clear
sign of immaturity. Seng observes that “while Holden is quick to pass severe judgments on others he is not so quick to see the faults in himself” (Seng 206). Holden further demonstrates his immaturity through his sexuality. He is uneducated about the reasons and purposes of meaningful sex. On one occasion, he hires a prostitute named Sunny to whom he intends to lose his virginity. This act is immature and ill-informed and Holden finds himself too intimidated to follow through. Society has told him that sex is something he should desire to engage in and although he wants to “come off as a bold young man in…his first sexual encounter,” (Beidler 56) he is clearly not ready for such a mature act. Holden’s immature tendencies contribute to his overall lack of stability and are the source of many of the troubles that plague his life.

While sexual curiosity is normal during adolescence, Holden demonstrates a high degree of confusion and guilt about his personal desires and tendencies. The theory exists that Holden is internally wrestling with his own homosexuality (Edwards 560).
While he makes his desire to sexually interact with women very apparent to the psychiatrist he is relaying his story to, his comments appear forced instead of genuine. Edwards presents the idea that although many opportunities arise for Holden to engage in sexual acts with women, he never has the courage or desire to move beyond the familiar and innocent stage of a simple kiss, and in fact “deliberately avoids both affection and serious sexual advances” (Edwards 556). It seems that Holden is attempting to present himself as a heterosexual but is struggling. When homosexuality is presented to him in the form of a possible advance from Mr. Antolini, Holden reacts in an overly dramatic fashion and rushes out (Seng 208). There is no obvious reason for Holden to be so disturbed by Mr. Antolini’s actions unless an always-present fear of the actualization of his own homosexuality exists deep within his subconscious (Bryan 1067). It is further observed by Edwards that Holden is the one to seek out the homosexuals referenced in his story (Edwards 560). He is the aggressor when he chooses to contact Mr. Antolini as well as Carl
Luce, who is Holden’s other homosexual acquaintance. It is as if Holden desires to acknowledge and begin experimenting with his homosexuality by seeking out these men but is consumed by fear when the opportunity actually arises. Holden’s sexuality causes much grief and uncertainty in his life that he would rather avoid than confront.

Holden finds the plethora of suffocating stigmas and expectations created by society to be unnecessary and repulsive. To him, the adult world contains no authenticity or truth. Holden’s favorite way to describe society is ‘phony’ (Fowler 194). He is constantly upset by the actions and behaviors he observes in people. The maturity and professionalism he finds in society only are shallow. When adults conform to the expectations of the world, they appear to Holden as automated and devoid of true human emotion. Seng states that Holden “sees that the world belongs to adults, and it seems to him that they have filled it with phoniness, pretense, [and] social compromise” (Seng 206).

Holden is further disturbed by the class distinctions society is so
fond of creating. The Caulfield family has a great deal of money, as is shown through their ability to send Holden to various private schools despite the fact that he is obviously not a diligent student. In this way, Holden is exposed to the expectations that a high class society presents as well as the divisions it creates. Freedman recalls a specific disturbing instance in which the parents of less wealthy students are treated disrespectfully by the school’s president (Freedman 414). Since they have nothing of monetary value to offer, the less-privileged parents are dismissed by the president as he moves on to socialize with the wealthier parents. This is very similar to Holden’s view of society as a whole; the wealthy are given special privileges and demonstrate an extreme pretense in order to appear elite while the poor are constantly overlooked. Holden despises the corruption and shallow nature of society and views it as the primary cause of the injustices and lack of genuine feelings he observes in the world.

As an adolescent, Holden finds himself caught between the innocence of his childhood and the realities of the adult world that
he refuses to comply with. At 16, Holden has grown too old to maintain his own ideal of innocence (Bryan 1065). While he desires to move back into his prior naïve state, it is obvious that Holden has experienced too much in life to. This unsettling to him and it seems that his only viable option is the natural progression into adulthood. Fowler notes that, “as a child, Holden Caulfield had known truth and ‘non-phoniness’…and he retains the courage and wisdom to refuse to compromise with adulthood and its necessary adulteries” (Fowler 195). The expectation of complying with adult society is even more disturbing to Holden than is his break from childhood. Holden views the responsibility that will necessarily be placed upon him as undesirable. In his essay on naturalism, Fowler states that “to ask [Holden] to accept his environment and his institutions would be to propose that he exchange a precious if precarious health for a mortal affliction” (Fowler 195). Instead, Holden would rather escape from the entire process of maturation within which he feels trapped. His initial movement in this desired direction is his break from his private
high school. Holden feels compelled to leave the institution that represents the lack of genuineness that he finds to be such a problem. Constant fantasies also arise in Holden’s mind involving his escape from society. Toward the end of the novel, he aims to run away, live with a deaf-mute wife in the wilderness, and never speak again. Through this fantasy, he exhibits his belief that the only way out of his quandary of being pushed into the adult world he despises is to run away from his increasing responsibilities (Seng 207). Seng concurs notes that Holden desires to “escape from an adult world with which [he] feels that he cannot cope” (Seng 207). In this way, Holden exhibits his strong aversion to the adult world that he feels forced to enter.

The causes of Holden’s distraught emotional state lie within a childhood trauma and a home life filled with adversity. The untimely death of his younger brother Allie proves to be an unresolved issue in Holden’s life. The memory of Allie serves as a constant reminder of the injustices the world imposes upon innocent youth. To Holden, Allie is a boy who will remain forever
untainted and innocent because, as Bryan states, he “died before the temptations of adulthood” (Bryan 1066). For this reason, Holden often references Allie as an ideal person and attempts to talk to him during times of confusion. Furthermore, the death seems to have caused a division of the entire Caulfield family. Martin observes that Holden’s parents appear very disconnected from their children’s life, probably as a result of the immeasurable pain they suffered through their son’s death (Marks, Reiman, Martin, and Bhaerman 508). Although not necessarily bad parents, Holden’s mother and father appear devoid of the nurturing nature that most parents possess, often leaving their children to their own devices and this lack of guidance has left Holden with a great deal of confusion about his brother’s death and the value of life in general (Edwards 561-62). If his parents had given him the love and guidance he so earnestly and innately longs for, he would most likely have been able to resolve many of his emotional struggles.

Despite the vast array of mental issues that distort and plague Holden’s reality, he has become to be one of the most beloved and
admired literary characters of the last century. Adolescents are particularly fond of Holden because he represents a struggle against society that is very similar to their own. Seng recognizes that “the great appeal this book has for young people is due, I think, to the fact that it is a valid, ‘realistic’ representation of the adolescent world” (Seng 204). Holden’s character denotes a refreshing honesty while providing comfort to youth by showing them that they are not alone in their quest for truth and happiness (Coles 220). Although he is a wealthy, intelligent, and attractive young man, Holden’s problems with himself and his world present a great hurdle. While his story causes young adults to realize that the tribulations they face are typical and necessary, it also instills a degree of thankfulness for their own of mental competency than their beloved Holden Caulfield. His appeal is also common among people who are struggling to come to peace with themselves. The immaturity and confusion that Holden exhibits so strongly throughout the novel are qualities most people secretly hold within. His passion and zeal for life that is often crushed by the
expectations of the adult world marks a universal experience. Although most adults have learned to assimilate into society, the innate yearning to break free of the ties it imposes is always close at hand. Holden’s capability to draw readers into his chaotic world and make them feel accepted through his own disillusionment is a critical aspect of his popularity (Freedman 404). While he may seem to be a highly disturbed example of over-privileged youth, Holden’s story has the tendency to provide hope for some, comfort for many, and honesty for all.
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Keyword: Holden Caulfield.


The Truth About Trenches: *All Quiet on the Western Front*

As A Lens to Understanding Trench Warfare in the First World War

By Melissa Sonier

*All Quiet on the Western Front* is one of the most celebrated World War I movies of all time. This film is so revered because of the realistic portrayal of the cruel effects that the war had on the soldiers, particularly during scenes relating to trench warfare. Trenches were a new war creation used extensively in WWI; the consequences of using them were far-reaching and unlike anything seen before. Brutality, trauma, and violence are common themes throughout the history of war, and they were especially prominent during the First World War. Historical evidence suggests that the
makers of *All Quiet on the Western Front* did not exaggerate their portrayal of the brutality that exists in trench warfare and its devastating effects on soldiers.

The film version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* is based on the novel of the same title by German author Erich Maria Remarque. Remarque fought in World War I and wrote his infamous novel in 1929. Remarque voiced his thoughts several years after the conclusion of the war\(^1\) when people no longer tried to suppress their feelings about it. Since many people viewed war as a heroic endeavor in the 1920s, his book caused a frenzy. Hollywood is attracted to a good story, especially one that causes a little controversy; it didn’t take long before Universal Studios bought the rights to the novel, transforming it into a feature film released in 1930. The three key people that crafted *All Quiet* into a movie were the film’s director, Lewis Milestone, and screenwriters Erich Maria Remarque and Maxwell Anderson. These filmmakers

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kept the script similar to the book and produced a movie that became more memorable than the war novel itself.²

The film and novel center on the lives of a high school class of German teenage boys whose teacher persuades them to become soldiers in the First World War.³ The film primarily concentrates on the protagonist of the novel, Paul Baumer, and his closest companions. As the film progresses, it displays a variety of horrors and hard facts of the war. Slowly but surely, each classmate is killed, until none are left alive, not even Paul.⁴ Such realism has stood the test of time. This realism was brought to life with the help of Milestone, who utilized the camera to make scenes more realistic. Anderson did a splendid job making the novel All Quiet on the Western Front into a feature film. The movie won two Oscars, one for Best Picture and one for Best Director, and was nominated for two additional Oscars, one for Best Cinematography

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³ All Quiet on the Western Front. Internet Movie Database. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0020629/
and one for Best Writing Achievement. Anderson’s script also emphasizes the most critical parts of the novel, and “the acting is mostly solid” in the film. Battle scenes specifically demand a charged emotional response from the viewer, even though they’re not in color. The scenes involving the trenches are some of the most significant.

