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The research project for this class required the students to stake a bold claim and use a limited number of credible sources to substantiate it. Relying heavily on recent news reports and documentaries, this writer demands wide-spread justice for survivors of sexual abuse.

Taking the Next Step: How Will Justice be Served for Nassar's Victims?

By Alexia J. Bartlow

Dr. Liptak – Bearing Witness

In our society it is common to praise American athletes, especially for large world-wide events like the Olympics. Not only do the Olympic Games show the highest level of competition, but they also represent athletes and coaches of prestigious organizations, such as USA Gymnastics (USAG). In the United States, the women's gymnastics team is held in high regard. It has grown in popularity due to its recent success in the last two Summer Olympics, earning a significant number of gold medals for our country. However, in 2016, the unthinkable happened when information was released publicly that someone abused his power in the gymnastics world. This individual was former USA Gymnastics doctor, Larry Nassar, who allegedly sexually abused more than 200 athletes. This abuse destroyed the lives of the survivors, and it also had a negative impact on the reputation of USA Gymnastics. Though Nassar has been held accountable for his actions, USA Gymnastics must also take equal responsibility for the harm it caused due to its inadequate protection of the athletes.

Before the allegations were made against him, Larry Nassar assisted many coaches by helping to heal their athletes. These young girls saw Nassar as a friend, and someone who they could trust to support them against their strict coaches. However, his world turned upside down in 2016 when former gymnast Rachel Denhollander courageously came forth as the first woman to make Nassar's abuse public. According to *Sports Medicine* writer Margo Mountjoy, the media learned that Nassar's way of "healing all injuries" was his pelvic floor therapy (57). He would use his un-gloved hands to penetrate the young girls' vaginas, claiming that by doing so, he would fix any injury from pain in their foot to their shoulder (Mountjoy 57). The treatments the survivors received were a clear violation of their human rights and the court agreed. On January 24, 2018 Larry Nassar was sentenced to 175 years in prison for seven counts of first-degree criminal sexual misconduct against his victims (Mountjoy 57). Many people thought that the abuse was finally over, but the continuous mental impacts the survivors face make it clear that justice still has not been served.

Following Denhollander, over 150 more brave women and girls read victim impact statements during Nassar's sentencing to reveal the truth about this so-called doctor. In the film *At the Heart of Gold: Inside the USA Gymnastics Scandal*, director Erin Lee Carter gives the audience a look into the emotional courtroom where the faces of these victims showed Nassar's abuse was more than just physical. Kyle Stephens, whose family had close relations with Nassar, said, "Sexual abuse is so much more than a disturbing physical act. It changes the trajectory of a victim's life and that is something that nobody has the right to do" (*At the Heart of*

Gold). As each survivor approached the stand, they all had the same motive: to show Nassar how his abuse affected their quality of life. Many of the victims reported that they faced psychological challenges due to the abuse. These included eating disorders, depression, and even attempted suicide (Montjoy 57). Not only were these girls impacted by the abuse, but it also changed their family dynamics. In the case of Kyle Stephens, she "attributes her father's suicide to her abuse at the hands of Dr. Nassar" (Mountjoy 57). Stephens lost her self-confidence, along with a dear family member. Another victim, Chelsea Zerfas, reported: "You manipulated me so much that I didn't know what was going on. It's hard for me to trust people because of you. I get scared and uncomfortable when I have to go to the doctors" (*At the Heart of Gold*). It's tragic that young people who are the same age that I am are deprived of the privilege of feeling safe around medical professionals. A doctor-patient relationship should never have to be questioned. For these young girls, the abuse they suffered at the hands of their doctor has impacted many of their other relationships, thus disrupting their daily lives.

The culture these girls were subjected to made it easy for Nassar to gain their trust. Nassar dealt with some of the top gymnasts and future Olympic stars, and the training environment for these young girls was very intense. Coaches would constantly yell and push the gymnasts over the edge physically and mentally by training all day long and without proper rest time. One main factor that played a role in the strict treatment inside gyms was the shared mindset of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and USAG. USOC's former CEO, Scott Blackmun, reportedly stated, "'[F]or us, it's about medals" (qtd in Hampel 556). The USOC was consistently influencing different decisions USAG made, including who should be coaching Olympic teams and sometimes who should be competing. Both organizations were focused more on winning than on the welfare and health of their athletes. As a result, coaches began to be emotionally abusive to the girls, which was thought to make them work harder. It was found that Nassar carried out his abusive actions under the supervision of former USAG Olympic Coach John Geddert, who also abused the girls emotionally. In this destructive culture, all they wanted to do was please their coach, but Geddert lacked the compassion that these young girls searched for. In the words of one of his former athletes, it was seen that, "Larry was good and John was bad" (*At the Heart of Gold*). There was a clear display of power among the leaders in this organization that made the girls submissive and unlikely to speak out. Katherine Hampel, editor of *Marquette Sports Law Review,* quotes famous Olympic gymnast Gabby Douglas, who explained that the reason why she didn't report the abuse earlier was because "for years we were conditioned to stay silent" (Hampel 553). Coaches constantly told the athletes to never share with anyone what happens in the gym, which allowed the abusive environment to continue without question. Coaches would sometimes not spot the gymnasts when trying new tricks (which could result in major injuries) or even throw objects at them (*At the Heart of Gold).* The harsh training environment restricted the girls from speaking up because their reputation in the gymnastics world would be threatened. Further, Nassar's role was the only source of positivity some of these

girls received. He would remove them from this harsh environment, which would soothe their confidence, "heal" their injuries, and create a bond based on trust. It almost seemed like Nassar became a friend to many of his athletes, and for a long time, no girl had the courage to speak up and convict a friend.

Today, people question why it took so long to reveal Nassar's twenty-five years of abuse. Many of the survivors were reluctant to come forward because they were conditioned to remain silent. The gymnasts didn't want to ruin their future and reputation by speaking out against a world-respected trainer. But it is the USAG that did not do enough to protect their athletes. There should have never been an environment where these athletes were scared to speak up to protect themselves. With further evidence being revealed in the case, it was found that there were many instances when organizational leaders were made aware of Nassar's actions but chose not to do anything. Why? In investigating his years of abuse, it came to light that there were individuals who knew about the horrific actions he performed, but who said nothing because, presumably, they were trying to protect Nassar. One of these individuals, Kathie Klages, was the head gymnastics coach at Michigan State University in 1997. In the film, *At the Heart of Gold: Inside the USA Gymnastics Scandal*, former gymnast Larissa Boyce explains her encounter with Klages when she reported the abuse Nassar subjected her to. Klages wasn't fazed by Boyce's accusations and subsequently brought in other teammates to defend the practice methods Nassar used. She threatened Boyce by saying that "I can file this [report] but there will be very serious consequences for both you and Larry Nassar. And you need to really think about this" (*At the Heart of Gold*). Young Larissa Boyce became embarrassed about her claims, and she never mentioned Nassar's abuse again. One must question Klage's true intentions as a leader and as a representative of both the university and USAG. No further action was taken by Michigan State or USAG, and Nassar continued to abuse more gymnasts. Through the investigation, it was later found that USAG received information about Boyce's statements to Klages but chose not to get involved. This event took place in 1997- over twenty years ago! USAG should have suspended Nassar immediately after learning about the abuse accusations. His subsequent actions could have been prevented, and hundreds of girls' childhoods could have been saved from this monster. Unfortunately, USAG ignored these claims until they were made public in 2016. This allowed Nassar to continue his behavior with no threat to his name.

What I consider an important point about this case is the fact that USAG did not follow proper protocol to protect the well-being of these athletes. Members of this organization, including its former president, Steve Penny, were reluctant to report Nassar's abuse to the authorities. For example, one time a coach overheard athletes asking one another if Nassar's pelvic floor therapy was used on them and quickly informed the head members of USAG. However, it took five weeks after the accusations were made for the organization to notify the FBI so that the investigation could finally begin in 2015 (Hampel 550). Why the hesitation? If USAG was concerned with protecting its athletes, then the threats to children's safety should

have been reported to authorities immediately. What else was USAG more concerned about? Perhaps its public image? Waiting those five weeks made USAG look worse in the long run because once the public knew how long the organization waited, people were astonished. It was also noted that USAG created a confidentiality agreement with victims. This document specified that anyone who chose to publicly admit to being a victim of Nassar's abuse would be subject to a fine of $100,000 (Hampel 551). Clearly, USAG was trying to conceal information to preserve the integrity of the organization. It did not want its world-renowned doctor to be the subject of such negative allegations. I understand that USAG was trying to protect its employees; however, when the lives of vulnerable children are at stake, USAG did not fulfill its higher duty.

In the past couple of years, the organization still has not taken public responsibility for its involvement. There have been some policy changes specific to USAG, which include employee background checks; mandatory sexual abuse educational classes for gymnastic coaches, trainers and athletes; and separate changing rooms for athletes (Hampel 560). Although these changes were eventually implemented, it is clear that USAG was initially lacking proper protective measures which paved the way for Nassar's abuse to go on for so long. Hampel notes that countries such as Canada, Denmark, and Britain implemented such policies dating back to 1998, while USAG did not do so until 2017 (Hampel 556). It seems as though USAG did not want to change its rules until after the Nassar scandal surfaced, explaining why no action was initially taken. This evidence further supports the point that USAG did not truly take initiative to prevent abuse from happening. One has to wonder whether or not these new policies would even exist if Nassar's case had never gone to trial. If they had existed, perhaps he would have been prosecuted much earlier than the 21st century. With these gaps in implementing and enforcing the child protection policies, one must wonder if there have been other sports where sexual abuse has occurred. Yes. Many individuals may not be aware that other United States womens' Olympic sports such as swimming, taekwondo, figure skating, and volleyball have also had instances of reported inappropriate conduct (Hampel 561). Many people did not know that sexual abuse has occurred more than once in US Olympic history. With the constant media coverage of Nassar's case, it made it seem exclusive, as if this was the first and only sexual abuse incident. I find that the tragic circumstances and secrecy surrounding Nassar's case is entirely USAG's fault by not administering proper safety regulations at the appropriate time. Again, USAG was more focused on the success of American athletes than on their safety. It cannot stand back and watch any longer, yet the organization's position is that it did nothing wrong. Despite the Nassar trial, more attention is needed to address the widespread abuse American girls and women face in Olympic sports.

Many members of USAG would probably object, saying that they had no involvement in or knowledge of Nassar's dangerous behavior. They feel that it was Nassar's actions that made him such a threat to the well-being of these athletes. Michael McCann, journalist for *Sports Illustrated*, acknowledges USAG's claim that

Nassar was not committing crimes while working at its events. A majority of the abuse occurred in other places, like Michigan State University gyms or even at his own home, and therefore USAG should not be held responsible (McCann 2). However, when an employee commits a crime, it is the organization's duty to properly administer appropriate consequences. No company with a global reputation should allow such acts of violence to happen without immediate intervention. With that being said, not reporting a criminal act, such as sexual abuse, is against the law. Considering a large majority of Nassar's victims were under the age of eighteen, Larry Nassar broke the law and USAG was trying to protect him. The organization should be held accountable, despite its pleas of innocence.

Understandably, victims of Nassar's abuse and their attorneys are not satisfied with the way USAG is handling the resolution of this case. With the Summer Olympics approaching, many current gymnasts are apprehensive about trusting the organization's words. In an article written by Juliet Macur, a journalist for the *New York Times*, she explains that in March 2020, USAG proposed a $217 million settlement to be distributed among the victims of Nassar's sexual abuse. It was said the money was allocated to rectify psychological issues the girls experienced (2). The fact is, money can't fix everything. A large majority of the victims think USAG is trying to pay its way through its mistakes and send a message to the gymnastics community to move on. John Manly, a lawyer who represents a large majority of Nassar's victims, argues, "In typical fashion, USAG managed to offend everyone with a settlement plan that doesn't allow for any of our questions to be answered. We want to figure out who at the highest levels of Olympic sports allowed this totally corrupt culture to continue" (qtd in Macur 2). Manly's point is that victims and their families are angry that this organization continues to withhold information. Moving forward, victims want to regain trust in USAG, but there are still secrets that have not been told. World famous gymnast Simone Biles says that she truly wishes that "they BOTH [USOC and USAG] wanted an independent investigation as much as the survivors and I do. And don't THEY also want to know HOW everything was allowed to happen and WHO let it happen so it NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN?" (qtd in Macur 2). As you can see, athletes like Biles are very frustrated with the lack of effort put forth by these organizations. They feel it is appropriate to reveal all the secrets and information involved in the case so *everyone* can move on and, more importantly, they believe this will protect athletes from such abuse of power in the future. It is obvious that Nassar was not the only criminal in this case. By withholding information from the public and by refusing to allow an independent investigation to occur, it is evident that members of USAG played a role in covering up Nassar's abuse. An independent investigation would be exactly what Manly and gymnasts like Biles want. It would allow an extensive investigation of the sequence of events regarding Nassar's abuse and could potentially reveal the names of everyone involved. USAG is trying to eliminate more legal action against their employees and itself. The only way the victims and families can move on is if the organization accepts full responsibility and provides transparency as far as the

information related to Nassar's case is concerned. Also, owning up to the role the USAG played in the ongoing abuse of these young girls will help address the toxic culture of the organization.

I hope that this case shows that aside from the person directly responsible for the abuse, the organization that employs that abuser must also be held accountable. USAG played an integral role in covering up information about the abuse Nassar committed and must acknowledge its negligence. It is responsible for the strict environment where athletes must fully submit to those in authority that is enforced by the organization, the lack of protection protocol, the hesitation to report allegations to authorities, and ultimately, the untold secrets compounded the abuse Nassar committed. The organization must take charge of fixing its reputation, not by using money, but by telling the truth. In the long run, these girls deserve the respect of knowing who was involved. Nassar destroyed these young girls' lives both physically and emotionally, and USAG must help these athletes put their lives back together.

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After watching a video of an interview with Native American attorney and professor Sarah Deer, the students in this class wrote a short reflection that included brief connections to course texts. In this focused and organized response, the student offers a brief rhetorical analysis of the interview, effectively incorporates her own personal reaction, and seamlessly makes pertinent connections to class material.

Sarah Deer and Native American Justice Systems

By Lauren Costello

Dr. Michelle Liptak - Bearing Witness

Sarah Deer, interviewed in 2017 at the University of Oregon, made many interesting points about the justice systems of modern native communities in the United States. Her background working in the federal government and her interests in the overlap between sex crimes and Federal Indian Law give her a unique and credible perspective. I found that she effectively argued the reasons that Native American court systems are lagging behind by pointing out statistics regarding violent crimes and by addressing events of historical relevance. Deer's passion for the subject made the interview more compelling, and I found myself gaining a deeper understanding of the novel we are currently reading for FYS, Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*. Deer's argument not only expanded my knowledge of Native American courtroom procedures, but she also helped me comprehend the importance of offering protection to Native American people, who often struggle to find a voice in America's overwhelming judicial system.

Violent crimes are prominent in the United States, but they are particularly pronounced in Native American communities. While the majority of crime in the United States may be intraracial, meaning that the violence occurs between members of the same race, this is not the case on many of the reservations scattered throughout the country. Deer pointed out that most perpetrators of crimes that take place on reservations are non-Native American. This is something that we see in *The Round House,* where a non-Native American man attacked and raped Geraldine, Joe's mother. The unfortunate truth is that over 50% of Native American women will experience sexual assault in their lifetime, and 80% will experience some kind of violence in general (Deer). I think that Deer takes an appropriate amount of time to address this fact, which I considered necessary because of the enormity and significance of the issue. Although Native American communities constitute only a fraction of the national population, the vast majority of women in those communities are experiencing violence. While the numbers may seem small on a national scale, the abuse of 80% of an entire population of women is entirely unacceptable. I think that Deer's inclusion of statistics like these served to strengthen her argument while simultaneously demonstrating her credibility. She constantly referred back to her own experiences, having attended nearly 20 rape trials, spoken to over 400 Native American women who experienced violence, and worked in various government positions related to justice. By incorporating specific knowledge and her own experiences, I think she was able to present a strong argument throughout the

interview from which I personally learned a lot. It isn't enough to simply search for statistics on a website. Deer's interview showed me that what's really important is taking action to change those statistics because they cannot remain the way they are without continuing to inflict pain and suffering on countless Native American people.

Another way that Deer produced a compelling stance was by including lots of references to the past. I like that she incorporated those historical references because it made the situation more real to me, which I believe was one of Deer's goals. She stated, "I think that exposing, particularly 18- and 19-year-olds, to [Native American] history is incredibly important. It shouldn't be relegated to the ethnic studies department or the Native American studies department. Everybody should know about this history and the trauma that native nations continue to experience" (Deer). I liked Deer's commitment to the topic, and I think her passion was visible through her desire to share this unfortunate history with the world. The trauma brought on by violent crimes against Native Americans, particularly women, is not something that people should overlook, for it has been a problem throughout all of American history, beginning with the Colonial period. Just as nature was viewed as an object that could be exploited, manipulated, and subdued during the Scientific Revolution, the Native Americans were viewed and depicted as savages during the late 16th century in order to be treated in a similar way. In "The Death of Nature," Carolyn Merchant writes, "Because nature was now viewed as a system of dead, inert particles moved by external, rather than inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature" (277). There was a certain justification that people employed in order to dominate the natural world, which is what the colonists did with the Native American peoples and their land. Colonial rapists generally used the same tactics that are still used today, such as degradation and humiliation, breaching any sense of dignity or humanity.

With her extensive background in justice and law, Deer was able to bring up some interesting topics that relate to the slow-moving nature of the Native Amerian justice system. Her points, which I'll discuss shortly, made me realize that there are external factors that have a negative effect on those courts, clearing up some questions that *The Round House* had raised for me. I knew that prosecuting a non-Native American person could be problematic in a reservation courtroom, but I didn't understand the extent of the difficulties involved. Deer pointed out that any new rules to be adopted by reservation courts have to be run through Congress first, which is a painfully slow process. This makes any victory a big one, such as the Tribal Law and Order Act that allows the court to sentence an offender to up to three years in prison. It had previously been one year. This fact that Deer provided put *The Round House* into perspective for me and made the issue of Geraldine's attacker likely getting away more understandable. The book is representative of the countless injustices faced by many Native American women like Geraldine. The reality portrayed by this story amplifies the idea that reservation courts are not strong enough to prosecute those doing harm to Native American

women. Thus, women like Geraldine cannot continue to live normally after being attacked. Deer made it clear that it will be an extremely difficult task to make Native American courts more self-sufficient, as the current administration doesn't seem to have any interest in prioritizing them. She stated, "If we really want to make sure that tribes can take on these crimes on their own terms, we have to undo some of the federal harm that's been done" (Deer). Her emphasis on the negative impacts that the federal government has had and continues to have on the reservation justice system made the urgency of the issue stand out in comparison to the slow rate at which things are being done to solve it. I feel like I am now more aware of just how little reservation courts have changed in the large span of time they have existed because of Deer's connection to our modern federal judicial system. Prior to listening to Deer's ideas, I hadn't realized the extent to which Native Americans have been silenced by those more powerful than them. By pushing forward to institute change and take control of their own justice system, the Native American community has proven to be stronger and more determined than I had previously considered.

I was fascinated by the way Sarah Deer presented the issue of outdated tribal court systems in her interview, for she was able to provide comprehensible support that helped me to better understand the problem at hand. By mentioning relevant statistics, related historical events, and the modern American judicial system, she made the information truly compelling, and I found myself wanting to learn more about Native American history and issues related to violence and injustices. Overall, she raised many interesting points and expressed not only why Native Americans have suffered for so long, but also why it's important that we bring attention to that suffering in order to overcome it. A good place to start is the justice system, made clear by *The Round House*, in which the courtroom is not strong enough to provide necessary justice to Joe's family.

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For this research paper, students were asked to choose a person or event from their home geographic area (where they live or a place their family visits often) and explain the national or international impact the person or event had. This writer uses a variety of primary and secondary sources to show how Strom Thurmond affected not only American national politics, but state and regional politics, as well.

