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ENGL 1010 *Argumentative*

Spencer Hahne “Gangsta Paradise is No Place for Kids”

Professor Johansen

First Place

Music has a profound impact on the minds of people of all ages. It can uplift, inspire, cultivate imagination and promote goodness. It can also influence negatively and instill desires of destruction and criminal activity, dull or numb the mind of the listener, and many other forms of detrimental behaviors. While all genres of music contain different songs that influence with a wide variety of good and bad, one genre stands out with an overwhelming amount of negative influence specifically on the teens of today: rap music. The explicit content and messages sent through most rap songs has a direct effect on the sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, and violence of youth. The universal influence rap has on teens through these types of messages has created a crisis in behavior among the youth.

One preliminary point to understanding the weight of the matter is that the teenage mind is at a point of critical development. Not only this, but because of the growing status and stage of cognitive development of the teenage mind, it is also very malleable. Teenagers are very impressionable, and their ways of thinking can be changed and formed with relative ease. Michael Arbib illustrates an important principal

in his book by writing about a learning mechanism called mirroring. This learning mechanism is most evident in infants and babies who are in the peak of cognitive learning, but is still strong in the teen years. Arbib describes this as when one learns by seeing another perform an action, then proceeds to do that action themselves. The brain is wired this way biologically for growth and survival (83-94). Later in his book, Arbib explains the power behind the emotions that can come from music. He says that emotions are a part of evolution and that “Emotions prepare the organism to respond to important events in its life and thus have a strong motivational force, producing states of so-called action readiness” (110). The motivation of sexual drive is a critical biological force intended for survival of a species. If there were no sexual drive, it is unlikely a species would reproduce and continue its existence. Because humans are very emotional beings, there is a direct connection between emotion and sex drive. This is extremely important, but a danger lies in when this emotion is produced within a person whose brain is not yet developed enough to responsibly make life-altering decisions that affect that person as well as those who they choose to participate with in those

acts.

One of the topics commonly found in rap music just happens to be that of sexual nature. Sexual content in the songs of other genres of music is most of the time included discreetly, while rap artists purposely send direct messages using words and phrases that are sexually explicit in nature. Rap artists are not beating around the bush when it comes to painting a sexual image in the minds of their listeners. Take for example the song *Anaconda* by Nicki Minaj. This song aired August fifth of 2013 and was an immediate hit. With over 19 million streams on the first day of its existence, *Anaconda* broke the record for the most streamed video of all time on Vevo. I personally remember when this song came out and I remember not being particularly fond of it, but it did have a catchy beat. I was 15 years old and many of my peers would listen to this song. Today, the song has been played almost 850 million times on Youtube.

Keeping in mind the power of language on the brain, these numbers become very scary considering the lyrics and messages being pumped into the minds of teens, lyrics such as, “And he telling me it’s real, that he love my sex appeal,” as well as, “[phallus] bigger than a tower, I ain’t talking about Eifel’s.” Nicki Minaj also mentions her buttocks many times in the song referring to it as large in size and otherwise objectifying her body (*Anaconda*). These are only a few, and probably of the more tame

lyrics in this song that refer to sex. In another example, popular rap artist 2 Chains composed a song called *Birthday Song*. In this song, 2 Chains says that all he wants for his birthday is “a big booty ho,” further objectifying women in a way that is unhealthy for youth both male and female (*Birthday Song*). When these messages are constantly being fed to the youth, it desensitizes them and portrays an idea that sex is a recreational activity with no consequences.

The seriousness and the relevance of this situation is evident by the findings of a research project conducted by the University of Chicago. The project is called the Black Youth Project, and it was conducted in order to learn about the attitudes and behaviors of the young black population of America. The project concluded that twice as many black youth listened to rap music daily as white youth did, and the black youth watched rap music almost five times as much. Another research study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Youth Research* found that youth who listen to rap are much more likely to have unsafe sex as well as multiple sexual partners (13-14). This is directly correlated as to why these behaviors are exhibited by the black youth population much more so than any other race. The more a group listens to rap music and is exposed to the sexually explicit messages, the more likely individuals from that group are to exhibit the behavior that is sung about in those songs.

The top 100 rap songs in 2009 featured 92% of

songs that had mentions of some sort of sexual activity. Free speech is a constitutional right and must be granted, but we must be sure to take measures to ensure the safety of today's youth against these songs that are not only promoting unsafe practices, but also poisoning their easily influenced minds with this explicit material. It is illegal to distribute porn to minors, and we know that it damages the mind of any who participates regularly in watching it, so why are we allowing sexually explicit language that describes pornographic acts in detail to be readily available and targeting youth?

Not only is sexual activity being promoted through the lyrics of rap songs, but the music videos of such songs are arguably just as explicit if not worse. I do not mean to pick on Nicki Minaj, but take another song by her for example- Superbass. Another massively popular song, largely intended for a young audience, Superbass became a huge hit right from its release. With 786 million views just on Youtube, there are few people who have not heard this song, especially the youth. This song does feature less references to sex and drugs than Anaconda, but this is made up for in its music video. The music video is quick to introduce a line of women that dance provocatively while wearing thin white tank tops, with bras underneath that are variety of bright colors, designed to draw attention to the breasts. Very soon after, the video shows shots of the closeups of shirtless men. Later in the video, a shot

features both of the women and men in another dance portion where the men are sitting in chairs and the women are dancing provocatively in close quarters with the men (Superbass). And in my experience as far as music videos in that genre go, this video could be considered quite mild compared to others by popular rap artists.

In a society that is aggressively and actively seeking out sexual pleasures, it makes sense that producers will create content that with sexual references because they know that people are wanting it. For them, it brings fame and fortune, but this does not come without consequence. As explained earlier in Arbib's book, youth who see others performing acts, especially musical role models who are perceived as "cool," are likely to exhibit those behaviors as well in a see-do fashion. Sexuality is being introduced and promoted in unhealthy ways by these music videos early on in life. This is putting teens at much risk because they are at a stage when they are incapable of fully understanding the consequences of those actions. By seeing the sexual acts portrayed in rap music videos, many youth are learning to follow the example and become sexually active at young ages which puts them at risk for STDs, STIs, and emotional damage. Becoming sexually active at a young age also dramatically increases the likelihood for having multiple sexual partners as well as teen pregnancies. The youth of today are more likely to learn about sex from media such as rap music

videos, rather than a class environment or from their parents.

Another topic commonly found in today's rap songs is drug and alcohol consumption. Substance abuse is currently at an all-time high, especially with the crisis of opioids going on. Never before have so many people died from overdoses. Even those that do not die from abuse find themselves with long term or chronic, sometimes irreversible effects. When one considers the immaturity of the teenage mind, still in a stage of critical development, it is easy to see just how dangerous substance abuse is to someone in this period of existence. Not only that, but because of the danger of damage to the brain, it is illegal for anyone to use certain drugs and it is illegal for any minors to consume alcohol. The stage of development that teens are in puts them at an increased risk of long term irreversible damage when addicted to drugs. Rap music containing this type of content is being targeted for and promoted to the youth. Ameer Whitbrodt found that across all genres of music, teens who listened only to pop music would come across, on average, five references to drugs or alcohol per day. On the other hand, teens who listened to only rap music would come across, on average, 251 references (4 Feb 2008). Again, why is music with this content being allowed to be targeted to minors who are obviously influenced by the messages sent through music?

A third and just as dangerous topic found in

many rap songs and music videos is violence. References to gang violence, murder, and intentional bodily harm are found in popular rap songs. One of the most popular rap songs right now is titled, *Murder on My Mind*. The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter highlights research that was conducted on female youth participants who lived in lower income areas. After 6 months of regular habits listening to rap music, not only were they almost twice as likely to have contracted a new sexually transmitted disease, but they were more than 2.5 times as likely to have been arrested, and 3 times as likely to have hit a teacher. Another study conducted showed that those who had listened to rap music regularly were more likely to interpret certain words as violent in meaning, and they would have increased feelings of violence and hostility with no stimulus to trigger the emotions (3). More evidence that connects much of adolescent behavior problems with rap music is mentioned by the American Academy of Pediatrics. They say that when they analyzed music videos of all genres that were shown over a period of time on MTV, rap music videos had accounted for the highest percent of violent acts depicted and consumption of alcohol and tobacco (3).

Tupac and Biggie were some rappers that not only rapped about violence, but actively participated as well, which may have led to much of the violent references in their music. Friends at first turned into

bitter rivals in the music industry and life itself. Both were involved in gang violence throughout their lives and promoted it through their actions and music. They grew up in New York City but then later in life lived on opposite coasts and Biggie even admitted to “[waging] a coastal beef”. The rivalry instilled feelings of hostility between the supporters of the rappers. Eventually, both were murdered by gun, and both murders are suspected of gang related violence. These rappers were very famous in their time, and they are still very well known, but their influence in music and as life role models has been cause for much violence. (Biggie Smalls, 3)

One of the worst things about all these negative influences is that with the media outputs from television, radio, internet, and others that teens are being exposed to everyday, the influence of rap has become omnipresent. No longer are the youth having to consciously decide to seek out this type of music, it seems to seek out listeners, backed by the promotion of those who prey on the fame and fortune it gives them without thought of what the music is doing to the youth. Rap music is being introduced to the youth of today and it is affecting their minds. They hear and view references to violent acts, drug and alcohol consumption, and unsafe sexual practices. With developing minds that are learning and malleable, these youth are trying out the things they hear and see because the rap artists are making it look desirable. The lives of those youth

who watch and listen regularly are being put at risk due to the behaviors is it instilling.

Now, this is not to say that rap is inherently bad. Not all songs produced by rap artists have elements of drugs, sex, and violence. And some rappers choose to not rap about these topics at all. For example, LL Cool J is a rap artist who grew up around violence and was influenced greatly by it, leading a criminal life for much of his youth, but later decided to change his ways and create positive music for listeners. He became an advocate against the ways of his past life and influenced many for good.

So it is not the idea of rap itself that is bad, but when it is overall saturated with images and references that create violent tendencies and misogynistic views, it is scarce to find rap songs that have a positive effect on listeners. Parents should be weary and involved in their children’s lives, taking actions like monitoring their child’s music preferences and playlist’s, looking up the lyrics and doing research about the messages songs are portraying, and talking to the child to make them aware of how their music choices will affect their behavior. Teenagers would also be wise to monitor their own music and be aware of how it affects them. The influence and damage from popular rap music has become widespread, but individual measures can be taken ease its effects on society and individuals.

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Adam Volle “Pseudoscience and Belief: A Dangerous Distortion”

Professor Sterrantino

Second Place

“People just do the strangest things when they believe they’re entitled. But they do even stranger things when they just plain believe” -Agent Keenan’s closing speech. Red State, 2012.”

History is rife with prime examples of brutal dictatorships, but in the 20th century a few dictatorships were exceptionally murderous. Russia suffered under Joseph Stalin, China saw Mao Zedong and Germany was subjected to Adolf Hitler. These leaders rose to power with the backing of popular support from their country’s citizens. Did these people know how evil their leaders were or would become? What drove them to surrender massive amounts of power to narcissistic leaders? Although there has been a lot of study on the charismatic leadership qualities attributed to Adolf Hitler there has not been a lot written in regards to specifically how the Nazi ethos attracted the common German. I contend that the Nazis used pseudoscience in the form of the “supernatural” to lure people to their cause in an occult-like society.