A man simply known as Behm is the first of Paul's classmates to die, and on the first night that the boys are at war. He is outside of the trench and gets injured by an artillery shell. He lets out scream after blood-curdling scream. Walter Rogers, the actor who plays Behm, conveys Behm's shock at his sudden blindness realistically, with a mix of palpable fear and depression. "...[A]s the camera with unfaltering objectivity records the naked and violent facts of war, we cannot but be shaken by the elemental

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5 All Quiet on the Western Front. Internet Movie Database. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0020629/
8 All Quiet on the Western Front. Internet Movie Database. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0020629/
quality of the scenes themselves. We experience with these boys their shock and disbelief as they witness the first death of one of their group." Soon after Behm is blinded, he is shot and killed by enemy machine guns.9

Another violent tragedy of the trenches in All Quiet begins with the insanity of shell shock. Franz Kemerich, one of Paul’s classmates, goes crazy listening to the sounds of the war from the trenches. He covers his ear to no avail, and attempts to flee the trench while yelling his heart out, but gets stopped by an older man, who is more experienced with war, known fondly as “Kat” – short for Katzinsky. Later, in a time of confusion, Kemerich successfully escapes the trench and since he is no longer in the semi- protection of the trench, he gets shot in the leg by the enemy. Other trench scenes are not as detailed, but the camera captures the mood perfectly. For example, after Kemerich gets shot, there is a scene in which the camera is positioned at a bird’s eye view and shows each soldier in his proper place within the trench. The

enemy is seen approaching at a distance, sounds of artillery pollute the air, and Allied troops storm the German trenches. Combat is shown up close and personal, with a multitude of yelling and weapons discharging.

It is nothing less than chaotic. As viewers of the film, we do not choose sides with either the Germans or the Allies, we just see the brutality of the battling. There is a very powerful scene in the trench after Kemerich has died in which his boots get passed between his classmates and the camera zooms in on the boots of all of the men in the trench. Then a whistle blows and the viewer sees all of the boots spring from the trench. Kemerich’s boots are worn by one of his classmates, and are blown back into the trench by an explosion. “A view of the dead boy’s face, blood trickling out of the corner of his mouth, is followed by a repeated close-up of the boots which we now know to be worn by a dead man.” This isn’t the only gruesome occurrence in *All Quiet*. During the first major battle scene, the viewer sees shell explosions everywhere, and towards the end of the scene, the viewer sees a shot of two hands
attached to wrists and nothing else, holding onto some barbed wire.

Although clearly disturbing, the most heart wrenching scene of trench warfare in *All Quiet* comes at the very end of the film. By the end of *All Quiet*, everyone that Paul knows has died. He is sitting in the trench by himself, melancholy in every way. He sees a butterfly outside of the trench, and lifts his head up to see it. The audience then sees an enemy sniper, preparing to shoot if needed. Paul reaches out to the butterfly- the last sign of life left besides himself and just as his hand is about to reach it, the audience hears a shot and sees his hand fall, limp and lifeless, to the ground. This may be dramatic, but it represents something that indicates how fighting and living in the trenches, as well as war in general, is violent and extremely depressing. *All Quiet* “is an objective record of the raw facts of war” that provides “accurate and powerful knowledge of actual warfare.” Unlike the nature of reading a book, this movie enables the audience to see and hear what’s occurring. They can visualize the strong emotions felt by the soldiers. This may lead one to question the historical accuracy of the events, and
if it’s just Hollywood attempting to make a blockbuster.

By analyzing primary sources, it becomes apparent that Milestone and Remarque portrayed the violence of trench warfare. Although the soldiers in *All Quiet* were German, all nationalities and ethnicities faced the same violence and disruption in the war. Letters from a Lutheran German could probably explain similar hopes, fears, and dreams as that of a Catholic Frenchman, or even a Protestant Frenchman.

Born in 1882, Robert Pesselier immigrated from France to the US at the age of 14. He went back to France at the start of the first World War to fight with a prestigious group of soldiers that occupied the Vosges mountains of Alsace. Trench warfare in the Vosges presented different difficulties than trench warfare shown in *All Quiet*. In the Vosges, the temperatures were colder thus forcing the soldiers to cope with the unfortunate results of snow and ice. Pellissier didn’t spend much time in the trenches, but he knew after a short while that he didn’t want to be there. Pellissier had various trench episodes that rivaled the trench horrors in *All*
Quiet. In November of 1914, Pellissier was in a trench when one of his fellow soldiers, referred to by Pellisier as Salmon, was shot by the enemy; Salmon was just visible above Pellisier’s trench. Pellisier and a man known as Muller went to get Salmon, who was not in the trench. As Muller started to roll Salmon’s body to Pellisier’s trench, about thirty yards away, he was hit, and landed on top of Salmon. He was shot in the brain and right through his mouth. Salmon and Muller were both buried the next day. Pellisier also discusses a man by the name of Galvin in his journal entry for March 10, 1916. Galvin sprinted from his trench, ridden with anxiety, and very similar to Kemerich, was shot in the head.

Pellisier did not have shell shock, but was none the less affected by the times of constant firing. “One week they fired an average of 3,000 shells a day on the trench where I was…the shells explode in front of you, behind you, and on either side of you, and you keep wondering whether the next will drop right on you,” Pellisier remarks in an undated letter to a friend. He talks about how trench life, on a whole, is not very interesting. When it does
get interesting, it becomes ridiculous. At night, for example, the sentry will think he hears the enemy, thus forcing the entire trench to awake and assume their positions. For the next 20 minutes, the troops manning the machine guns fire a constant stream of bullets and when this ends, everyone goes back to sleep. This process can occur multiple times in the same night, which is enough to make a soldier crazy, but Pellisier managed to keep his head. Trench life convinced Pellisier that the war was a stalemate and that the killing taking place was useless- the exact point that Remarque made in both his novel and film. “The war is now a deadlock and it will either end in two or three months or else it will last all winter and also next summer. If it ends in a comparatively short time, leading to an unsatisfactory compromise, I don’t care to get killed or maimed in the last meaningless and purposeless skirmishes,” he says. Pellisier had a lot of time to think about matters of the war because he spent most of his time sitting around given the notoriously boring nature of trench life. When writing to a friend, Pellisier tells his friend that he should be glad to be at home and
not fighting for and in a country that’s controlled by militant thoughts rather than logic and reason.

Lieutenant William Owen Steele of the Newfoundland Regiment of World War I owned similar opinions to Robert Pellisier. He too kept a journal of his days fighting in the war and wrote letters to his friends and family. His letters were more hopeful compared to his journal entries that showed his frustration with the continuation of the war. An entry on September 23, 1915, shows yet another violent and tragic death of a soldier, witnessed by Steele. Steele spent several hours in the middle of the night on patrol in the trenches and at 4 a.m., Lt. Taylor, Steele’s lookout partner, decided to go outside of the trench to check things out. He told Steele not to follow. Steele doesn’t say how he feels about this, but by obeying Taylor’s instructions he saves his own life; Taylor was shot and killed within the hour.
“Taylor’s death showed how unpredictable war was and how much they were all part of a terrible game of chance.”10 Looking at war from the soldier’s point of view clearly demonstrates the destructiveness of war in the trenches. Yet even for outsiders—who live very different lives from the soldiers—the view on trench warfare is the same. In 1915, Mary Roberts Rinehart, a nurse and writer, wanted to see for herself what life was like in the trenches. She knew that the war was filled with horrors, and wanting to find evidence to prove this to the rest of the world, she went to visit a trench. After only spending a short time in the trenches, she remarks that “[m]any people have written about the trenches—the mud, the odours, the inhumanity of compelling men to live under such foul conditions…under the best conditions the life is ghastly, horrible, impossible.”11 Rinehart did not see death, but she got a feel for what trench life was like.

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10 Facey-Crowther, *Lt. Owen Steele*, 68.
She learned that often times, soldiers on the offensive must wade or swim through the water that separates the Belgian side from the German side, water that can be anywhere from two to eight feet deep. Rinehart assumed that it would be easy for the men to cross this, but is then told that the water has a large amount of barbed wire in it and that many men have not succeeded in getting across.12 Accompanying soldiers on patrol around the trenches, Rinehart saw many decimated villages. She encountered one with no houses; every single house had been destroyed. What horrified her most was a cemetery that had been annihilated by shells. “There was not a cross in place; they lay flung about in every grotesque position. The quiet God’s Acre had become a hell. Graves were uncovered, the dust of centuries exposed.” Huge holes from the shells contained dozens of bodies, an image Rinehart would never forget.13

12 Straubing, The Last Magnificent War, 291.
13 Straubing, The Last Magnificent War, 295-296.
Yet she was only subjected to a small portion of the trench warfare horrors. Milestone depicted the trenches as a place where a man can go crazy from a lack of food and constant battle. John Ellis devotes an entire book, titled *Eye Deep in Hell*, to the terrible conditions of the trenches. He describes more details of trench life than one person could have experienced, and certainly more than Remarque could have squeezed into his novel and film. When reading his book, one would believe that it is Ellis who is exaggerating and not Milestone, whose portrayals seem tame compared to what Ellis has to say. First off, the men had to put up with copious amounts of rain, which led to copious amounts of mud that the men literally drowned in. Men would fall in muddy holes created by shells and slowly die.\(^\text{14}\)

Water also caused another problem, a malady known as “trench foot.” This happened when soldiers were forced to wear their boots for days on end in the wet, muddy trenches. Trench foot

is similar to frostbite: a foot will become numb, turn color to either red or blue, and many times have to be amputated.\textsuperscript{15} Sanitation was abysmal. The men were unable to wash themselves and corpses were many times not moved from wherever the body landed at the time of death. This attracted rats; those rats bred hundreds more rats. The rats ate the corpses lying around and crawled over soldiers who were alive in the effort to find food. Lice were also an all-too-common pest that caused incessant itching and the spread of disease. Flies and nits added to the vast array of disgusting pests. All of this contributed to the wretched odor of the trenches—a combination of: chlorine, bug repellent, excrement, feet, sweat, smoke, and rotting corpses.\textsuperscript{16}

These conditions were terrible, but the causes of death were almost unbelievable. First off, thousands of soldiers were killed by their own weapons. Artillery bombardments were unbearable; the attacks sounded like severe thunderstorms. Gas was a new weapon

\textsuperscript{15} Ellis, \textit{Eye-Deep in Hell}, 48-49.
\textsuperscript{16} Ellis, \textit{Eye-Deep in Hell}, 52-59.
of trench warfare that killed a man slowly and painfully over an entire month. Wilfred Owen was a British soldier who wrote a variety of poems about his experiences fighting in World War I. He wrote a particularly moving one about the use of gas in the war titled “Dulce et Decorum Est.” In this poem, Owen describes what happens to a man affected by such noxious gases:

He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning…If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood/Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs/Obsene as cancer, bitter as the cud/Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues/My friend you would not tell with such high zest/To children ardent for some desperate glory. The old lie: Dulce et decorum est/Pro patria mori.  

The last line of the poem, “Dulce et decorum est/Pro patria mori,” is Latin for “Sweet and proper it is to die for one’s country.” This

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line is Owen’s scathingly sardonic response to anyone who believes that war is glorious.