A Southerner for President

By Nicholas DiScala

Dr. Nolan - Local History: National and/or International Impact

On the grounds of the South Carolina Statehouse in Columbia, there is a statute of a lone man, standing tall and proud, casting a long and imposing shadow in the hot South Carolina sun. Growing up I spent my summers and vacations in South Carolina, and I always heard about this man, a politician who seemed to have always been there, who seemed to be as old as the large Palmetto trees that blanket the state. This man, Governor turned Senator Strom Thurmond, has long cast a shadow over South Carolina and the United States. The beginning of his highly debated legacy began in 1948 when at the onset of the Civil Rights Movement, Governor Thurmond announced his candidacy for president. His candidacy was atypical, for he had decided to run under a newly formed party banner, the States Rights Party (colloquially known as the Dixiecrats). This exclusively Southern party was focused on preventing then President Harry Truman from winning re-election and was hoping to put an end to his new civil rights initiatives. Thurmond lost the election and failed to prevent Truman from being re-elected, but his political impact was greater than just that lone election. Governor Thurmond's political impact can be classified in three distinct ways: his impact on state (South Carolina), regional (Southern), and national level politics.

When Strom Thurmond was elected Governor of South Carolina in 1946, South Carolina was still very much a one-party state that was divided along racial lines. The Democratic Party had controlled all aspects of political life since the years following Reconstruction. Thurmond called himself an "avowed New Deal Democrat" ("Strom Thurmond for President") and was elected on a quite progressive platform. This is striking since his legacy is very much identified as conservative in every sense of the word. Historian Joseph Crespino explains that in Thurmond's gubernatorial inaugural speech, "he urged the abolition of the poll tax and that more attention be given to Negro education. For later profile writers, they provided an ironic detail: the Dixiecrat candidate who used to be a radical liberal" (49). While not all of the above policies were instituted, significant progress was made in terms of advancing legislation aimed at helping minority communities. The increase in state funding for African American majority school districts helped temporarily define Thurmond as a "radical liberal" during his tenure as governor. His now forgotten, progressive legacy greatly impacted local communities in South Carolina. This legacy, however, would drastically change just two years after his inaugural speech, and in 1948, Governor Thurmond became the public face of the movement to preserve segregation and racial inequality in the South.

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Thurmond's 1948 presidential candidacy notably impacted the political standing and makeup of the Democratic Party in South Carolina. South Carolina was a one-party state in that Democrats controlled all statewide political offices. This began to change when the Democratic Party adopted civil rights language into its party platform at the 1948 Democratic National Convention. Due to the introduction of such language, then Governor Thurmond decided to run for president on a uniquely Southern, anti-civil rights platform. Thurmond handily beat Truman in his home state of South Carolina by a massive margin, with over 72% of the vote, thereby carrying its eight electoral votes ("Strom Thurmond for President"). This election began to change the makeup of the South Carolina Democratic Party. The 1948 campaign laid bare the divisions that had begun to form within the state party. Historian John E. Borsos points out, "The coalitions that campaigned for Truman in 1948- blacks, white liberals, labor, and old-time politicians- were the forebears of the groups which solidified into the 'modern,' post-1965 South Carolina Democratic Party" (17). Gone was the white, middle class, suburban Southern Democrat, as this demographic abandoned the Democratic Party and voted for native son Governor Thurmond. The shift in voting patterns displayed due to Thurmond's candidacy began the collapse of the one-party Democratic system in South Carolina. Furthermore, the standing of the Democratic Party also diminished, as noted by Harvard politician scientist V.O. Key, when "at a time of great dissatisfaction with the national leadership of the Democratic Party, South Carolinians began to talk about the great virtues of a two-party system" (150). The new two-party system in South Carolina would be famously solidified later when Thurmond infamously switched parties in the Senate, crossing the floor to become a Republican. Thurmond, arguably single-handedly, overturned 60 plus years of Democratic Party rule in South Carolina. He helped create a two-party system in the state that for a brief time saw competitive elections between Democrats and Republicans. The politics of South Carolina today can be greatly attributed to the actions of Strom Thurmond.

The final component of Governor Thurmond's political impact on South Carolina was his candidacy's effect on down-ballot races during and after the 1948 presidential election. During this election, Governor Thurmond and the States Rights Party identified local, state, and federal level candidates up for election that were supportive of the causes being advocated by Thurmond and the Dixiecrats (see Figure 1 below). These "friendly" candidates were often advertised with Thurmond in the hopes that these candidates (who were running as Democrats) would retain the traditional Southern Democrat support that was supporting Thurmond (Figure 1).
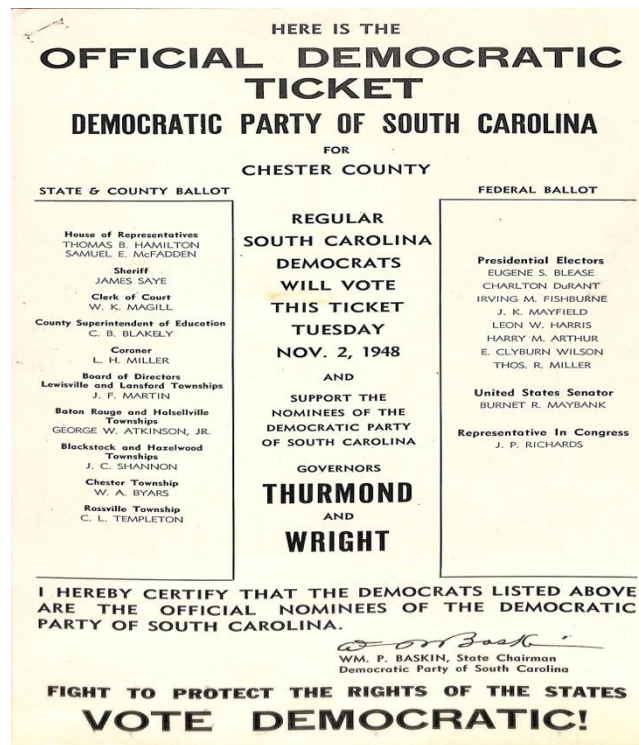
Figure 1 ("Strom Thurmond for President")

Additionally, Thurmond's candidacy affected down-ballot races in South Carolina far after the election of 1948. By abandoning the Democrat Party and attacking it and then by switching his official political affiliation in 1964 to Republican, Thurmond elevated the standing of the Republican Party in South Carolina. According to Russell Merritt, whose research is focused on senatorial elections in the 1960s, "Thurmond legitimized the Republican Party to South Carolinians in one quick move" (281). By legitimizing the Republican Party in the minds of South Carolina voters, Thurmond impacted congressional races in the years after his 1948 Presidential run, ultimately leading to Republican domination seen in South Carolina today.

Moreover, Governor Strom Thurmond impacted the direction of politics in the United States as a whole. This impact can be seen in his use of race as a campaign issue. Thurmond was one of the first modern American presidential candidates to use race as an effective campaign issue and was also one of the first candidates to achieve success based on this strategy. While running for President in 1948, Thurmond repeatedly used the issue of segregation and proposed integration as a way to fearmonger white Southerners. Thurmond's candidacy was one of the first to have openly used racial dog-whistles and racially charged language. In his research on the racial undertones of Thurmond's campaign, author Tomiko Brown Hall writes that "his [Thurmond's] candidacy had introduced a genteel form of white supremacy cloaked with a veneer of civility. This particular brand of race-baiting would be enshrined by Thurmond and other white Southern politicians in the years to come as an effective strategy" (Hall 75). Governor Thurmond repeatedly spoke to exclusively white audiences, warning of the dangers of integration, and these orations were the main factor

for his success in winning four Southern states in that election. Thurmond understood from the beginning of his campaign how successful this race-baiting could be. In his acceptance speech at the States Rights Party Convention, Thurmond declared: "Each state has the right to avail itself of the best method of promoting harmony between people of different races within its boundaries…some may determine that the separation of the two races is the way to accomplish this purpose" (Thurmond 8). By speaking directly to the concerns of white Southerners, i.e. keeping the system of segregation, Thurmond was able to draw away traditional Democratic support to his campaign. His impact on regional (Southern) American politics was further seen in Governor George Wallace's 1968 presidential run, for Wallace employed the same strategies Thurmond used in 1948. Wallace faced a similar electoral fate as Thurmond, too, only winning select Southern states. However, Thurmond's impact did not end there; it was felt again during the 2016 campaign cycle, as the issue of race in American politics was exacerbated by Donald Trump's candidacy. The parallels between the Thurmond's campaign and Trump's are incredibly striking. Both spoke to overwhelmingly white crowds, both used language seen as racially inflammatory and provocative, and both utilized existing racial division to benefit their campaigns. In contrast to Wallace, however, these strategies that were first espoused by Thurmond, proved electorally successful for Trump.

Thurmond's presidential campaign of 1948 greatly impacted the movements that would morph into modern American conservatism. The conservative undertones and overtures that existed in Thurmond's campaign helped create an environment where many of the pillars of American conservatism lie today. The emphasis on faith and religion, the staunch limited government rhetoric, and the defense of states' rights all are considered today to be part of mainstream conservatism, and all were central to Thurmond's campaign. Historian and Strom Thurmond biographer Joseph Crespino remarked that "Thurmond was also an innovator who saw the future of conservative politics before anyone else. As early as the 1950s, he began to forge alliances with Christian Right activists, and he eagerly took up the causes of big business, military spending, and anticommunism" (1). These early overtures to these specific demographic groups helped weld what would become the modern Conservative movement. Thurmond's campaign was comprised of these demographic groups, and this was the first instance of a conservative electoral movement in modern American politics. This movement would later be embodied by another American candidate for president, Senator Barry Goldwater, during his run for president in 1964. The ideological ties between Goldwater and Thurmond were so strong that in 1964, as stated by Crespino, they "culminated in Thurmond delivering a scalding denunciation of the Democratic Party, announcing his new status as a Goldwater Republican" (165). The foundations laid by Thurmond's campaign in 1948 created the blueprint for future conservative presidential candidates' campaigns. Again, Thurmond's impact is most recently seen in Donald Trump's successful run for president. In 2016, then candidate Trump relied on support from the Christian Right along

with a robust rhetoric concerned about increasing military spending/strength to help elect him to the White House. His racial rhetoric on the topic of immigration also closely resembled the racially inflammatory style campaign that Thurmond ran in 1948. The 1948 Thurmond presidential campaign, while not electorally successful, provided the beginnings of a conservative revival in America, which has greatly impacted modern American politics.

In addition to his ideological influence, Governor Thurmond and his campaign changed generations of regional, Southern voting patterns, thereby affecting the national electoral landscape. By rebuking the Democratic Party and successfully taking several Southern states at the electoral level, Governor Thurmond started the end of what once was the "Solid South." The once strong and seemingly unbreakable one-party system was eventually felled due to Thurmond's attacks on the national Democratic Party. The election of 1948 and Thurmond's campaign, according to author Dewey Grantham, "led to a real political division in the South. The States Rights Party also provided…a coherent and voluble vehicle for challenging the region's growing sense of political isolation…and disrupted the Solid South" (123). Never before had Southerners been provided with another political option, and when other options presented themselves through Thurmond's campaign, Southerners switched their political allegiance to voice their displeasure. This switch in political leanings led to a more competitive two-party system in the South that lasted until the 1980s. By then, Governor Thurmond had become Senator Thurmond and had switched his political allegiance, like much of the rest of the South, to the Republican Party. Governor Thurmond's presidential run created the political makeup of the South that is seen in national electoral politics today.

Strom Thurmond during his time as governor and as a presidential candidate created a lasting impact on the politics of South Carolina and the South as well as the United States, as a whole. Governor Thurmond, during the early part of his tenure as governor, enacted progressive reforms that would contrast with his mainly conservative legacy. During his presidential campaign, Thurmond greatly impacted the standing of the Democratic Party in the minds of many white South Carolinians and affected the party loyalty of many down-ballot South Carolinian Democrats. Similarly, Thurmond impacted national level politics through his use of race as a central campaign issue. Thurmond's overtures heavily influenced what would become the modern American conservative movement. Finally, Governor Thurmond greatly affected the national electoral landscape by creating the environment that led to the end of the "Solid South" and its subsequent switch in loyalty from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. While South Carolina and the rest of the nation have ceased to hear the striking Southern baritone of Thurmond's voice, his impact and legacy are incredibly present in today's political landscape. Politicians have used the Thurmond playbook to seek election to political office. Thurmond's strategy of using racial rhetoric is perhaps one of the most prevalent tactics

employed today to scare or energize respective party bases. Presidential campaigns were forever changed by Thurmond's candidacy, and his impact will likely always be felt by South Carolinians and Americans alike.

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In this research paper, the writer argues that the stories our children read have the capacity to not only shape their attitudes, but to influence our larger societal narrative. Using scholarly research to support her thesis, she focuses on the importance of LGBTQ literature and the role it plays in promoting awareness and acceptance.

Open a Book and Open a Mind: How LGBTQ Children's Literature Can Foster Acceptance

By Emily Erlanger

Prof. Collins - Narrative: The Inside Story

What's on our children's bookshelves? While it may not seem like a weighty question, the beloved childhood staples we read to our children imprint on them a narrative with implications that extend far beyond the one in between the covers. The privilege to read to our children and choose the plots, characters, and settings that occupy the stories they hear cannot be taken lightly. As a society, the move towards a climate where we accept and embrace our differences starts with who we write into existence: who we deem deserving of space on our bookshelves. Historically, LGBTQ inclusive children's books have never failed to stir up discord, but despite the controversy, promoting the visibility of LGBTQ individuals and families is essential for cultivating acceptance among our young readers. By endorsing the narratives of people with diverse backgrounds and identities, we can instill in our children not only a love for reading, but a love for all people.

One of the primary reasons that LGBTQ inclusive literature is important is children's need to see themselves, as well as others, reflected in the media they consume. As a society, we have begun to turn our attention towards equal representation in television and movies, but we should not underestimate the significance of including children's literature in this progress. Reader-response criticism is a theory that echoes this sentiment; it emphasizes the reader's role in making meaning of the text by negotiating it within the context of their own lives (Möller 236). Rudine Sims Bishop is a researcher who, based on the findings of her landmark case study, argues the importance of inclusion in literature (Möller 236). For example, when literature excludes or stereotypes African Americans, Bishop argues that "the educational and psychological well-being of both Black and White children" suffers (qtd. in Möller 236). Bishop's research demonstrates that children not only need to see representations of themselves, but also representations of others, in order to effectively engage with their reading. This same concept she observed with African American children can be applied to children with LGBTQ individuals in their families. Bishop uses the metaphor that a story can be a mirror, window, or sliding glass door through which readers can see themselves and others. The degree to which their stories reflect and celebrate a wide range of identities determines a reader's ability to understand and accept differences.

LGBTQ inclusive literature can also serve as a tool to help expand our current discourse from its heteronormative tendencies and normalize the experiences of children with a connection to LGBTQ issues. Teachers, specifically, have an incredible power to inform children's expectations and values. As an educator, says Karla Möller, "our choices of whose knowledge we value, which meanings we promote, what books we

provide, and how we teach children to read and respond are important ways we exert the power inherent in our positions" (236). Through their role in the classroom, teachers have the ability to either affirm existing systems of power and privilege or attempt to redistribute them. This becomes especially important when examining the experiences of gay and lesbian youths, who face higher rates of harassment and suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. In their 2013 National School Climate Survey, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network found that of the LGBTQ youths surveyed, 85% reported verbal harassment at school, and 56% reported having felt unsafe at school (Knoblauch 210). These troublingly high numbers reflect the ostracism LGBTQ students encounter in the school environment. The verbal harassment they report is likely an indicator that their peers are intolerant of LGBTQ individuals, and the lack of safety they feel implicates worse: LGBTQ students may face threats of violence in school. Improving the experiences of LGBTQ individuals in the school setting is a worthwhile goal for all educators, and LGBTQ literature offers a platform for teachers to open conversations that explore the delicate issues of gender and sexuality.

In the past, LGBTQ inclusive literature has lacked the commonplaceness and prevalence in popular literature that contributes to widespread acceptance. Despite the publication of an array of LGBTQ inclusive titles, these books have remained largely unembraced by the public. Due to this poor reception, authors, publishers, and educators remain hesitant to produce and endorse LGBTQ inclusive literature. The controversy surrounding these books often makes them difficult to get published and sold, contributing to author self-censorship (Chick 16). *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell is one such controversial text. It tells the true story of two male penguins at the Central Park Zoo, Roy and Silo, who pair up and build a nest. When one of the zookeepers takes notice, knowing the two can't lay their own egg, he brings them a spare one from another couple. Together, Roy and Silo hatch and raise Tango, making her the zoo's first penguin chick with two dads. Despite its lighthearted intentions, the book went on to top the American Library Association's 10 Most Challenged Books List between 2005 and 2010 (Machlin). While the book has often been attacked for its perceived gay agenda, the authors maintain that their only goal was to write a book that helped parents start a discussion with their kids about same-sex parented families. In the words of Justin Richardson, "It's no more an argument in favor of gay human relationships than it is a call for children to swallow their fish whole or sleep on rocks" (qtd. in Depalma 829). Despite being well intentioned, Justin Richardson and other authors of LGBTQ inclusive literature are often unsuccessful in heading off criticism. In the interest of preventing parental backlash, schools and libraries often see books like *And Tango Makes Three* better fit for the top shelf. Through the eyes of some parents, gay relationships are a taboo issue with inherent political and religious implications. As a result, they object to teachers incorporating literature with LGBTQ characters and themes into the curriculum, and the teachers are often criticized for addressing a topic viewed as being inappropriate for children.

However, it should be made clear to parents that the intent behind LGBTQ inclusive literature isn't to further a certain set of political ideologies; rather, it is to create and foster a learning environment that values acceptance. Nurturing empathy, minimizing bullying, and strengthening a sense of belonging among students is something everyone can get behind, regardless of one's beliefs about gay relationships. Furthermore, parents who are unsettled by the implicit sexual undertones surrounding the discussion of homosexual relationships should know that the focus of LGBTQ inclusive literature is not on the sex in sexual orientation: "Children's interest in 'family' has to do with who loves them—not the sexual life of the family's adults" (Knoblauch 211). This statement captures our tendency to ascribe sexual stigma to issues that, for kids, are not innately sexual. As adults, we need to be aware of our own biases and be careful not to pass them down to children.

Given the sensitivity surrounding LGBTQ issues, chosen literature needs to be integrated into our educational settings in a thoughtful and strategic manner. However, LGBTQ related material need not be at the forefront of our curricula; simply allowing children access to it is a step in a positive direction. In her article, "Building the Foundation of Acceptance Book by Book: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender Themed Books for Grades K-5 Multicultural Libraries," Dee Knoblauch suggests that teachers utilize books that casually and subtly involve LGBTQ characters. As an undergraduate educator and a gay mother, she understands the importance of inclusion that doesn't entice opposition. Great care also needs to be taken with LGBTQ inclusive literature, as with all children's literature, in order to ensure quality of message and representation of people from diverse backgrounds (Depalma 839).

In addition to promoting inclusivity with LGBTQ literature, acknowledging and promoting the diversity of groups that belong to the LGBTQ community should also be an area of concern for educators. In her extensive analysis of 60 LGBTQ children's titles, B.J. Epstein found that "there is a strong overall tendency to represent gay and lesbians to the exclusion of other aspects of gender and sexuality diversity" (qtd. in Depalma 836). In other words, there are a multitude of children's books that contain gay and lesbian characters, but a lack of books that feature characters with bisexual, transgender, or other queer identities. The decision to forgo inclusion of these individuals sends a strong message about the kinds of identities that we value. In denying bisexual, transgender, and other queer identities their place in literature, we are prioritizing the straightforward, distinct binaries that gay and lesbian individuals adhere to. In regard to this issue, there is an ongoing debate surrounding support for essentializing identities. Some educators believe we should promote narratives that obscure stricter identity binaries in an effort to promote the visibility of these underrepresented queer groups. Others, however, fear that this attempt at inclusion would unintentionally undermine and discredit gay and lesbian identities. Among teachers involved in *No Outsiders,* a UK-based project aimed at advancing sexuality and gender equality, opinions were split (Depalma 836). For example,

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one teacher expressed concern that the book *And Tango Makes Three* feeds into heterosexual typical archetypes, with two individuals in a monogamous relationship and a baby. A different teacher contended that gaining recognition and validation for gay and lesbian individuals presents enough of a challenge; trying to tear down the binaries that are slowly beginning to accept homosexuality does more harm than good. According to Depalma, the distinction here pertains to the ease of representation. In her words, "complexity and fluidity are difficult to represent, while it is much easier to present homosexuality in terms of clear-cut characters that behave in familiar and nonthreatening ways" (836). We have a tendency to fear what is strange and foreign to us—in this case, individuals who do not obey gender and sexuality binaries or fit neatly into our perceived societal narrative. Gay and lesbian individuals, who often heed to more traditional expectations and gender norms, have more quickly secured a place in literature than their nonbinary counterparts. Depalma goes on to pose critical questions: is our goal to disrupt these comfortable and familiar binaries or conform to them, and by choosing to conform are we devaluing the experience of queer individuals who reject the binaries that are insufficient in representing their identities? (836) While there is no easy answer, we must examine our purpose as we continue fighting for representation of the LGBTQ population. If we are to convince others that LGBTQ individuals are worthy of recognition, we first need to know who exactly we are talking about and why.