The idea of politicians leveraging the needs and wants of the people they are trying to gain support from is not a new idea. This essay will show that power hungry leaders are willing to not only fabricate claims and provide a populous with false information

but also must appeal to their belief system to gain power. Additionally, neither side of the political spectrum is immune from gross abuses of power. While Nazis are characterized as being on the “right side” of the political spectrum, the left side has also seen its share of maniacal dictators. Russia under Stalin and China under Mao, both countries lived under a brutal communist regime that saw tens of millions of people murdered. Regardless of which side of the political spectrum these tyrants fall under there is one common theme between them all, absolute control over a society.

When reading any history book regarding the atrocities committed by the Nazis in World War II, one wonders how any reasonable person in Germany would have allowed Nazis any power to begin with. That is not any easy or straight-forward question to answer but by understanding cultural climates, both before and after WWI, we can help shed some light on the subject. There have been dozens of books written on the charismatic qualities of Adolf Hitler and how he was able to project himself as a dominant leader to the

down-trodden people of Germany. What hasn't been widely discussed is how the people of Germany were not only receptive to the radical ideas of a powerful leader but also of irrational thought.

The Versailles Treaty and its effects on the German people has been widely studied and documented in most history books as a major influencer of the Nazi movement. So, this essay will only briefly touch on that important aspect. The end of WW1 saw an enormous economic hardship on the people of Germany from the Versailles Treaty. Many critics of the treaty argued that the punishment Germany would endure for decades would be too much. Indeed, the cost of the treaty had long lasting effects on Germans, large unemployment rates, hyperinflation and foreign troops in the German homeland lead to unrest in Germany. At the time, in the 1930's Hitler was a very charismatic leader that knew how to speak to the common German citizen. He promised to rebuild Germany from its economic shambles and return Germany to previous generations level of success. The Nazi party exploited the needs and wants of the common German in the most persuasive ways. And while there may have been those who resisted the Nazi party movement, in the end they were silenced, often times by violence, else they fled Germany. The French Scholar Gustave Le Bon is interestingly quoted in Eric Kurlander's book *Hitler's Monsters*.

...even the most intelligent or skeptical individuals

in modern society could succumb to suggestion in the presence of less critical or wholly ignorant peers. This phenomenon was especially true of crowds that were influenced by an 'expert' such as a trained medium or a charismatic politician like Hitler. (Kurlander 26)

When beginning a search for the Nazi rise to power, one doesn't generally start with the prospect of the supernatural and any rational person would probably dismiss the notion entirely. But to understand how irrational thought became acceptable under Nazi Germany, one must put forth an effort to understand the irrational. In my search for answers, I stumbled upon the book *Hitler's Monsters* by Eric Kurlander, published by Yale University Press, and I was initially very skeptical. Kurlander is very upfront about the fact that Nazis were obsessed in outlandish topics such as; occult organizations like The Golden Dawn, Theosophy, tarot divination, ice world theory, new age religions, even vampires and werewolves, to name a few. I believe that Kurlander approaches the obtuse idea of the supernatural influence on the Nazi ideology from a sterile academic view point, establishing facts from primary sources to show a history of occult-like behavior. As fantastical as this all sounds, linking Nazi Fascism to the supernatural, is necessary to understand its importance on how the Third Reich operated. This essay will often refer to the term "occult" several times and for the sake of clarity the term will be used as per the

Meriam-Webster dictionary as: “Matters regarded as involving the action or influence of supernatural or supernormal powers or some secret knowledge of them.” What hooked me into studying this topic through this kind of lens was one of Kurlander’s initial statements:

...I argue that no mass political movement drew as consciously or consistently as the Nazis on what I call the ‘supernatural imaginary’ – occultism and ‘border science’, pagan, New Age, and Eastern religions, folklore, mythology, and many other supernatural doctrines – in order to attract a generation of German men and women seeking new forms of spirituality and novel explanations of the world that stood somewhere between scientific verifiability and the shopworn truths of traditional religion..... Without understanding this relationship between Nazism and the supernatural, one cannot fully understand the history of the Third Reich. (Kurlander XI)

Ariosophy is an esoteric ideological system conceived by Guido von List and Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels between 1890 and 1930. It is a system that branched off from Theosophy, a popular occult society in the late 1800s. The system defines the Aryan race from various Christian, Eastern and Nordic racial elements. The swastika, runic symbols and elements from the various religions were tied together into an occult-type society. Organized Christianity began a decline in

the late 19th and early 20th century and the Ariosophy ideology (among other “border science” ideologies) gained traction throughout Germany over the decades.

Faced with the ‘disenchantment of the world’...and a decline in organized religious devotion, German, like many other Europeans, sought alternative forms of knowledge – whether astrology, clairvoyance, spiritualism, or ‘natural healing’ (Kurlander XV)

The changing spiritual landscape of Europe in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s saw a shift from traditional Christianity to more of a folklore and mythic renaissance. Many people needed to find meaning in a declining Christianity-dominated society and they turned to spiritual alternatives. Inner circle Nazis established Nazism as being built up from a history and tradition, and they fabricated their own propaganda mythos based from strong German influences and Nordic religious practices. Nazi founders knew that people were looking for spirituality alternatives and exploited those needs with fabricated folklore to lure people in. The Nordic resurgence was a prime vehicle from which the Nazis launched their own version of history. It was very symbolic, even described as magical, the chronicles of heroic Norse gods and fairy tales became an important element in the identity of many Germans. Nazi propaganda fabricators drew inspiration from this Nordic revival and handcrafted the

Nazi mythos as a natural extension of the Nordic saga. This process in and of itself helped to erode the rationality of people in favor of irrational “border sciences.”

Instead of accepting mainstream natural science, millions of Germans turned to parapsychology, astrology, ‘transcendental physics’, among other border sciences. (Kurlander 23)

By drawing upon and appealing to an array of supernatural ideas, the Nazis created a space which existing views – be they liberal, socialist, or traditionally conservative – could be overturned, displaced, or elided to produce a sense of ideological coherence where none otherwise existed. (Kurlander xvii)

The Nazi ethos depicts itself as a “superior Aryan race” along “other lesser races.” They view the “purity” of their race as the defining factor that keeps them separate from the “other lesser races.” They discourage interracial relationships as it weakens their purity and they view other races as a hinderance to the progress of the Aryan way of life. These “lesser races” are viewed as enemies that must be overcome. The Nazi ideology became a code for people to believe in, complete with history, tradition and an alternative to Judeo-Christian spirituality.

As recent studies have shown, supernatural expla-

nations most readily displace rational, instrumental reasoning in public life when individuals believe themselves to be dealing with ‘sacred values.’ The political danger point, whether in fomenting religious fanaticism or fascism, appears to be when people feel themselves to be completely fused with a group defined by its sacred value. (Kurlander xiii)

As is a textbook theme with brutal dictatorships, a common enemy must be presented to unite people for a “just cause.” That enemy is usually the opposition to the dictator or party and violence is used to defeat or subjugate the opposition. The Nazis depicted many groups as enemies of the state; the mentally disabled, Jews, Catholicism, freemasonry, Communism, the existing government at the time and homosexuality. When labeling a group of people an enemy it becomes necessary to dehumanize them so that it becomes easier to commit acts of violence against them. The Nazis were no exception and they drew upon old prejudices that existed to depict Jewish people as vampires or a subrace of humans.

By binding Jews, Communists, and freemasons to images of vampires, zombies, devils...the Third Reich helped to justify otherwise exaggerated responses to ‘an enemy who did not seem to adhere to the same cultural code. (Kurlander xvii)

It's not as though the common German woke up one day and decided that surrendering supreme power to a dictator and engaging in ethnic cleansing was the right way to progress. And while it is not fair to assume that all Germans participated or agreed with the Nazi ethos, in the end full Nazi control of Germany became a reality. The slow decline into Nazi control happened over many years and by methodical planning by the Nazi inner circle. The Nazis gained power by offering Germany a way out of their plight in a post WWI environment. At the time, most Germans were living in poverty, unemployed and struggling to get by. The Nazis were presenting a radical new way forward, in both a practical and a spiritual way, a way in which German would be made whole again, as it was in previous generations.

....it didn't happen overnight. Since it's impossible to know the precise tipping point at which killing became moral for the majority of Germans Koonz rightly notes that the "genocidal consensus" was "a result of six years of administrative networking, theoretical disputes, and factional infighting" more or less a process of "incremental radicalization" despite its comparative suddenness. (Beisel, 372)

The Nazis were a secretive group, as is common with most occult societies, and they did not advertise the evils they were prepared to carry out. This was a form of "sugar coating" that allowed most rational

people to initially overlook, or not perceive the danger of National Socialist Party. On one hand the Nazi were portraying themselves as "the saviors of Germany," eagerly extending a helping hand to the common German and on the other hand they were ready to violently strike down opposition. As the Nazis gained power, they also began to intimidate their opposition. They formed the "Sturmabteilung" or 'brown shirts. This was initially the Nazis "strong arm" group that, as the name suggests, wore brown fatigues and used violence in order to gain control.

One main aspect of an authoritarian state is controlling information. An authoritarian state will censor any and all information it deems to be a threat against it. The "free press" is forced to close and a state-run media is established. That media is carefully tailored to present information that only shows the state in a good light and actively seeks to condemn all criticism. The Nazis were quick to suppress free speech and establish a single source of information for the people of Germany, one regulated by the Nazi propagandists. In today's world, we still see this kind authoritarian regulation from some countries and it is a danger that all should guard against.

The state of Iran is considered to be an authoritarian-theocracy and has extensive restrictions on the internet. Iranian authorities have established a large-scale censoring program of digital media within Iran and heavily regulates what information is allowed in.

In the last 10 years Iran has cracked down on critics that use social media to voice their opposition to the Iranian regime, western-inspired content or anti-religious themes. Marcus Michaelsen, from the University of Amsterdam, wrote about the human rights crimes being committed against the people of Iran:

Now and then, state television airs forced confessions of arrested social media users to highlight the regime's skills in cyber-policing. In addition to internet activists and journalists, these campaigns also target other online communities who are considered to transgress official norms. In 2014, for instance, six young Iranians were detained for circulating a homemade music video with an interpretation of Pharrell Williams' song "Happy" (Kamali Dehgan 2014). In 2015, the cybercrime unit of the Revolutionary Guards announced that it was monitoring the Facebook activities of Iranians on a large scale and had arrested groups of social media users for promoting "obscene content, western-inspired lifestyles and anti-religious jokes (Michaelsen 467)

In conclusion, the goal of power-hungry politician is to convince a populous, often times through fabricated claims or distorted truths, that control should be relinquished to their regime. They will promise the common person a better future, free of the troubles that plague them today, in a sugar-coated

manor at the expense of another group of people. They will lie, cheat, steal and murder their way into a position of power. They will play groups of people against each other, usually in the form of identity or social politics, all as a mean to distract a population from current events or to mask true goals. The Nazis were especially effective in luring people into their ethos by way of border-science theories and romanticized ideas of past German successes. Additionally, they were able to see and exploit the needs and wants of a population struggling both physically, mentally and spiritually. Abuses in power can happen anywhere and under any kind of political climate. It is imperative that a society safeguards against a "slippery-slope" by keeping power decentralized, championing free speech and always keeping a mutual respect for their neighbor.