In his poem, Owen shows “[w]ar as a demeaning and wholly destructive force.”19 This sentiment is epitomized with equal fervor by Milestone, Anderson, and Remarque in All Quiet. Paul Baumer experiences death, destruction, and chaos exactly like Robert Pellissier, Lt. William Owen Steele, Mary Roberts Rinehart, and Wilfred Owen and the thousands of unnamed soldiers who died without the time to write down their story. Each person may have had a different trench experience, but the themes of violence and brutality persevered throughout. By studying and reading accounts of the people who experienced the trenches of the First World War, one learns that Milestone and Remarque were not exaggerating in their portrayals. Even by looking at secondary sources, the evidence of the extreme violence is blatant and historically accurate. All Quiet is not just a Hollywood war movie, it is the story of average soldiers fighting and dying in the trenches.

History as well as this film prove that the violence was unprecedented in the trench warfare of World War I. Although the film is entertaining, it serves more as an educational lens for discovering the true traumatic effects of trench warfare in “The Great War.”
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Affirmative Action in College Admissions

By Alyssa Bradt

Affirmative Action is a policy or program that seeks to redress past discrimination through active measures to ensure equal opportunity, as in education and employment (Wordnet). This issue is very well-known and is often especially controversial in college admissions. Many argue that colleges and universities should take a student’s racial background into consideration while reviewing application material. This may be an attempt to acquire a more diverse student population, or to guarantee that discrimination against minorities does not occur. Others disagree with the policy, and believe that the ethnicity of a student should not play a role in the admissions process. Information from recent court cases and long-standing legislation has contributed to both sides of the issue. Although many colleges provide evidentiary support that Affirmative Action is beneficial to the school and the
student body, it should not exist in admissions because it limits the number of highly qualified non-minorities accepted and enrolled.

Admission is more competitive than ever, with record numbers of students applying nationwide (Levine). Some people feel that Affirmative Action results in overcompensating the college admissions committee is subconsciously urged to be more lenient toward a minority applicant in order to prevent accusations of racism. Therefore, it has become slightly easier for African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnic groups to get into some colleges. Some argue that as a result, unprepared students are enrolled in high-level institutions (Levine). Potentially qualified candidates that are not of any ethnic background are often deferred, waitlisted, and rejected by schools they apply to because spaces are filled by minorities of lower academic standing. The reality of the situation is that opinions vary from person to person based on their geographic location, their own race, and personal beliefs.
Democratic Presidential Candidate Barack Obama stated, “if we have done what needs to be done to ensure that kids who are qualified to go to college can afford it, affirmative action becomes a diminishing tool for us to achieve racial equality in this society” (Klegg). As a minority Harvard Law School graduate, Obama makes it clear that colleges that select students to make a diverse population for “educational benefits” is a false claim (Klegg). When asked about what he expects when his two daughters are old enough to apply to college, Obama responded by saying, “they should probably be treated by any admissions officer as folks who are pretty advantaged, and there is nothing wrong with that.” Along with Barack Obama, numerous people believe that rationale for racial preferences in college admissions is essentially remedial, namely to help “struggling” African Americans to achieve racial equality in society (Klegg). The conflicting views on this topic continue to make Affirmative Action an issue used in debates and politics, and despite the laws
that both encourage and discourage it, the amount of attention paid to it becomes a separate issue.

The landmark case v. Bollinger in 2003 upheld the University of Michigan Law School's admissions policy of taking race into account on a case-by-case basis (Eisenberg). The issue tried in the court dealt with racial preference programs that unconstitutionally discriminate against whites (CNN). The undergraduate program at University of Michigan uses a complicated “points system” when looking at applications, and the race of the applicant is considered. As a result of the case, it was determined that the University of Michigan Law School did not violate the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, but the undergraduate school did (CNN). The University is allowed to take race into consideration, but cannot make any overriding actions to accept a minority into their programs.

: In California, Proposition 209 prevents any employer or education facility from withholding rights from minorities (Cose). Colleges such as the University of California, Los Angeles have
begun accepting more diverse students as opposed to 1996, when the proposition had not been put into effect (Cose). That is clear evidence that colleges are nervous about being charged with discrimination, and will be more likely to accept ethnic students that may have been rejected in the past. As students often apply to colleges outside of their own state, the only solution would be a national proposition to either encourage or discourage Affirmative Action.

While ethnic applicants may possess a slight advantage when applying to college, in most United States colleges and universities, white students make up the majority of the student body. It varies by location and many institutions are “Historically Black,” meaning nearly 100% of their students are African American. At Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, over 84% of the student population is white or Caucasian (CollegeBoard). The second largest group is the students of Hispanic or Latino background, but they only account for seven percent of the population (CollegeBoard). Less than four percent of
students at Marist are African American, less than three percent are Asian, and the remaining students make-up about two percent of the entire population (CollegeBoard). At Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 48% of the students are white or Caucasian, meaning that there are more minorities than white or Caucasian students. This may be because Ivy League schools are more interested in diversity, or because there is simply a larger applicant pool with more minorities. It is also possible that schools with a very low diversity rate may be more inclined to accept minority students in hope of raising diversity. Affirmative Action may be a contributing factor to higher diversity rates at more recognized schools, but it can be inferred that several schools do not take race into consideration when examining applications.

Students at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island tend to support Affirmative Action, and the attempts made by the University to encourage diversity. With very similar statistics to Harvard on the amount of students with ethnic backgrounds, 53% of students at Brown agree that the University should continue its
policy to use race as an admission factor (Shapiro.) Many may suggest that the minority students are the ones this feel that way, but the amount of minority students is a smaller percentage than the amount of students that agree with the policy (CollegeBoard). Some students that came from a relatively homogeneous student population admire the fact that Brown exposes them to different cultures (Shapiro). Other students are in disbelief that Affirmative Action exists. The most common view on the subject is that the student’s academic record should be the most important decision factor, while taking SAT scores, activities, leadership, and employment into consideration as well. Other believe that it almost seems hypocritical for one to say that colleges should look for unique individuals, but then disagree with a student’s race being considered in the application.

When regarding the issue that students with alternate ethnic backgrounds should be primary candidates for specific scholarships, Affirmative Action should be enforced to an extent. Many colleges and universities offer larger academic scholarships
to minority students, and the qualifications are often not as high as
the qualifications for a white student. This may be an effort to
encourage more minority students to apply to the school, or
because of endowments made specifically for students of different
races. For example, some scholarships are named for an African
American that strived for better education for African American
students across the nation. In that case, it would make more sense
for the scholarship to be given to an African American. On the
other hand, some scholarships should be available to everyone, and
the student with the best academic record should be awarded the
scholarship. Affirmative Action also does not only deal with race
and gender. Some schools want more geographic diversity in their
student population, and may be more willing to accept a student
from another part of the country. Other schools may want the
majority of their students to live in the state in which the college is
located. This may depend on whether the school it is public or
private. It also may be another form of Affirmative Action.
In order to make everyone satisfied with the college admissions process, applicants should be aware of any Affirmative Action policies in advance. This would prevent people resenting the fact that they applied to a school that does not practice Affirmative Action, or vice versa. The ruling in Michigan in 2003 concluded that it is unjust for one to make overriding decisions based on the race of a student (Salemi). If this policy is in effect, but the court did not make any laws against taking race into consideration, then what role it is meant to have? If it is considered, than it still can be an overriding factor. When I applied to colleges last year, the boxes on some the applications which requested my race and gender were optional while other colleges required that I include my race and gender. I believe that making a universal movement to make the disclosure of such information optional would eliminate the problem. There are millions of students that are rejected from college each year, where they may have been accepted the previous year. More students than ever are pursuing post-high school education, making the amount of
applicants larger, and the selectivity of a school more competitive. It is not fair for a white student that is more qualified than a non-white student to be rejected from an institution for the sole purpose of making the school more diverse.

Affirmative Action will remain a controversial topic, regardless of the policies and laws. Dissatisfied students that are rejected from schools, or not given enough scholarship money, will try and use Affirmative Action as a reason for their rejection. In order to make all opportunities for students equal, there should be no special consideration for minority students, and college admissions should be concerned about a student’s potential for success.
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Spring 2009

And the Star-Spangled Buyer in Triumph

Shall Wave

By Serena Bubenheim

With the current economic recession taking a general precedence over all other concerns in America, the government is consumed with trying to find the best solution to pull us out of it as quickly as possible. Reports say that the economy contracted approximately six percent in the last quarter of 2008, compelling the government to hastily pass viable legislation. The present stimulus package contains large portions of both government spending and tax cuts, an obvious compromise between
Republicans and Democrats to ensure that the package was ultimately approved. This ideological rift between the two parties, with the Republicans more in favor of tax cuts and Democrats pushing for increased government spending, is what ultimately dictated the content of the legislation since the Democrats were forced to give in somewhat to secure a few Republican votes. While a lot of these political fights and compromises are often overlooked by the general public, the main aspect of this debate that should concern Americans is whether tax cuts or increased government spending is more effective at stimulating the economy. For a variety of reasons, increased government spending appears the more viable option for stimulating the economy.

While I have previously pointed out a political split between the two sides of the debate, the ideologies behind this split go much deeper into economic theory. These ideologies are not based solely on whether or not one prefers tax cuts over government, or whether one is a Republican or a Democrat. In fact, most economists avoid getting into the realm of politics and primarily
focus on finding the most practical theories and economic models for today’s times. The two major categories of economists tend to be Keynesians and Classicals. Keynesians generally believe in bigger government and greater involvement in the economy. These are the people who vie for increased government spending during times of economic crisis. The Classicals, on the other hand, believe more in allowing businesses to regulate the market through normal business cycles and self-correction. Today’s Classicals tend to favor tax cuts over increased government spending and contend for a more hands-off government. With that said, both political parties would develop the trend of enforcing ideas from opposite economic schools of thought, an idea proven by the intense debates in the House and Senate over the stimulus package.

The economic reasoning behind each sides’ contention for tax cuts or increased government spending will be discussed later. For now, I would like to provide background information on the different types of economic stimulus that policymakers utilize and the governing entities in whose jurisdiction they lie. In the United
States, the Federal Reserve—or the Fed—and the United States government are the two main arbitrators of economic policy.

The Fed serves as the nation’s central bank, which duties include “conducting the nation’s monetary policy…supervising and regulating banking institutions…maintaining the stability of the financial system and…providing financial services to depository institutions” (The Federal 1). Monetary policy comprises the lowering or raising of interest rates to manipulate people’s desire to hold money. When conducting expansionary monetary policy, the Fed will lower interest rates in an attempt to raise the incentive to invest. As a result, more investment projects become profitable and people become more willing to borrow and spend money. When the Fed raises interest rates, the opposite happens, and the Fed is said to be engaging in contractionary monetary policy.

While the Fed concerns itself with monetary policy and maintaining economic stability, the government also has the power to make changes in the economy. Unlike the Fed, the government
cannot adjust interest rates or seize control over banks. It can, however, affect the economy through what is called fiscal policy. Fiscal policy “is the use of government spending and taxation to influence the economy” (Weil).