When students inevitably have questions and comments to share in response to LGBTQ material, teachers should be prepared to address them. Experts emphasize the importance of nurturing a classroom environment where students are comfortable asking questions, and teachers are confident in engaging them (Möller 240). In "Reading and Responding to LGBTQ-Inclusive Children's Literature in School Settings: Considering the State of Research on Inclusion," Karla Möller includes examples of how teachers can respond to student questions and generate productive discussions. One teacher collaborator, Maree, seized a teachable moment when, reading aloud *The Witches* by Roald Dahl, her students laughed at the word "queer." Maree, instead of simply ignoring or scolding the children, tactfully initiated a discussion about the word's multiple meanings. In maintaining a "calm authority," Maree "not only taught about the potential of words and reactions to marginalize and offend, but also harnessed an opportunity to use a single word to expand students' understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ people" (Möller 240). This transaction demonstrates how teachers can not only approach students' comments, but utilize them as an avenue for effective discussion. By engaging students and responding to them with consideration, teachers allow students to interact and remain connected with the material.

Through the narratives we bestow on our children, we have the capacity to set the bar for what their "happily-ever-afters" look like. In the following quotation, which she shares with her students every year, Dee Knoblauch acknowledges this immense power: "I have never met a bigot who was a reader as a child" (Knoblauch 209). As this notion poignantly conveys, insofar as we are responsible for the literature our

children consume, we are responsible for shaping their minds. Historically, the void of LGBTQ inclusive literature in our world has silently condoned the exclusion and erasure of the LGBTQ community, and until our literature expands to include their narratives, it will continue to. Children's literature offers us an invaluable opportunity and avenue by which to make our children's truths more inclusive, accepting, and positive than our own.

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Employment Inequality of the Deaf/HOH

By Amal Faheem

Dr. Nadeau - Globalization

Concerning areas of gender and minorities, it is common knowledge that employment inequality exists. Minorities and women face discrimination and are paid less in comparison to predominately white male employees. However, these groups are not the only ones affected by employment inequality. The Deaf/Hard of Hearing (HOH) are also affected by unemployment inequality but on a greater scale. To erase the employment inequality of Deaf/ Hard of Hearing in the workplace, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Disability Discrimination Act in the U.S. and UK, respectively, need to be rewritten. Society must recognize the accommodations needed by the Deaf/Hard of Hearing population, reduce the pay gap between them and able-bodied employees, and promote inclusion of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community. The Deaf/HOH are hardworking people who deserve to be recognized as equals in the workforce and to be given the opportunity to work to their full potential.

According to Eun Jung Kim, et al., "Deaf persons are those who identify themselves as culturally deaf and Deaf people base their identity on shared experiences and collective values of the Deaf community. Deaf community membership is largely determined by cultural behaviors (usually sign language use) and beliefs and not by medical diagnosis" (378). I can relate to this definition, for as a student who is hard of hearing, I face many hardships and obstacles in my life. For example, in order to do well in class, I have to work twice as hard as many of my peers and give all my attention to lip reading and listening to the professors. I tend to feel fatigued afterward, but I want to achieve my goals and be treated as an equal to my classmates. My experiences remind me of Thomas of Celano's story of the young Francis of Assisi's attitude toward the lepers. Francis "used to say that the sight of lepers was so bitter to him that in the days of vanity when he saw their houses even two miles away, he would cover his nose with his hands" (Thomas of Celano 35). Just as Francis did not understand or respect the lepers, people don't understand what I've been through, so they treat me differently. The able-bodied often view the disabled as being incapable or vastly different from themselves. As a result, Deaf/HOH people are considered like lepers in today's workplace. However, some may be surprised to learn that the Deaf/HOH population is huge: "According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 1.1 million Americans aged 15 years and older were deaf or unable to hear a normal conversation in 2010" (qtd. in Benito et al. 178). This large community that I am part of is entitled to fair and equitable treatment, especially in the workplace.

As a first step in solving the inequality faced by the Deaf/HOH, employers should provide accommodations. However, employers are often reluctant to do so because they see the need for accommodations as a sign that the Deaf/HOH are incapable of completing their tasks and need extra help. In addition, because of accommodation costs, employers may label the deaf/HOH as incompetent workers. Due to this perception, employers usually don't hire the Deaf/HOH. Current laws, like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), were designed to prevent employers from discriminating in this way. One provision in the ADA states that the employers must provide accommodations for the disabled. However, according to a study conducted in 2009, neither the ADA nor the DDA had any effect in increasing the employment rate of disabled people (Bell and Heitmueller 3). This explains that although there are laws in place, they do not improve the welfare and employment rate for the disabled. The Americans with Disabilities Act states that "in 2010, among individuals aged 21 to 64 years in the United States, the employment rate for those reporting severe hearing difficulty was 41.4% compared with 79.1% for those without a disability"(qtd. in Benito et al. 178). This clearly shows the need to reform the ADA and DDA because the employment rate is very low for the Deaf/HOH. One critical flaw in both the ADA and DDA is the accommodation costs. Many employers hesitate and do not employ Deaf/HOH because they have to take on additional responsibilities, especially financial ones, in order to provide accommodations. If the ADA and DDA were to include additions in policy that state the government would be responsible for paying for the accommodations, then the employers would be more likely to hire Deaf/HOH workers.

Due to the employers' negative perceptions of accommodations, many Deaf/HOH are hesitant to ask for them. The common accommodations for Deaf/HOH are Text Telephone (TTY) capability, sign language interpreters, note-taking availability, and an FM System (wireless transmitter device), to name a few. Some can be expensive, like TTY or FM System, and some can be provided for free like notetaking or captioning. It must be noted that all Deaf/HOH have varying needs of accommodations and that some may need more than others. According to the *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, "26% [of employed Deaf/HOH] had not asked for special arrangements when attending professional development or training days even though they considered that this accommodation might be helpful to them" (Punch et al. 505). Clearly, Deaf/HOH people were afraid to speak up due to fear of getting fired or facing discrimination. The study also concluded that "workers who reported more assertive work-coping behaviors obtained more accommodations than those who were less assertive and that many workers reported using passive and reactive, rather than assertive, coping behaviors at work"(Punch et al. 505). Instead of working in fear, Deaf/ HOH need to learn to advocate for themselves in order to rightfully ask for accommodations. To be able to do that, they need employers to be accommodating and understanding.

Another issue that would result in workforce equity is the reduction of the pay gap between hearing and Deaf/ HOH. According to one study, "While men who are deaf or hard of hearing earn 16.4% less on average than men without a hearing disability (US $45,244 vs. US $54,137), the hearing earnings gap is 14.2% (US $37,181 vs. US $43,318) among women" (Benito et al. 181). This data demonstrates a significant difference in pay between hearing and non-hearing people. It is difficult for Deaf/HOH people because according to a labor report from 2015, they were "twice as likely to have no educational qualifications compared to non-disabled people" and, thus, less likely to be employed full-time (Kim et al. 377). In the UK, the DDA planned to decrease disability benefits, which likely affects people with impairments and increases economic hardships for them (Kim et al. 386). These facts help to prove the urgent need to reduce the pay gap between Deaf/HOH and able-bodied people so the Deaf/HOH have equal opportunities for work and economic stability.

The most important step that must be taken for workplace equity is the promotion of inclusion for the Deaf/ Hard of Hearing. In the *International Journal of Audiology*, it is argued that "Deaf and hard-of-hearing workers have reported feeling socially isolated and lonely in the workplace, experiencing exclusion from the 'office chatter' and social interactions such as those that occur during lunch breaks, and missing out on incidental information and informal conversations" (qtd. in Punch et al. 505). This clearly shows that Deaf/HOH people felt excluded from their colleagues in the workplace. The Deaf/HOH may also miss important messages which puts them at a disadvantage because they are unaware of both work and social information due to exclusion. Another study also supported the lack of inclusion of the Deaf/HOH: "Even after gaining employment, over half of respondents felt socially isolated at work, a quarter felt subject to harassment and over three-quarters felt they were held back on their career path" (Kim 379). In essence, these workers were treated like lepers within the workplace. Because of hostile and non-inclusive environments, Deaf/HOH employees might hesitate to come to work or make less progress in their work. This may be one factor that has led to lower employment rates and contributed to the negative stereotypes of the Deaf/HOH.

This non-inclusive environment connects to Peggy McIntosh's "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: White Privilege and Male Privilege." In this essay McIntosh states that "White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks" (71) in order to show the invisible advantages given to whites compared to non-whites who had to work harder in order to get those tools. McIntosh argues that whites do not recognize their privilege, and this idea can be extended to those who are able-bodied and those who are disabled. More specifically, able-bodied people can easily hear what everyone is saying on the phone, at a meeting, or even in a loud cafeteria. However, Deaf/HOH struggle to communicate by phone because

there are no visual cues, and the reception is monotone or static. Deaf/HOH people may struggle in a meeting if a person talks in the opposite direction from them, and they can also have difficulty in a loud cafeteria because they need to lip read and hear sounds associated with what people are saying. The Deaf/HOH tend to get "listener's fatigue" which means that when they concentrate too much on speech reading and listening in everyday work/noisy environments, they feel fatigued (Kim et al. 377) . This shows how much effort the Deaf/HOH put forth in order to communicate, compared to able-bodied people who do not easily see this kind of privilege.

In order to end this vicious cycle of exclusion and stereotyping and diminish hostile and non-inclusive work environments, employers need to check their privilege and educate themselves about Deaf/HOH culture. If one were to ask the able-bodied what category Deaf/HOH people fall in, most would reply that the Deaf/HOH people are limited because they are disabled or have medical issues. In reality, the Deaf/HOH community is a part of a rich culture of empowerment. That culture has a unique history, sign language as its primary language, and many role models who show how much the Deaf/HOH can achieve. For example, Nyle DiMarco is a famous deaf activist, model, and actor. He showed the world that he is proud of his deaf culture and proved his success through hard work. Clearly, the Deaf/HOH are not a subordinate minority, and people should recognize them as individuals with a culture, not as those who are impaired. As noted by Kim et al.,"the lack of deaf awareness and attitudes . . . can leave Deaf/HOH feeling frustrated and embarrassed when having to use public services [for example, unqualified sign language interpreters] and result in them not using the services again" (379). If employers are more aware of the Deaf/HOH's abilities and needs, they are more likely to be open and inclusive with Deaf/HOH people. In turn, the Deaf/HOH will feel less hesitant in self-advocating and more will enter the workforce and excel in their positions. Inclusion and equal treatment often begin with awareness.

Employers need to make minimal changes in order to make their work environments more inclusive for the Deaf/HOH. Simple gestures, such as tapping a Deaf/HOH person on the shoulder to get their attention instead of repeatedly calling their name or conversing with them face-to-face in a quiet setting can make all the difference. Also, spreading awareness and providing diversity training will help the Deaf/HOH to feel like they truly belong in the workforce. At the societal level, employment inequality for the Deaf/HOH should be diminished by amending the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Disability Discrimination Act. These laws must ensure that employers recognize that the Deaf/HOH need to be able to access accommodations without hesitancy in order to work at their full potential. The pay gap between hearing and non-hearing people should be eliminated in order to help Deaf/HOH be independent and financially stable. Employers who value Deaf/HOH culture will be well-positioned to create inclusive work environments in which the Deaf/HOH population are treated as valued employees and equals. When Saint Francis became closer to God, "He

extended a hand of mercy to those who had nothing and he poured out compassion for the afflicted" (Thomas of Celano 36). This shows that St. Francis realized that he should fix his attitude and embrace the lepers for who they were. People should follow his example and care about the Deaf/HOH. With the many obstacles and challenges the Deaf/HOH face, don't they deserve to have a place in the workplace and to follow their passion for working in their careers?

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Sports Players Doing What They Love: But, Should They be Fearful?

By Adrianna Grande

Prof. Barranca - Voice

Sports are a big part of many childhood experiences. Playing a sport allows children to have fun and to develop a love that is indescribable. Whether they play for a high school team or on a travel team that goes all over the country to compete, kids make memories they will not forget. As sports such as soccer grow throughout the world, turf fields are being installed everywhere, replacing the grass fields that players used to play on. However, putting in artificial fields takes away from nature's purity by replacing it with fake grass. People need to stop ripping up real grass and replacing it with artificial turf because of the environmental and human health-related damages it causes.

Nowadays many children are distracted by their phones and other technological devices, so often the only time they go outside to play is for a sports game. Thus, playing a sport allows children to interact with nature and the beauty it contains. Yet, does this beauty still count if it is fake? Many people love artificial turf fields because they are easier to take care of and they stay in great condition regardless of the weather. It is not just sports arenas constructing these fake fields; playgrounds and high schools are doing the same. This makes the schools look better since they have nicer football, soccer, and baseball fields compared to other schools that do not have artificial fields. Taking out perfectly fine grass fields is ruining nature not only because it is removing the natural grass but also because people are creating environmental problems that can be avoided. This process is explained in Joni Mitchell's song, "Big Yellow Taxi," when people ruin the purity of nature by building parking lots and shopping malls that we do not need, thus damaging the environment for no reason. A lyric from the song states, "Don't it always seem to go/ That you don't know what you got 'til it's gone" (Mitchell). The song explains that people tend to take things in nature for granted, so when grass fields are replaced with turf, they won't realize until it's too late what they had and what they lost. In addition to what they're giving up, they also don't recognize the negative effects of turf until it's too late. Even though the artificial fields make everything so much nicer to look at, people do not see that they are significantly hurting the environment. Another lyric from the song states, "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot," explaining that "paradise" is being taken away from everyone in the development of an artificial substitute (Mitchell). Turf fields are causing great damage to the environment, and people need to realize this.

Some people may argue that grass fields are too difficult to maintain and if the weather is bad, some sports cannot be played due to the poor condition of the field. If baseball fields are turf, coaches and players do not have to worry about the field being soaked or the dirt being wet and unplayable. Also, a turf field allows for an even playing field for the competitors compared to grass fields that are often marred. Even

though people who hold these views make valid points, the artificial fields are still causing damaging effects to the environment since construction has to be done in order to obtain these artificial fields. Before putting all these artificial fields in, people must consider if it is worth replacing natural beauty with an artificial substitute, which would be harmful to the environment.

Not only are the artificial fields harmful to the environment, but they also affect people's health as well. Even though the turf fields can withstand any weather condition and stay in beautiful form, there are still questions about the safety of the turf itself. The turf is made up of crumb rubber from car tires, which acts as a synthetic dirt. In William Anderson and Cheryl Falvey's article, "Crumb Rubber Turf Wars: The Synthetic Turf Fields Investigation," they explain the health risks associated with artificial turf. They describe how "Crumb rubber contains carcinogens and either could or actually is causing cancers and other health problems for players and children who use these fields" (287). In other words, the rubber turf creates new concerns, and people should be worried about the cancer risk associated with these fields. Anderson and Falvey shared that when this news came out, parents were fearful that their children would get cancer at a young age just because they were playing on artificial fields instead of natural grass ones. The writers stated that "[m]any of the news stories cite a group of over 150 soccer players identified with cancer, and many of them goalies, who understandably spend more time on the turf surface," showing the dangers that sports players face over a tiny bead that seems harmless (287). Thus, the question is: Is it really worth all the hassle of ripping out a perfectly playable field for one that causes more harm than good? People need to look at the dangers before they go tearing nature apart since doing so could have potentially significant effects on the health of adults and children.

Artificial fields seem like a great idea because they stay in great condition without needing a lot of maintenance. However, the way this artificial field is obtained destroys a natural grass field. Not only do people need to consider the environmental damage that the turf fields cause, but they should also be cautious because of the effects this has on human health as well. The turf fields are known to be cancer-causing, so people must think of all the damage these fields are creating because it is an important issue for both people and the natural world.

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For this research assignment, students were asked to pick a topic relevant to women and social justice and one about which they are passionate. In this well-written and informative essay, the student builds a strong argument for the impactful roles that self-expression and artistic creation play for women and for the world.

Women in Poetry: Freedom and Expression

By Sarah Hoffmeister

Dr. Haas – Women: Their Voices, Their Values, Their Vision

The literary world plays a significant role in upholding sexist and misogynistic power structures. This is why the literary canon must be expanded to include more female writers and poets for the sake of the readers, but more importantly, for the writers themselves. Because their experiences and perceptions are different from men's, women can capture the female experience of the world and expose readers to ideas and perspectives that they cannot find in work by men. Most importantly, however, the inclusion of women's writing in literary circles will inspire more girls and women to become writers, poets, and storytellers. When teachers and professors expose their students to work by women, not only do all students benefit, but more specifically, girls will know that they can create something that will impact the world around them because they will have specific examples and influences to draw from. As readers of women's writing, girls will also come to understand the value of self-expression and how the act of creating gives the artist a sense of empowerment and belonging. By familiarizing young girls with female authors like Sylvia Plath or artists such as Nicola Muirhead in classrooms and other settings, the cycle of misogyny will break because girls will know from an early age that they should *not* repress their emotions, and they will be encouraged to express their own ideas, experiences, and opinions.

One female writer who is important to look at when considering women in literature is Sylvia Plath. Though her work did achieve the kind of critical acclaim freely given to men, it was not until Plath began writing specifically about women and their search for identity that she found her true poetic voice.[1] But by looking at Plath's life as a writer, one should conclude that not much has changed in the way of women in the literary world or the world in general because Plath essentially served as an editor and assistant to fellow writer and husband Ted Hughes.[2] As a result, Plath's own work and poetic voice suffered. She grew frustrated with the lack of conviction in her work, but in her later poetry and fiction, she hit her stride with works such as *The Bell Jar* and *Ariel*. This is due to the fact that she began writing about women and because she no longer served as Hughes' unpaid assistant. Plath wrote about mothers as well as daughters, unambitious as well as achieving women, the fertile and the infertile. While her confessional poetry illustrated to readers the internal conflict that exists within women, it also exposed them to the real-life effects of sexism and misogyny in the world by writing from the perspective of multiple women. For example, in her poem "Lady Lazarus," Plath

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[1] Linda Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath: A Literary Life,* 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2003), 95.
[2] Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath,* 75.

changes Lazarus into a woman and, instead of discussing the Biblical origin and explaining what was responsible for Lazarus's resurrection, "Plath's Lady Lazarus is under the command of her own superior will."[3] While male writers are often unable to accurately (or fairly) depict different kinds of women, female writers do so with ease. Through her writing, Plath was able to share with the world different kinds of women that really existed, which in her time was unprecedented. Women were, and still are in many cases, hardly even seen as being human; society does not grant women permission to be authentic, or to make mistakes, or to have flaws of any kind. The way to combat this is with words, as shown by Sylvia Plath. The more that women write about their experiences, the more women in the real world are free to express themselves.

But it is difficult to inspire young girls to express themselves when women's writing is not afforded the same critical acclaim as men's, as is evident with Plath's struggles with her early poetry. Not only did Plath fall into the traditional roles of wife and mother while also working extensively on Hughes' poetry, but she also lacked any strong female influences in the literary world, which further discouraged her from writing. Early on, Plath did not have any real encouragement to write and often found herself emulating the voices of male writers in her own work because she did not have any female authors to look up to in high school. Linda Wagner-Martin writes of Plath that, "While she could read Thomas Mann and T. S. Eliot accurately, she did not much identify with their traditional themes."[4] This is still an issue today; women's names are seldom found on reading lists in English classes, and so girls are not given role models who they can relate to and even try to emulate. In their article "Women in or Outside of the Canon: Helping High School Students Investigate the Role of Women in 'Literature,'" authors and teachers Susan Coryat and Colleen Clemens discuss the lack of female writers in the outdated curriculum they teach. They write, "Once the students listed every book they read in high school, they quickly realized the gender gap in the texts the school district chose for them to read."[5] The issue is that because high school and even college students are exposed to works from the canon, and the majority of canonized authors are men, it becomes all too easy for school districts not to make books by female authors required reading. There is also the problem of female writers taking on male pseudonyms and literally trying to take on a male voice. Because young women do not feel connected to the poetry and fiction written by men, they feel that their voices must not matter. This, too, is something Sylvia Plath had issues with. Like so many aspiring female writers, Plath failed to see the value of her own mind, until she opened up and began writing sincerely, showing that the ability to express oneself through words is a

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[3] Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath,* 112.