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ENGL 2010

Argumentative

Kiley Rawson “Human Opportunity on Mars”

Professor Christensen

First Place

Humanity has a way of becoming connected to inanimate objects which can't be explained using logic or common sense. For example, when a Roomba vacuum breaks, the consumer has the option to send the Roomba back to the manufacturer and get a new one in return or to get their own fixed. Families often choose to get the same one back because they feel like the Roomba has become a part of the family (“Roombas Fill an Emotional Vacuum for Owners”). The phenomenon of irrationally caring for machines that are incapable of returning the sentiment is carried further to machines we haven't even seen in real life. The recent “death” of the Mars rover Opportunity, a rover beloved by thousands, highlighted the irrational human reaction to the things we create. Opposers of the space program might ask if the rover really served an important role, if it is just the human phenomenon of illogical attachment to robots that gives Opportunity its “importance.” However, we feel a tremendous loss over Opportunity because the rover did so much good work, much like the loss a family feels without their favorite little house-cleaning robot. The Opportunity Rover was worth the cost it was to the U.S. government

because it exceeded all expectations placed on it by its creators as well as its funders. By retrieving a substantial amount of useful data, Opportunity also paved the way for space exploration, which will only become more relevant as the Earth's state continues to decline.

In the appropriately titled Time Magazine article “Goodbye to NASA's Opportunity Rover, a Machine We Loved That Could Never Love Us Back,” written by Jeffery Kluger, Opportunity's accomplishments were praised, and its loss was mourned. The article noted that the rover worked hard for 15 years when “her” life expectancy had only been 90 days. Not only that, but Opportunity catalogued many new geological samples, sent back more than 217,000 photographs, and traveled more than 28 miles when it was designed to go only 1,100 yards. Kluger quoted the manager of the NASA Mars Rover project, John Callas, saying, “When I think of Opportunity, I will recall that ... our intrepid rover far exceeded everyone's expectations ... [and] what I suppose I'll cherish most is the impact Opportunity had on us here on Earth” (Kluger). Callas' words illustrate that Opportunity did more than just make discoveries on Mars, but also made quite

the impression on the people of Earth. This resounding impression on man can be explained in part by Kluger's suggestion that while we form connections to technology and machines, our relationships to various kinds of machines are fundamentally different and we feel the most for spacecraft because they epitomize humanity where its influence is needed the most. "Cars and boats transport us. Computers serve us. Spacecraft represent us..." Essentially, what Kluger is saying is that our bond to spacecraft is special because the things we send out into space are part of us and their purpose is so much bigger than that of a car or a computer. This relationship is highlighted by the collective reaction to the news of the Mars rover's death. The loss was felt so significantly because as the rover represents humanity, we often put our hope for a better tomorrow into the space exploration program, and when any part of that program is lost, a little bit of hope seems to get lost along with it.

While emotional attachments certainly have worth to those that form them, emotional value matters little when it comes to questions of government funding. What is important, however, is the fact that Opportunity did more than anyone ever could have hoped for. Outcome is generally the best way to measure the cost effectiveness of something, and the outcome of the Opportunity mission was a huge success. When we invest in something, we have certain expectations of how long the thing will last as well as

how well it will perform its designated task. Whenever our expectations are surpassed, we feel that our money was very well spent, and the same thought process can be applied to Opportunity. In an article from The New York Times, Kenneth Chang explains that the rovers Spirit and Opportunity were originally supposed to cost \$665 million but had actually cost \$800 million by the time they were launched. In the end, after both Spirit and Opportunity's missions had been declared over, NASA had spent \$1.2 billion. That's about a cost of \$400 million more than they had planned for, but it allowed for 14 more years of science (Chang). That seems like a pretty good return on investment.

While money plays an important role in any program, it wasn't the driving force of the operation. NASA's main goal is to gain information and to make a difference as a human-oriented organization. Subsequently, NASA understands what the loss of Opportunity meant to people, arguably more than anyone else could. Because of this understanding of the emotional connection to Opportunity, NASA has dedicated a place on the Mars Rover website where a person can choose from several pictures that Opportunity took and write a note on it to "send a postcard" to the rover. So far, 24,234 postcards have been written to Opportunity by people all over the world ("Send a Postcard to Opportunity"). While not everyone that heard of the rover's passing would care to write a postcard to Opportunity, some of those who saw the news that

didn't know much about Mars missions then took the initiative to investigate what the late rover had been up to before it ceased transmissions forever. Though it is unfortunate that the demise of Opportunity is what sparked such interest, it is always a good thing when people take the time to learn about what is going on in the world, and outside of it. Even though of the younger generation wouldn't have known or cared when the "Adventure Twins" Opportunity and Spirit were launched, or when they landed on Mars, it's because we were merely too young to know any better. But as we got older, we learned to care. When we heard that it had been found that there was once water on Mars, we got excited. When we heard that the Opportunity's last transmission could be roughly translated to "My battery is low and it's getting dark" (Kluger), we cried.

But those that didn't weep at the news of the loss of the cherished Mars rover might not know much about Opportunity and what exactly its mission was. According to the NASA website "Mars Exploration Rovers," Opportunity landed in Eagle crater when it first arrived on Mars, and this is where the rover found hematite, a mineral that usually forms in water. This was a hopeful sign that there could have been water on Mars, which we know is the key to life. However, the signs of water became less promising for proving life on Mars when scientists realized that the water must have been acidic. Nevertheless, in a crater called the "Endeavor Crater," the rover found veins of gypsum,

which points to underground water flowing through fractures in the rocks. This is a sure sign that Mars was once semi-hospitable to life. Further proving that Mars could have supported life, Opportunity also found clay minerals which are usually formed in neutral-pH water. This discovery made the Endeavor Crater the friendliest environment for life to have thrived ("Top Science Results").

Why does any of that matter? The reason scientists are so pleased that Opportunity found evidence of water on Mars is because life as we understand it needs water to survive. The prominent physicist Freeman Dyson claims in his book *A Many-Colored Glass: Reflections on the Place of Life in the Universe* that "The origin of life is the deepest mystery in the whole of science," but "If we can understand how life began, we shall also [gain] a deeper understanding of what it means to be alive" (104). The secret to life is currently hidden under many variables that we don't yet understand, and all that scientists have access to for modeling the pattern of life is merely what can be found on our planet. But is life here the same as it is on different planets? Scientists hope to better understand this one day by discovering a living being beyond what we have already tirelessly studied. Without an outside example of life, we can never truly have a complete picture of life in the universe. This is a huge reason to continue sending rovers out into space, they will allow us to have a better picture of our world and the universe

around us. Dyson also declares “No matter whether life turns out to be abundant or rare, we shall continue searching” (105). Dyson insists that further space exploration is an inevitability, because humanity’s questions about how life began demand answers that we simply cannot find on our own planet. We must seek out these answers on different planets, and we can use rovers to do it. However, Dyson also cautions against making the same mistake made with the Viking missions to Mars. Their sole purpose was to find evidence of life on Mars, and when they didn’t, the mission was considered a failure (110). Dyson strongly suggests that all rovers looking for life must also have other goals to satisfy, or they might fall into the failure category as well.

Opportunity originally had a sister rover named Spirit, and while it was the hope that the rovers would find signs of life, there had to be other reasons for sending them to Mars. Their mission objectives were to determine whether life ever arose on Mars, characterize the climate of Mars, characterize the geology of Mars, and prepare for human exploration. When Spirit became unresponsive in 2010, it had explored 4.80 miles and lasted 20 times longer than it was originally designed for. Opportunity lasted eight years more after the death of Spirit and traveled six times farther. Opportunity holds the record for longest working robot on Mars, as well as the record for the most extraterrestrial travel. These rovers proved that

there was once water on Mars, found that the climate was once warmer, and discovered a volcano eruption site, which all could have helped to support microbial life (“Top Science Results.”).

Mars rovers like Spirit and Opportunity are necessary not only to help scientists look for new ways to understand life’s beginnings, but also to prepare for manned missions to Mars because we are rapidly exceeding our planet’s limits, and human missions will become a must. J.S. Singh, a professor in the Botany department at Banaras and Chief Editor of *Tropical Ecology*, emphasizes that “Reports indicate that the Earth has indeed entered into a phase of mass extinction, and that the ecological footprint has substantially exceeded the biocapacity of the Earth” (210). Increasing human population, pollution, overexploitation of resources, and climate transformations all contribute to humanity’s increasingly negative affect on the planet. Singh also asserts “It is clear that the ecological footprint or demand has far exceeded the biocapacity of our planet, so that now equivalent to 1.5 Earths are needed to meet the current demands of the humanity on nature” (211). Singh mentions Johan Rockström, a professor at Stockholm University and vice-chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, who identified nine Earth-system processes that would mean irreversible change to the environment. So far, we have crossed three of them: climate change, rate of biodiversity loss,

and interference with the nitrogen cycle (212). Despite what we know about our planet and what needs to be done to save it, we continue to pump greenhouse gases out into the atmosphere, watch species go extinct, and dump plastic into the ocean. The entire world is at risk, and the chances of total recovery looking rather grim.

Singh's observations of what humanity has done to our planet show exactly why we need to continue to invest money into space programs. There are many skeptics of the necessity of the space program that would insist we should stop wasting money on other planets and start putting that money into saving the one we have. But as we continue to move forward, the state of our Earth isn't getting any better. We are nearing the point of no return, if we haven't reached it already. The problems the Earth faces are too large to fix without a complete shift in every government worldwide. Making the move Mars is far more likely than changing entire governments' minds. We can't reverse what we have done to our planet, but we can look to the stars for answers.

The only alternatives to recovering our planet are terraforming a new planet and discovering an entirely new planet with conditions similar to Earth. In his book *The Future of Humanity: Terraforming Mars, Interstellar Travel, Immortality and Our Destiny Beyond Earth* Michio Kaku tells that Elon Musk's life goal of making humanity multi-planetary is because

“Musk concluded that the risk of human extinction could only be avoided by reaching for the stars” (62). Many people, like Musk, are starting to look to the stars for answers to questions of survival. In the *Discover* magazine article “Space Stations” it is noted that Musk's company SpaceX is hopeful it will send humans to Mars in their Falcon Rocket in 2024 (Haynes). This ambitious plan surpasses NASA's more cautious one described by Kaku in his book. Sometime this year, the SLS/Orion rocket is supposed to be launched to orbit the moon. Four years later, astronauts will take the rocket back into orbit around the moon. In 2023 comes the construction of the Deep Space Gateway, a smaller version of the International Space Station that orbits the moon instead of the Earth, and it is planned to be operational by 2026. In 2029, a new rocket called the Deep Space Transport will have its first test orbiting the moon for around a year. Then, finally, in 2033, after rigorous testing, the Deep Space Transport will send astronauts to orbit Mars (71). In the midst of this, NASA is also planning to send a new, more advanced rover to Mars. This rover will be based on the basic structure of the Curiosity rover that landed on Mars in 2012, but the new rover will carry more advanced instruments and have new objectives. Among those objectives is advancing knowledge of the possibility of human explorers using the natural resources on Mars to aid in their survival (Beutel).

An article from *Scientific American* states that

NASA's Deep Space Gateway Plan is the best route to take, insisting that we have to make it to Mars, but in order to do that we must first establish a home base orbiting the moon (Neal). The importance of a lunar space station is something that not all space exploring organizations agree on, but most (if not all) do agree on the necessity of missions to Mars. It seems obvious that people feel we must escape our own planet's atmosphere for humanity to continue to thrive. What's sometimes less apparent to people is that what paves the way for rockets full of people to have a successful mission is probes and rovers. These robotic space scouts are the most important part of any space mission because they figure out what would be needed for a human being to survive the trip to any given planet, and/or what it would take for someone to survive there. The information gathered by these critical little things gives us what we need to insure our astronauts have the best chance of survival that we can possibly provide them with.