Furthermore, the ability of fiscal policy to affect output by affecting aggregate demand makes it a potential tool for economic stabilization. In a recession, the government can run an expansionary fiscal policy, thus helping to restore output to its normal level and to put unemployed workers back to work. During a boom, when inflation is perceived to be a greater problem than unemployment, the government can run a budget surplus, helping to slow down the economy. Such a countercyclical policy would lead to a budget that was balanced on average (Weil).

Facets of expansionary fiscal policy include increased government spending and tax cuts while contractionary fiscal policy is comprised of higher taxes and decreased government spending. Both are means for the government to control demand and consequently maintain economic growth in the economy.

Since the government can only exercise fiscal policy over the economy, policymakers must choose between tax cuts or increased government spending, or decide on a mixture of both. In this aspect, the two dominating political parties find their major
differences in regards to economic policy. With Democrats pushing for an increase in government spending and Republicans fighting for tax cuts, the stimulus package was a source of heavy debate in congress, in economists circles, and in American households for weeks. It is important to note that the stimulus package was a last resort solution. After many months of debate, congress reluctantly proposed the implementation of expansionary monetary policy. The reason why the Fed’s monetary policy ultimately failed to significantly affect the economy can be attributed to its failure to influence another, more subtle, driving force in the economy—consumers’ psychological fears.

Psychological factors, such as uncertainty, and consumer expectations for the future play a huge role in the economy. After all, if people are worried that they might lose their jobs tomorrow, they will be less likely to go out and buy a new car or house today. Keynes understood how influential such factors could be, and his consideration of them is what dictated the underlying direction of his theory. Here, Keynes’ biographer, Lord Skidelsky, summarizes
Keynes’ economic reasoning behind increasing government spending during times of depression:

The same uncertainty made monetary policy a dubious agent of recovery. Even a "cheap money" policy by the central bank might not be enough to halt the slide into depression if the public's desire to hoard money was going up at the same time. Even if you provide the water, you can't force a horse to drink. This was Keynes's main argument for the use of fiscal policy to fight a depression. There is only one sure way to get an increase in spending in the face of falling confidence and that is for the government to spend the money itself (4).

This issue of consumers' and investors' unwillingness to spend money is the exact problem that America currently faces. A lack of transparency in the credit market enabled banks to make many risky loans. Homeowners all over America were issued adjustable interest rate loans that they never would have been able to pay back. Subsequently, the fall into bankruptcy of many of those homeowners caused the housing bubble to burst. For years, housing was overpriced. Now that the bubble has burst, and houses have fallen back down to their real values, people are in hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. The inability of consumers to pay back their massive debt has caused corporations, who have
purchased their loans in the hope of making a profit, to lose large amounts of money as well. Consequently, the overall deficiency of liquidity in the marketplace has forced consumers to spend less, and as a result, firms are producing less. The resulting slump in money circulation is only exacerbating the problem. As USA Today writer Stuart Lazar puts it, “Everybody is to blame here: borrowers who should not have borrowed; lenders who should not have lent; regulators asleep at the switch; and legislators who allowed the crisis to occur, and had no plan to stop it once things got rolling. Many people recognized that a bubble was being created, but no one did anything to prevent it. The slower economy acted as the pin to puncture the bubble” (16).

In order to revitalize the flow of money throughout the economy, the Fed did partake in a “cheap money” policy, lowering interest rates until “its benchmark interest rate [was] virtually zero,” (Andrews) and could not be lowered any more, in the hopes of encouraging investors to take out loans. However, fear and insecurity prevailed and the government was forced to take more
drastic measures—to create a stimulus package. Keynes witnessed and took note of similar patterns in consumer behavior during the Great Depression of the 1930s, and that is the evidence he drew from to create his case for increasing government spending during an economic downturn.

According to Keynesian economic theory, “each dollar of government spending can increase the nation's gross domestic product by more than a dollar. When higher government spending increases G.D.P., consumers respond to the extra income they earn by spending more themselves. Higher consumer spending expands aggregate demand further, raising the G.D.P. yet again, and so on. This positive feedback loop is called the multiplier effect” (Mankiw 6). The basic idea is that the government hires a bunch of workers to build a bridge. On their lunch break, the workers eat at a restaurant, which turns into income for the waiters and waitresses at the restaurant. In turn, these waiters and waitresses go out and buy new clothes, which then becomes revenue for the clothing store employees and manufactures and so on. Basically, one
person’s expenditures become another’s income. As long as money is continually circulating through an economy, new income is being generated for more people. However, as soon as people stop spending, businesses are faced with decreasing demand for their goods, and in order to stay afloat, they must fire workers. This, in turn, leaves people with even less money to spend. The cycle gets worse as more firms go out of business and as more people find themselves unable to make ends meet.

The effectiveness of the multiplier model rests on another economic term—the MPC or marginal propensity to consume. The MPC answers this question: Out of every dollar that consumers make, how much of those earnings do they spend? In Keynes’ own words, “The fundamental psychological law, upon which we are entitled to depend with great confidence both a priori from knowledge of human nature and from the detailed facts experience, is that men are disposed, as a rule and on the average, to increase their consumption as their income increases, but not as much as the increase in their income” (96). For example, an MPC of .60 means
that on average, consumers will spend sixty cents of each extra dollar they earn and save the other forty. This figure is important for economists to know so that they can derive the minimum amount of government spending needed to effectively stimulate the economy. The greater the MPC, or likelihood that consumers will spend more of every dollar they earn, the less stimulus money the government has to put out.

An interesting idea concerning the MPC is that those with a lower socioeconomic status have higher propensities to spend more of each extra dollar they make. If a single mother of two makes an extra $100, she will most likely spend all of it, either for groceries or new clothes for her children. The CEO of a large corporation is less likely to spend any of an extra $100, especially if he already lays out $1 million a month for savings, because he is less in need of it. For this reason, tax cuts for the rich are virtually ineffective at stimulating the economy. The logic behind the theory of tax breaks for the rich are that by giving them more money, they will have a greater incentive to start a business, providing a source of new jobs.
for the economy. However, a smart businessman knows that starting a company in the midst of plunging demand will fail. If no one is willing to buy your products, why would you put forth the money, effort, and time to do so, knowing that you will only incur a loss in the end?

As I have stated before, I favor government spending as a tool to stimulate economic growth during times of recession. In an economic crisis like the one we are currently facing, an initial push has to come from somewhere. With consumers weary of high unemployment rates and increasingly bad news about the economy, and businesses experiencing a slowing demand for their goods, the push cannot be expected to come from consumers or firms. Therefore, the government must step in and provide that much needed push through heavy government spending in order to spur demand (The Next).

According to Lawrence Mishel, President of the Economic Policy Institute, “The two feasible ways to boost demand are to increase consumer spending or increase government spending (at
the federal, state, or local level.” He also says that “government spending is more effective than tax cuts in stimulating domestic demand. This is because part of any tax cut is saved and because consumers are more likely than government to spend on imports.” For example, if the government implements a $300 billion tax cut, only a third of it is spent on foreign cars or at Wal-Mart. The tax cut will ultimately fail to stimulate the American economy. The goal of our nation right now is to promote “Buy American” propaganda to ensure that the American economy receives the boost it needs. By purchasing foreign goods, companies within the United States will not experience any significant rise in demand for their products. They will only be lowering their expectations for the future and will be decreasing their incentives to invest in future projects. As a result, they may be forced out of business, causing an even greater recession. Thus, government spending is more effective at stimulating the economy. The government can decide where to allocate large sums of money and ensure that most of it gets used to help domestic corporations.
It is important to note that a large part of the argument for government spending rests on the effects of the multiplier. However, while tax-cut promoters like to point this out as a flaw of the pro-spending reasoning, effectiveness of tax-cuts also depends on the multiplier, albeit in a more indirect way. The ideology behind increased government spending is that spending creates initial demand, which increases both income and demand. The idea behind tax cuts is that a tax cut leaves more money—or income—in the hands of consumers. This raises the demand for goods, which increases both income and profits for the companies that consumers buy from. Therefore, the main difference between these two fiscal policy options is that government spending seeks to begin the effects of the multiplier by creating government demand, while tax cuts work to raise income in order to spark consumer demand.

After looking at both options, with this perspective in mind, this question still remains: Which option has better reliability? As it turns out, government spending is more reliable because the
government will spend every dollar it sets aside for public works, or for other similar programs. The problem with putting money directly into the hands of consumers, especially in a time like this, when debt is high and consumer confidence low, is that not all of it will be spent. Instead of buying goods and stimulating demand, consumers may use their money to pay off debts or save it for bleaker times—in effect, putting a stop to the multiplier. Some can argue that the same can happen with increased government spending, if the workers the government hires use their income to pay off debt. But in this situation, the government workers could have built a bridge, of which, would have been used for public works, in an area where the workers' services may have been in demand. Also, the workers would have received payment for their labor, thus, benefitting financially from the situation. In total, government spending accomplished a great deal more in this situation than if the government decided to institute tax cuts.
Some people are opposed to increases in government spending because they say, “you do not become more prosperous by writing yourself a check.” They also say:

Economic growth is the result of creating new wealth, not redistributing existing wealth. The federal government cannot conjure prosperity out of thin air. Any money it spends… it must first tax or borrow from somewhere else. A trillion dollars pumped into the economy tomorrow is a trillion dollars siphoned out of the economy today - a trillion dollars no longer available to the private sector for investment or consumption” (Jacoby).

These people feel that by the government coming in and deciding to implement expensive public works projects, it is ultimately deciding where and how precious resources will be allocated. A move like this is unhealthy for the business cycle because it disrupts the power businesses have to determine what and how much of something to produce. They complain that with the government hogging many of the resources businesses need to invest in to produce their goods, the increase in demand for them causes these resources to become more expensive, discouraging businesses from producing as much as they normally would,
creating a misallocation of resources and a possible slump in the economy.

In his paper, “The Impact of Government Spending on Economic Growth,” tax cut activist Daniel Mitchell argues that “government spending becomes a burden at some point, either because government becomes too large or because outlays are misallocated,” leading to an array of costs which all stem from the fact that government bureaucracy is slow and inefficient and the public works projects they put into place can often be done more effectively and for less money if left to the private sector. Why? Because private firms are always searching for the newest technological advances to make their production costs cheaper. This underlying profit motivation in the market place is what drives competition, leads to greater efficiency, and promotes growth among firms. Tax cut advocates argue that all of this rests on a sufficient allocation of resources, which can be hindered by heedless government spending.
While their arguments appear to be sound and credible, these critics forget a few very important aspects that must be considered. First of all, “with the private sector unwilling to spend and nervous investors clamoring for safe government bonds, there is little risk of crowding out private investment (The Next). If no one is going to invest anyways, the government can, and should, use up as many resources as it needs to spark projects and get an economic rebound underway. After all, it was government investment in public works projects that resulted in railroads, a highway system, and the Hoover Dam.