[4] Wagner-Martin, *Sylvia Plath,* 17.

[5] Susan Coryat and Colleen Clemens, "Women in or Outside of the Canon: Helping High School Students Investigate the Role of Women in 'Literature,'" *English Journal,* 106, no. 5 (2017): 44, accessed June 15, 2020, http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.siena.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.494559177&site=eds-live.

magnificent and powerful skill that should not be exclusive to one gender. Not only did Plath show the world through her poetry that women are far from being the two-dimensional wives and mothers that society makes them out to be, she also serves as the perfect example that, through writing, young women have the means to define themselves as real, multifaceted individuals. Essentially, Plath's career is proof that women's words have immense power.

Certainly, women's desires and abilities to express and share their experiences is not limited to America; poetry is a powerful agent of self-actualization across the globe. Ranu Uniyal, an Indian poet writing about women in poetry, puts it perfectly: "It is the woman poet, after all, who has now been raising questions and resisting silence. Who am I? Where do I exist? When was I born? To whom do I belong? History is full of men. Philosophy has ridiculed me as a whore. Thought belongs to men and so do weapons. I am everywhere — in poetry and in bed, in religion and in the kitchen. I am where I should not have been."[6] Uniyal asserts that while most other areas of life and art are hostile toward women, poetry is a tool for women to use in order to redefine womanhood, to reshape it so that it fits all women in its definition. Poetry opens the world to women, and they can discover themselves within it, carving out their own space to fit into. Thus, poetry is not only an agent of self-actualization for women, but it also gives them the opportunity to change the culture they are a part of.

While male writers fail to accurately or fairly depict female characters, women are more than able to flesh out a female who is fully human, simply by way of being a woman. There is nothing mystical or complex about the female experience; this just means that women understand the world as it is, and it is plagued with the abuse and objectification of women. However, poetry is a means of self-expression that gives the poet (the woman) the power to reshape her environment. When reading women's writing — because it is required summer reading, or because it was given a highly prestigious award — readers internalize the information and apply it to the real world. This gives the female poet power first through catharsis, and then in the ability to communicate with readers. That is why the literary world must expand its understanding of what is great or classic; by looking up to various female role models, girls see that their voice has a place in the world's chorus. To have one's voice heard and understood is not a power exclusive to men, and every day, female poets show this. When women write about their unique intersections of identity — as a mother, or as a queer woman, or as a woman of color — they reinforce the confidence of the readers who look up to them. As Rebecca Bonham, a poet and entrepreneur, puts it, "A lot of people think that poetry is written by old white men, and it's not. They think about Eurocentric, pre-20th century poets. When you say what does a poet look like, people say

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[6] Ranu Uniyal, "Voices of Resolution and Resistance in Indian Women's Poetry," *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik: A Quarterly of Language, Literature and Culture* 66, no. 1 (2018): 13, accessed February 10, 2020, doi: 10.1515/zaa-2018-0003.

Shakespeare, or Thoreau, or Hemingway or Jane Austen. There's so much more than that."[7] If girls are encouraged to write and to write with conviction from a young age, and if they are given role models that they can relate to, then they will not only improve their own lives, but also the lives of readers who gain a new understanding of the world through their words.

What women's poetry does is reinforce to readers that anyone can be a poet. This is especially important when considering the fact that poetry inspires people from different artistic backgrounds and creates dialogues that can transcend barriers like language and time. As seen with Nicola Muirhead's photography,[8] poetry works with different artforms and means of self-expression. Muirhead traveled to New Hampshire to capture its stoic beauty through her camera, pairing her photographs with selected poems from Robert Frost's *New Hampshire: A Poem with Notes and Grace Notes.* One photo in particular depicts a singular ice shanty, leaning just too far to one side. The ice stretches for miles, grayish white and the same color as the sky above the shanty. Muirhead paired this photo with Frost's "The Star Splitter," and if one did not know any better, it would be hard to tell which piece of art inspired the other. The ways in which Muirhead's and Frost's art interact with each other prove that it is imperative for open channels of communication to exist between artists and writers, especially so that there is an even greater opportunity for girls to get involved in artistic expression. Women's art, whether it is poetry or photography or painting, opens doors to new ideas and concepts, while also opening the minds of readers and showing them that the perception of women that has been implanted into society by men is, in a word, wrong. Through words, women take back control of their identity from ill-willed misogynists and get to define themselves accurately and realistically, with flaws and strengths as well as weaknesses.

The reasons for reading women's writing are expansive; being able to read about the experience of queer women as told by queer women, to being able to see rape culture through the eyes of a woman are just two simple reasons that come to mind. These things can only be accurately portrayed by the people experiencing them in real life – i.e., women. And that is not because all women have this innate, nurturing quality that allows them to somehow *understand* certain things that men do not. That is a myth. Rather, it is the ongoing struggle for the power to define what a woman is that binds women together. Every piece of art created by a woman – every poem written by Plath, every photograph Muirhead takes – wrests a portion of that power from the clutches of misogynists. Reading women's work is like removing a patriarchal blindfold. Suddenly, the reader is thrust into a world they are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with. But the process goes far beyond that: readers will then come to notice that the real world is indeed full of inequalities and

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[7] Ahmad Graves-El, "'Verse Diversity,' Poetry Sees a Resurgence in Millville," *SNJ Today,* January 23, 2020, accessed February 10, 2020, https://snjtoday.com/2020/01/23/verse-diversity-poetry-sees-a-resurgence-in-millville/.
[8] Nicola Muirhead, "Visual Poems from the Granite State," *The Washington Post,* February 7, 2020, accessed February 10, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/amp-stories/rural-new-hampshire-photos/.

oppression, which their female authors have made them aware of. Having, in a way, experienced the misogynistic world through a female lens, readers will be inclined to call out the sexism they see in their lives and make the world a better and safer place for women, and for anyone who values the freedom of self-expression. Most importantly, though, when one woman is praised for her contributions to the world of literature, or to the world of music, or to the world in general, it shows every other woman that they, too, are worthy of the same respect and admiration. The act of creating undermines the sexist power structures put in place by men because once a woman has the confidence to express herself, nothing will stop her from speaking up for herself and for her fellow women.

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Speak Out Against Texting

By Shayna Lacijan

Prof. Barranca - Media

We live in a world where technology is constantly at our fingertips. We often find ourselves shying away from reality and hiding behind the screen of our phones. Information is always being thrown at us through our devices, and we let it seep into our heads and believe it. In addition to the constant influx of information, technology has created a realm of texting that has a set of non-universal rules that we all think we understand. Texting has allowed us to easily reach others without any human interaction at all, and, without a doubt, it has changed our methods of communication forever. But with efficiency comes a price that all of us must pay. We must use our voice and body language rather than rely on technology to build connections with others, as texting cannot be used to substitute human interaction and the direct connection that comes from having an actual conversation.

For many, texting is simply the easiest, most efficient way to talk to others in our modern world. While it may be efficient, texting leaves room for misinterpretation and implied meaning, which make it less effective than face-to-face conversations. This is due to the immense amount of choices one has when choosing how to send their messages. In our generation, there are numerous ways to send a message: *iMessage, Facebook Messenger, Snapchat, Direct Message.* Each one supposedly sends a different message, for one may appear more or less personal than the others. Deborah Tannen explains in *Discourse: Language and New Media,* that not only the words used in the message but also the speed of response and medium one chooses to use all go into the interpretation of a text message (104). Today, the platform one utilizes to reach others has an impact on the words themselves. For example, if one chooses to send an *Instagram* direct message, a response might take longer than, for example, sending a picture through *Snapchat*. For those who are unfamiliar with it, *Snapchat* is an app where users can exchange pictures back and forth and add words to the picture if they want. There seems to be a "code" for all social media platforms, but especially for *Snapchat*. Some say if a person sends a black screen it means they are angry or upset. This is just one example of how the app, or medium, one chooses affects how the person interprets the message being sent and gives power to technology to control how we respond to each other. Tannen suggests that messages can be interpreted in many different ways, and we have not yet perfected the so-called rules in this realm of texting (109). This unperfected, non-universal code for social media platforms makes it far less effective than simply talking to someone in-person and using one's body language and tone of voice to interpret what is being said.

The speed and medium of the message are not the only factors that impact the interpretation. Tannen points out that there are also various ways to misinterpret a text message based on age, gender, and personality (109). She states that "for many members of one generation it is rude to not return phone calls, whereas, for many members of the other, it is rude to make phone calls in the first place" (102-103). Furthermore, while some find it rude or disrespectful to text at the dinner table, others see no problem with this. Some may say, "How could anyone mistake this for an interruption? It takes so little time" when sending a text (Tannen 103). However, texting divides one's attention, and, therefore, it is taking some of the focus away from the conversation they are having in person. This represents changing times and the disagreement between generations about how to properly communicate through technology. All these factors affecting the message one is trying to send are taking away from simply having the conversation itself, which is one reason why we should not use technology as our main form of communication. People have grown to love texting for its efficiency without realizing it is taking away the quality of our communication due to the lack of direct connection we can only get when talking in person.

Our generation has started to shy away from conversations with others when given the choice between the people they are with and their phones. This is a common example in today's society: a person, who is with a group of friends, receives a message on their phone. After replying to the text, the person looks up and realizes everyone at the table has their heads down staring at their phones in silence as if being on social media is more important than being with others. This is a generational problem many of us have experienced, yet not everyone recognizes it as a problem. According to Common Sense Research, "nearly half of kids (44%) say they get frustrated with their friends for being on their phones when they're hanging out together, yet an even greater proportion (54%) admit that they get distracted by social media when they should be paying more attention to the people that they're with" (Steinmetz). We have grown so attached to our phones, we often forget to converse with those we are with, yet we later regret valuing technology over people. Jacquelyn Kegley, who wrote "Royce on Self and Relationships," claims that because we are spending too much time "improving how we present ourselves online" we are losing opportunities to "improve" the relationships we have with others (289). Time spent interacting with other online is not the same as using the voice we have to communicate with others in person. We must not forget to have these true, effective conversations in order to make connections. By valuing texting over face-to-face communication, we are giving technology the power to control our connections to others.

Yet because many people do want to be connected to others, which is not always physically possible, our generation has introduced the idea of "being alone together." This involves being with others through technology but not in real life. In other words, technology has allowed us to connect with those whom we would not have been able to before. Being connected through technology, however, does not promote

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effective conversation. Although it does allow us to reach others across a long distance, it actually is "promoting isolation, loneliness, and a decline in social contact," which has been proven to be bad for our physical and mental health, according to research (Kegley 291). Because we have grown so attached to technology and generally find sending a quick text easier than meeting up with someone, our communication quality has declined. Many people today may feel as though they do not have to be with others if they are connected to them through technology, yet humans are known to be social creatures and must interact with others to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, we must not replace social interaction with technology as it is simply not the same.

Although we might not realize, nonverbal cues and body language are extremely important in a conversation. Some may say that the medium one chooses to have a conversation, phone or in person, does not affect the conversation itself. However, in order to truly understand the message someone is trying to send, one must be able to read their nonverbal cues just as well as their verbal message. According to sociologist Shenyang Zao, "there is no reality check" when sending a text message (qtd. in Kegley 291). By this, he means that since technology has a "disembodied environment" and happens from a distance without human interaction, one cannot be sure that their message was received properly (qtd. in Kegley 291). Again, many times text messages are interpreted differently depending on the person they were sent to because there is no universal code that tells us how to interpret a text. Therefore, the message is often lost due to the lack of human interaction and our reliance on technology to communicate. Kegley states that "in conversation, you listen to someone else, you read his or her body language, voice, tone, and silences. You convey an interest in the individual as a person" (298). However, while texting, one cannot do this. It is strictly reading a message and interpreting it without nonverbal cues. Without body language and voice, one can rarely have a true, effective conversation.

As many of us know, it is difficult to predict events in life and control face-to-face conversations, so texting can help avoid unpredictability and regulate interactions. Kegley states in her book that "while texting we can control things; in real conversation, we may encounter the new and unpredictable. People can ask deeper questions, and the conversation can get risky" (296). Of course, many people may disagree that not having risks in life is better; hence, this is why they may argue texting can replace human interaction when necessary. However, life is all about taking risks, and we must be able to overcome the unpredictable (Kegley 296). Inevitably, one will have to leave technology behind at some point in life, take some risks, and engage in face-to-face conversations. We all must be able to react to new ideas and questions without having ample time to think ahead and prepare an answer. While not everyone thinks deeply about every text they send, one may take as long as they want to respond to a given message, whereas, in person, one must respond on the

spot no matter how uncomfortable or unprepared they may be. Texting allows us to think about our responses, yet, therefore, weakens our ability to converse in person.

Communication is a skill we all must learn and practice in order to maintain it. According to Grant Dillard, a speaker who has studied the art of verbal communication, conversation is something we all must learn to appreciate more, for "it is a gift we are all privileged to use to express our most intricate, complicated, complex thoughts and ideas with each other each and every day" (Dillard). In other words, without being able to talk to each other, we would never be able to fully express our emotions and ideas. However, we tend to value technology and what it offers us more than the gift of talking itself. The verbal communication expert also compares emojis to hieroglyphics, one of the simplest forms of communication used over 4,000 years ago (Dillard). This comparison suggests that maybe we are going backward in our communication skills. It is crazy to think that in the 20th century we have resorted back to a communication method comparable to what was used thousands of years ago. One would think that technology has advanced our ability to reach others, but maybe we are going in the wrong direction. While emojis can be used to express some of the simple emotions we feel, they cannot replace body language and facial expressions completely.

Technology is a necessity in the world we live in, for it would be nearly impossible to live a modern life without it. Dillard emphasizes that technology itself is not the problem; it is how we use our phones in the wrong ways (Dillard). While we should use them as a tool, we use them instead to start and end relationships, falsely present ourselves, and indirectly say things we are afraid to say in person. In other words, we can be a completely different person through texting than we actually are which is dangerous in certain situations. Rather, we must learn to use technology properly to express ourselves as we are and connect with those with whom we already have a relationship. We cannot build true connections through texting and without human interaction. Many people believe that technology is adding to our communication abilities, and arguably, texting is an innovative communication method that allows us to reach others beyond who we could before. However, experts argue that texting is actually hindering our ability to talk to others in person (Dillard). Therefore, we should not use texting as a substitute for face-to-face conversation; rather, it should be a tool to communicate with those we are unable to see in person.

Texting impacts our ability to verbally communicate, but our reading and writing abilities have shown to be impacted as well. More and more parents are becoming concerned with the influx of technology and its impact on their children. In a recent news article titled "Teens are Texting and Using Social Media Instead of Reading Books, Researchers Say," Hannah Natanson lays out why texting may be a cause for concern. She states that "1 in 3 U.S. high school seniors did not read a book for pleasure in 2016. In the same time period, 82 percent of 12th graders visited sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram every day" (Natanson). Teens are choosing technology now more than ever before. She later adds that "the reason for concern is that

the skill set and attention it takes to digest concepts in long-form writing are quite different from glancing at a text message or status update" (Natanson). We are losing critical skills we need in life due to the increase and reliance on technology. Although some may argue that books are becoming an outdated source of information, they offer us "in-depth knowledge not available through the 'instant gratification' of the internet" (Natanson). In essence, books offer us knowledge that technology is unable to provide. Just as we should not completely replace talking in person with texting, we should not replace books with technology. Reading, like verbal communication, is a critical skill that we must not lose sight of because of our increase in technology use and texting.

While writing may not be everyone's favorite, it is a crucial skill to have in life along with reading. In one study, "SMS Texting and Its Potential Impacts on Students' Written Communication Skills," Solomon Ali Dansieh assesses whether texting has damaged our written communication abilities. There are those who say that "the more students write, the more they improve upon their writing skills," yet this position would only be correct if we were improving our skills as we write (222). In other words, the way we choose to communicate through written language today is not improving our communication skills. Dansieh conducted this research as a response to a claim that was made regarding text messaging. In short, the claim was that abbreviations in texting are not a problem as they are well-known and have been used for many years. Experts also stated that someone must know how to spell before texting, so bad spelling cannot be caused by texting (Dansieh 223). However, the importance of grammar and spelling seem to be lost when sending a simple text, allowing alterations to the message itself. Through a series of questionnaires and multiple-choice questions, it seemed to be confirmed that texting and cell phone use has a negative impact on our written communication, and Dansieh states in the results that there is a clear correlation between damaged written communication and texting (227). We all must be aware that texting has the potential to damage our written communication as well as verbal communication skills.

For many years now, research has been conducted to see how technology has impacted our younger generations. New technologies are emerging faster than ever, and it is clear that they have an impact on many aspects of life. According to *Time*, a study was conducted in 2012 to see how the emergence of texting was affecting our youth. It was shown that the majority of kids preferred to talk to their friends in-person even with some technology available (Steinmetz). Unfortunately, our communication has drastically changed in the past eight years. A second study was done in 2018, which showed that the majority of teens now say their favorite method of communication is texting, and "less than one third said they prefer chatting with friends face-to-face" (Steinmetz). We can see that there has been a dramatic decline in the value of face-to-face conversation due to the innovative methods of communicating through technology. One of the researchers who worked on both studies, Vicky Rideout, empathizes this "fundamental shift in how we interact with each

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other" and says, "more work needs to be done to understand the net effect technology is having on kids' well-being" (Steinmetz). It is clear that this is an evolving problem in our youth. We should be able to use technology to help our communication abilities, but rather we are using it to substitute talking to others in-person.

For many people, communication is not something we think about all the time. It is something we learn to do and use it so often that we forget how valuable it really is. Sherry Turkle, the author of *Alone Together,* voices her concerns about how society is choosing technology over being with each other. She believes that this addiction to our phones is a problem within itself, but she is even more worried that it is causing us to lose the ability and desire to communicate face-to-face (Kegley 294). The recent influx in technology use has allowed us to choose how we talk to others. Turkle adds:

> Face-to-face conversation is the most human-- and humanizing— thing we do. Fully present to one another, we learn to listen. It's where we develop the capacity for empathy. It's where we experience the joy of being heard, of being understood. And conversation advances self-reflection, the conversations with ourselves that are the cornerstone of early development and continue throughout life. (qtd. in Kegley 294)

Turkle is saying that it would be totally irrational to choose something like texting over face-to-face communication with others. While texting is likely the most convenient form of modern communication, we must all open our eyes to appreciate the beauty of simply talking to each other.

In a world where technology is constantly advancing, it is easy to lose sight of what is right in front of us. With new kinds of phones, texting is readily becoming the most preferred form of communication. People love convenience, and texting is able to provide us with a fast, easy way of reaching others. While texting may have numerous benefits, we must be aware of the potential damage it can do to our communication abilities. We should not be willing to lose our voice and body language in exchange for texting.

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In this expository research-based essay, the writer, a student athlete himself, exposes various causes of the mental health crisis in the world of sports and argues that professional athletes who are comfortable using their public platform to speak about their own struggles can positively influence countless others who are suffering.

The Mental Health Crisis in the World of Sport

By Antonio La Gamba

Prof. Godson-Glynn - Be the Change

Mental health is a controversial topic in the world of sports. This is partly because of the stigma surrounding mental health concerns among athletes which negatively affects those dealing with mental health complications. Comprehending the unfortunate relevance of stigma in mental health is pivotal to understanding the difficulty involved in openly discussing mental health concerns in a public setting. As a student athlete, I am especially interested in exposing the role that this stigma plays because it has a direct bearing on athletes who are forced to deal with mental health complications behind closed doors. Athletes are often seen as superhuman and privileged, and these stereotypes exacerbate the notion that they do not experience and are not licensed to have moments of extreme mental pain like the rest of the population. When an athlete faces a mental health crisis, they are faced with the difficult decision to seek treatment and risk the possibility of being publicly outed as "fragile" or "vulnerable." In particular, society is still ripe with double standards regarding gender, and an ever-present stereotype involving men is that they are expected to be tough and not talk about their feelings. This stereotype is one reason that professional male athletes are unsettled by the idea of publicly speaking about their struggles with mental illness. However, a troublesome situation like this is also a seedbed for opportunity. If we bring attention to the stigma surrounding mental health in sports, many male athletes may be empowered to seek help and share their personal challenges with the public. In doing so, they could be an amazing inspiration to others fighting in silence.