In preparation for such space missions, studies are being done in Antarctica using the information gathered by the rovers to help test the possible effects that living on a Martian or Lunar base could have on the human mind and body. These tests were done by both NASA as well as Russian specialists. It has been determined that the shortest mission to Mars would have to last approximately 435 days (Demidov). So, in the article "Psychological and Behavioral Changes

during Confinement in a 520-Day Simulated Interplanetary Mission to Mars," an experiment is described that was conducted with 6 healthy men over the course of 520 days. Throughout the experiment, the men's psychological state was carefully surveyed every week through several inventories and questionnaires (Bassner et. al). Though the study made substantial gains in studying the human reaction to confinement in a hostile environment, there is still a lot to learn before we can truly understand with any sort of certainty how well people could cope with the stress of a mission to Mars. The best way to gain this information would be to continue to send rovers to Mars with the intention of preparing for human missions and furthering the search for life and the study of the physical history of Mars.

The desire to take humanity to Mars is undeniable, which makes the decision to fund Martian projects an obvious choice. We need to keep investing money in Martian projects in hopes of better understanding our universe and the life on our world. Future Mars-based endeavors should be treated with some urgency because it may very well be one day soon that we need to move to a terraformed Mars, or a newly discovered "Earth 2". Though in order to make terraforming Mars or finding an alternative planet possible, we need to keep collecting data on not only the environment of Mars, but that of other planets within our universe as well. One of the most effective ways to do

this is by sending rovers to those planets to gather data and determine what would be necessary to make a human mission to or colonization of said planet possible.

The importance of that data collection is highlighted by the way NASA continues to send rovers to Mars.

Currently, Curiosity is the only rover still working on the red planet, kept company by NASA's InSight lander, which landed in November of 2018 and now acts as a Martian weather station ("NASA's InSight Mars Lander"). Those of us on Earth that care for the work and progress of Curiosity will keep cheering for her until she joins the ranks of fallen rovers. When she does, she will be mourned just like Opportunity. Opportunity, the rover that was worth every penny of funding because she did much more than asked of her. She found evidence of water on Mars, something scientists had been hoping to find for so long, and she even helped start paving the road to humanity's future.

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Jessie Fischer “New Technology and Developing Minds: What is It Really Doing to Us?”

Professor Johansen

Second Place

In recent years, there has been a significant rise in technology output by companies across the globe. It seems like every day there is a new product, app, or platform for being connected with the rest of the world. With all these new technologies being available for public consumption, many people have started to wonder if there may be a correlation between this new tech and increasing mental health issues. Parents report that the hardest challenges they face are their children's excessive use of phones, social media, and video games (Freed, 2018). More children and adolescents are falling victim to anxiety, depression, self-harm, and cyber-bullying every day, and technology may be a contributing factor. What most parents don't realize is that the damage is far worse than that. Modern technology is essentially an uncontrolled experiment on an entire generation. This new digital world became a social necessity before scientists truly knew the effects it would have. Modern technology is disconnecting people from the real world, creating severe negative effects on mental and overall well being, particularly in adolescents, due to its addictive nature and ever-growing presence in the world. It is causing a myriad of

health problems that are increasing rapidly, and if people do not take action, there will be perilous consequences.

F. Diane Barth, a licensed clinical social worker, studied both the helpful and the harmful effects of social media on adolescents' minds and behaviors. She explained how it has become “a central fixture within our society and has radically changed individuals' social interactions, learning strategies, and choice of entertainment” (Barth, 2015). While this is not inherently a bad thing, it does have consequences. She argued that, at this point in time, it is an inevitable part of most adolescent life; therefore, the solution lies in finding management strategies that coincide with social media use, rather than strictly rallying against it. Barth looked at technology as a sort of “double-edged sword” (2015). On the one hand, technology gives teens a wide range of access to information from around the world about ideas and concepts that stretch beyond the walls of their classrooms and reach across the entire globe. It provides an outlet of comfort and connection, and many believe it has led to a more empathetic generation. On the other hand, adolescents are losing their

ability to process and understand their own emotions.

A study being conducted by the National Institutes of Health has found that as little as two hours of screen time a day can cause damage to one's mental capabilities. While the study--which includes 11,000 children-- is still in progress, researchers are already finding that thinking and language skills are lower in children whose screen usage is greater than two hours (Naftulin, 2018). Dr. Dimitri Christakis, the lead author of the American Academy of Pediatrics' most recent screen-time guidelines, stated that "these negative effects occur because children don't know how to translate two-dimensional skills learned on a screen to the real, three-dimensional world" (Naftulin, 2018). This means that even if children are doing more than mindless scrolling, even if they are supposedly learning or engaging in an educational program, their ability to retain what they have learned and apply it to situations outside of the program is profoundly limited.

In addition to impaired learning capabilities, Jean Twenge, an author and professor of Psychology, stated that "we are on the verge of the biggest mental health crisis our nation has ever seen" (2018). She explained how depression and suicide rates have skyrocketed since 2011. This is in direct correlation with the release of many popular social media platforms. By 2011, Facebook had reached nearly one billion active users (Facebook Users Worldwide, 2018). Instagram was founded in 2010, and Snapchat followed a year

later (Kartchner). This has caused a generational shift unlike anything seen before. The link between screen time and depression is unmistakable. From 2012 to 2015, depressive symptoms have increased by as much as twenty- one percent in males and a shocking fifty percent in females. Additionally, suicide rates have doubled in males and tripled in females between the years 2007 and 2012 (Twenge, 2018). These numbers are alarmingly high. Once again, this is all being traced back to the introduction of smartphones and social media.

One mother, whose daughter fell victim to suicide just a few years ago, believes her daughter's smartphone had everything to do with her suicide. Often, when people ask how her daughter died, the mother will say that she gave her daughter a loaded gun and didn't teach her how to use it. This frequently leaves listeners confused, wondering who in their right mind would give their daughter a loaded gun. Subsequently, the mother always follows by reaching into her pocket, pulling out her smartphone, then reiterating once more, "I gave my daughter a loaded gun" gesturing to the smartphone, "and it killed her" (Kartchner, 2018). This woman's daughter was one of many who have fallen victim to the pressure that social media places on people today. While it may have once seemed like a good thing to be digitally connected to peers at all times, it now seems as though the virtual world has become the ultimate place for comparison, self-crit-

icism, cyberbullying, sexual predation, and fear of missing out-- otherwise known as FOMO. Ultimately the culmination of these things and more have aided in taking not just this girl's life, but countless others.

Dr. Nicholas Kardaras, one of the world's leading addiction experts, examined these phenomena extensively and documented some of his findings in a book entitled *Glow Kids*. Kardaras concedes that today's society is, indeed, more connected than ever before, with hundreds of ways to communicate and share stories, messages, and life events. Yet we are also more lonely and depressed than ever before. This is because as social creatures, humans crave purpose and meaning, and we tend to "bolster our emotional states largely through the social and cultural context created by contact with others" (Kardaras, 2017). Unsurprisingly, research shows that social media does not meet that criteria. Being connected through online platforms is only an illusion of connection and simply does not provide the nurturing support that humans need, which can lead to profound emotional and psychological problems. When people engage in physical, face-to-face interactions, the mind and body are stimulated in different ways; endorphins can be released and there is a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment that is not present when interacting online.

Although some may feel like their on-screen interactions are enjoyable, the data proves otherwise. Since 1975, a study done by the National Institute of

Drug Abuse has examined the correlation between leisure time activities-- including both screen and non-screen leisure-- and overall happiness and well-being. Without exception, the results have shown that those who engage in more screen time are more likely to be unhappy. Twenge noted that there was a spike in teen loneliness in 2013 that has remained constant ever since (2018). These kids report that they feel isolated, left out, and lacking in strong friendships. The percentage of adolescents who engage in daily, in-person activities with their peers has dropped by forty percent in the last fifteen years (Twenge, 2018). This technology that so many feel is a necessity and an inevitable part of the world today is literally altering behaviors and destroying basic human interaction. Often, people will turn to their social platforms in hopes of relieving their feelings of loneliness. This, however, simply does not work. While social media may "relieve the loneliness and isolation that a person may feel... it does not address the underlying need for real, in-depth connection" (Kardaras, 2017). Despite being connected virtually to hundreds or thousands of other people, the need for real connection is not satisfied through a digital screen. Social connection is an integral part of what makes us human. It is a key component of health and happiness, and a lack of connection can have devastating outcomes.

Knowing this, many may wonder how these platforms still attract so much attention from users

around the world when it is clear that people are miserable because of it. The term “Facebook depression” has even been coined to explain the decrease in overall happiness that occurs when people scroll through their online newsfeed (Kardaras, 2017). In 2014, a study was conducted and published in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior*, in which researchers from a university in Austria studied Facebook’s emotional consequences; the study sought to determine why people still use it even though it decreases their mood (Kardaras, 2017). The “class reunion effect” as it is called, is used to explain a person’s natural tendency to judge and compare their peers’ lives with their own lives. In the study, the researchers found that this comparison caused people to feel like their online presence wasn’t meaningful. This lack of meaning directly corresponded with the mood of their constituents. Puzzled, the researchers wanted to understand why--if browsing Facebook so clearly made people unhappy--would anyone continue to do it.

As an addiction expert, Kardaras recognized what was happening right away. Knowing that this technology is just as addictive as narcotics, he classified this phenomenon as an “affective forecasting error” which is a common symptom of drug users (2017). This explains why people expect to feel good while scrolling through their newsfeed, but are left unsatisfied. The technology and social platforms literally have the same addictive effect as hard drugs. One sensation

that contributes to this faulty expectation is known as “euphoric recall” (Kardaras, 2017). This causes people to remember only the positive memories associated with an event while overlooking the negative. Just like drugs leave users feeling miserable and unsatisfied until the high comes again, Facebook’s short-term dopamine surge beckons users to keep returning. Dopamine is a powerful neurotransmitter in the brain that is associated with attention and addiction and has been proven to rewire behaviors and habits (Freed, 2018). Even though, logically, most people could recognize that they didn’t like the way they felt after being online, the memory of that pleasurable sensation one feels when they receive a notification or refresh their page leaves people always wanting to come back to the app.

One of the most shocking things about this technological epidemic is that tech companies are aware of it. While they might not have fully understood the long term effects of what they were doing initially, that doesn’t change the fact that they knew what they were doing when they began marketing their products to youth. Just as cigarette companies used to be notorious for marketing to younger generations in an attempt to get them to start younger and be hooked for life, major tech companies knew that if they could appeal to the younger generation, they would have lifelong business. Richard Freed, a child and adolescent psychologist, stated that behind the devices--the video games and social media sites--are teams of neurosci-

entists and psychologists who use their knowledge to develop software that is attention-capturing and addictive enough to keep them hooked for life. This is all done to ensure a steady profit for their companies (Freed, 2018). It is appalling and unsurprising to think that money is the motivating factor for such a serious crisis.