Another claim that tax-cut promoters make is that tax cuts can be implemented more quickly than government spending projects. Whereas government spending projects may take weeks or months to plan before being carried out, tax cuts put money quickly into the hands of individual Americans, enabling spending to increase immediately and the economy to be boosted fairly quickly. However, tax cuts are not as quickly implemented as advocates would like us to believe. A recent example of this is the
tax rebate checks that the Bush administration handed out to families in need in July 2008, where it took months for all the checks to be written and sent out. President Obama seems to understand the importance of timely government action and has worked hard to push his stimulus plan through the House and Senate and into operation. He claims that the money will be spent on “shovel ready” projects which can be undertaken immediately to both benefit the public and create new jobs. NPR reported that Obama had “19,000 such projects, adding up to almost $150 billion” (Naylor).

Another issue arises when we consider that putting money back into the hands of consumers does not necessarily mean these consumers will spend the money. The Bush administration’s tax rebate checks exemplify this, as estimations say “that consumers spent only thirty percent of their rebates” (In Need). With the large amount of debt households have accrued within the past few years, coupled with the sharp drop in home values, any extra money that people make will most likely go to paying off debts. Without
putting money back into the economy in the form of consumer spending, the tax cuts will have virtually no impact in stimulating the economy. The economy needs new spending and a higher demand for goods. Tax cut money used to pay off old debts goes nowhere except to floundering banks who are gradually becoming more hesitant to loan out money to individuals, and increasingly unable to find businesses that want loans, even with near zero interest rates.

Statistical data further substantiates my argument that government spending is more effective than tax cuts. In his article, Dean Baker, the Co-Director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, finds that “$100 billion of additional government spending will lead to an increase in GDP of approximately $150 billion (about 1 percent of GDP at current levels)” and that this “$100 billion of additional spending will lead to 1 million additional jobs.” However, a temporary cut in payroll taxes will only generate 860,000 jobs, while a $100 billion cut in corporate taxes will lead to just 200,000 new jobs. The Republican belief that
temporary cuts in payroll taxes or cuts in corporate taxes are much more effective is misguided. By choosing an option that provides both jobs to curb the increasing unemployment rates and a means to stimulate demand and GDP, the government fulfills its duty of developing the most effective and efficient way to boost the economy. Data has shown that government spending will provide both of these benefits at a much lower cost than any tax cuts can, so the government must lean toward a stimulus package that relies more heavily on government spending to pull the nation out of the recession.

In an article in *The New Yorker* Magazine, writer Hendrik Hertzberg calls the Republicans’ theory of preventing the government from spending any more money in order to solve the recession even in the face of falling demand, a “crazy” one. He goes on to say that many Republicans, even as they rail against "government spending," at least understand the government must cause more money to be spent, and that the fiscal deficit must rise in the process. But Republicans want the government to do the job
indirectly, by cutting taxes—especially taxes paid by the well-off, such as inheritance taxes, capital-gains taxes, corporate taxes, and high-bracket income taxes—in the hope that the money left untaxed will be spent. This approach was tried for eight years and we learned the comfortable are less likely than the strapped to spend any extra cash that comes their way; government spending often serves socially useful purposes; "wasteful spending" is not a government monopoly (see corporate jets, golf-course "conferences," premium vodkas); and that the only way to ensure spending money, is to spend it (23).

A few pro-tax-cut advocates, including N. Gregory Mankiw, a professor of economics at Harvard and former adviser to President Bush, cite the study by Christina and David Romer, “The Macroeconomic Effects of Tax Changes: Estimates Based on a New Measure of Fiscal Shocks,” claiming that they report “that a dollar of tax cuts raises the G.D.P. by about $3” (Mankiw 6). This however, is false. In their study, the Romers state that “a tax increase of one percent of GDP lowers real GDP by roughly three
percent. Our many robustness checks for the most part point to a slightly smaller decline, but one that is still well over two percent” (42). The Romers say nothing about tax cuts in their study, and it cannot automatically be assumed that a tax cut by one percent of GDP will increase GDP by three percent because there are different factors to consider when looking at the effects of a tax increase versus a decrease. To predict how much of their extra money consumers will save and how much they will spend after a tax cut can be difficult. However, with a tax increase, consumers obviously lose buying power equivalent to that of the extra taxes they have to pay, and often stay away from more frivolous purchases since they have less money to spare, causing GDP from consumer spending to fall even more than the amount of the tax increase.

Furthermore, the Romers warn that “in considering the implications of these findings, it is important to note that our estimates are not highly precise” (43). In other words, their findings cannot be heavily relied on, and therefore should not be
used by pro-tax cut advocates as a major source of statistical data. The authors themselves do not place much confidence in their own statistics. Besides serving as a blatant indicator that those who rely heavily on their findings either didn’t thoroughly read them or simply twisted the data to further their own agendas, the Romers’ statement of caution also serves as a reminder that economic situations vary considerably and that it is very difficult to lay out a foolproof plan for politicians to follow in any kind of economic rut. With each situation, consumer levels of confidence, firms’ predictions for the future and desire to invest in projects, politicians’ agendas, and the overall financial state of the economy vary. Politicians and economists have yet to come up with a solid plan for the future and are careful not to make bold predictions about the actions they have proposed. We should look at past examples and try our best to apply the lessons we learned to our current recession.

One significant past example, the Great Depression, gripped the nation throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. “From the middle
of 1929 through the first few months of 1933…Industrial production declined by 37 percent, prices by 33 percent, and real GNP by 30 percent…Unemployment rose to a peak of 25 percent and stayed above 15 percent for the rest of the 1930s” (Temin 1). While many economists attribute the Great Depression to the stock market crash in 1929, others, including Temin, believe that the stock market crash was independent of the Great Depression and simply came about as a result of “the Fed’s tight monetary policy” (7). Temin and others say that the Great Depression was long underway beginning in the 1920s as a result of the First World War. However, Temin does say that the stock market crash did have an effect on the Great Depression insofar as it “increased consumers’ uncertainty about what the future would bring” (7).

Lack of confidence in the market is a key characteristic that our current recession shares with the Great Depression. According to a quote published in 1929 by The Magazine of Wall Street, “Uncertainty is worse than knowing the truth, no matter how bad.” Because of the huge loss in confidence from the Roaring ‘20s to
the 1930s, it was important that the government make some drastic changes. In his paper, Peter Temin argues Franklin Delano Roosevelt – the president at the time - took such immediate and drastic measures (pulling the dollar off the gold standard, the Banking Holiday, and the First and Second New Deals) boosted consumer and business confidence, playing a huge role in pushing the nation out of the Depression because people began to act on their confidence. This boost in market confidence, coupled with increased government spending is what ultimately led to the end of the Great Depression.

In an article in USA Today, writer David Lynch discusses a speech that Christina Romer, head of Obama’s Council of Economic Advisers, gave on March 9th about the parallels between the Great Depression and our current recession. In her speech, she claims that “as the New Deal's deficit spending took hold, the U.S. posted the fastest peacetime growth in its history. The economy expanded by 11% in 1934, 9% in 1935 and 13% in 1936.” And,
after a short drop in the economy in 1937, it once again continued to expand, most notably during WWII.

According to J.R. Vernon, author of *World War II Fiscal Policies and the End of the Great Depression*, more than half of the recovery from the Great Depression occurred during 1941 and 1942, when World War II stimulus was implemented. Vernon writes, “54.7 percent of the increase in real GNP for 1941 was accounted for by the increase in federal purchases of goods and services” (855) amounting to an approximate “increase in federal purchases of $13.7632 billion” (859). During this time, federal spending on non-defense goods decreased, further proving that war fiscal policies played a significant role in economic recovery. As a result of this increase in government defense spending, “WWII fiscal policies did much more than simply complete a recovery already largely accomplished: they were, for more than half the recovery, the major determinant in the restoration of full-employment performance” (867).
Mike Moore, a former director-general of the World Trade Organization, highlights the many lessons we have learned from the Great Depression. He writes:

The lesson of the Great Depression was that government needs to intervene to protect the virtues of the market. It also needs to ensure there is prudent disclosure, proper competition and that global markets are regulated through agreements and the WTO. Government also has a role to ensure social security in times of stress and uncertainty, and to invest in common goods such as skills and infrastructure. Rebuilding must be done in a way that produces both economic and social confidence. There has to be a sense of fairness, of equality of sacrifice.

Again, the role of consumer fears and expectations are brought to center stage.

A second unforgettable crisis in U.S. history was the recession that came in July 1981 and lasted until November of 1982. In 1979, inflation was still very high and to combat it, Fed chairman Paul A. Volcker decided to implement contractionary monetary policy, or an increase in interest rates. He did this once in 1979, again in 1980, and a third time in 1981. However, in 1981, his policies were more severe than they previously had been,
resulting in very high interest rates and the “most severe post-war recession” (Frankel) since the Great Depression.

According to Frankel, “perhaps the most powerful factor that pulled us out of the ’81-’82 recession was the tax cuts and the increase spending under Ronald Reagan.” He also claims that Reagan’s expansionary fiscal policies and their outcomes, while not Keynesian in design, did have Keynesian consequences, proving once again that Keynesian policy was successful in combating recession.

The 2001 recession that our nation faced as a result of the tech bubble bursting is also important to examine. To face the ensuing collapse in wealth and the widespread fear following the terrorist attacks, the Federal Reserve “cut interest rates aggressively” and “provided very aggressive discount lending to banks to make sure that markets were working well” (Hubbard). These measures worked successfully, quickly pulled the nation out of the ensuing recession. However, Hubbard claims that as a result of the Fed’s failure to raise interest rates after the recession was
over, “asset bubbles in both the housing market and the equity market” formed - a significant development in regards to our current economic downturn.

From the significance of maintaining a positive psychological environment for consumers to the benefits of increasing government spending during times of recession, the current government does not suffer from any deficiency of historical examples to look at when creating its own policies. Nonetheless, there is already talk of the failure of our government. Just like how Roosevelt’s actions could impact the economy because they were swift and drastic, Obama, too, has attempted the same measures by introducing the stimulus package his first day in office. However, critics are saying that Obama, “for almost two months of his presidency,…has been persistently and politically negative about the economy - even pessimistic, portraying it in near-hyperbolic terms. As a result, the financial markets fell into a deeper nose dive than before and consumer sentiment, already in the dumps, worsened” (Lambro). The article goes on to say that:
Wall Street was plunging and the country's mood was turning darker. His advisers warned that he was talking down the economy too much, scaring the business community, needlessly stoking fear among already-insecure consumers, and failing to give Americans reasons to believe that as bad as things are now, the economy will get better.