Erasing the taboos associated with mental health is a relatively new subject in sports because professional athletes have been fearful of sharing their stories, and stigmatization has also influenced athletes' willingness to speak out. An important facet in understanding why the topic of mental health is still difficult for athletes to speak about has to do with the widespread and stigmatized belief that mental illness cannot affect people of a certain pedigree. In *Sport, Mental Illness, and Sociology*, Michael Atkinson writes, "Stigma is sociologically defined as a sign of disgrace or discredit, which arises when an individual lacks the attributes required to be an acceptable member of a group and so disqualifies them from full acceptance" (11). Simply because someone is rich and thought of as successful, they are expected to not have mental health issues by some in mainstream society who then stigmatize those suffering for showing "weakness." It is essential to fully understand the gravity of mental health problems by grasping the role stigma plays in environments where people are encouraged to suppress their pain, feelings, and thoughts rather than express them.

It should come as no surprise that when athletes inevitably experience normal human feelings, they feel as though they cannot seek professional help. All athletes at a certain level share an unquenchable competitive spirit, which greatly helps their athletic performance, but it may have the opposite effect on their personal lives. Athletes are always told to push through pain, difficulties, and hardships, but regrettably, mental illness cannot simply be pushed through. Avoiding or denying mental illness often causes it to manifest in a more potent manner. The headspace that athletes are obligated to live in is described vividly in this excerpt from Laura Dockett's study of athletes' confessionals: "It's stunning to read such unflinchingly honest details from members of an elite segment of society who have historically been set up as untouchable heroes" (Dockett).

Gender stereotypes only amplify the pressure athletes face if they wish to come out about their mental illnesses. In most cases, athletes with the biggest platforms are male, which leads to complications because there are certain gender stereotypes and expectations placed upon them. Male athletes tend to have a greater platform than women because the vast majority of revenue and sales in the sports world occur in male sports, but, historically, men have always been told that they are not supposed to show weakness. Thus, for male athletes, projecting their mental instabilities to the world is a frightening task. The renowned saying "men don't cry" is problematic and ever-present. Unquestionably, gender stereotypes contribute to the athletes' uncertainty when contemplating coming out about their mental health struggles. Despite the fact that a plethora of stereotypes make admitting shortcomings to a world audience an even more daunting task, athletes have the platform and voice to enrich the lives of those who admire them.

Recently, however, there have been various professional athletes across all sports who have spoken out about their battles with mental illness. I have investigated the stories of various athletes such as Clint Malarchuck, Ron Artest, and Michael Phelps. Clint Malarchuck was perhaps the first well-known professional athlete to profess his story after nearly dying on the rink during a National Hockey League (NHL) game. His life went on a downward spiral, and he developed a mental illness as a result of the trauma he experienced. *Washington Post* journalists Cindy Boren and Matthew Guitierrez state, "Malarchuck was among the first to speak out, describing his struggle with borderline personality disorder; he is an executive producer of the new documentary and also appears in it"(Boren and Guitierez 1). According to Boren and Guitierrez, Malarchuck uses his platform to speak about his fight with borderline personality disorder. His willingness to share has opened the door and encouraged other athletes to follow in his footsteps.

Former National Basketball Association (NBA) player Ron Artest is another figure who recently spoke out. He is someone who is seen as a "tough guy" for his aggressive style of play on the court. Artest publicly addressing his challenges to the media proves that no matter how invincible you might appear on the outside, no one is immune to mental illness. His documentary, *Quiet Storm*, speaks exclusively about his mental

struggles, how they manifested, and how, ultimately, he combatted them. Artest's documentary unapologetically depicts how being brought up in an impoverished area of Queens, New York, led him down a dark trail with little help as an adolescent. He developed mental health complications as a young adult that loomed over him throughout his entire professional career. Speaking out is a monumental task for any athlete; however, for Artest it is perhaps even more difficult because of the fear of judgement from his family and friends in Queens, whom he describes as a rugged group. He felt as though they would see him as "soft" if he publicly acknowledged the mental issues which haunted him (*Quiet Storm*). However, despite his expectation of being heavily judged and looked down upon, Artest was, in fact, embraced by his family and friends for showing the courage that he did. For all the positive encouragement athletes, such as Ron Artest and Clint Malarchuck, have received, they have also been criticized by people who do not appreciate the gravity of what they are attempting to do. These athletes are selflessly opening up to the world to benefit those suffering in silence, unaware that they are not alone. Overall, eliminating the stigma in society will undoubtedly take time. However, the stigma will dissipate with the help of athletes who are willing to share their honest stories. While perhaps this may not occur as quickly as some would like, eventually the stigmas surrounding mental health will be cast away.

Discussions of mental illness often stir up controversy because ignorant people try to put down those who are struggling. Commonly, when those suffering from mental health issues speak out, they are told that they are overreacting or that their situations are not as bad as they make them out to be. Cynically, people often think that those who share that they are experiencing mental illness are really fabricating their issues to get sympathy, which is a poor and detrimental mentality to have in today's world. Especially in situations when successful people admit to mental difficulties, they are heavily judged by critics. Whether stemming from a lack of education about mental health or perhaps a lack of empathy, this ignorance can lead to stereotyping regardless of social status or wealth. This attitude needs to be eliminated in order to banish stigma. Without stigma, mental illness would not seem like such a daunting obstacle for such a large portion of the population.

The media puts athletes on pedestals, which makes it substantially more difficult for players to feel comfortable coming out to the world about their struggles. They are expected not to show vulnerability and shortcomings because of the fulfilling lives of privilege they partake in. This is one reason why athletes find it so difficult to first get help and then to voice their personal stories to the public. In the book *Sport, Mental Illness, and Sociology*, Michael Atkison wrote, "Mass media plays an integral role in contemporary society generally and sport specifically . . . In the context of mental health, shaping normative assumptions obviously takes on heightened importance" (145). Unfortunately, mass media has often ostracized people who have conditions that are considered to be abnormal by some in the general public. A prime example of this was when Ron Artest was still an active NBA player; he got a large amount of backlash for being such an outspoken

public figure about mental health despite portraying the image of a menacing figure on the court. Joshunda Sanders states, "When Metta World Peace [Artest] . . . has spoken honestly and publicly about his therapy for mental health issues, he has been mocked by reporters . . . *Los Angeles Times* columnist Bill Plaschke referred to him as 'the looniest Laker'" (Sanders 50). This displays how the media depicted Artest as being deranged simply because he wanted to share his experiences with the world. In many respects, the media holds a central role in making athletes feel at ease speaking about their struggles; it is pivotal that they do not cast-off athletes who wish to use their platform in this beneficial manner.

Some critics may challenge my view on an athlete's potential role in normalizing mental illness by insisting that athletes should remain silent about their struggles. They would argue that mental illness is a personal matter; therefore, athletes who discuss their challenges are airing details that should remain private. In addition, professional athletes who share their most personal hardships with millions may do so at the expense of themselves or their careers. In "Why It Matters that More Athletes are Talking About Their Mental Health," John Affleck describes a common fright that athletes have when they consider coming out about their struggles. He writes about a conversation he had with journalist Jackie MacMaullen, who published a piece about athletes with mental illness. MacMullen told Affleck, "Other big names backed out at the last minute, concerned about the stigma of mental illness and whether it might hurt their ability to land a good contract in free agency . . . a league source called the problem 'rampant'" (qtd. in Affleck). This shows the common anxiety of professional athletes who contemplate professing their mental problems to the world; they are afraid that it will limit their future career opportunities. Unfortunately, this is a rational fear because of the stigma surrounding mental illness, for it is possible that owners of professional teams will be hesitant to give a contract to someone who is stereotyped as mentally unstable. Engaging in judgmental behavior is common in modern society, and often when something is not familiar, people automatically respond by thinking it is negative. Thus, professional athletes are perhaps protecting the financial interest of themselves and their families by opting not to speak publicly about their issues. Economic interest is only one of a plethora of reasons that athletes stay quiet; other reasons are often central to the fear of being heavily judged and criticized in the media. Overall, there are a multitude of sufficient reasons athletes choose not to speak out about their mental struggles. The idea that they should not be pressured to speak about these problems is definitely reasonable.

In my view, however, the athletes who choose to come out about mental illness can empower others to face their struggles. Athletes who speak about their issues publicly are beginning to squash the stigma. In the article "Why Stories Matter," social organizer Marshall Ganz explains, "The initial challenge for an organizer—or anybody who's going to provide leadership for change—is to figure out how to break through the inertia of habit to get people to pay attention" (Ganz). As Ganz conveys, the first step in breaking a stigma

or other social issue is getting people to pay attention; thus, if athletes are willing to climb the alarming mountain they face, they can potentially impact countless individuals. According to Boren and Guitierrez, "Athletes acknowledging their issues 'helps take therapy out of the shadows and opens doors for compassion'" (1). This shows the perspective that there are many positives to be reaped by everyone if athletes speak out about mental illness. If fans see their heroes struggling, it will make it substantially less difficult for them to seek help. Affleck explains, "It all points to changing attitudes in sports — and society" and goes on to quote Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, who stated, "'getting help is a sign of strength, not weakness'" (qtd. in Affleck). Clearly, if ideals and mindsets are altered in sports, change will filter into society as well. Stigmatizing mental illness is a vicious cycle which needs to be broken. However, it will only be eradicated if we expose the roles that ignorance, misinformation, and dangerous stereotypes play in silencing athletes who are suffering.

The mental health crisis is exacerbated by stereotypes and stigma which make mental illness an intimidating force. Studies have shown that professional athletes are just as susceptible as the general public to mental illness, and some have even suggested that athletes are even more prone to mental illness. However, that being said, they have an extraordinary platform. If athletes, specifically male athletes, are willing to shed light on their personal challenges, they have the potential to help countless individuals. Often, it is even therapeutic for the athlete themselves because they feel a sense of empowerment over their condition. In conclusion, mental illness is a serious topic that continues to become progressively more talked about in the media, and athletes who are willing to share their stories of triumph with the public can be role models to people struggling with mental health concerns.

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For this analysis, the author stakes a clear position regarding the unfair targeting of young people from low-income families when it comes to military recruitment and argues that such predatory policies misrepresent what military service actually entails. Students were only allowed to use a limited number of sources to support their argument, emphasizing the necessity of choosing evidence wisely.

Military Recruitment of Low-Income Youth: The Predatory Reality

By Zaynab Lazreq

Dr. Woolbright - The Idea of War

My best friend from kindergarten through 8th grade fiercely believed in peace and nonviolence. In class she would always denounce war as stupid and pointless, and while she was always patriotic, she was never very supportive of the military. We parted ways after middle school but reconnected at her high school graduation party. I was shocked to learn that she had joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), a program that offers to partially pay for students' college education in exchange for at least an eight-year commitment to the military after graduation. I couldn't believe that the person who I grew up knowing as clearly anti-war was now planning to major in Arabic in preparation for a career in the military. What could be so enticing that one would so drastically change their values or consider doing something they may have never considered before? I must have looked visibly shocked because she tried to reassure me by telling me not to worry as she wouldn't be shooting anyone. Instead, she said this was her way of making something of herself, and she needed a way to pay for college. My friend's story isn't unique. The military attracts the underprivileged, specifically young people from low-income families, since it is presented as a mechanism for gaining privilege and as a way to solve all of their economic problems. The military is not only selling a false promise, but it is also using predatory recruitment strategies that disproportionately target low-income youth.

Military recruitment is predatory on a federally mandated level. As Philip Ruben Nava, an attorney and an advocate of counter-military recruitment, pointed out, "buried deep within" President Bush's 2001 No Child Left Behind Act was a "scarcely debated and unrelated provision" that established a new condition that public high schools must provide military recruiters access to the personal information of all enrolled students in order to receive federal funds (Nava 463). This not only granted the military unprecedented access to public high schoolers by way of effectively forcing public schools to give student information to military recruiters, but it also gave recruiters much more access to the high schoolers themselves. The provision required schools to give the military as much access to campuses as is given to any other recruiter, such as college admissions officers and potential employers, for example. Upon the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act, public high schools legally became de facto recruiting stations where high school students are free game for military recruiters. As of 2006, Nava explains that there were "approximately fourteen thousand frontline recruiters nationwide with a quota of two recruits per month, which translates to an annual recruiting goal of over three hundred thousand" (466). These recruiters have such unrestricted access to high school campuses that, in the

words of Seth Kershner, freelance writer and researcher, and Scott Harding, associate professor and associate dean for academic affairs at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, "many schools allow military recruiters to coach sports, serve as substitute teachers, chaperone school dances, and engage in other activities. In some cases, recruiters are such a regular presence in high schools that students and staff regard them as school employees" (Kershner and Harding). In some schools, the military has become as integrated as academics and other school-related activities. Aside from this ridiculously unrestricted and unquestioned access that the military is allowed in schools, there is a predatory function that this new access entails. Bush's provision gave equal access to *all* public schools; however, those that are most visited are low-income schools.

Military recruiters disproportionately visit low-income schools over higher income schools. An *Education Week* study, based on documents about recruiter activities provided by the U.S. Army in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, looked at military recruitment in low-income public schools compared to high-income public schools in Connecticut during the 2011-12 academic year. Based on just the activities of recruiters for one service branch, the Army, the study found a concerning trend. As stated in the report, "Take the example of two similarly sized high schools in two Hartford suburbs: Avon and Bloomfield. Army recruiters visited Avon High, where only 5 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, four times during the 2011-12 school year. Yet at Bloomfield High, where nearly half the students qualify for such assistance, recruiters made more than 10 times as many visits" (Kershner and Harding). The authors concluded that "The data suggests that schools with a high proportion of low-income students serve as a magnet for the military" (Kershner and Harding). Military recruiters are specifically targeting low-income youth, and this recruitment is working. Why wouldn't it when, as the authors deduced, "some youths see far more khaki and camouflage than college brochures" (Kershner and Harding)? *The Seattle Times* reported in 2005 that "nearly half" of new recruits came "from lower-middle-class to poor households, according to new Pentagon data based on ZIP codes and census estimates of mean household income" (qtd. in Martin). The same data showed that nearly two-thirds of Army recruits in 2004 "came from counties in which median household income is below the U.S. median" (Martin). Seeing the military recruiters more often is not the only reason that low-income youth are swayed to enlist; it's how the military presents itself and what it promises that really lures underprivileged youth to join.

For the poor, the military is advertised as a way to gain privileges that the rich hold. Historically the poor have been disproportionately part of the military especially since the time of the Vietnam draft, which, as reported by former US Army doctor and author Ronald Glasser, "skewed conscription to the poor and disenfranchised, and away from those in positions of power, prestige, wealth, and privilege" (196). Glasser even compares the US military to the Roman Army where "not one general and… not one ground commander of any legion was from a family of wealth, privilege, or influence" and states that while "we may not be Rome

yet… it is beginning to seem that way to the units that we keep deploying again and again, as well as their families and loved ones, while all the rest of us go shopping" (193). But why don't most upper-middle to upper class citizens feel a need to go to war? And, why do people like Vice President Dick Cheney, who received five deferments during the Vietnam War, feel like they have "other, more important things to do" than serve in the military (qtd. in Glasser 196)? The answer lies with privilege. The rich have privileges that the poor do not—namely, financial stability and the benefits that come with it. Being able to access and afford college, to obtain a respectable job as a college graduate, and to make something of themselves in civilian society is all accessible to the rich. They already have privilege. They don't need to go to war to feel like they've gained it. But for the poor, the military advertises itself as the perfect opportunity to gain these privileges. Nick Martin, staff writer for the *New Republic*, asserts, "The paths that service members travel to the military are different, but there are base circumstances that often connect them: Being poor means a lack of options; being middle-class often means mounds of debt and instability. The military promises solutions to all of that" (Martin). At home, the military offers "fast-tracked citizenship, relief from the financial pressure of attending college [and] real employment prospects" (especially to those with parents who have lost jobs) in exchange for commitment to the military (Martin). Recruiters entice young, low-income students to join by saying that they will have the same opportunity to prove themselves and to make something of themselves as those who come from wealthier backgrounds. Recruiters also boast that the military is where the disadvantaged can overcome their economic lack of privilege and become American heroes. For low-income youth, becoming a soldier is seen as a way of leaping up the privilege hierarchy and feeling equal to those who are otherwise at a disproportionate advantage. They believe that they will gain the privilege they otherwise would not have by joining the military.

Promises made at military-staffed recruitment tables are not the only enlistment tactics used. U.S. Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs (JROTC) help to create a pipeline of low-income youth into the military. According to Martin, "There are currently around 500,000 American children enrolled in 3,400 U.S. Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs in high schools across the nation" (Martin). JROTC has a target audience. In 2017, the RAND Corporation reviewed JROTC programs across the country and found that "at public high schools with JROTC programs, 56.6 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, on average- nearly 10 percentage points higher than at schools without JROTC" (Martin). This program, which claims to not be a recruiting program and instead bills itself as "one of the largest character development and citizenship programs for youth in the world" actually provides enlistment bonuses and grooms high schoolers for service in the military (Martin). It is a sly and predatory way for the military to tighten its grip on low-income youth and a way to circumvent the "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict," a congressionally-ratified protocol that

"instructs all signatory countries to set their own minimum age for voluntary recruitment" (Nava 465). The US set the absolute minimum age at seventeen years. However, JROTC programs are available to students as young as thirteen years old. These "leadership" programs remain unchallenged and continue to serve as an undercover recruitment strategy meant to appeal to those who are economically disadvantaged and looking for opportunity. JROTC's true purpose as a form of recruitment is not the only thing low-income youth are lied to about, however.

Recruiters lie about military life and overemphasize the positives aspects of military service to potential enlistees. In a study that aimed to assess military recruitment strategies, researchers questioned high school juniors and seniors in several low-income high schools in Southern Texas about their experiences with recruiters. They found that "[a]mong the more than 800 Texas high school students who told researchers Adam McGlynn and Jessica Lavariega Monforti that they had had contact with military recruiters, 86 percent said they were never told about the possible risks of military service" and reported that service "was never portrayed to them as dangerous" (Monforti and McGlynn 10). In fact, the portrayal of military service as being dangerous was reported the least amongst all other portrayals at only 13.5% (Monforti and McGlynn 10). Instead, it was reported that the educational opportunities (61.7%), career benefits (55%), and general "improving life chances" (46.1%) were the aspects of service most commonly portrayed (Monforti and McGlynn 10). Recruiters are portraying military service as overwhelmingly positive and rewarding instead of making students aware of some of the harsher realities, especially the implicit danger of being sent to war. This is further evident through the study's finding that "half [of those surveyed] responded that no explanation of the difference between combat and non-combat positions was given," and "two thirds of respondents were given no information about the number of expected deployments and their duration" (Monforti and McGlynn 10). In the words of McGlynn and Monforti, "High school students are being given rose colored glasses with which to view military service and are not being given accurate or honest information about what their potential service may entail" (10). Intentionally, recruiters are leading those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds into blindly committing themselves to a life that will certainly turn out to be much harsher than they were told and that will not provide everything they were promised.

The military is selling a false advertising, and in Nava's assessment, recruiters are particularly deceitful about the actual amount of college funds students receive as well as about the deadly dangers of war. Touted programs that promise financial support, like the GI Bill, "are especially misleading because very few veterans actually get the amounts promised, and some get nothing despite paying a significant nonrefundable buy-in. Between 1995-2005, only eight percent of all veterans received their full tuition benefit from the GI Bill, and thirty percent failed to use it at all, even though the $1200 buy-in was not refundable" (Nava 468). Actual financial benefits are also not substantial, Nava notes, as "monthly benefits payable to veterans with three or

more years of service is only $1321 per month subject to some restrictions" (468). Not only are these enlistees lured in with misleading assurances of financial stability, but once these low-income youth actually join the military, the devastating and dangerous reality is that they are "much more likely to be on the deadly frontline in hand to hand combat… Low-income enlistees, regardless of race, constitute sixty-eight percent of the Iraq War casualties and were from a zip code with a median household income below the national level" (Nava 478-79).