In spite of that, only in more recent years have people realized that the psychological impact reaches further than addiction. One psychologist in particular, Dr. B.J. Fogg, is known as the father of persuasive technology, which he described as “digital machines... configured to alter human thoughts and behaviors” (Freed, 2018). While Fogg argued that his persuasive technology had good intentions and can be used to produce positive change in areas including health and education, Freed believed this is all just a cover up for what the technology is really doing. He maintained that psychologists like Fogg are using their knowledge of adolescents’ incredibly impressionable minds to psychologically manipulate and abuse them. He explains how persuasive technology works by delivering “rewards” that increase feelings of competency. Adolescents are especially susceptible to this desire to feel they are obtaining certain intangible goals or achievements. These can come in the form of obtaining a certain number of likes or followers on social platforms or by successfully completing a quest on a video game.

One model for changing behavior is known

as the “Fogg Behavior Model” which uses motivation, ability, and triggers to compel people to continue using social networks (Freed, 2018). Freed elaborates on this by explaining how “motivation” refers to the desire to use the apps for reasons such as social acceptance (Freed, 2018). Nearly everyone in the US has some sort of online presence, and this fear of being socially ostracized will drive people to use media platforms for the sake of being accepted. “Ability” refers to ease of use; people don’t want to think too hard about how to navigate their digital devices, so tech companies are simplifying as much as possible (Freed, 2018). Lastly, “triggers”, as one might expect, refer to the constant notifications and reminders that urge users to check their phone to ensure not “missing out” on whatever may be happening online (Freed, 2018). Fogg and other tech executives have used this formula to create an industry that has generated many billions of dollars at the expense of the children and adolescents who unknowingly take part in their trap (Freed, 2018). It is remarkable and terrifying that something so simple as motivation, ability, and triggers can spark something so compelling in one’s mind.

One disorder that has developed as a result of this formula is known as Electronic Screen Syndrome. Screens have been intentionally designed to be unnaturally stimulating which, regardless of its content, can “wreak havoc on the still-developing nervous system and mental health of a child on a variety of levels”

(Kardaras, 2017). Various biological and hormonal systems can be affected and disrupted when children interact with screens because the overstimulation will shift the nervous system into a fight-or-flight mode. Kardaras further explained that “these disrupted systems can then create-- or exacerbate-- disorders such as ADHD, depression, oppositional defiant disorder, and anxiety” (Kardaras, 2017). These are no small concern; they are real, definable, legitimate health disorders that are occurring because of something that seems so commonplace.

One of the biggest reasons why these companies have become so successful at engaging the minds of youth across the globe is because of the “brain hacking” that occurs nearly every time they respond to a trigger (Kardaras, 2018). Similar to the addictive nature of pulling the handle on a slot machine, social media sites can send waves of dopamine through the brain every time a user receives another like, or receives a new notification. Tech designers who are aware of this are constantly working on new designs that will create the maximum dopamine release to continue to compel users to always come back for more. Many software programmers and game developers, including those who created the Xbox Live, Halo, and other popular video games, have even opened up about the process by which these games are developed. They understand how deeply engaged a person must be in order to disregard all attention for

homework, sleep, and other responsibilities in favor of staying connected to the game. With this knowledge, they work to make the games and social media as addicting and engaging as possible (Freed, 2018).

While many CEOs and executives fully support this ever-growing trend, there are some who have started to speak out against this increasing dilemma. A former design ethicist at Google, Tristan Harris, has disclosed that “the job of these companies is to hook people, and they do that by hijacking our psychological vulnerabilities” (Freed, 2018). Former Facebook president, Sean Parker has also stated that “the thought process that went into building these applications, Facebook being the first of them... was all about: ‘How do we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible?’” (Freed, 2018). Many of these executives are only now pausing to consider the effects that reach beyond time consumption, and they are beginning to call for some sort of regulation. One CEO, Marc Benioff, argued that “just as the cigarette industry has been regulated, so too should social media companies” (Freed, 2018). Technologies are an inevitable part of modern existence, but if there is any hope of saving our generation from a lifetime of addiction and mental issues, regulations need to be put in place.

Protective regulations have been implemented for juveniles on far-less damaging products than addictive technology; even things like movie ratings and dry

ice have age restrictions. As studies have shown that a child's brain isn't fully developed until their mid-twenties, there are already restrictions in place for these as well as other physically damaging and addictive consumer goods such as alcohol and tobacco (Kartchner, 2019). Barth stated that "given the evidence that the capacity to make good decisions and healthy judgments is not fully developed until after the college years, I would suggest that clinicians need to help parents engage in appropriate involvement in adolescent cyber life" (2015).

It is time to take matters into our own hands. While there may be renegades within tech companies whose eyes have been opened to the damage that is being done and who are fighting for change, the majority of companies, on the whole, have no interest in stopping what they have done. This means that parents, school boards, and health professionals alike must take a stand against this epidemic. But one question still remains: what is to be done? Many who want to affect change have wondered the same thing. Hanna Rosin, an author and editor for *The Atlantic*, voiced the concerns of many: "On the one hand, parents want their children to swim expertly in the digital stream that they will have to navigate all their lives; on the other hand, they fear that too much digital media, too early, will sink them" (2018). So where is the balance? Oftentimes, it is difficult for parents to know how to be aware of their children without being too overbearing

and, in effect, betraying their child's trust. It is common for well-intentioned parents to be overly intrusive which makes their child feel stifled or controlled in a way that can actually make the problem worse (Barth, 2015). Parents need to develop a healthy relationship with their children that is based on mutual trust. This will allow children to feel comfortable sharing their online activities without feeling like their privacy is being invaded.

Conversely, some parents give their children too much freedom and a complete lack of supervision, which can be just as problematic. Collin Kartchner--an internet crusader who has written several news articles, spoken to hundreds of schools, and even appeared on TEDx to speak about the issues with social media--has related this lack of parental supervision to handing a child the keys to your car with no training or guidance. Fatalities are certain to follow. One of the biggest tools for teaching kids how to use technology responsibly is to lead by example. In the book *Media and the Well-Being of Children and Adolescents*, the authors explain how parents' use of media is directly related to children's use. This, they explain, is because children pattern their behaviors after their parents (Bleakley et al, 2014). If parents want their children to utilize their technology appropriately, they must learn to do the same. Parents now spend more time with their kids than ever before, but the quality of time is lacking, so they are not "emotionally attuned" to their children

(Christakis, 2018). Oftentimes, distracted parents will misread or ignore altogether the emotional cues their children are sending and assume the child is intentionally misbehaving when really they are simply seeking parental affection. Additionally, screen time has been shown to make adults more irritable and impatient with their children. If this is the case for people with fully developed brains, one can only imagine how screens affect those who still have a lot of growing to do. The change needs to start with the adults; setting a better example by limiting their use of technology and social media will teach their children to do the same.

In addition to parents speaking out and rising up, children and young adults alike are starting to become aware of the issues with social media and have even begun to take a stand for themselves. A new trend has begun to circulate among the younger generation who are making the switch from smartphones to flip phones (Frishberg, 2018). With the ever-growing research showing a correlation between health issues and smartphones, many Gen Z and Millennials have opted for the old-fashioned flip phone in an attempt to get away from the “apparent ubiquity” and “dangerous pull” of smartphones and the apps associated with them (Frishberg, 2018). Many young people are recognizing the way their whole attitude toward life has changed since taking proactive steps to limit their screen usage. One young adult was able to identify eight distinct things that occurred when she stopped

using social media. Among those were increased productivity, greater gratitude for life, improved relationships with friends and family, more wisdom and intelligence, and simply being more happy and content with life (Agyekum, 2018). What is so remarkable about this is that this particular girl wouldn't be considered an addict, nor did she have significant mental health issues. She simply wanted to be more self-aware so she made the switch on her own.

Thousands of teens across the country have begun to follow suit and the results couldn't be clearer. Kartchner receives hundreds of messages every day from the students and parents whom he's addressed who have made changes to their technological habits. The lives of these students are being changed for the better. Teens who have been depressed or suicidal for months or years have taken the challenge to quit social media for a few weeks, months, or sometimes even indefinitely, and have reported that their lives have improved significantly (Kartchner, 2019). Children who had been showing symptoms of psychosis and other severe mental disorders that otherwise would have been treated with intense medications and other professional medical care have seen their symptoms completely vanish after following a doctor's instructions to strictly limit their online interactions (Kardaras, 2017). There is no denying the facts. Social media has wreaked havoc on an entire generation. It is time to stop the destruction.

To be completely clear, technology is not inherently bad. Sensibly, advocating for a complete removal of all technology or calling for everyone to revert back to primitive ways is irrational. The fact that technology has brought society further than any generation before is irrefutable, but there needs to be some type of regulation. Just as with nearly every revolutionary invention, the rules can't always be made beforehand. Certainly the first cars didn't come with restrictions on age, physical capabilities, or blood-alcohol concentration. Those restrictions didn't come until after numerous accidents occurred and lives were lost. Likewise, the development of technology and social media didn't come with any instructions or warning labels. Only now are the consequences bearing fruit, and they are far worse than anyone could have imagined. Perhaps in the future government regulations may be implemented and enforced. For now, however, the responsibility rests upon the individual. Each person must take responsibility for how they use the technology they have. This can come in a variety of ways: maybe it means simply reducing the amount of time spent mindlessly scrolling, or perhaps one could simply be more intentional with the activities they choose to engage in with their tech. Most smartphones have settings now that can allow users to manage their usage of specific apps and set limits to what they do each day. The bottom line is that technology usage should be intentional. It is a tool to be used for good, and must

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ENGL 2010

Expressive

Nannan Zhou “How to Evaluate Good Journalism Photography”

Professor Sterrantino

First Place

News photography is a news report on the events that are taking place in the form of photographic images. In the 180 years of the development of news photography, news photography of different eras has taken on different roles and values. Similarly, photographic images have always been the primary means of communication photography to spread information, with the aim of explaining events. The difference is that news photography in different periods has different criteria for judging. Especially in the Internet age, this is an era of data explosion. The huge data flow fills our lives. As publishers and readers, we need to think about new ways to evaluate good news photography. Three important criteria for judging are proposed, including photography techniques, the value of news, and the emotional expression of the photographer. It cannot be ignored that photography is a form of art. We can find some ways to evaluate news photography from how we judge good artwork.

180 years ago, on August 19, 1839, the French painter Louis Daguerre invented the world's the first real camera. Photography, a young art, is rapidly developing with the help of technology. Photography has

also evolved into different categories. One of the more special ones is photojournalism. Photojournalism is a form of news reporting that combines the visual image of a picture with a brief textual description to report news and disseminate information. I personally prefer Thomas Moorhead's elaboration. He defines photojournalism as the following four themes:

- 1. Humans interacting with other humans, in either humorous or dramatic situations, or humans, by themselves, involved in a project, working or playing.***
- 2. Humans interacting with members of the animal kingdom (and vice versa) or movies interacting with other animals.***
- 3. Natural or man-made disasters, such as auto collisions, and/or their aftermath.***
- 4. Various inanimate objects, usually man-made, combined with other objects to provide a message of some sort, usually humorous, but often very serious and thought-provoking (16).***

In 1928, German E. Salomon used a small camera to capture news footage, which laid the foundation of the technique for modern news photography.

From 1935 to 1955, pictorials were very popular, and photojournalism provided a large number of photographs for pictorials. In the 1950s, after the popularity of television, the role and status of news photography in the newspaper layout was taken seriously. In today's Internet age, photojournalism has become an important genre of news and an integral part of the news itself.