This article serves to highlight the magnitude that negativity from the government can have on its own policies. In the future, our government must be careful to avoid digging itself into a pessimistic rut and then wonder why its efforts are not taking root and why the economy is not improving. Furthermore, the government must work to spark hope in consumer expectations and promote optimism among businesses.

In 2001, monetary policy was effective at turning the economy around, but we have already taken similar measures and failed. Therefore, in looking at the other key recessions in our history we see that increasing government spending is the most viable option. These recessions are landmarks in American history and serve as valuable experiences for economists and policymakers to draw on when developing new economic policy. In cases such
as 1981-1982, increased government spending, though unintentional, was key in ending the recession. While each recession or economic slump is brought on by a slew of different factors, with each reacting differently to government stimulus in each case, government spending has consistently proven to be a reliable and viable tool for policymakers to implement. From the Great Depression of the 1930s to the most severe post-war recession of the early 1980s, government spending played a key role in alleviating the economic downturn at hand. Therefore, such an instrument, tested over time and through many difficult situations, has proven to be a practical and useful fiscal policy tool for government officials to utilize. If we utilize this practice properly, the next few years should give rise to a renovated and efficient infrastructure, a return to GDP growth, and the legacy of a powerful and enduring economy, all testaments to the willpower and strength of our nation.

And the star-spangled buyer in triumph shall wave
O’er the land of the debt-free and the home of the paid
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It’s for the Best?

By Liz Wesley

The high school I attended has a tradition. Towards the end of each year, a wall in the cafeteria is covered with sheets of paper designated for each senior. Each sheet has a different name at the top with space below for each senior to write the college or university that he or she will be attending in the fall. Sharing this information is not optional; everyone must do it. It is just assumed that everyone has something to fill that blank spot with. College is expected to be every senior’s next step. Everyone’s college is displayed on the wall for the student body to see and for the whole school to compare.

While this seems like a harmless tradition, it is representative of the competitive nature of my town’s school system. This competitive nature that exists from elementary school to high
school is generated by the student’s parents. Their child must be the best athlete, the top of his or her class, and attend the best college. To ensure this, parents buy teachers’ editions of textbooks so their child makes the honor role every marking period. They have coaches over for dinner so that their child has a starting spot on the team and is recruited to a Division-One college. They even fill out their child’s college applications to prevent any possible mistakes.

The aforementioned parents are examples of “helicopter parents”, a term coined to describe parents like those from my town who “hover” over everything their child does (Hinds 5). These families usually resides in “affluent suburban neighborhoods” (Dunnewind 3). They try to control their child’s life. (Hinds 5). While their intentions are good, these overbearing parents may cause long-term negative effects (Dunnewind 20).

Parents have the aspiration to raise the perfect child even before the child birth. As one pregnant woman confesses in a Seattle Times article, “I started to feel intense pressure to perform
as a mom and make my baby perform too” (Dunnewind 16).

Stephen Bryan, an Associate Dean of Students at Duke University, points out the overbearing parent’s habit of constantly setting goals (Booher 30). Achieving every goal is expected and required. Bryan explains how some parents are putting their child’s name on waiting lists for the best preschools before the infant can even walk (Booher 30). Parents have even misconstrued “Baby Einstein”; a videotape that is meant to “provide parents with tools to help expose their little ones to the world around them” as an absolute necessity that will make their babies smarter. (Dunnewind 12).

Products like these are meant to be fun, but they contribute to the pressure parents feel to provide their children with every opportunity.

As these children grow up they are sent to the best schools and “treated like gifted children” (Booher 15). In one case noted in The Times Educational Supplement, “Get them On Side”, a parent becomes angry when her child is no longer in the “fast track reading group” because the other children have caught up so the
group is no longer needed (Hinds 19). The child is still proficient at reading for his age, but he is no longer labeled the best in the class.

There is a major difference between “helicopter parents” and parents who are involved. Involvement in a child’s life is important for growth. In 2008 “Every Parent Matters” was published and made accessible to the public by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (Hinds 7). The document states, “[P]arental involvement in a child’s schooling between seven and 16 is a more powerful force than family background, size of family, and level of parental education. Educational failure is increased by lack of parental interest in schooling” (Hinds 7). Parents need to be involved with their child’s education in some way or another. Whether it is helping the child with homework or helping to study for a test, this involvement and support helps the child believe he or she is smart, and encourages maturity (Berk 40). Parents are supposed to guide and support children as they grow up.
“Helicopter parents” take this involvement to another level. Instead of helping their child with homework assignments, they simply do it for the child instead. This sends out the message that the child is incapable of doing anything on his or her own (Fortin 5). It is mentioned earlier that a child excels in academics with the help of parents. However, a study done by a psychology professor at University of Illinois which is mentioned in the Seattle Times article, “When parents’ are too hands-on,” showed that children who struggle in school actually perform better with parents who give them their distance than struggling students did with parents who hover (Dunnewind 21). These seemingly contradictory facts are due to the different extremes of parental involvement. Parents should be there to support and encourage their child with schoolwork and only intervene when the child asks for help (Dunnewind 24).

It is much easier for parents to hover when their child is at home. Children of “helicopter parents” are used to having someone schedule their lives for them. This is why these children often run
into many problems during their freshman year of college. They are now presented with freedom. It is the “lack of structure in the college community” (Kadison 338) that throws these students off. They are used to a six-hour day of school followed by tutors and extracurricular activities their parents sign them up for. With their parents helping them with their work in high school, students had time for all these activities. These students believe in being active. They feel a sense of obligation to over-commit to multiple clubs and social events while balancing double the amount of academic work college demands (Kadison 338). Students then often compromise sleep in order to be able to complete all of their tasks. This can lead to depression, sickness, and trouble concentrating. As a result, simple tasks take longer, adding to a constant game of catch-up on sleep and work (Kadison 338).

“Helicopter parents” feel the need to be in control, usually due to their insecurities (Dunnewind 11). Overbearing parents view their children’s success as their own (Dunnewind 11). Parents who over schedule their children might even be trying to live
vicariously through them (Dunnewind 11). There is irony in the fact that most parents of children today are from the baby boomer generation. This generation, which rebelled against their parents and strived for independence is in turn suffocating their children (Bruno 7).

Because these parents are experiencing socioeconomic success for the first time, they tend to have an overbearing nature. Most helicopter parents are from the upper middle-class where jobs tend to be more competitive and more exclusive. Parents often want their child to have a better life than they have now, which puts pressure on the child to get a better job than the successful parents. The wealthier and the more successful the “helicopter” parents are, the harder it is for the child to impress them.

The most common psychological effect of helicopter parents is codependence. These parents perceive their children as trophies. The child feels the need to sustain this image (Booher 17). Because of this they develop insecurities about themselves. Children of overbearing parents tend to feel like they are never good enough
and always must be perfect. When they fail they feel as though they have failed everyone (Booher 16). They have been taught that mistakes are not acceptable, turning a minor setback like a bad grade into a major setback emotionally (Booher 16). The high standards set by their parents cause them to go a few different ways. Some children purposely fail in order to disappoint their parents. Others sacrifice everything (even their own happiness) for academic excellence, or resort to cheating or other immoral means in order to succeed (Dunnewind 2, Booher 2).

In cases where children continue to rely on their parents to do their work and make their decisions for them, independence and success is harder to achieve. A survey that was conducted in 2006 by Experience Inc.--a company that connects people with jobs--found that “58% of students moved home after graduation and 32% of them remained there more than a year” (Bruno 9). According to the opinion of Debra Bruno, “a reformed helicopter and freelance writer”, parents who are too involved are to blame. They are so focused on their child looking good on paper that they
tend to overlook the true meaning behind education and extracurricular activity. It is important for a child to find passion doing something and fulfill personal dreams and not the parents’ dreams. Psychologist, Madeline Levine writes in her book about parental involvement “authentic success involves character, engagement, well-being, emotional intelligence and achievement” (Bruno 6). These qualities are hindered by parents making all the decisions. Also, with parents running the child’s life and providing the child with comfortable living, there is little motivation to break away.

Parents that constantly make decisions for their children run the risk of ruining long-term relationships. Once children are left to do things on their own they feel discouraged because they did not acquire these skills at a young age like most people have. The constant hovering of their parents have delayed maturity and adulthood (Booher 14). By the time they are adults they are unable to take on responsibilities because they have not learned to “negotiate obstacles,” “experience failure (and) recover from
failure”. At this point it is simply easier to give up. Some even resent their parents and purposely “burn out” to get back at their parents (Dunnewind 26).

Most parents do not realize the negative influence that their overbearing nature has on their child’s future relationships. Relationships are difficult because these children “tend to be perfectionists who, consciously or not, link love and acceptance to academic excellence” (Booher 15). They put their grades before their own happiness or integrity. Kathy Hollingsworth, director of Duke’s Counseling and Psychological Services, supports this with her observances on the Duke Campus: “[W]e see straight-A students who have serious eating disorders and are cutting themselves” (Booher 18). Their academic success is to mask the unhappy relationship that they have with themselves.

Relationships with teachers and professors become difficult when there is a disagreement over grades. Parents often intervene, blaming the teacher for the bad grade, which teaches their child to
argue with professors or authority figures when things do not go in his or her favor (Dunnewind 38).

There is also the possibility of a child of a “helicopter parent” later becoming involved in a controlling romantic relationship. They are accustomed to their parents controlling them so they are more likely to control their partner or be controlled by their partner. In general they may be unable to trust people and “blame others for bad outcomes”, or they may trust people too much (Fortin 7).

Students with “helicopter parents” are more likely to be awkward in social situations (Harvard Mental Health 2). Social interactions are most likely out of their comfort zone since they are not emphasized by their parents as academics are. This can lead them to feel anxiety when meeting new people and in extreme cases can lead to a dependent personality disorder (Harvard Mental Health 1). When they go away to college they shelter themselves by keeping in constant contact with their parents
through phone calls, text messaging or e-mail (Fortin 11). Without socializing it is impossible to develop into a well-rounded adult.

Overbearing parents’ priorities are skewed. Rather than the actual learning process being emphasized, grades become the first priority. The way these grades are actually achieved is usually compromised or seen as unimportant. It is all about results. In order to get the best results children may have their parents do their work for them. They may even resort to plagiarizing (Booher 19). The student may do the work and if he or she is not satisfied with the grade might blame the professor instead of taking responsibility (Dunnewind 32). They are more inclined to ignore their moral compass in their pursuit of perfection.