Such disparities are intersectional. As Monforti and McGlynn found, "Impoverished minorities find themselves in high risk situations more than their Caucasian counterparts" (6). This applies to Hispanics in particular given "the lower socioeconomic status a disproportionate percentage of the Hispanic population finds itself in" (Monforti and McGlynn 4). A Pew Research Center study found that Hispanics are "severely underrepresented in officer corps of the Air Force and Army as well as the upper ranks (Major and higher) in all four service branches," which likely contributes to the findings that Hispanics are "more likely to face combat increasing the risk of Hispanic casualties" and are "overrepresented in the ranks of those service members who 'directly handle weapons'" (Monforti and McGlynn 5). This is particularly devastating given that this is not a new phenomenon. Since the time of the Vietnam War-era draft, Hispanics and other minorities have been disproportionately drafted and disproportionately killed in combat. An all-volunteer force has not ended this reality, for those with less privilege are viewed as easy targets for recruitment. The military draws them in with false assurances all the while shielding the reality that, if sent to war, they are being sent to die and are not going to actually benefit from the things they were promised. Although they are told of opportunities that, in their eyes, translate to increased privilege, they will likely not receive their full financial benefits and, therefore, will not be equal in privilege to wealthier and/or white enlistees. The idea that their privilege will increase once they become soldiers is an illusion painted by the military so that low-income youth, in particular, will fall prey to this privilege trap. The truth about military service today is that it is not an equal effort by the lower, middle, and upper class but a system that preys on those without privilege and "offers little but a narrow, violent, and deadly way out" (Martin).

Inevitably, efforts to call out the predatory targeting of low-income youth and create rules for military recruiters will have serious critics and face strong opposition from those who claim that such reforms are anti-military and hinder the ability of recruiters to find new service members. First, as *Education Week* states, "This is not about being for, or against, the military. It is about ensuring that high schools do not become de facto recruiting stations, and that all young people have equal access to educational opportunities" (Kershner and Harding). Second, restrictions would not aim to end *all* recruitment, but, rather, *predatory* recruitment of low-income youth. Recruitment can still continue, allowing for the military to meet its needs, but this must be done equally in schools of all economic levels. In the conclusion of its study, *Education Week* outlined a list of

policies that public school districts across the United States should adopt if recruiters are to remain in schools. It recommends that districts "require military recruiters to remain in one part of the school only… limit recruitment visits to one per branch of the military per year… 'visits' should be broadly defined to include any activity by a military recruiter in which student contact is made (this would include not only traditional table set-ups, but also activities like classroom presentations by military personnel)" and recruiters should be required to fully disclose the health risks of military service and be required "to tell students that if they join the military, they may end up in combat" (Kershner and Harding). Lastly, in order to make sure that these guidelines are followed, Kershner and Harding suggest that "a designated military monitor should be present at all times when recruiters interact with students" (Kershner and Harding). This policy has actually already been successfully implemented in public schools in Seattle where "the Parent Teacher and Student Association… assigns a parent to monitor the military during school visits by recruiters" (Kershner and Harding). These policies allow for recruitment to continue in low-income schools but to do so in a more honest, regulated, and fair way so that low-income youth are not being preyed upon and lied to but are still provided with the opportunity to join the military should they wish. It also allows for schools to meet the requirements to receive funding while not sacrificing the well-being of their students in the process.

However, I personally believe that beyond school-implemented regulations, policies should be put in place by the government as well in order to limit the number of times recruiters are allowed to visit schools per semester and to require that recruiters must visit schools of all economic standings. Additionally, as Phillip Ruben Nava proposes, counter-military recruiters should also be allowed on campuses to make sure that students are aware that "there are other ways to find college money and serve your country without joining the military" and to make sure that students are fully aware of all aspects of their decision and seeing both sides of the story (459). These actions would ensure that we strengthen our commitment to a military that seeks a balanced racial/ethnic and economic composition and prevent predatory recruitment that, by targeting students on the basis of socioeconomic status, perpetuates a "poverty draft" (Monforti and McGlynn 2).

The military sells a false promise that by becoming a soldier, low-income youth will have access to opportunities and financial benefits that potential enlistees equate as an increase in privilege. This attracts low-income youth. It attracted my friend who went from wearing "Coexist!" shirts to wearing camouflage. The promise of overcoming her lack of privilege due to her economic status was simply too alluring. I fear for her. Will she be the same in eight years, or will she be even more unrecognizable to me than she is now before she has even been deployed? Will she come back with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or an amputated limb? Will she come back alive? Will her service have been worth it? Or will she remember the values she once held and regretfully and remorsefully question her actions? Will she realize she was sold a lie? My friend and many like

her continue to be drawn in by the false promises that the military uses to get them to enlist. They are never-endingly exposed to the military in high school, a place that should be safe for students to explore every opportunity and not one where they are targeted for being economically disadvantaged. Such students are sold lies and grandiose ideas of service without getting any actual details of the dangers of war so that they will blindly enlist. They are then either sent to die or doomed to come back broken in some way and left financially unsupported. By simply grasping for more privilege, they have and will continue to fall into the trap the military has set for them so that they will continue to fill our armies and fight for those who have privilege.

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The author of this piece explores a current gender identity issue in the field of sports. She uses a variety of sources to support her argument that what happens in the case of this one athlete has repercussive effects for not only female athletes, but for the larger world as well.

Running for Acceptance

By Sydney Levison

Prof. Stein - Out of Bounds

As the bell rings for the final lap, Caster Semenya takes the lead and wins the 800-meter race in just one minute and 55 seconds, smashing the best time in the world that year by two seconds. What came next after the 2009 Berlin Track and Field Championships would change Semenya's life forever. Caster Semenya is a native of South Africa and won the world championships in the 800-meter distance at the young age of 18. After this big win, Semenya was scrutinized because of her man-like appearance by fellow competitors and the press. Semenya was then subject to gender tests, which determined that she has higher levels of testosterone than her female competitors thereby giving her, as it was ruled, an unfair advantage. Semenya was just recently banned from competing in her prime track events (400-meter to the 1500-meter) unless she takes hormone-reducing drugs. Caster Semenya should not be subjected to these gender tests and harsh ultimatums because this is how she was born, and she has put in many years of hard work to get to where she is physically and mentally today. Semenya is sticking up for her rights as a human being and paving the way for others to do the same, for she does not want others to have to go through a similar experience.

Caster Semenya is first and foremost wrongly subjected to gender tests because of her supposed man-like appearance. She does not appear as feminine as her fellow competitors and is often photographed with her large man-like muscles and a scowl on her face while her competitors have a slender and happier appearance (Pastor 3). Semenya may have a different build from other women, but this is the way she was born. From a young age, Caster has been scrutinized for her unfeminine looks and was always cast as an outsider. In a video released by Nike in 2019, Semenya says "I know I look like a boy, so what?" (*Caster Semenya*). Semenya has not let the differences in her looks bring her down because this is who she is, and she does not want to change that. Semenya being forced to take part in a gender test is essentially saying that her body is not good enough and she should alter it. This is definitely not the right message to convey to elite athletes or any person, for that matter. In the Nike video, Semenya explains that "from home I was taught the only way to love yourself is to accept yourself and appreciate yourself" (*Caster Semenya*). This helps give insight into Semenya's character. She accepts that this is who she is meant to be and has not given up on her dreams of competing. She has a great amount of love and respect for herself which is something that everyone, no matter their age, gender, or appearance, should take away from Semenya's story. Semenya should not have to go through the horrors of gender testing and should not have to fight to prove her identity to others. Her identity is fortified in her own mind and that should be enough. Her success on the track has

not come from these hormonal differences, even though many people believe that, but because of her work ethic and love of the sport.

Like many professional athletes, Caster Semenya has achieved great success in track and field because of hard work. Aaren Pastor, a PhD candidate at Pennsylvania State University, states that the most important thing to remember when looking at professional athletes in a sport is that "elite athletes are made, not born" (Pastor 4). Of course athletes may have been born with talent, but that does not make them the great athletes they are today. Talented athletes like Semenya have had to work every day to get better. In Semenya's case, she might have been born with extra levels of testosterone that might make her stronger than other females, but that does not mean that she has not worked just as hard as everyone else. These gender tests make it seem like Semenya has been getting by solely because of her higher levels of testosterone, but this is definitely not the case. Semenya herself said that "even if you come from a dusty place like this, you can be whoever you want" and added that "we want to build a human, before we can build an athlete, before we can build a leader" (*Caster Semenya).* In other words, she believes that athletes are made, that she can be a great athlete, and that great athletes can make a difference. Semenya credits her success to her endless hours of hard work and her strong mentality and, therefore, she has grown as both a person and an athlete. Semenya should not be subjected to gender testing because it is her hard work that has gotten her to where she is now, not her natural body type.

Unlike many others in the sport of track and field, Semenya's body is totally natural and has not been chemically altered in any way. So many people have relied on blood doping and chemically altering their body to make them a better competitor, and they have gotten away with it. In an article from *Runner's World,* it was revealed that women's steeplechase Olympic champion Ruth Jebet tested positive for EPO, a drug that increases the amount of red blood cells in bone marrow in 2017 and was given a four-year ban ("Olympic Steeplechase Champion"). Yet, Jebet is allowed to keep her gold medal because she was not tested during the year that she won it (2016). In an Instagram post, the steeplechase bronze medalist, Emma Coburn, says that "my bronze medal will forever shine brighter than her gold" ("Olympic Steeplechase Champion"). This is very important because people like Coburn were denied a gold medal because of someone else cheating. People like Jebet, who are doping and making the playing fields uneven, are the people who the IAAF should be worried about, not people like Semenya who are competing with their natural body. The debate continues as Rayvon Fouché, a professor of American Studies at Perdue University, has questioned how much modern athletes rely on a variety of performance enhancers. He says this "makes us wonder if recent technoscience, from blood boosting pharmaceuticals to feather-light shoes, will make the human athlete, as we currently think we know him or her, obsolete" (Fouché 132). When people alter their physical body, they are altering their human abilities, and they are cheating. This negatively impacts the sport. Caster Semenya has the drive

to get better. It is unfair that people can get away with doping when people like Semenya are competing with their natural body. Semenya is doing everything right in terms of her physical body, yet she is still being unfairly investigated.

Altering one's body to better compete is wrong and, yet, that is precisely what the governing board is pressuring Semenya to do. Semenya refuses to take the hormone-reducing drugs that the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) is trying to force her to take. She is refusing not just because she does not want to alter her body but also because she is making a statement to the IAAF and others who might be in her same situation. In an article in the *LA Times*, Semenya said, "I am very disappointed to be kept from defending my hard-earned title, but this will not deter me from continuing my fight for the human rights of all the female athletes concerned" (qtd. in Wharton). There actually are many female professional athletes that have high levels of testosterone, just like Semenya. The IAAF estimates that this condition "occurs in seven of every 1000 female runners at the elite level" and even athletes like Dulle Chand, Sandaraja, and Serena Williams struggle with some of the same criticisms as Semenya (Wharton). Semenya, though, is the only one being forced to take gender tests when many other women have this same condition. For Semenya to not be allowed to race at this time is proving to the whole world that things need to change and that we need to start accepting people for who they are.

There are many claims for why Caster Semenya should be forced to alter her body, but none of them are convincing arguments. Sex testing for athletes began in the 1900's and became mandatory in the 1968 Olympic Games, but only for women (Dworkin et al. 44). This gender testing came about because the governing board wanted to prevent men from disguising themselves as women but never the other way around (Dworkin et al. 44). This is not right. Since the 1968 Olympics, women have only been sex-tested when the IAAF claims that they have a reason to do so. Experts in the fields of women's health, gender studies, and sports claim that gender testing Semenya "rests on the assumption that superior athletic performances are a natural essence of biological males" (Dworkin et al. 44). This is saying that great performances, like Semenya's in Berlin, should only be attainable by men because women are not as capable. This is extremely demeaning to Semenya. Instead of being congratulated for a great performance, she is being told that it is not natural for her to be running these times unless there is something unnatural that is making her faster. Again, the main argument for why Semenya should not be competing and why she should have to take these hormone-reducing drugs is that many believe that her higher levels of testosterone are an unfair advantage, for they are responsible for muscle mass and strength (Wharton). This seems like a compelling argument because scientific facts cannot be argued with. However, this scientific fact does not mean that Semenya should be treated the way she is being treated now. Women can have varying amounts of testosterone and still be women. And those women can and do perform well, but this goes against widely believed stereotypes about male and

female athletes. Aaren Pastor points out that "if males and females competed together, males as the supposed dominant sex… would always win, even despite a growing amount of social science and biomedical research and legal precedent that suggest otherwise" (Pastor 5). This means that it is fully possible for Semenya to be achieving success even if she did not have the slightly higher levels of testosterone. And even if she does have elevated levels of testosterone, Semenya is competing with her natural body, and it is her endless hours of hard work that has produced these impressive times. Higher levels of testosterone alone do not turn someone into an incredible athlete, hard work does. Semenya is wrongly being subjected to gender testing and if she is allowed to compete with her natural body, then we would see more amazing things to come from Caster Semenya—things that would be impressive, even for a male.

Caster Semenya is being criticized by people all over the world, including the track and field governing board (IAAF), because she looks different than a typical female. Since Semenya blew away the field at the 2009 Berlin World Championships and because of her unfeminine looks, she has been subjected to gender tests that have determined that she has high levels of testosterone. The IAAF gave her an ultimatum to either not race in prime events or take a hormone-reducing drug. Semenya refuses to take the drug and has been fighting for her right to compete. Unlike the real disgraces to the sport who are getting away with blood doping, Semenya competes with her natural body and has not altered it in any way, even though that is exactly what officials are trying to make her do. It is unfair for Caster Semenya to be scrutinized for her natural body and expected to take hormone-reducing drugs to chemically alter her body. No one should be forced to alter their physical body just to fit in with others and fulfill the gender stereotypes that are so rigid in our society today. Semenya is continuing to train hard for the time when she can compete and show the world what she can really do. She is fighting the system and paving the way for others like her to continue to do what they love.

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In conjunction with the Natural World and Story to Screen themes, students attended the film <u>Dark Waters</u> for their First Year Seminar field trip. They were asked to compare it to <u>Erin Brockovich</u>, which they had previously watched for class, and argue which was the stronger of the two. This writer analyzes the movies from both filmmaking and storytelling perspectives and supports her position with strong cinematic examples.

What Elements Make *Dark Waters* a Great Movie?

By Amanda Motyka

Prof. Collins - Story to Screen

"Based on a True Story" is one of the most commonly used title cards when making a film. Although watching any kind of film can be compelling, there is something about watching a movie based on actual events that is much more impactful on a viewer. In order to make a great film, elements such as plot, visuals, and actor portrayal are important to focus on and perfectly execute. Two movies, *Erin Brockovich* (2000) and *Dark Waters* (2019), both focus on the true events of a greedy big business poisoning drinking water in a rural community, which led to innocent residents developing deadly diseases. Even though both of these films share significant events about environmental and water issues, there are differences between them that make *Dark Waters* the superior film. Due to a finely developed and focused plot, great visuals, and the convincing performance by leading actor Mark Ruffalo, *Dark Waters* was a more captivating film than *Erin Brockovich.* Through these engaging elements in *Dark Waters*, audiences are able to fully understand the true horrors of what it was like to live in a community that was being taken advantage of by big business.

Having a clear and purposeful plot makes a film so much easier for audiences to understand and enjoy. *Dark Waters*, directed by Todd Haynes, tells the powerful story of how a corporate defense attorney, Robert Bilott, takes on an environmental lawsuit against DuPont, a giant chemical company, for knowingly contaminating thousands of people through an EPA unregulated chemical, Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). This class-action lawsuit and fight against DuPont took about twenty years, beginning in 1998, and is clearly a very complicated and telling story, which gave Haynes the dramatic task of fitting all the significant events into a two-hour movie. He does a great job of hitting the main points of Bilott's discoveries and of building up the plot's momentum so that audiences become drawn in and eager to find out what Bilott discovers next. In an interview for *Collider Conversations*, Haynes says, "You can't possibly maintain and understand every single aspect of either the legal discourse or the journalistic discourse . . . but it's all there . . . and the point is to watch the overall progression that real people take and risk their lives over and that is what we tried to accomplish" (*Todd Haynes Interview).*The purpose of this film was not to just entertain audiences but to share Bilott's life story and explain why he dedicated his time to getting to the bottom of DuPont's dark secrets. By watching the film and having that easily understandable plot, it was evident what Haynes wanted the viewers to take away from the film - the prevalence of PFOA still in the world today. A title card shown at the end of

the film explains that PFOA is in 99% of people's blood, clearly explaining why all Americans should be made aware of this chemical (*Dark Waters*). PFOA has been used for decades in Teflon and other kitchen appliances and has been linked to cancer and many other fatal health problems. That title card made viewers realize that DuPont did not just affect these small-town families in West Virginia, but each and every one of their own lives as well. The destruction that big businesses, such as DuPont, are causing to the common population needs to be stopped, and films like this help to stimulate this necessary change.

Although the story of *Erin Brockovich* dealt with similar issues, it felt as if *Dark Waters* had more at stake due to the clarity of the plot. There were many subplots incorporated in *Erin Brockovich*, such as single parenting struggles and romance, that acted as distractions from the main focus of the film, which was the environmental issue. Brockovich was the complete opposite of Bilott since she was an unemployed single mother living in a run-down home. As she stumbled upon a job at a small law firm, she came across files that exposed the corporation, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), for inconspicuously contaminating the water supply of the small town of Hinkley, California with hexavalent chromium. She then became determined to get to the bottom of the scandal and uncover the harm and destruction that PG&E had caused to many innocent families. While it was helpful for Brockovich to be a "common" person, for the victimized families easily trusted her, it also meant that the plot had to include issues about her personal life as well. Even though it was important to display her difficult homelife since that was her true story, it took away from viewers clearly seeing the severity of the environmental issue and did not raise the same empathetic emotions as *Dark Waters* did. The advantage *Dark Waters* had was the ability to stay focused on the case while also revealing Bilott's personal life through showing how the case mentally affected him. The sequence of events in *Dark Waters* was more focused and compelling than in *Erin Brockovich,* which makes it an overall better movie.

When bringing *Dark Waters* to the big screen, there were a lot of different approaches Haynes could have taken when it came to the visuals of the film. Since this story had already been turned into a news article and a book, the point of the film was to give viewers a new look and understanding of the complexity and seriousness of the case. Haynes was able to convey that through thought-out visuals such as the camera angles and drastic mood changes. These prominent visuals help the audience experience the same shocking reactions and emotions as Bilott did as he was unraveling the truth. For example, in the scene where Bilott had to sort through all the boxes of paperwork, the camera started in on Bilott scrambling through all the papers and then slowly began backing up to reveal the dozens of boxes he had left to uncover. This added tremendous suspense to the scene because it revealed the extensive amount of research and time that was needed to uncover the truths about DuPont, along with the high level of stress Bilott was experiencing. By simply choosing the right camera angles, directors are able to bring out specific emotions in their viewers, which adds to their engagement with the film.

The huge mood changes throughout *Dark Waters*, brought upon by the color shades of certain scenes, also added to the suspense in the film. When the scenes were not at Bilott's corporate office, they were at the Tennant Farm in West Virginia, which is where the lawsuit all began. Whenever Bilott travelled to West Virginia in the film, the atmosphere was always dark and gloomy, which helped to emphasize the tragic living conditions of those innocent residents. Some scenes even got graphic as they showed the damage that PFOA was causing. Little girls were seen to have black teeth from their public water, and there was physical evidence of cows' bloated organs and grotesque tumors. The initial reaction that the viewers experienced when seeing these horrifying sights resembled Bilott's reaction, so it is almost as if the audience was uncovering the truth alongside Bilott. Such graphic sights prompted lasting emotions of disgust and sorrow for audience members, which left them to feel eager for revenge against DuPont for the harmful events they were causing.