Different from before, the right to publish photojournalism in the Internet age no longer belongs to newspapers, magazines or other mainstream media. The rise of personal media gives everyone the opportunity to create their own photojournalism. Coupled with the rapid spread of information in the Internet era, people accept more fragmented information. It is normal to express a story in a picture. As a result, the number of photojournalism works grows extremely fast, but the quality is no longer guaranteed. "Only 100 years ago, people believed that what they saw in photographs was true. As we embark on a new century, a Virtual Age even, we know that many visual representations that seem to be true are not" (Newton 2). As a recipient or even a producer of news photography in the Internet age, we need to establish a standard for photojournalism. It is necessary to think about how to evaluate good news photography.

"Moreover, journalistic images fulfill four main functions: informative (communicative and cognitive), expressive, impressive and aesthetic. And finally – the

person who presents an image is the author of this image; his or her name and profession is an assurance of responsibility for and authenticity of the image" (Kedra 70). Based on his words, I think that good photojournalism should include three elements, including excellent photography skills, the value of the news itself, and most importantly the emotions that the creators want to express when they shoot. The use of photography skills can help us evaluate photojournalism. More than just photojournalism, photography itself focuses on the use and composition of light. Especially for the adjustment of light, it can even be said that photography is the art of light. The photographer can adjust the intensity of the light using the shutter time and aperture size. However, due to the different shooting environments and shooting needs, different adjustment methods need to be decided. Good photography skills can largely help to establish the aesthetic basis of the photographic work itself. It should be noted that photojournalism is different from portrait photography and natural scenery photography. News photography pays more attention to accuracy and needs to accurately express news events, not just for the beauty of it. This means that basic photography skills are one of the essential elements of good photojournalism.

As mentioned earlier, good photography skills can help news recipients intuitively understand the time, place, people and events of the news in a short period of time. These are also essential elements of the

news. The composition of the entire picture is the most intuitive way to help readers quickly grasp the key points. A good composition can make ordinary objects unique; on the contrary, a bad composition will blur the subject that the creator wants to express, which is confusing. The main point of the composition is the coordinated organization of each element in the picture, for example, if the news you want to express is an important speech in academia. Composition requires a focus on the speaker, not on non-academic audiences. Another example is if the news meets with the leaders of the two countries, then the leaders of the two countries should be in the middle of the picture at the same time, and any bias may lead to public opinion. Good composition creates more than just a pleasant feeling for the reader. It also helps the creator to express the main body of the news and the creator's own expression. Every reader has a different understanding of the same photographic work, because everyone has their own perspective on things. Composition is a very important factor in helping photographers limit the perspective to make readers understand the photographic work.

It should be noted that photojournalism with only superb photography skills cannot be considered good news photography. "News" and "information" are the kernel of the image, and the images are just the shell that carries them. If there is no "news content" in the picture, only the picture itself, there is no way to

give the picture meaning. Therefore, when we evaluate photojournalism, we need to consider the value and meaning of the news itself.

Basic photography techniques can help creators better express the basic elements and information of photojournalism. At the same time, these skills will also help news recipients to more easily accept what the creators want to express. In addition, the value of the news itself also affects the quality of photojournalism. The importance of this view is obvious. News photography belongs to a branch of photography. The judgment of the quality of news photography needs to refer to how to evaluate a photograph. However, the difference is that photojournalism is called photojournalism because it carries the meaning of news. In other words, photography without news meaning cannot be photojournalism.

For example, due to the large population of China, you can easily take a photo of a lot of people there, but not every photo with a large number of people can be good photojournalism. This is a photo of a tourist attraction taken during the peak holiday. Undoubtedly, this photo uses basic photography techniques when shooting, and it clearly expresses the message that the creator wants to convey: crowded. It is also a photo taken with a large number of people. This photo about the Chinese college entrance examination is even better. The college entrance examination is one of the most important exams that most Chinese stu-

dents face throughout their student life. The results of the college entrance examination will determine which universities these students will travel to complete their university studies. Students enrolled in a good university will have more employment opportunities than those who are in a regular university after graduation. Excellent universities also have more and better educational resources. These educational resources are very helpful for the growth and development of students. The importance of the college entrance examination itself is obvious. This photojournalism about the college entrance examination carries the attention of Chinese students to the college entrance examination to a certain extent. The same basic photography skills are used to represent a large number of people, but they differ because of the news value behind the pictures.



5-1 Holiday scenic spot by Debing Li



6-1 College entrance examination by Beijing college entrance examination

The final element in judging good news work is to consider the emotional appeals that the creator

himself wants to express through photojournalism. To explain this, we need to consider that photography itself is an expression of art. More than just photojournalism, the judgment of good photographic works should, to a certain extent, refer to how we judge a good work of art.

So what is art? “Art is a diverse range of human activities in creating visual, auditory or performing artifacts (artworks), expressing the author’s imaginative, conceptual ideas, or technical skill, intended to be appreciated for their beauty or emotional power.” (Wikipedia). This shows that the fundamental purpose of creating art is to express emotions. If this is a good work of art, it must express to some extent the emotional appeal of the creator in some respects. In photojournalism, this conclusion applies equally. In his book, Bowers describes the relationship between a photojournalist and a painter: “Art and photojournalism exist in what Susan Sontag has termed ‘febrile rivalry.’ Their moral and epistemological battles concern authenticity, truth, and the nature of reality. Despite this, photojournalism consciously or unconsciously attempts to emulate the painter’s techniques and sensibilities” (1). This undoubtedly proves that good photojournalism must express the emotion that the creator wants to express in a certain sense.

No one can forget the little boy who was lying on the beach. This photo was taken on a beach in Turkey. The little boy in the photo is lying on the beach. It

looks like he is asleep at a distance, but in fact, his body is already cold. The three-year-old child became one of the victims of the displacement in the Syrian war. The reason why this photo silences the world is because people do not only understand the pain that war brings to the world, but also the emotional appeal that the photographer wants to express: this is the consequence of the war, please stop the war. Photographer Demir said in an interview,

“I can’t do anything for him, can’t resurrect him.”

Demir told CNN, “I felt that the only thing I could do was to take their photos. Let Turkey and the whole world see it.” So Demir did what he thought was the only thing he could do: pick up the camera and start shooting. “Besides taking him down, there is no other way... This is what I did at the time.” She said that she took this photo to express Alan’s silent cry. (Oriental Morning Post)

“The British Independent” once commented on this photo: If the photos of this highly impacting Syrian child rushing ashore cannot change the attitude of Europeans towards refugees, then what else can change this? (Xinkuai News)



7-1 Little boy on the beach by Nilufe Demir

the most authoritative event in international professional photojournalism competitions. The first prize of the 60th WPP Nature Group was awarded to Caretta Caretta Trapped by Francis Perez. Undoubtedly, this photo has good photography skills and news value, and more importantly, it attracts people’s attention to the abominable turtle that is entangled in the fishing net. The emotions that the creators want to express through this work are self-evident: please protect our living environment and protect these neighbors who live under the same blue sky as us.



8-1 Caretta Caretta Trapped by Francis Perez

Coincidentally, the first prize for the Natural Group was the Rhino Wars by Brent Stirton. This set of photos uses three photos to express the author’s emotions. The first one was a horned rhinoceros crouching on the soil, and the corner wounds were still full of blood. The second is that the rescuer is holding a scared little rhinoceros sleeping in the rescue. One arm of the rescue volunteer surrounds the little rhino, just like protecting her child. The third is an illegal poacher who was arrested. Their expressions are indifferent and unsympathetic. They have no regrets about their actions. In front of them is an anesthetic gun for hunting

World Press Photo (WPP) is considered to be

rhinoceros and a tool for taking rhino horns. This set of photos not only expresses the author's sympathy for the victim rhinoceros, the gratitude of these rhinoceros rescue volunteers and the anger of those ruthless mercenaries who are poachers. More importantly, using these photos evokes the emotional resonance of the reader.



9-1-1 Rhino Wars by Brent Stirton



9-1-2 Rhino Wars by Brent Stirton



9-1-3 Rhino Wars by Brent Stirton

The voice of opposition also exists. Some people would say that the photographers who filmed the war theme had no pity at all. They could have stopped

the tragedies, but at that moment, they chose to pick up the camera and take pictures of the moment when the tragedy occurred. "The constraints of the photojournalistic professional identity, however, mean that artistic affinities are repressed, at great emotional and ethical peril to the photographers themselves as well as to the detriment of the people who they serve" (Bower 1). Bower's words very clearly expressed the focus of contradiction, but the reality is that many war reporters risk their lives to take pictures of wars. They are not indifferent. It is precisely because they want to express their opposition to war and their sympathy for the victims of war. The feelings they want to express in their hearts are so strong that they can support them without fear of artillery and gossip. They show the cruelty and ruthlessness of war in front of the world. They watch out for those who are out of the way to protect those who have been hurt in the war.

By analyzing the definition of photojournalism and the important role that photojournalism plays in the Internet age, it is understood that photojournalism is at an important stage of development and change. These changes are mainly caused by the huge amount of information in the Internet era and the speed of rapid information transmission. People will realize that creating great photojournalism is very important in the Internet age. However, in the new era, how to judge good photojournalism becomes a difficult problem to think about. After analysis and exemplification, three

elements that determine the quality of news photography in the Internet era are obtained, including photography skills, news value, and the author's emotional expression. The criteria for evaluating the quality of photojournalism must be far more than these three elements, but as the most important three points, they each bear the requirements of different aspects of the formation of photojournalism. News skills help readers to clearly understand the purpose of news photography; the value of news itself determines the core of news as news; the emotional expression of creators helps readers to resonate emotionally, and helps to improve the influence of news through news photography.

As a young artistic expression, news photography still has a lot of room for progress and development. Under different times and different needs, there must be different criteria for judging. But in general, as a work of art itself, the ability to express the emotional appeal of the creator is always one of the most important criteria for judging, and this will certainly not change.

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Nathan Andrew Wiggins “The Passion of Science”

Professor Christensen

2nd Place

One of the most widely-held beliefs when it comes to science is that there exists two kinds of people: those born with a natural inclination and talent towards the sciences, and those not. This notion can drive many a high school student sitting in his or her chemistry class, staring at the whiteboard, wondering what the blazes is going on, to conclude with a reasonable level of confidence that science is simply not for them. This can be a terribly discouraging and confusing feeling. I should know. I was one of those students. Luckily for me, and for every other science student who has felt those same disheartening emotions, falling in love with science is not determined by some random integer in genetics that magically endows one with scientific knowledge restricted to a limited few or that comes through what some would term as academic success, but is, rather, an experience that can happen for anyone. Indeed, a passion for science, obtained through making a connection between one's personal life and the world of science itself, will do much more to determine the success of a scientist than academic excellence.

My personal slow start with science was not

due to a lack of exposure – I was surrounded by scientists from the day I was born. To say that I have a few family members who are capable scientists would be somewhat of an understatement. Perhaps the man that started it all was my grandfather. He was a geologist by trade, and a good one at that. From a young age I really liked volcanos, so I wondered if I should set my own Brunton compass in that direction. But when I discovered that being a geologist often implied many long hikes and camping in less-than-ideal circumstances, I decided that field wasn't my calling. I considered biology, but quickly discarded that idea like the remains of my first dissection project – an unpleasantly-textured owl pellet which left me feeling more queasy than enthused. From there, I set my sights towards chemistry, where I had a brother as an exemplar who was both very skilled in that field of study and somewhat of a pyromaniac. His favorite pastime was finding different ways to blow things up. I thought that science couldn't get any more exciting than that. That idea quickly went up, literally, in flames, however, when one day, during a demonstration, my brother made one small miscalculation that left him in the hospital with sec-

ond degree burns. It seemed that everywhere I turned, there was just no place for me in the world of science, and I wasn't quite certain what to make of that. Just as I was about to lose hope, however, there finally came a day when I found my love for science in a place that I would never have expected. That day was the day I watched my first NASCAR race.