This is not to say that all children brought up by “helicopter parents” are unable to become successful on their own in moral ways, they are just more susceptible to continue a lifestyle either dependent on their parent or dependent on someone else, such as becoming dependent on their children to follow their footsteps of “excellence.”
Many colleges and universities have responded to the epidemic of “helicopter parents”. They have developed various parent programs and ways for the parents to be involved. This allows colleges and university’s to put limits on parental involvement while pleasing the parent’s (who are usually paying the tuition) at the same time (Booher 36). Schools have made accommodations for parents such as links on the school websites specifically for parents, special phone lines or numbers where they can talk to other parents, and orientation sessions specifically geared towards parent (Booher 36). These tools are positive ways for parents to get involved with their child’s education; however, the fact that colleges had to develop these programs sheds light on the growing number of helicopter parents. In 2005 about 79 percent of colleges that participated in a West Virginia University survey have links to parent pages on the front page of the school’s website (Booher 38). The hope is that with the development of these programs, parents will back off once their child goes to college.
It is important that children with “helicopter parents” take charge of their lives before the negative effects become irreversible. Children in these households need to realize that this is not a normal parenting style. While in most cases this behavior of parents derives from love and care for their children, the effects as previously noted are usually warped in comparison to proper love and care. It is the next generation’s responsibility to break the cycle of overbearing parents and find the right balance of guidance and independence to give their children. Hopefully the emphasis on status and superficial qualities will be replaced with what is truly important in life, actually learning something.
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His-tory or My Story?

By Karishna Perez

History is defined as an accurate depiction of past events. However, because everyone takes his or her own experiences into account, it is hard to determine which history and which story is, in fact, true. When there are several different points of view about a particular subject, it is extremely difficult to conclude a final answer to a research question.

Professor Jane Tompkins shares this same outlook on viewpoints in history. She believes the study of literature should not only focus on writing known as a “stunning success” or a “masterpiece” but also the writing of popular and admired authors. She writes about this in her essay, "'Indians': Textualism, Morality, and the Problem of History," which describes the problems Tompkins faced when she began conducting her research on the Puritans’ relations with American Indians. She begins her essay by
observing the issues of post structuralism which looks at the world through different points of view and specific experiences.

Tompkins writes:

This essay enacts a particular instance of the challenge post structuralism poses to the study of history. In simpler language, it concerns the difference point of view makes when people are giving accounts of events, whether at first or second hand. The problem is that if all accounts of events are determined through and through by the observer’s frame of reference, then one will never know, in any given case, what really happened. (648)

In addition to problems deciding which versions of her research were accurate, she felt “some of the conflicting accounts were not simply contradictory, they were completely incommensurable, in that their assumptions about what counted as a valid approach to the subject, and what the subject itself was, diverged in fundamental ways” (649).
I myself encountered this issue of a researcher’s “point of view” when trying to find an answer after researching Dominican and Haitian relations for my paper on Antihaitianismo (Spanish for Anti-Haitianism). Dominicans with distinctively African features often deny their roots and historical connections with Haitians. This leads to racial prejudice and segregation amongst Haitians on the island which is known today as Antihaitianismo. Furthermore, (this hostility and hatred towards Haitians) also results from the disregard for the role of African slaves and their descendants. Because of these findings, I wanted to know why there has been such contempt for dark skinned people in Dominican culture in the past and present.

The issue of “point of view” affected me in several ways. First of all, since I myself am of Dominican descent and have many Dominican friends, I already have firsthand experience with the issues of neglecting African roots in the Dominican culture. For example, many of my family members and friends who are dark skinned refuse to believe their ancestors were Africans.
Additionally, some of my family members who still live on the island feel superior to the Haitians who live in the Dominican Republic. (For those who do not know, Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the Caribbean island Hispaniola).

Already familiar with this problem of Antihaitianismo I focused on the ways one can notice Dominicans’ denial of their ancestry and their extreme dislike amongst Haitians while writing my paper. In this case, when others read my paper about this subject they will see it in my point of view instead of the objective history. Since it was clear in my paper that I was appalled by the issue of Antihaitianismo and did not congratulate dark skinned Dominicans for their refusal to acknowledge their racial similarities with Haitians and Africans, my readers ultimately will begin to have this biased view of these past events. Additionally, whenever they educate others on this subject, they will take with them my own point of view because that is how they learned about it. Their perspective of Dominican and Haitian relations will most likely be influenced and shaped by my own.
My primary sources, just like Tompkins’, also influenced me. Tompkins wrote, “…the primary materials are constructed according to their authors’ biases…” (657). Everyone’s perspective, even those of primary sources, are distorted and influenced by someone else’s thoughts and beliefs. After speaking to one of my high school friends, Juan, who is a Dominican of dark complexion, I quickly began noticing how he refused to acknowledge his roots. Although he would laugh and joke around when he made remarks such as, “I’m not black. I’m from Spain!” I still knew deep down that he refused to believe he had African ancestry. Although Spain colonized most of the islands, not all Dominicans have Spanish roots; most generations after the colonization were born mulatto—the children of a black and white parent. The information Juan provided me with about the Dominican Republic dealt more with the Spanish colonization than the mixture of ethnicities that occurred during that time. Another primary source I came across was an article in the New York Times which describes how a teenager who lived in the Dominican
Republic all his life, Angel Luis Joseph, was offered a $350,000 contract to play with the San Francisco Giants. However, he was denied his visa to the United States and birth certificate after the Dominican government began a “crackdown” of Haitian immigrants (his dad was of Haitian descent.) This led the Giants to deny their contract. The article states, “the Dominican government says the new crackdown is a security matter, aimed at wiping out fraud…young Haitians who had crossed the border illegally claimed to have been born on the Dominican side” (Lacey, par. 16). However, these sources did not change my mind that this was the cause of Antihaitianismo in the Dominican Republic.

Overall it became apparent that when I spread knowledge about this subject it is subjective, which is what Jane Tompkins ends up understanding—history is not objective! If something is not noteworthy to the historian and does not count to them in a fundamental way then it will not be taken into account when they write their research. For that reason, whoever reads that particular historian’s research will never be completely knowledgeable about
the subject. Rather they will only know the information the historian provided them with. Tompkins’ writes, “… the attitude a historian takes up in relation to a given event, the way in which he or she judges and even describes ‘it’… these judgments and descriptions are a function of the historian’s position in relation to the subject” (659). Everyone’s point of view is skewed in some way. People write history in their own perspective which eliminates the real history: “everything is wiped out and you are left with nothing but a single idea— perspectivism itself” (661).
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Status is as much a part of human nature as love, family and friendship; however, the concept of status has been twisted into a notion that correlates with money and power. Reflecting upon what status means in countries that do not hold the idea that wealth translates from power and into status, one realizes that status correlates directly with pride and dedication. As seen in Clifford Geertz’s “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”, in countries like Bali, the dedication and pride in which people put into cockfighting is what really translates into status. Geertz points out that although a Balinese cockfight is shrouded with gambling, the monetary value the winner makes holds no bearing to his status in comparison with the pride he gleans from his cock being crowned the victor. Geertz’s description of the Balinese cockfight is a subculture that exists within Bali — in which cockfighting is a
hobby and the pride and dedication that exists within the subculture serve as the definition of one’s status. The concept that surrounds the Balinese cockfighting subculture also relates directly with different subcultures throughout the world: one specific subculture that gained popularity throughout the world is the culture of the Sneakerhead. Sneakerheads are individuals who are extremely prideful and dedicated in their hobby of collecting sneakers. The pride and dedication that cockfighters and Sneakerheads put into their passion may seem meaningless to some. The reason in which these individuals fight cocks or collect sneakers goes much deeper than outsiders understand.

Sneakerhead culture consists of a large group of individuals who engage in fetishized behavior. The culture itself has one main interest: collecting sneakers. However, from outsiders looking in, it may be hard to understand how such an everyday object like a sneaker can hold so much importance for a whole subculture to surround. This inability to understand the subculture correlates directly with Geertz’s study on the Balinese cockfighting
subculture. Without a deeper understanding on what surrounds the cockfights, one may not be able to grasp how a fight between two chickens can be so important as to have a whole subculture based around it. Geertz’s descriptions on the events before, during, and after the cockfights give an outsider a much better understanding on why cockfighting is so important to the Balinese people.

Geertz first focuses on the pride, care, and dedication that cockfighters put into their prized cocks. He writes:

They are fed a special diet…Red pepper is stuffed down their beaks and up their anuses to give them spirit. They are bathed in ceremonial preparation of tepid water, medicinal herbs, flowers, and onions in which infants are bathed… Their combs are cropped, their plumage dressed, their spurs trimmed, their legs massaged, and they are inspected for flaws with the squinted preparation of a diamond merchant (Geertz 264).

This process, which reflects directly on the dedication and pride that the cockfighter has for his bird, draws a direct parallel to the
pride and dedication a Sneakerhead has for his sneakers. First off, like cockfighters choosing a prized cock, Sneakerheads do not just wear any sneakers; there are two main types of sneakers that Sneakerheads wear and collect: the limited editions and originals.

The limited edition sneaker is the first of the two. One of the main things that outsiders don’t know about Sneakerheads is what makes the sneaker so special. Sneakerheads rarely wear sneakers that can be purchased in any “mainstream” sneaker store. Companies like Nike and Jordan put out limited release sneakers to some of these stores, as well as exclusive sneaker boutiques in major cities throughout the world. These limited releases are usually low in number and each store only receives anywhere from 1 to 15 pairs. Oftentimes, the companies responsible for the limited releases only release to a limited amount of stores as well. If a release is limited, dedicated Sneakerheads have been known to camp outside a store just to get their hands on one pair. This dedication comes with reward—when a Sneakerhead purchases a pair of sneakers that he or she (yes, there are many female
Sneakerheads) has camped out for, they only pay retail price. After the release day, depending on how limited a sneaker is, a sneaker can sometimes go for $500-$1000 above retail price. This is where the concept of a Sneakerhead’s status comes into play.22

Like Balinese cockfighters, the dedication that Sneakerheads have for their hobby is what defines his or her status in the “Sneaker Game.” The Balinese use many words and nicknames to describe different individuals who make up the cockfighting subculture. The Balinese use words like “bebatoh” and “djuru kurung” to describe true cockfighters, and “potet” to describe individuals who are looked down upon merely for taking part in the gambling side of the cockfight (Geertz 275). These nicknames that exist in cockfighting are similar to nicknames given to people within Sneakerhead culture. As stated before, status in Sneakerhead culture does not correlate with money or power. For instance, although an individual may have lots of sought after

22 For more information on rare and exclusive sneakers individuals can visit forum sites like www.theshoegame.com or www.sneakerfiles.com. Aside from these sites, there are also many other publications dedicated to sneaker collecting. “SoleCollector” and “Kicks” are two prime examples of these publications; they are magazines that individuals can subscribe to to keep updated on new sneaker releases.
sneakers —“heat”— if he paid much more than retail he is considered a “hypebeast.” Individuality is a strong component of Sneakerhead culture; individuals who buy sneakers at full market price because they are “limited” are labeled posers and “hypebeasts.” Alternatively, respect and status are gained within Sneakerhead culture through the dedication of camping out for a sneaker, traveling long distances, or being on the better end of a two person trade. People who have acquired “heat” in respectful ways are labeled as “beasts” in the sneaker game. 23

The second type of sneaker in which Sneakerheads base their collections on are called “OGs”, which slang for original. These “OG” sneakers consist of sneakers circa 1985 to 1999. The concept behind collecting an OG sneaker compares directly to the vintage car collecting subculture. Like car enthusiasts, if Sneakerheads predict that a certain sneaker will appreciate in value, they will keep the sneaker on “ice”—

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23 For a complete list of Sneakerhead terminology, one can visit http://www.solecollector.com/forums/sc-board-dictionary-t182016.html. On this site there are over 70 terms for words surrounding sneakerhead culture.
unused in its original box—a until the owner looks to sell the sneaker. Some sneaker collectors will go as far as keeping these sneakers in shrink wrap or low oxygen cases to prevent any damage to the sneaker. In order to understand how much certain sneakers appreciate over time, one should look online for OG Jordans or Nikes from 1985-1996; it is not uncommon for Jordan sneakers from this time period to sell for $5,000 to $10,000 a pair.