As for *Erin Brockovich*, there were no breathtaking visuals in the film and that affected how the intensity of the case was portrayed. Bilott had much added pressure on him due to his high-ranking position at a huge law firm in Ohio and that aided the urgency of solving the case in *Dark Waters.* While Brockovich proves that an everyday person can make a huge change in communities and that the story is truly inspiring, all of this could have been expressed more strongly in the film. There were no evident color or overall mood changes from scene to scene, and no visual graphics existed that showed the unsettling truth. The most compelling scenes were when Brockovich would go to the Hinkley residents' homes and learn about all the diseases and losses that PG&E caused them. The main victims shown in the film, the Jensens, had dealt with several tumors and Hodgkin's lymphoma while their neighbor had five miscarriages and all their chickens had birth defects. Everybody in that area was suffering, and PG&E went as far as paying the doctors to hide the recurring problems and even telling all the residents that the water supply was in fact good for them. While this created empathy from the viewers, all this information was expressed through dialogue whereas sometimes visuals can be more effective in capturing the audiences' attention and emotions. More color shades and dramatic reactions from characters, such as those that were presented in *Dark Waters*, could have enhanced the visuals within the film. With stories as horrific as these, it is important not to shield the full graphic truth from the audience because everybody should be aware of the harm big business can cause. Just because they possess great amounts of wealth does not mean they can dump their chemical wastes into a community's water supply and take advantage of residents.

When it came to casting in *Dark Waters,* Haynes found the right actor to play the protagonist and sell the significant role of Bilott. Mark Ruffalo, due to his dedication to the environmental issue, was perfect to play him. Ruffalo has starred in many movies before; however, he had never played a character quite like this. Rex Reed, movie critic for *Observer*, complimented Ruffalo's portrayal of Bilott: "playing varying degrees of patience, despair, anxiety and rage, he [Ruffalo] has a smooth charm and concealed passion that is something

of a physical transformation" (Reed). Ruffalo underwent a lot of physical and mental preparation for the role due to the complexity of Bilott's personality, for Bilott was emotionally guarded and lost in the world until he found his voice and life work through these accidental circumstances that crossed his path. Bilott also had this observational elegance. It was important to show this in the film because it added to his character's mannerisms as he carefully took in all his research and findings in West Virginia and did not miss a beat on taking down DuPont. However, that environmental suit took a toll on Bilott's mental state, and Ruffalo portrayed Bilott's character superbly as he made that two hours' worth of film time feel like it was the genuine two-decade time span that the case actually lasted. Towards the end of it all, Bilott was still spending endless hours on the case and became emotionally separated from his family, causing him more stress and resulting in him getting rushed to the hospital due to a panic attack. From Ruffalo's acting, viewers were able to see that Bilott truly put everything into getting justice for everybody impacted by DuPont's wrongdoings and how difficult it is to take down a huge corporation due to their secured power and wealth.

Erin Brockovich also had the benefit of having a strong leading protagonist who was played by the talented Julia Roberts. Although Roberts is an astonishing actress and does a great job of portraying Brockovich, viewers were split on whether or not they enjoyed her bold personality. Brockovich possessed very distinct traits that set her apart from the lawyers, but it was what made her trusted by the Hinkley residents. She dressed very unprofessionally with low cut shirts, mini-skirts, and obnoxious high heels while always carrying around with her a very forward and dignified lack of self-pity attitude everywhere she went. Brockovich was a complicated character and that turned away some viewers because they could not take her seriously and oftentimes found her to be annoying. While Roberts was complimented by many critics for her performance, there were still many other critics who said Brockovich's character became a distraction to the seriousness and severity of the case. That controversy gave Dark Waters an edge because Bilott was a subtle family guy and a hard-working lawyer, which made viewers immediately inspired by him. Joe Morgenstern, a critic from The Wall Street Journal, states, "Instead of Julia Roberts's crowd-pleasing flamboyance there's Mr. Ruffalo's earnest, admirably serious portrayal of Rob Bilott" (Morgenstern). Having a favorable protagonist in a film impacts the film's success, so it was important for these directors to cast appropriate actors to play them because this environmental topic needed to be told correctly and spread throughout the world. For Dark Waters, Ruffalo's passion and dedication to the character strongly enhanced the film and made people believe every word he was saying.

Although this lawsuit actually happened in real life, Haynes and Ruffalo made Dark Waters come alive in a different and new way that no one had seen yet. The little details that were implemented into the film truly enriched the experience for audience members. Having strong elements in a film, such as the ones discussed above, helps to bring the story to life and to strengthen the message being taught, while keeping

audiences engaged in what they are watching. Bilott and Brockovich are completely different individuals who have both made and continue to make huge differences in the world pertaining to social and environmental justice. The two films, *Dark Waters* and *Eric Brockovich*, show people that no matter where they come from, they can accomplish anything they work for. The magnitude of these films' stories is so high because they show the systemic problem of big business and wealth dominating our country and destroying our land and our health. These two films demonstrate that as residents, we need to do something about it.

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For their Heritage essays, students in this First Year Seminar section were required to choose three texts studied in class to support an argumentative thesis. This writer chronicles the story of three women who reject lives that were molded for them in order to forge their own realities and thus serve as role models for women today. The author highlights similarities in these women's life stories, drawing clear connections among the various texts.

Real Women Who Have Created Their Own Realities

By Jacqueline Rhea Rennick

Prof. Collins - Story and Screen

For centuries, the world has been, and will continue to be, populated by diverse women who will advocate for their rights and independence. Each woman has her own story, and it is quite rare to find one that is exactly parallel to the next. Through the stories we read and the people we interact with, we observe unique women from all walks of life. Their differences may be caused by environmental or societal conditions, level of education, and personal biases. Despite such differences, women as a whole have been told how they ought to speak and behave. Although many have followed such dictates, some have pushed through such boundaries created by their societies. By doing so, they were resolute in having their voices heard. Those women have created change, not only during their lifetimes, but for centuries thereafter. Their actions paved the way for other women to stand up for their rights and for what they believe in, and reading their stories proves that a woman does not have to be defined by societal expectations. Their courage to reject the norm has made them inspirational role models for women, and their ability to create their own reality proves their resilience and independence.

Saint Clare of Assisi emerges in Margaret Carney's "Clare of Assisi: Bringing Her Story to Light" as someone whose self-expression and confidence allowed her to become the independent woman she was. Though significant events in her life took place during the 1200s, Saint Clare's story demonstrates that a woman can create her own reality. According to Margaret Carney, Clare came from a family of nobility and had everything she truly needed to be successful in that "her education was preparing her...to read and write, to arrange the affairs of a great house, manage servants, treat the illnesses of the extended family" (30). However, that wasn't *her* reality. That was what was expected to be her reality. Clare wanted to follow in the footsteps of Saint Francis, a man who devoted himself to God without the support from his father. She observed his preaching and was bewildered by his character. She wondered how his life changed so drastically, how he detached himself from the life that his family lived in order to pursue his faith. Clare decided to take her life into her own hands. For a woman, this wasn't socially acceptable, and she would have to "...risk everything - reputation, physical safety...to be a part of this Christian adventure" (Carney 32). Engaging in such rebellious actions wasn't the reality for most women during that time, but Clare was concerned with her own religious expression as an individual. She was confident enough to pursue this, and even decided "she and her sisters would earn their own way while serving the needy on the city's margins"

(Carney 34). She was a determined, brave, and independent woman who was motivated by faith and a desire to help others. She understood that in order to fully pursue her faith, she needed to separate herself from some of the traditional expectations of women, including marriage and remaining close to home. Clare's reality was created by herself and her faith in God, not by anyone else.

Clare's determination and independence are characteristics also found in Tara Westover, a woman from Idaho who was sheltered from the outside word as a child, and who was influenced by her father's extreme biases. A much more modern story, Westover's characteristics model the idea that women can create their own realities. When she was a teenager, she made the decision to leave her home and attend university, something that her family did not fully support. Her father promoted the idea that the medical establishment and the educational system in America were the Illuminati, but Westover's older brother assured her that it was okay to attend university and learn new things. With this, Tara Westover made her own choice. She had no intention to *be* her older brother, but was simply intrigued from observing him. In her memoir, *Educated*, Westover begins her trip to college by saying, "On New Year's Day, Mother Drove Me To My New Life" (153). This was her new life. She did this for herself, and no one was forcing her to go. The mind of Tara Westover was not exactly parallel to the mind of Gene Westover, her father. While she listened to his ideas for years, she had a mind of her own. Her father tried to mold her into his idea of what a woman should be, and that did not include going to college. However, Westover decided to pursue her education and made that decision independently. Her educational journey did not only result in intellectual advancement; it also allowed her to embrace her true identity. Westover's professor at Cambridge, Dr. Kerry, said to her, "'Whomever you become, whatever you make yourself into, that is who you always were'" (Westover 242). By saying this, Dr. Kerry wanted Westover to understand that she was in the process of creating a life for herself. He says that this reality has been and will be inside of her indefinitely. He supports the idea of individualism when he states, "'The most powerful determinant of who you are is inside you'" (Westover 243). Ultimately, the decision to attend university and leave home were choices made by Westover. While being taught only certain ideas as a child, she was able to step away from those ideas, open her mind, and courageously build a new reality, a life for herself. Her liberation influences women to think freely and pave their own road.

Similar to Westover, Malala Yousafzai is a modern woman who demonstrates the idea that reality is not created for women, but by women. Growing up in Pakistan, Yousafzai lived a normal life, full of playing games and watching cartoons, though she had to attend an all-girls school that her father founded because girls were not allowed to have the same educational rights as boys. Yousafzai believed that she was disadvantaged because of this, and as someone who was eager to learn, recognized this issue in society. She writes in her autobiography, "I thought things could be better" (Yousafzai 2). It was unheard of for a young woman to speak out about education, even if she understood the injustice. Malala Yousafzai yearned to be

understood. She was not forced to speak about educational issues for woman, but recognized the unfairness, and knew she had to do what she could to create change. The Taliban limited opportunities for women, but it was a part of Yousafzai's character to use her voice and exhibit strength even while understanding the danger of doing so. As a result, she was shot in the face by those who opposed her. Yousafzai writes about the moments leading up to that event and remembers the Taliban asking for her: "No one said a word, but a few girls looked in my direction. He [a Taliban fighter] raised his arm and pointed at me. Some of the girls screamed…" (Yousafzai 7). In that moment, Yousafzai was as vulnerable as she had ever been. She was powerless. Why would she continue to advocate for educational rights after being shot? The truth is, advocating for these rights was her reality. She would continue to be an activist, even with the ongoing danger that nearly killed her. It was her voice that allowed her to become an inspiration, and it was also her voice that caused her near-death experience. It is critical to notice how one person can create such change. For Yousafzai, her reality was the life that she created for herself.

Reflecting on the stories of Saint Clare of Assisi, Tara Westover, and Malala Yousafzai, there is one critical piece of information that connects these women. They created their own lives. They were able to see the world through their eyes and use their vision to inspire. As a woman myself, it was refreshing to read about passionate women. I could relate to their determination as I am a student hoping to become a physician in the future. Ultimately, each woman created the life that she wanted to pursue and fought against oppressors and external influences. All of what happened along the way resulted from their voices. Yousafzai recognized this, and said, "I am Malala, and this is my story" (7) in her autobiography. It was *her* story, her life, one that I will continue to be inspired by throughout my own journey as a woman.

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For this research paper, the author explores the "road" to incarcertaion, which includes the factors that lead one to be incarcerated. This well-researched analysis culls information from a multitude and variety of sources.

The Journey to Incarceration: Policing Techniques and Laws that Increase Mass Incarceration

By Jared T. Slovic

Prof. Rody-Wright - Incarceration

With an increase of nearly 500% from forty years ago today, over 2.2 million people now occupy our nation's prisons and jails.[9] To make matters even worse, there are more people serving time for drug-related offenses now than the entire prison population for any crime in 1980.[10] Our country is certainly experiencing a problem with mass incarceration, and the majority of this problem rests with the federal and state imprisonment laws. The fact of the matter is that U.S. citizens are paying for an inordinate number of incarcerated people to sit behind bars for non-violent or drug-related crimes, oftentimes posing no real threat to public safety. Furthermore, policing techniques and policies such as "stop and frisk" and sting operations, as well as the "Three-strikes" laws all play critical roles in contributing to mass incarceration while at the same time perpetuating racial and ethnic stereotypes.

Although the policing technique of "stop and frisk" was deemed unconstitutional in 2013 and is no longer practiced, "stop and identify" statutes still allow police officers to approach someone and ask questions if they feel a situation or person is suspicious. As of 2018, the relatively new "stop and identify" statutes have been implemented in twenty-six states, making it a very relevant issue.[11] Whether one terms these policing techniques as "stop and frisk," "stop and identify," or "Terry Stops," they all have the same result which is to excessively incarcerate people. There are many reasons behind and benefits to bringing about the end of "stop and identify" laws. These include how racial profiling can make its way into these police stops and how these stops create a distrust between the community and law enforcement. The evidence suggests that racial profiling was used heavily during the implementation of these stop and frisks. For example, Propublica, a nonprofit that produces investigative journals, found that police stops in New York City rose from 100,000 in 2002 to 700,000 in 2011, and between 2004 and 2012, 83% of those stopped were black or Latino people.[12] To make matters even worse, 90% of people who were stopped were later found to be innocent of any wrongdoing.[13] In fact, a federal judge in Manhattan ruled that this policy of "stop and frisk" was an indirect

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[9] **The Sentencing Project, Criminal Justice Facts, 2019, accessed March 16, 2020, https://www.sentencingproject.org/.**

[10] **The Sentencing Project.**

[11] **"Stop and Identify Statutes in the United States," Immigrant Legal Resource Center, February 1, 2018, accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.ilrc.org/sites/default/files/resources/stop_identify_statutes_in_us-lg-20180201v3.pdf.**

[12] **"Crime Falls as New York Abandons Stop-and-Frisk," Equal Justice Initiative, January 1, 2018, accessed March 16, 2020, https://eji.org/news/new-york-crime-falls-as-police-end-stop-and-frisk/.**

[13] **"Crime Falls As New York Abandons Stop-and-Frisk."**

way for law enforcement to racially profile.[14] After gathering data and compiling a great deal of testimony, the court found that police targeted young Latino and black males who resided in lower income neighborhoods or who "looked suspicious," such as by looking over one's shoulder or wearing a hoodie.[15] It is clear that law enforcement didn't distribute police stops equally, as blacks and Latinos have been disproportionately targeted in these stops despite not even making up half the population of our country. As a result of this racially-biased policy, distrust and resentment builds in communities where law enforcement is continually frisking people. The constant presence of law enforcement in a community has many long-lasting effects on the mental state and stress levels of community members. According to a recent study, it was found that "[s]tressors that negatively affect non-Whites are triggered by the presence of two common features of discrimination: (1) the individual or group was treated unfairly and (2) the treatment was based on social identity (group membership)."[16] It is clear that "stop and frisk" policing techniques are inherently biased, so it would make perfect sense for those who are targeted to feel as though they were treated unfairly. It is these feelings that evoke notions of distrust and resentment from minority communities towards law enforcement, for community members don't feel that police are looking out for their best interests.

Despite the many downfalls of "stop and frisk" policing techniques, there are still many who believe that these techniques are beneficial. Numerous people who oppose the notion that "stop and frisk" does more harm than good argue that if it weren't for this policing technique, crime would inevitably increase. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, for example, was a supporter of "stop and frisk" during its peak years. However, the argument that this policy would decrease crime is incorrect. According to New York Civil Liberties Union Stop and Frisk data, there is no correlation between police stops and crime in NYC. From 2006 to 2015, the number of police stops fluctuated between a high of almost 700,000 in 2011, to a low of around 20,000 in 2015.[17] Yet, the data shows that through the ebbs and flows of police stops throughout this time period, crime remained pretty stagnant. If anything, crime rates have fallen slightly since the removal of "stop and frisk" policies.[18] Thus, statistically, there is no positive relationship between more police stops and less crime. In addition, the Brennan Center, an establishment that works to hold political institutions and laws accountable, claims that New York remains safer than it was 5, 10, or even 25 years ago.[19] It is clear that crime has not increased since the removal of "stop and frisk" policies, so it is time to remove these styles of policing that

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[14] Ashley Southhall, "Why 'Stop-and-Frisk' Inflamed Black and Latino Neighborhoods," *The New York Times*, November 17, 2019, accessed March 18, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/17/nyregion/bloomberg-stop-and-frisk-new-york.html.

[15] Southhall, "Why 'Stop-and-Frisk' Inflamed Black and Latino Neighborhoods."

[16] Brandes, et al., "The Mismeasure of *Terry* Stops," 9.

[17] "Ending New York's Stop-and-Frisk Did Not Increase Crime," Brennan Center for Justice, April 11, 2016, accessed March 18, 2020, https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/ending-new-yorks-stop-and-frisk-did-not-increase-crime.

[18] "Ending New York's Stop-and-Frisk Did Not Increase Crime."

[19] "Ending New York's Stop-and-Frisk Did Not Increase Crime."

now include "stop and identify." These policies undermine a person's right to privacy and limit society's freedom as a whole.

Sting operations have also played a critical role in increasing the prison population and adding to the tension between communities and law enforcement by manipulating people into perpetrating crimes. There are two main problems with sting operations. The first is that they are historically known for unfairly tricking people into committing crime. Sting operations began in 1968 when the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) was founded. This administration boasted a 98% conviction rate for sting-related operations during the peak of its existence.[20] Charges included various non-violent crimes including petty theft and drug possession. Although the LEAA has since dissolved, it paved the way for the FBI to carry out similar sting operations to the present day. Over the past decade, the DEA has made 179 arrests by means of sting operations in the Southern District of New York alone. 177 of these arrests involved blacks or Latinos.[21] Another prime example of how the use of sting operations induced crime is through the stories of young Muslim men living in Minnesota. These stories were brought to life through *The ISIS Trial- No History of Violence* movie, which was presented at Siena College on December 4, 2019 and followed by a panel discussion. Oftentimes, it is minorities who are the target of sting operations and unfortunately for three Muslim men- Adnan, Yasuf, and Mohamed- they became prime targets closely after the events that transpired on 9/11. Basically, the FBI created a list of "at-risk" people who could potentially join ISIS by seeing who decided not to participate in activities like going to the YMCA or joining a Boys and Girls Club.[22] The FBI then proceeded to bait these young men whom they deemed "at-risk" to see if they would commit any crimes. This is where the problem arises because the FBI's job is not to create or induce crime.[23] When these young men fell for the bait and attempted to join ISIS after being brainwashed into thinking that they would be heroes if they were to join, all the FBI had to do was say they were attempting to join ISIS to convict them.[24] Who knows whether or not these young men would have joined ISIS, but the FBI took it upon itself to influence their decisions, only increasing the chances of their incarceration. The second problem with this type of operation is that it furthers the stereotype that all Muslims are terrorists and that minorities are more likely to commit a crime. In Erik Love's book, *Islamophobia and Racism in America,* he outlines how the FBI paints a skewed picture of Muslims in America. Love states:

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[20] Elizabeth Hinton, "'Operation Sting' and the Creation of Crime Itself," *Harvard University Press* (blog), April 26, 2016, accessed March 18, 2020, https://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2016/04/operation-sting-elizabeth-hinton.html.

[21] Shayna Jacobs, "10 years. 179 arrests. No White Defendants. DEA Tactics Face Scrutiny in New York," *The Washington Post,* December 15, 2019, accessed June 6, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/10-years-179-arrests-no-white-defendants-dea-tactics-face-scrutiny-in-new-york/2019/12/14/f6462242-12ce-11ea-bf62-eadd5d11f559_story.html.

[22] *The Isis Trial-No History of Violence,* directed by Ellie Bernstein (2019), DVD.

[23] *The Isis Trial-No History of Violence.*

[24] *The Isis Trial-No History of Violence.*

In essence, what we have is an FBI program that is both motivated by and contributes to a racial stereotype. The reason that confidential informants so often target Muslim Americans is due to the stereotype that Middle Eastern Americans are the likeliest source of terrorism. As each of the hundreds of "sting operations" develops, they accordingly reproduce this stereotype, literally by reproducing "Middle Eastern terrorists." The images of the young, Middle Eastern men caught up in this FBI program appear repeatedly in the media, making it seem as though the FBI is barely containing the "Middle Eastern terrorism" problem. This vicious circle repeated again and again, with another "sting operation" case on average once every two months between 2009 and 2013.[25]

Love's interpretation of how the FBI handles sting operations exemplifies how they perpetuate the idea that Muslims are terrorists. By using the media as an outlet to report on the success of various sting operations, Muslims are shed in a negative light, thus dampening the public's view on this already marginalized group of people. What many people don't know is that these people are baited into committing crimes when they had no prior history of crime commission.