The general public sees NASCAR as the sport where drivers turn left for hours on end and that is viewed primarily to watch crashes. While they are not wrong on either counts, those who truly come to understand the sport present a slightly different view. The National Science Foundation put it best when they said, "You can't win NASCAR races without getting the science right. NASCAR teams push science to its limits to eke out the tenths or hundredths of a second that separate the winner from the also-rans... A racecar really is a science experiment on wheels" ("The Science of Speed"). NASCAR races are amazing opportunities to see both the scientific method in action for four hours straight, and the results of many years of scientific research. For me, the connection was instant. I quickly learned that racing, just like science, runs much deeper than it might originally appear.

As I learned about some of these deeper aspects, I understood science in a way that I had never been able to previously. One of these profound aspects that I discovered fairly quickly was the fact that race teams can make adjustments to their cars during the race.

This is necessary because the cars often suffer from two conditions at opposite ends of a spectrum that make the car hard to control. One of these ends of the spectrum is referred to as, "tight," and the other as, "loose." In her book entitled *The Physics of NASCAR: The Science Behind the Speed*, Diandra Leslie-Pelecky helps one visualize these two conditions by telling the reader to imagine driving a truck with no weight in the back. She explains that when the truck hits ice, the back end will want to swing around because of the lack of weight in the back of the vehicle: "This is what drivers call 'loose' – the rear tires have less grip than the front tires." Conversely, when explaining how a "tight" race car feels, she continues, "If the front tires have less grip than the rear tires, the car is 'tight' and doesn't want to turn" (Leslie-Pelecky 132). These two conditions can make a car extremely hard to drive, especially when racing for a win at 200 miles per hour. Thus it is essential that the teams constantly make adjustments to the car by distributing the weight in the vehicle, altering the aerodynamics of the car, or even changing the pressure in the tires to move that car towards a better balance between "tight" and "loose." It takes a lot of experimenting and fine tuning during the race to find the right balance. The more I watched, the more I found myself asking questions, such as, "Now how does that work?", and "I wonder if adding more weight to the left side of the car would solve that driver's problem." In the midst of all of these questions, the product

of my intense curiosity, I started to realize that I was seeing the scientific method go around a race track at a speed that absolutely filled me with thrills I couldn't put to words. The moment I realized this, suddenly, my science classes were no longer the classes that I dreaded each day coming to school. The moment that I realized how science was connected with my passions, it became the most important thing in the world to me.

This kind of a connection is not unique to an obscure boy who discovered a love for the science of racing. The consideration of those who found their passions in realms much more serious than that of the racetracks of NASCAR also proves to be very enlightening. A survey performed in 2014 by the Pew Research Center asked a number of Ph.D. scientists belonging to the American Association for the Advancement of Science reported that only "roughly one-third (32%) of working Ph.D. scientists said a main motivator for their career path was a lifelong interest in science and desire for intellectual challenge..." (Funk and Hefferon). That leaves the vast majority of a high class of successful scientists with a passion for science that was ignited in some other way than the one just described by this study. Luckily the results of the survey do not end there, for participants were asked to describe briefly how they discovered their love of science. It is interesting to note that the grand majority of these accounts do not indicate a love of science discovered in the classroom – many of them don't even mention

schooling at all – nor do they indicate that those in question seemingly came out of the womb with science engraved in their genetic destiny. Instead of highlighting inherent scientific genius and academic excellence, the accounts point more toward a connection between curiosities and, "the natural world," as the reason for their success as scientists.

One such person who participated in the survey in question, an ecologist, recounted the following experience: "One memory that stands out in particular is of a canoe trip to the boundary waters in northern Minnesota when I was about 12, where I saw carnivorous plants in the wild for the first time – beautiful, huge, floating mats of pitcher plants..." Evidently, these fascinating plants instilled in this future ecologist a curiosity that would blossom into a fulfilling scientific career. A medical physicist who responded to the same question described a similar curiosity, this one sparked when he looked through a telescope at a full moon for the first time. This event – which I can personally testify can only be described as awe-inspiring – coupled with the launching of several manned rockets into space at around the same time resulted in an inward take-off toward the sciences.

A passion for science can sometimes begin a little more explosively, however. In 2013, Peter Higgs was awarded the Nobel Prize for his work in physics – particularly, for his discovery of a mechanism that gives particles mass. Upon being awarded this pres-

tigious honor, Higgs described to reporters that he originally had no intention nor desire to study physics. As recorded by *The Telegraph*, “The 84-year-old theoretical physicist said that he did ‘not perform well’ at physics while a pupil at Cotham School in Bristol and found the subject ‘not very inspiring.’” The article goes on to say that, “It was only after seeing a series of public lectures on the nuclear bombs that had been dropped on Japan and others on particle physics in 1946 that he changed his mind” (Gray). Something about those nuclear bombs struck a sharp chord with Higgs, and the moment that he made that personal connection and became passionate was the moment that a future Nobel Prize winner would fall in love with science for the rest of his life.

What then is the difference between someone who makes a personal connection between his or her life and science, and someone who merely performs well in a classroom setting? There are, of course, those who will argue that while having a passion that relates to science is nice, those who truly go on to become the world’s highest caliber scientists can be pinpointed in any given class by sorting it by grade, not by a variable as indefinite as “passion.” Their argument seems fairly sound – after all, how do you plot passion on a graph? However, as one begins to analyze this view a little more closely, the argument starts to spring several sizeable leaks, forcing those who developed it to bail at a high rate of speed. The most effective blow comes from

Times Higher Education, which conducted a study that concluded, “Many of the UK’s most eminent scientists did not achieve a first-class degree, while some received third-class honours or worse...” Mr. Francis Hooten, who conducted the survey, further observed that, “Many of the most well-known scientists on my list got the lowest grades” (Grove).

My own personal experience may shed even more light on the subject. During high school, I was always what most of those who back the aforementioned argument would call a “top student,” performing consistently near or at the top of my science classes, academically speaking. Despite the fact that I knew how to perform well on tests and how to read a text book, my science classes were always anticipated with, I regret to say, a measure of dread. A career in anything science related could not have been further from my mind, and that did not change until I made my personal connection to the world of science. That change has altered the course of my life in more ways than I can describe.

Thus, discovering a personal connection is the most potent and effective cure for that student plagued with discouragement and disconnect in his or her science class. That personal link between the natural world and the world of science will soon grow into a beautiful passion which passion, in turn, will always trump arbitrary classroom performance in determining the future contribution of a scientist in any given

scientific field. To see the result of that personal connection, one need only look around and contemplate the wonders accomplished by scientists throughout history, all over the world, and marvel at the power of a passion.

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Gen Ed 2000

Expressive

Grace Sullivan “Sleazy Bed Track”

Professor Ferguson

1st Place

December's grey covers the sky. The backseat warms under His dark purple blanket He keeps in Max's car. We hold hands underneath it, my head is on His shoulder. His wet hair drips and chills against my cheek. He smells intoxicating. I get out of the car with Stuart and walk to the seminary building. My heart is not in this. For one, I'm shaking from the Rockstar and Strattera I had for breakfast. Second, I can already hear Blake's laugh echo in my ears. He's already texted me, telling me He misses me. I put my headphones in, the cords are stiff from the cold. thinking of what we'd give... I look up into the tree above me. I wished the sky were blue and the sun was out. I rubbed the back of my neck, feeling the small bump of my vertebrae sticking out.

“I'm going now!” He yells from the other side of my closed door. He's trying desperately to get my attention. I roll my eyes. I like Him trying.

“I don't ca-are!” I yell in a sing-song. I throw a blue hanger at the door. It's silent. I frown. I crack open the door and peer out. He's gone. I check my phone to see if Courtney texted me. She had about three minutes ago. I open it and respond. I tell her: *No babe, he's*

just annoying. I don't care about him. You know I love you. I glance toward the door and picture His curls falling over His mopey face. My phone buzzes again and I half expect it to be from Him. She responded: *I'm just worried. He's so persistent and you're not exactly telling him to fuck off.*

Survivors of sexual abuse have to overcome the damage of the past and to build their own, new models of sexuality based on a sense of choice, renewed self-respect, and a commitment to emotional intimacy. Sexual abuse creates specific kinds of problems with sex. Here is a partial checklist of the most common problems. You may want to consider whether any of these statements apply to you.

I walk in to seminary, pull my scriptures down from the top shelf cubby, and sit down at my desk. I pull out my red notebook, folder, and pen. Kids are streaming in after a few minutes. My heart is racing and I feel dizzy. The walls around me are tilting and the floor is spinning beneath my feet. I start bouncing my leg to match my heartbeat when I hear her. It's impossible not to. Blake's voice is loud. Her

laugh forces the pounding in my chest up into my throat. I open my notebook and take out a pen. I start scribbling wildly, stop, tear the paper out. I carefully fold the paper corner to corner and run my nail over the crease. I tear it along the ridge, and repeat. I turn my music up and make the smallest pieces I can make.

It's happening again. The waves. It swells up and crashes down. Rising in the tightness of my throat and breaking in the heaving sobs and digging nails into my legs. I put my headphones in and step down off the bed. I float to my desk and find the closest piece of paper I can find. I spit out the trains of thought before they can fall out of the sky. *I'M RUINING HIS LIFE. I'M GOING TO HELL AND DRAGGING HIM WITH ME.* I tear it out and it slides to the floor. I tear out the next blank page and fold the corners gently together. I turn up the music. *going back to 505...* I run my fingernail along the edge and back over the other side. I tear it up into the tiniest pieces I can make.

TOP TEN SYMPTOMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

1. I avoid, fear, or lack interest in sex
2. I approach sex as an obligation
3. I experience negative feelings such as anger, disgust, or guilt with touch
4. I have difficulty becoming aroused or feeling sensation
5. I feel emotionally distant or not present during sex

6. I experience intrusive or disturbing sexual thoughts and images
7. I engage in compulsive or inappropriate sexual behaviors
8. I have difficulty establishing or maintaining an intimate relationship
9. I experience vaginal pain or orgasmic difficulties
10. I have erectile or ejaculatory difficulty

These symptoms can show up immediately after sexual assault, emerge slowly over time, or come on suddenly, long after the abuse occurred. They can exist both before and after we've identified ourselves as survivors.

I sit in my usual spot for lunch. The cold stone bench laid into the wall outside the library. Kids pass me in the hall, talking animatedly to each other. My music drowns them out. Tanysha passes me with a new friend of hers, not taking notice of me. My old friends are in the cafeteria. First table to the right, next to the first door in the hall. I pull His hoodie closer around me. I text Him. I'm at lunch right now. Wish I could strangle some of these kids. I bite into my sandwich and it turns to cement in my mouth. I pull my knees closer to my chest and turn my music up. I try not to think about the assessment results. They should be back any day now.

I lay on the ground, hands by my sides. Mom stirs something in a pan. I turn my head all the way

to the left, back to center, pause, and all the way to the right.