The pride and dedication a Sneakerhead has for his sneakers does not stop at the sneakers he or she collects. Once a sneaker is purchased, a decision must be made as to whether or not the sneaker will be worn (which is oftentimes one of the hardest decisions a Sneakerhead makes). A process then takes place to ensure the life and quality of the sneaker is prolonged. The process goes as follows:

1. A pair of sneakers is purchased. The pair is usually purchased in one of four ways: online (pickyourshoes.com, flightclub.com or sneakerhead.com),
at commercialized retail stores, at exclusive boutiques, or from a fellow Sneakerhead either via trade or purchase.

2. Once the pair of sneakers is received, they are inspected carefully. Every part of the sneaker is analyzed to make sure the sneakers are real. Fake sneakers are prevalent in the marketplace and if a Sneakerhead is caught wearing a pair of counterfeit sneakers his status as a Sneakerhead is forever tarnished; he or she would lose the respect of all fellow Sneakerheads. After the analysis, a Sneakerhead will unlace and re-lace each sneaker until he or she finds a satisfactory lace pattern. This process takes anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour and a half.24

3. After the re-lacing process, a Sneakerhead oftentimes inserts a form of “decreaser”—a product that is placed inside the sneaker on the underside of the toebox in order

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24 In order to avoid purchasing counterfeit sneakers one must utilize the many different web based publications that teach how to detect fakes. Most sneakerheads do not need to use these types of resources because they usually develop a keen eye for fakes and can tell if a sneaker is fake or not by assessing the weight, colorway and overall appearance of the sneaker. Without a trained eye or in order to double check if a sneaker is legitimate or not, one can visit sites such as [http://www.solepedia.com/Nike_Dunk_SB_Fake_Guide_-_How_to_tell_Fake_Dunk_SB’s](http://www.solepedia.com/Nike_Dunk_SB_Fake_Guide_-_How_to_tell_Fake_Dunk_SB’s) or [http://ezinearticles.com/?Fake-Jordan-Sneakers:-How-to-Spot-Fake-Nike-Air-Jordans&id=296002](http://ezinearticles.com/?Fake-Jordan-Sneakers:-How-to-Spot-Fake-Nike-Air-Jordans&id=296002).
to prevent any creasing—into his or her sneaker. The absence of creasing means a longer life for the sneaker and a sustainment of the “box fresh” look. There are over ten different kinds of decreasers on the market; however, Wearable Shoe Trees are by far the most popular.

4. After the decreaser is set in place, depending on the material of the sneaker, it is usually sprayed down with a water repellent or stain deterrent. Although this precaution is taken, you will almost never see a Sneakerhead wearing his most prized sneaker in any type of rain or muddy terrain. Also, even though a decreaser may be set in place, Sneakerheads oftentimes engage in what is described as a “penguin walk” as an extra precaution in the fight against toe box creasing.

5. After a sneaker is worn, it is wiped down with a mild soap and water. There are many different cleaning techniques for after a sneaker is worn; the main goal being to remove all dirt and impurities on the sneaker. After the sneaker is
thoroughly cleaned, the decreaser is taken out and the sneakers are stuffed with the original tissue paper and returned to their original box.

To most people not involved in sneaker collecting, this process of care that a Sneakerhead engages in may seem extravagant. To a Sneakerhead, the sneaker itself does not represent just an object that he or she wears on his or her feet; it is the back story of the sneaker: how limited the sneaker is, how long he or she camped out for it, how badly he or she worked to get it, how long the sneaker has been on “ice”, how much respect is shown by fellow Sneakerheads when they see his or her collection, and most of all, the pride and dedication in the individual. Like the Balinese cockfighters, Sneakerheads gain status and respect on the pride and dedication they have for taking part in their passion. Although the subcultures of Balinese cockfighting and sneaker collecting deal with completely different subjects, the main factors that define status within the cultures are the same. The comparisons of the care and dedication that a cockfighter has for
his cock with a Sneakerhead to his sneaker are parallel to each other. Both cultures have specific phrases that describe different people within them and their main foundation is based upon a fetishism that defines itself by the individuals whose status is defined by the dedication and pride they have in their hobbies within their perspective subcultures.
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Dangerous Solitude

By Oliver Roe

Provincetown, the eastern San Francisco exists as the gay capital of the Northeast – Raves, drag shows, and tea dances rule the nightlife. At all times at least two leather shops, three liquor stores, several art galleries, dozen of B&B’s, and several hundred clubs, bars, restaurants, and outright dives (operating with varying degrees of legitimacy) pervade the area. Beneath the throbbing synesthetic pulse of the clubs’ rhythms and dazzling cacophony of self-expression, however, lies a sleepy little Portuguese fishing village with an almost religious devotion to the sea beyond. Just outside the eastern border of the village, next to a no-tell motel and one of the ubiquitous clubs, is a small park in the middle of a rotary (a circular turnabout in the road which seems to have been placed there to confuse the drunk drivers who routinely roar through at excessive speed, blaring Cher out of their late-model
Jeep Wranglers). On the western border of this park and that looks out to sea, the town (Cher and all) falls abruptly off the continental shelf of the conscious mind. A fall, and in rushes the ocean.

The ocean’s water touches the eastern end of the state of Massachusetts creating a giant hook. A shaft continues pointing north with a business end that curls around, claw-like, to the west forming Cape Cod Bay. Running from the tip of the inner edge of that hook out to the barrier beach forms a point adjoining a mile long man-made jetty to the root of the small park in the rotary north of Provincetown. The massive stones of the breakwater were hauled through Provincetown Harbor ages ago by the Army Corps of Engineers (about the size of SUV’s and primarily composed of granite); they appear to have been dropped in a loose line with their rough-hewn tops forming a jagged giant’s walkway out to the point. Along the way, the water surrounding the structure varies from Vermont spring clear to Turkish coffee black, depending on its depth and the tide. The tide, lapping at the rocks, makes a sibilant sound which proves soothing and foreboding all at once, as
if the ocean whispers sweetly for the breakwater to give in and fade to sand, as it eventually must. Intermittently placed the boulders already shifted and sank, parts of them jutting up at odd angles. In some areas, the occlusion of the rocks has become so drastic that at high tide the sea rises over them, trapping hapless tourists on the narrow spit of sand which has served for millennia as the Cape’s only protector from the power of the deep.

Looking south from the breakwater, there are about 20 acres of tidal flats, and on these fickle and treacherous shores one finds the true nature of the Cape. When confronted by the staunch barrier of the jetty, the Atlantic whirls angrily about in endless spirals and eddies which create cavernously deep tide pools. Every twelve hours, as if reconsidering its attack strategy, the tide goes out and leaves behind an abundance of life which would otherwise be confined to the depths and trenches off Stellwagen Bank. In 1986, a fin whale beached itself on the point, and its gigantic bleached bones still scatter the flats after rough storms.

Contrasting with the whale bones’ magnolia hues, the darker
skeletons of wrecked fishing trawlers and broken docks dot the shoals, their sagging embarnacled masts and rusty wheels seeming to melt ever deeper into luthe sand. The harbor is deep enough at high tide to moor a US Navy Destroyer, (it was used for that purpose in World War II), but when the ocean subsides twice a day it’s possible to walk right up to those old wrecks and listen to the creaks, pops, moans, and gurgling sounds coming from their decaying bowls. One gets lost in the moment here, breathing the briny air thick with salt and sea and clouds, wondering about the mariners who worked on those ships and the gales which brought those men and their creations to rest on the sandy floor of Cape Cod Bay.

The light on the flats is unique. The closest comparison in Upstate New York might be the morning light in September and early October. There’s an omnipresent opacity on even the clearest day, yet the normally vibrant colors of the ocean and sparkling rocks prove brilliant by the purity of the white light. The juxtaposition of that clean, clear, airy light with the gossamer mist
of salt spray combine to create a transitory, ephemeral luminescence which no photographic equipment, no matter how sensitive or expertly-wielded, can capture. Everything that passes through or comes to rest on the flats is bathed in that light, and made more beautiful for it: from the obsidian brilliance of the mussel beds to the opalescent wings of the many shorebirds which congregate noisily around the tide pools. Even the bellies of basking sharks that made the mistake of dallying too long in the harbor, and were imprisoned by the receding tide in pools too shallow to support their massive eight-foot frames, glow a soft, almost ethereal white.

The sand on the tidal flats indicates the region; it’s a coarse-grained yet somehow smooth and supportive substance. The size of the irregularly-shaped grains ranges from full pebbles down to the finest silt, and everywhere in between. The general effect of its coloration depicts a tawny camel hue, but upon close inspection, the Cape’s sand expresses much more – blue, red, brown, black,
gold, platinum, and jade all mingle in among the dominant yellow sand.

Every schoolchild knows that the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620, creating the first permanent settlement—“The New World.” Yet, the schools neglect to relay that those beleaguered travelers of the 17th century actually landed somewhere else a few days before they found Plymouth; a place so hostile, remote, and unforgiving that even the adventurous Pilgrims, who were so weary of their travels, deemed it uninhabitable. Before the town was established and crowds of tourists rushed in, the outer tip of Cape Cod was fierce enough to drive away even the most hardy and desperate of travelers. Despite all the human effort to tame it, its majestic quality reigns supreme making it one of the most beautiful places on Earth.