Many people who are in favor of sting operations argue that they are a necessary evil in order to keep our country safe. There have been success stories like in 2009 when Farooque Ahmed was arrested and charged with plotting to bomb the Washington Metro after undercover agents got him to reveal his plans.[26] However, there have been many circumstances where the use of sting operations was certainly not warranted. For example, Albuquerque Police Chief Gordon Eden has defended his department's controversial sting operations.[27] These sting operations entailed officers going undercover and posing as drug dealers dealing to homeless people small amounts of cocaine and methamphetamine and then proceeding to arrest them on the spot with a felony charge of possession.[28] Police Chief Gordon claimed that these operations would improve the quality of life for businesses and residents, decrease property crime, and gain intelligence.[29] However, his actions seemed to suggest that he was attempting to get rid of the homeless population by means of incarceration. It would be much more beneficial to send the homeless people who are addicted to drugs to rehabilitation programs. Instead of placing them behind bars, which is much more costly, we should be spending the money up front to promote reintegration back into society for these people. It is also worth noting that six out of the eight homeless people who were arrested in this instance were people of

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[25] Erik Love, *Islamophobia and Racism in America*, (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 13-14. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=8XWDgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP9&dq=sting+operations+and+racism&ots=1JeZr2i Thf&sig=fyZmOzJH4IXUfah9IQgjO6pqMSs#v=onepage&q&f=false. eBook.

[26] Eric Schmitt, "In U.S. Sting Operations, Questions of Entrapment," *The New York Times*, November 29, 2010, accessed March 24, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/30/us/politics/30fbi.html.

[27] Jeff Proctor, "Controversial 'Reverse Stings' on Drug Users Will Continue Despite Outcry," The NM Political Report, June 2, 2016, accessed March 18, 2020, https://nmpoliticalreport.com/2016/06/02/controversial-reverse-stings-will-continue-despite-outcry/.

[28] Proctor, "Controversial 'Reverse Stings' on Drug Users Will Continue Despite Outcry."

[29] Proctor, "Controversial 'Reverse Stings' on Drug Users Will Continue Despite Outcry."

color, and three of those six had a mental illness.[30] This only strengthens the argument that minorities are the typical target of these sting operations. The majority of the time, the use of sting operations is unnecessary and only contributes to mass incarceration.

Not only do Three-strikes laws, like "stop and identify" policies and sting operations, contribute to mass incarceration, but they are the main contributor to it. Since the implementation of the first Three-strikes law in 1994, the United States prison population has increased exponentially, by over 200%.[31] This suggests that these laws have certainly led to a spike in the number of incarcerated people in the United States. The Three-strikes law forces the judge to hand out a longer, much harsher sentence after the third conviction. This includes minor crimes such as drug possession or petty theft. In California especially, the number of people in jail due to drug-related offenses has risen since the passage of the Three-strikes law. In 1980, California's drug-related prison population comprised 10% of the total prison population; by 1998, that percentage rose to 32%.[32] An increase in drug-related convictions of 22% during the time frame that the Three-strikes law was implemented in California clearly shows that Three-strikes laws led to an increase in incarceration. Although California amended its Three-strikes law in 2012, making it so the third offense has to be violent, this still doesn't change the fact that the first two offenses could be drug-related.[33] Charges shouldn't be grouped together because they vary in severity case by case. One of the most serious problems with Three-strikes laws is that they take sentencing out of the hands of the judge, and put it in the hands of law enforcement. When someone is arrested for the third time, the judge has very limited power over what sentence he or she will receive because, in a way, that has already been determined by the police officer when he/she made the arrest. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, "[T]he Three-strikes law can result in the government spending $500,000 to incarcerate someone for committing three $500 crimes."[34] It would be much more cost efficient to do away with these unnecessary laws. Further, these laws are not a good deterrent to prevent criminals from committing crimes. First of all, crime is not always premeditated; it can be done in the moment or in accordance to one's current emotions. Therefore, even if the penalties are harsh, the law will not act as a disincentive because when actions are the result of one's impulses, one will likely not think of the consequences for his or her actions. Moreover, according to the American Bar Association, around 34 million serious crimes are committed each year and out of these crimes, only around 3 million of these crimes result

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[30] **Proctor, "Controversial 'Reverse Stings' on Drug Users Will Continue Despite Outcry."**

[31] **Joshua Jones, "Assessing the Impact of 'Three Strikes' Laws on Crime Rates and Prison Populations in California and Washington,"** *Inquiries Journal* **4, no. 9 (2012): 1-3, accessed March 18, 2020, http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=696.**

[32] **Jones, "Assessing the Impact of 'Three Strikes' Laws on Crime Rates and Prison Populations in California and Washington."**

[33] **"California Proposition 36, Changes in the 'Three Strikes' Law (2012)," Ballotpedia, Lucy Burns Institute, November 6, 2012, accessed May 8, 2020, https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_36,_Changes_in_the_%22Three_Strikes%22_Law_(2012).**

[34] **"Ending New York's Stop-and-Frisk Did Not Increase Crime."**

in arrest.[35] Therefore, many criminals would be correct in thinking that they could get away with the crimes that they commit. Thus, the Three-strikes law, instead of acting as a deterrent, has increased mass incarceration across the country, forcing judges to hand down long sentences, regardless of the severity of the crime.

There are many supporters of the Three-strikes law who believe this law deters criminals from committing a third crime. However, this isn't necessarily true since many criminals act impulsively and won't even think about this law before they commit a crime. Law enforcement also fears that this law could actually increase crime. If a criminal knows he or she is facing life in prison after being caught for a third offense, then he or she is more prone to act out violently and cause greater harm to police officers, due to the simple fact that he or she has nothing to lose anymore.[36] Proponents of the Three-strikes law also don't take into account the cost of incarcerating someone for life. Although some states have a low cost per inmate- like Alabama where it is $14,780- some states that have large inmate populations like New York and California come in at $69,355 and $64,642 respectively.[37] In fact, with the implementation of this law, many "lifers" could be locked up for no more than a possession charge just because it is their third offense. To put this into perspective, a United States citizen would now be obligated to pay through their taxes to lock someone up for life due to a marijuana charge. Not only is the Three-strikes law costly, it also has been shown to disproportionately affect black people more than white people. National studies have been conducted which show that under the Three-strikes law, prosecutors were 50% more likely to charge a black offender than a white.[38] Although these laws may not look or intend to be discriminatory on the surface, far too often people have used them to exploit minority communities, contributing to both mass incarceration and the perpetuation of racial stereotypes.

The implementation of legislation that allows for the use of sting operations, "stop and frisk" policing techniques, and "Three-strikes" sentencing only perpetuates the problem with mass incarceration and racial and ethnic stereotypes in our country. Incarceration has not affected races equally, further dividing our nation as a whole. The extreme disproportionality of minorities in prison, put into place through such policies must be changed in order to decrease our prison populations. After all, whether or not one agrees with the previous

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[35] "10 Reasons to Oppose '3 Strikes, You're Out,'" American Civil Liberties Union, 2020, accessed March 18, 2020, https://www.aclu.org/other/10-reasons-oppose-3-strikes-youre-out.

[36] "10 Reasons to Oppose '3 Strikes, You're Out,'" American Civil Liberties Union, 2020, accessed March 18, 2020, https://www.aclu.org/other/10-reasons-oppose-3-strikes-youre-out.

[37] "Prison Spending in 2015," Vera Institute of Justice, 2020, accessed May 8, 2020, https://www.vera.org/publications/price-of-prisons-2015-state-spending-trends/price-of-prisons-2015-state-spending-trends/price-of-prisons-2015-state-spending-trends-prison-spending.

[38] "Race and Ethnicity: 'Three Strikes' Laws," accessed June 6, 2020, https://law.jrank.org/pages/12136/Race-Ethnicity--Three-Strikes-Laws.html.

points, they must accept the fact that we, the citizens of America, will bear the burden of paying for many non-violent, drug-related offenders to sit for years behind bars.

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The Undeniable Power of Adhesion

By Hannah Soliman

Dr. Woolbright -The Idea of War

In scientific terms, cohesion is described as the ability of "like" molecules to bind themselves together, forming a bond between two substances of similar nature while adhesion is the ability of two different molecules with contrasting properties to bind together and form a complex. Surprisingly enough, the bonds of adhesion are much stronger than the bonds of cohesion. Much like the science behind forces of attraction, individuals within a society perform best when placed with people uniquely distinct from themselves, allowing for the spread of ideas and ultimately yielding to societal advancement. This idea stands in stark contrast to the present military, where group cohesion and uniformity are the dominating schemes designed to promote focus on a common goal. The military is blind to the concept of adhesion, where individuals from different ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and religions can cooperate and achieve greatness together for the common good. Only when the military replaces the band of brothers' myth and group cohesion with philosophies related to open mindedness to diversity and group adhesion will the armed forces be able to function at its best and reflect the values America claims to stand for.

The basic application of cohesion versus adhesion can be seen in Thomas of Celano's story of Francis of Assisi encountering a leper. Francis, an individual originally of wealth and high status, did not find comfort in his stagnant existence and, therefore, decided to find a new life. He came into contact with three different groups: the bandits, the monks, and the lepers. Thomas of Celano artistically crafts the narrative by making the cohesive forces within each group clear. Both the exclusive bandits and monks denied or mistreated Francis. However, when he came in contact with the lepers, Francis was welcomed with open arms. He seamlessly adhered to the lepers, contrasting how in the past, "sight of the lepers was so bitter to him" (Thomas of Celano 35), yet the force of attraction between Francis and the lepers allowed Francis to humble himself and reach unification with them. From then on, Francis "extended a hand of mercy to those who had nothing," connecting to those who had different backgrounds from him (Thomas of Celano 35). The ability of distinctly different individuals fusing together for the common good and well-being is vital for the advancement of society. The military must refer to the Franciscan values exhibited in this story in order to attempt to understand the positive attitudes and results that adhesion instills, for it will conclusively help unify soldiers.

Conversely, group cohesion within the military, as defined by one former United States Chief of Staff in the early 1980s, is "the bonding together of soldiers in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment

to each other, the unit, and mission accomplishment, despite combat or mission stress" (qtd. in Manning 4). Nowhere in this definition is ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religion mentioned, yet in reality these identifying factors determine the fate of an individual's experience in the military. According to Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "homogeneity, in terms or age, ethnicity, and cultural background, was essential to group dynamics" (qtd. in MacKenzie 25). This argument is outdated, as it is rooted in sexism, racism, and other forms of prejudice. Group cohesion, therefore, relies heavily on the lack of individual expression, diminishing the values our nation proclaims to hold dear. The fallacy in this argument is evident, for the claim is centralized around the fear of losing hetero-white hypermasculinity. In actuality, the focus on group cohesion has done more harm than good because it diminishes the number of perspectives available, which directly and negatively impacts the ability of the group to solve problems, make decisions, and perform various challenging tasks.

One example of the strength of adhesion is evident in the book <u>Band of Sisters</u>, where Amy McGrath, a former Marine fighter pilot and current politician, works seamlessly with many men. The fate of male soldiers was often in her hands, showing the strength diversity fosters: "[Captain Andrew] Larsen had come to rely on McGrath . . . He had to be able to trust her with his life because the back-seater controlled the ejection seat" (Holmstedt 91). The cooperation between McGrath, a wife and mother of three, and her male counterparts strengthened the intra-gender relationship and reliance on individuals in dire situations on the battlefield. Cooperation within the military must be rooted in reliance on one another, not reliance on one group or type of person. Allowing individuals with different identities to form relationships and, therefore, enable the spread of different ideas ultimately results in increased and successful productivity. This is done through a shift in attitudes toward acceptance of those with unique identities.

The first step to deconstructing the cohesion hypothesis is understanding the privilege that the majority of individuals hold, specifically white males in the military. Peggy McIntosh prefaces a discussion about this with her observation of "men's unwillingness to grant that they are overprivileged" (McIntosh 71). According to McIntosh, the tendency of an individual to defend and protect their privilege is natural, as it provides an unspoken "right" and openly disregards the injustice involved. Individuals who hold this same unspoken privilege tend to stick together and use it as a way to place themselves on a fabricated high ground. Cohesion presents itself in this way, showing its ugly face through a blurred lens. McIntosh's "invisible package of unearned assets" (McIntosh 72) is challenging to dismantle because it has been ingrained in society. Although it is very complicated, it is not impossible to overcome in the military. Just as Francis understood his own privilege and decided to change his perspective to better serve humanity, individuals today need to take responsibility for their actions and analyze how privilege plays a role in their lives. Much of the problem lies in the power of cohesion; however, the indisputable strength of adhesion will have a more potent impact.

In order to move from cohesion to adhesion and remove the power of privilege, a shift in attitudes about diversity is required; ideas of not only acceptance, but an internal desire to integrate individuals with different backgrounds and ideas is necessary. Military leaders must take a stand against the detrimental control privilege enables and its impact on the nation's ability to protect itself, as "individual acts can palliate, but cannot end, these problems" (McIntosh 81). Denying the systems that dominate the existing privileges is the first step away from toxic group cohesion and a step closer to unifying group adhesion. As written in *The New American Standard Bible*, humankind must remember "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" (Gen. 3.19); we are all made of the same molecular compounds. It is our arrangement that makes us unique, but not better than anyone else. Only when leaders change their attitude toward privilege and decide to reconstruct the ideas instilled within the nation's military will America be able to successfully preserve the peace and security all citizens deserve. It is our duty as citizens to pay attention, band together, and send a powerful message to leaders, especially those in the military. We can no longer stand in cohesive coteries; we must adhere to each other based on distinctiveness in order to unify in the strongest way possible.

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For this Nature Unit essay, the author uses the ideas of St. Francis of Assisi as a way to reimagine humans' relationship with the natural world. She adeptly points out shortcomings of "quick-fixes" to environmental problems, and in so doing, effectively overcomes the naysayer's argument.

Relationships Decide Our Earth's Fate

By Natalie Stagnitti

Dr. Woolbright - The Idea of War

From extensive droughts and raging fires to rising sea levels, the modern world is facing a myriad of environmental issues. As these issues grow, the earth is coming dangerously close to a catastrophic point of no return. The worst part of this is that we, as arrogant humans, are the reason for the earth's dying condition. However, it does not have to be this way. Saint Francis of Assisi's respect for nature shows us how we could maintain a positive, healthy relationship with the living earth on which we reside. Humanity has abandoned our caring and respectful relationship with nature and has turned, instead, to human domination and ignorance. The earth is not just a surface for us to trample over and ravage when we feel like it; it is a living entity, worthy of respect and gracious treatment. Various temporary fixes have been proposed to amend the problem at hand, but who's to say that a few decades into the future we will not destroy the earth again? What needs to be fixed is nothing quick or convenient as we would like to think; it is our relationship with nature that needs to be fixed. Until we fundamentally change our relationship with nature, we will continue destroying the place we call home.

Saint Francis, patron saint of ecology, taught that nature is alive and worthy of respect long before the current ecological crisis arose. In his thirteenth century poem, "The Canticle of the Creatures," Francis praises God and thanks Him for all life on earth and for the earth itself. In doing so, Francis compares aspects of nature to human beings. For example, he calls the sun a brother and water a sister. With these words, Francis calls us to reflect on two things: our relationship with our brothers and sisters, and our relationship with nature. A relationship between siblings is filled with love, compassion, and affinity. A brother or sister is not to be harmed, but rather protected. While this respectful brother and sister relationship is a common concept today, society's values deviate from Francis's when it comes to relationships with our environment. Francis attempts to cultivate ecological consciousness by translating the caring and respectful sibling relationship to things on earth like water, trees, and the wind. If we treat our brothers and sisters with respect and have healthy relationships with them, we should be doing the same with the other living entities. For example, Francis praises the Lord "through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us" (lines 36-38). By calling the earth our mother, Francis boldly states that we are reliant on the earth for survival. Mothers bring children into the world. They care for their children and nurture them, selflessly providing for them and preparing them for success. If the earth is our mother, should we not respect her and treat her justly? Our "Sister Mother Earth" provides us with food, water, and air to breathe. Without her, mankind would cease to

exist. While Francis acknowledges that valuing the environment and maintaining a caring relationship with nature is essential, today's society does not. Unfortunately, the relationship that we do have with nature is toxic and in no way emulates Francis's teachings. As a society, we clearly need to actively pursue a healthy and respectful relationship with nature as Francis did.

Keith Douglas Warner, a social ethicist in the Franciscan Tradition, describes in his interview with the editor of *U.S. Catholic* how we can adopt Francis's teachings into our modern lives and reconnect with the natural world. Warner points out that the matter of ecological destruction is driven by modern greed and corruption. He tells us that currently, "we do not consider the fate of Earth's diversity of life or even acknowledge that we are part of a community, an ecosystem, that is being dramatically transformed by humanity" (Warner). Today, humankind views nature as something we must contend with and a burden we must bear. It is easy to be annoyed that we have to clear snow off of our cars in the morning without realizing that snow is essential to regulate the earth's climate and fill water reservoirs. We think that trees are in our way when building infrastructure or that they are here for our economic gain, when they provide air for us to breathe and food and shelter for animals. Everything in nature is interconnected and necessary for not only other parts of nature, but for our own survival as well. Without an appreciative relationship with nature, it is hard for society to slow down and see the interconnectedness of life and how much we need to work with and show respect for nature, just like siblings in a healthy relationship. According to Warner, we "are in desperate need of retrieval and renewal to re-imagine our relationship with the earth today." Mankind is not "apart from and superior to nature," as we ignorantly assume in this day and age (Warner). Today's ecological crises are a wake-up call asking us to reinvent our view of nature and form a positive and healthy relationship with all that is living.

While Warner and Saint Francis see respectful ecological relationships as a durable and long-lasting solution to help our dying earth, others disagree. Brown University Professor Neta C. Crawford suggests some ways to aid our environment through the reduction of military emissions in her 2019 study, "Pentagon Fuel Use, Climate Change, and the Costs of War." Crawford claims that if the U.S. military reduces its emissions, the earth would face fewer natural adversities. Some of her ideas to reduce energy consumption include "gradually replacing some non-tactical fleet vehicles with hybrid, plug in hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles, [and] reducing engine idling" (Crawford 6). While these improvements and changes may reduce emissions, they will not solve the fundamental cause of the earth's destruction. By placing our energy and attention on something so small as reducing engine idling, we are ignoring the bigger picture: our relationship with nature lacks respect and appreciation. Solutions to problems this large require more than just a surface-level change. Crawford's idea is similar to the idea of using metal straws. In the grand scope of things, abstaining from using plastic straws is not enough to save the environment. People come up with these kinds of ideas because of

how little of our lives we would have to change to carry them out. We are too self-absorbed to acknowledge that the real change has to happen fundamentally within ourselves and our daily interactions with nature. Refusing to use a plastic straw does not force us to see that our arrogant view of ourselves in relation to nature is mistaken and does not promote a healthy relationship with nature. It focuses solely on human action, not man and nature working together. It is human nature to dislike any implications that we are wrong, yet if we want to continue to have an earth to live on, we have to face the truth: our fundamental relationship with nature is deeply flawed. We must stray from the mentality that humans are meant to dominate the earth with no regard for nature. The relationship with nature that we must build is one of protection and respect for the earth. Until we live by this principle and form positive and healthy relationships with the environment, nature will continue to be trampled upon and destroyed by us.

The truth is that we cannot preserve our earth through surface-level changes. We must work harder and look deeper into ourselves to foster a healthy and caring relationship with our living surroundings. The ideas and values of Saint Francis must be with us every day in order to preserve the earth we live on. We must not think materialistically, and instead dig deeper within ourselves to cultivate respect for the environment. Instead of passing on environmental issues for our children and grandchildren to try to rectify, we can pass on the value of maintaining a caring and respectful relationship with nature. This fundamental restructuring of our relationship with nature is our only chance at truly rectifying all of the wrong we have done to our environment. It is up to us to decide whether we would rather turn a blind eye to the changes we need to make within ourselves and continue to destroy the earth or create a fruitful relationship with nature.

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