“What are you doing?” He asks. I smack the tile floor next to me. He puts the chalk down. He’s drawing a Christmas tree on the blackboard painted panel in the wall.

“Try it,” I say, beckoning Him over. He lays beside me and turns His head against the ground and meets my eyes. He shrugs. “Can’t you feel your skull?” I ask.

“What?” He says it in that way that He does.

“I can feel the bumps.” I keep turning my head, lost in my world. The slopes of my uneven bones press against the cold tile. He just stares at me. I love to feel that stare. I hope He thinks I sparkle.

There are no easy answers or quick fixes. Sudden breakthroughs in healing occur rarely. In most cases changes come little by little, over months or years. Sexual healing usually takes a long time and involves real effort. It takes time to change established patterns of thinking and responding. Sexual healing is rarely as fast as survivors and intimate partners would wish. When you give yourself the time it takes, the rewards are well worth the experience.

Nadya sat in front of me on the floor. She asked me to tickle her back while she practiced her reading. A page comes through over the intercom: “We need

Grace to come to the office.” I stop and look to Mr. Lindberg. He nods. I walk out of the classroom and over to the office. I tell the receptionist my name. She waves me behind the counter and leads me into the conference. I feel my phone buzz in my back pocket. There are two men and a chocolate cake in the room. The cake is covered and untouched. It has those little chocolate shavings around the edges. “Do you remember a camp you attended in July?”

The air is clear at this time of night. I feel at home in the star-freckled sky. The lights on this playground equipment frame the sky in my peripheral vision. I roll my head on the concrete, feeling my skull rise and fall. The cold seeps into my brain. My headphones are loud. true love turned to sickness in my body... I knew He’d see me as He came down the hill. I saw his silhouette against the street light. He made it over to me. We sat side by side on the swings.

“You know your brother is the same age I was,” I tell Him. He says nothing. “That would be like if I now dated your brother. That’s the same difference. Don’t you see something strange about that?” Nothing. “You hurt me.” He kicks the mulch around his feet into a pile. His curls hide his face. “I think we should stop talking.” I walk home, chest collapsing. The waves crash. My headphones are full blast. I can’t hear how loud my tears are to the nurseries I pass. *I know that you’re not a liar and I know that you could set fire this*

day...

Begin your journey only when you feel ready for it. Go slow. Pace yourself. Trust yourself. Remember: This is your journey. So let's get started. You can repair the damage done to you in the past. You can look forward to a new surge of self-respect, personal contentment, and emotional intimacy. When you reclaim your sexuality, you reclaim yourself.

One headphone in my right ear. My left is listening to Mom in the driver's seat. She tells me the detectives came to me last and none of the other girl's parents were told they were being interviewed. She tells me it was probably Blake's mom just trying to get money out of the camp. I don't say anything, I just let her talk to fill the space. We're parked in the driveway at home. The car is easiest to talk in. Leave it in the car. She speaks up again, "Your assessment came back." I look up into her eyes. "They want you admitted to the intensive care unit as soon as possible." My face scrunches. The tears come spilling out. "I told them you wanted to spend Christmas with Dad and Lilly and you'd come back and then go in." I nod. She practically dives over the gearshift to hold me.

David's room was grey. Grey doesn't belong in August. The shutters on his window were pulled down. I sat toward the edge of the bed, wrapping the blanket

around myself. My shirt lay discarded on the pillow. I felt a pull in my chest. He sat back behind me, waiting for me to come back. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine." I labored with the words.

"I knew something was wrong, I could sense it. Why didn't you speak up? You know I don't care about this stuff." I looked over my shoulder at him. My face was blank. "I just want to protect you." I nodded. "Talk to me." He scooted forward and sat a safe distance from me. My face scrunched. The words come spilling out. I have a hard time saying no he made me feel so one dimensional I can't help feeling this way I know you have no intention to use me or harm me but I have this voice in my head telling me you do and I know I can say no but I'm just so messedupinsidelikeI'mnot-thereorsomething and I'm so so sorry

The packing list was open on my laptop. Three shirts, three pairs of pants, pajamas, a coat, shorts, a journal, etc. He was reading me items off the list. He was wearing my pajama pants. "This is best for the both of us that I get better." I try consoling Him. He had been panicking since He found out I was going away to an intensive therapeutic hospital. "I know, I'm just worried you'll realize I'm detrimental to you." He said that to me. Verbatim. I stood up from my suitcase and crawled into bed beside Him. I let Him hold me and I consoled Him that everything would be okay. He gave me a picture of Him to keep with me. He wore his

purple scarf tucked into His leather jacket. I tucked it into my Moleskine journal.

“So we’re going to build a map of what we need to tackle. Your target is the sexual abuse,” Taunia draws a circle at the top of her notes. She writes “sexual abuse” in the center of the circle. “Before we get to that, you need to think of the things you think are tied to it. The legs, if you will. These legs are connected emotions and memories to the abuse. Taking down these legs will lead us to your target.” I nod. “So what are some legs you can think of?” I look around the room. It’s not my usual room in this building. I look over her silver hair and red glasses peering over her clipboard.

“I can’t think straight.”

“That’s okay, take your time. If you can think of a couple here and you want to go home and write out some more that works.” And that is what I did.

AFFIRMATIONS TO HEAL MY INNER CHILD

1. The sexual abuse was not your fault
2. You are a valuable and good person
3. You did not deserve what happened
4. You are not bad because of what happened
5. Your feelings and responses during the abuse were normal
6. Your sexual energy is good and separate from the abuse
7. You are a strong Woman.
8. You can share your pain with others, and it will go away
9. You are not alone anymore.

Scott Wood “The Family Wall”

Professor Campbell

2nd Place

In the house that I grew up in there is a stairwell leading upstairs to my old room. Along both walls of the stairway there are several pictures of my parents, and eventually my brothers and I, which, in a way, provide a chronological depiction of the events within my family. In the first picture my parents are outside of a church building. My mom is garbed in a beautiful dress made of a reddish-purple fabric, long and loose. A semicircular, low collar made of a silk-like material, capturing the glistening sun and refracting the rays directly into the camera. My father’s hands are around her waist and, seemingly without effort, is lifting her up three inches from the ground. My father is wearing a plain white button-up dress shirt with a black tie embroidered with silhouettes of roses. He’s wearing his old Oxford dress shoes, which present day are decrepit, ruined from overuse. However, in the photo they’ve been recently polished, most likely by the exact same shoe polish kit that my father taught me how to shine my own dress shoes with. His silhouetted feet contrast the green of the grass, littered by dandelions distributed throughout the courtyard of the church.

The outline of the church in the background

is dissolved by the focus of the camera on my parents. I like it this way. You can’t see clearly that the stained glass that decorates the outside of the church are partially shattered, or that the old stone walls are cracked between the mortar of adjacent marble slabs. The blur from the camera creates a photograph that seemingly captures a religious couple who were recently married in a church of some kind, although this isn’t the case at all. When I was six, I wondered why we didn’t attend church despite the fact that my parents were married outside of one.

“It was just a symbol,” my parents said. “Just something that people do to show how devoted they are to each other.”

The way they explained it at the time made it seem like something in a fairytale; however, I now realize that their marriage had become, over the years, much like the old church in the background: a rotting heap, subservient to the elements and storms of life.

The second picture, which is hanging superiorly and a little to the right of the first, is a picture of me with my parents when I was about four. We were still living in the very first house that I remember growing

up in. It was one of those old-school houses with red bricks and mortar topped with tile. It was just like any other house on the street, but to my younger self it felt like a different place as you stepped inside, a place where my lungs felt deeper and my heart beat a little steadier. My parents and I were huddled against the stairs that led up to the front door of the house, which I realize now painfully stood out from the rest of the building. They looked if they were slapped against the red-brick exterior being nothing but an afterthought, too narrow and simply three steps of stairs falling too close to the front door. However, that's where we were, huddled together, barely fitting on the narrow passage-way. My grandfather was in town visiting at the time, so he was able to take a family photo for us. He perfectly captured my parents' and my red hair, fanning over our shoulders much like how a dust cloud settles after a sandstorm.

During one vacation back to Michigan we were able to go back and visit that old house that I grew up in. Disappointingly, the house appeared to have started inwardly collapsing somewhat, almost resembling a loaf of bread that was taken out of the oven before it had finished cooking. The yard was so unkept you could see tracks in the knee-high grass, most likely from the neighborhood children who were dared to search for ghosts in the twilight. It saddened me that time had implemented such irreversible deeds to the proud house of my childhood. It seemed that time

always damages that which is unkept, whether it be an old house or an old marriage. Nothing is safe from the wear of time.

Looking at the photograph now, my parents truly seemed happy back then. My mom's smile in particular was radiant. The kind of smile that opened like a spring flower, spreading wide across her cheeks and so genuine with just the right touch of shyness. Her eyes in this picture are the way I remember them before becoming tainted with red bloodshot veins after her sleepless nights arguing with my father. They were a deep emerald, the color of deep forest pools that you only see in National Geographic magazines, mossy green with the same hue as a pecan shell.

The third picture is of my parents, my brother Kent, and my eleven-year-old self all squished together on our living room couch. The wear of stress upon my father's face was apparent, likely caused by his long hours at work and the need to provide for his growing family. He was sitting, brow furrowed and bleary-eyed, unshaved with a facial expression that made it look like he was holding back a monstrous yawn. He had mastered a fake smile right down to the wrinkles on his forehead and around his eyes that could go unnoticed by the untrained eye. I can see now the pain which he was so desperately trying to hide, his joyful façade crumbling into a disfigured grimace. He wasn't happy with his work, with his pay, with much of anything really. The once delighted new father and husband

was now feeling the cloak of melancholy being slowly draped over his shoulders. When I look at the photo today, I picture my brother and I as the glue holding my parents together.

The fourth and last picture on the stairwell is the bleakest of them all. It was taken by a Walmart photographer with a generic blue background. I was eighteen at the time and by now all three of my brothers had been born. It was one of those Saturdays where you would love to do nothing at all, just stay home and relax from a stressful week of work and school. My father apparently felt the same way. My mom has a bad habit of not sharing her plans for the day with us, and out of the blue she announced that we were going to get a family photo at Walmart. My father was sitting in the recliner in front of the TV with the grace of a sack of wet cement. His body contorted to take the shape of the chair; his back being pulled down by invisible strings creating a slouch more befitting of a grandfather. He showed no interest in coming, so we went without him.

I remember when the Walmart associate said the famous lines, "Say Cheese!" We all must have done a terrible job smiling because she said it twice, a little hesitation in her voice. In the moment I found it a little comical, helping me to produce a smile worthy of a picture. I'm still not sure why, but this is my favorite picture of the four. Maybe its because my father isn't in it, as bad as that sounds. Perhaps it's because we all

have a genuine smile due to the photographer's unintended joke. Whenever I visit home and find myself on the staircase, I always take the time to study the four pictures. They act as a time machine. One glance at the second picture and I'm back in simpler times, sometimes wondering what happened between my parents that caused so much tension. I find myself wondering if it was just a normal reaction between two people forced to live with each other for an extended period of time. The photographs teach me a lesson: that good things in life will eventually fade out of the picture if not taken care of. I've also wondered why my mom keeps those pictures up on the wall, but I now realize that it's because of us kids, the four reasons that made everything worth it in the end.

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To the winners: Thank you for all the hard work you put into these essays and for being brave enough to share them with world.

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Sincerely,

Megan Warner
Scriblerian Committee Chair