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With the exception of font and spacing, all student essays appear exactly as they were submitted. My thanks to you all for your enthusiasm, for your exploratory thinking, and for your willingness to share your thoughts in print.

Amanda Smith, English Coordinator
Table of Contents

**First Place:** Ayasha Anglin  
**Second Place:** Sarah Hodge  
**Third Place:** Calvin Cunningham  
**Honorable Mention:** Ashlei M. Ayala

Lineth Angel  
Julissa Antigua  
Dejvis Bejolli  
Jose Brito  
Letícia Campos  
Maria Canela  
Jenny Charlestín  
Louis Diaz  
Ayaa Elgoharry  
Devon Farquharson  
Rogert Fernandez  
Teodoro García Jr.  
Tess Godson  
Atilana Gonzalez  
Kiana Gonzalez  
Hajrija Guster
Nana Gyimah
Kevin Huang
Raul Infante
Rumanah Kasliwala
Adrian Lawrence
Stephano Luzzi
Rosemary Manu
Samuel Milbin
Richard Miller
Hasudin Pehratovic
Laura Portillo
Carlos Preising
Dahiana Rivera
Anuscha Robinson
Brittney Robinson
Jerry Sebree
Anita Spence
Daniela Sousa
Gregory Velez
Tyler Washington
Kevin A. Yong
The essence of beauty is truth that comes from deep within and reveals the glowing, unshattered authenticity of an individual. At least, this is what we want to believe but we should recognize that we live in a world where the drive to be a real person seems inevitable because of the roles people have to play in society. Being authentic means being your true self and living an honest lifestyle, not only to please others but as a personal choice. Instead people live their everyday lives trying to fit into a world of such diversity that they tend to forget who they really are or what they really want. Several factors which help to prove a person’s authenticity include the things they say, the groups they are a part of or the person they think they are. The aspect of authenticity takes courage in these crucial times and it raises the question as to whether or not a person can really be authentic. However, believe it or not, according to Walker Percy in his essay “The Loss of the Creature,” no one can ever be truly authentic but they can only keep trying to be real. The ways in which someone can try to be authentic include making the right decisions and being around the right people. It also includes getting to know oneself and observing the disorderly behavior of humans in order to create a sense of change in society.

Decision making has a great impact on the type of life a person wants to live, whether it be by following others or just being themselves, and this in turn determines their authenticity. As teenagers, we all have a role to play in society and that is to go to school to get an education and obey those figures of authority that are set above us. Even though we know what is right, we tend to be rebellious and we live our own lives, abiding by our own rules. Percy states that “The highest role
of the educator is the maieutic role of Socrates: to help the student come to himself not as a consumer of experience but as a sovereign individual” (471). So it is normality for education to provide students with an open mind and help them to become independent in the sense that they do as they please, because that is being themselves. For some of them, their rebellious behavior proves them to be real individuals but others choose to be rebellious when they decide to follow friends or the media which grabs their interest. Those who choose not to be themselves but engage in trying to fit into a group or social class are not honest to themselves but they dare to be artificial by searching to find their identity living in the shoes of others. Not only that, but some people focus on living to please others rather than getting what they really want out of life. Percy states that “some stratagems obviously serve other purposes than that of providing access to being” (462). Therefore, some people get distracted from being themselves because they get caught up adhering to negative stratagems such as shallow friendships, popularity and the current trend that everyone else is after.

On the other hand, many people can learn to be genuine from the people they are around. This is because individuals always surround themselves with a group of people that matches their interest or whom they admire and seek to become alike. By doing so, some people become friends with those that try to be the ‘good’ person, and they learn from these people to live simple lives, not fussing over material things but just to be kind and true to others around them. From admiration for those human beings who seem to live in purity, one can choose to strive to become real because they decide to live a pure life, but this still isn’t being authentic because they are still trying to be like someone else. Percy states that “A young Falkland Islander walking along a beach and spying a dead dogfish and going to work on it with his jackknife has, in a fashion wholly unprovided in modern educational theory, a great advantage over the Scarsdale high-school pupil who finds the dogfish on his laboratory desk” (466). This analogy highlights the fact that some people are born a certain way while others are molded by society. The person who finds the dogfish and works on it is the one
who discovers what it is to be authentic and strives towards authenticity, but the one who finds it on his desk is the one who lives the life given to him by society. So he lives for what people want him to and not his true desires.

Getting to know yourself is another way in which a person can know if they are being authentic. Knowing oneself means to be aware of your limits and capabilities as well as your aspirations for the future. It can also mean to have a sense of your interests and the type of person you are. For example, you can be outgoing or maybe you like being by yourself. This does not come solely from what a person is used to but it involves dealing with situations and having experiences. This relates to Percy’s quote from Mounier which says that “the person is not something one can study and provide for, he is something one struggles for. But unless he also struggles for himself, unless he knows that there is a struggle, he is going to be just what the planners think he is” (471). In other words, knowing yourself can be a struggle and so it takes hard work to try to be genuine because in reality authenticity does not really exist because everyone has a flaw, but a person can spend their time trying to match up to it. Hence, individuals gain knowledge about their inner self when they are honest and are motivated to reveal their true personality. This is because when a person gets to know himself, he learns to love himself and not try to be someone else and that suggests that he is trying to live a genuine life.

The drive to become authentic involves being able to observe the awful behavior of humans in the world today and diverge from this conduct to create a more progressive era. The question of authenticity requires deep thought and analysis because authenticity is next to perfection and there isn’t a perfect life here on earth because of sin, so authenticity is impossible to accomplish while living on earth. However, as indicated by the Christian religion it can be possible in the afterlife. By observing life, a person can learn to live genuinely. Living and taking interest in the things people grab on to or the challenges that keep the world behind, for example vanity and violence, can help
someone to decide not to do the same as everyone but try to be real. Being in a zone of deep thought enables a person to see things differently in a somewhat authentic way as Percy states “with an authentic sight, a sight which is charming, quaint, picturesque, unspoiled” (463). These people examine the way people behave and how their behavior affects the world in terms of making life a struggle, and they try to be different from the world and be more concerned about being their true self.

The aspiration towards authenticity is a possibility which should be acknowledged by all, even though it is impossible to reach a state of purity in our world today. Seeing that many things such as groups, friendships and role models are the center of an individual’s life, it is obvious that it is not an easy task to live an honest lifestyle. Being authentic means saying what you mean, throwing away aspirations of fitting into a group and not making excuses about who you are. The processes of decision making, knowing yourself, meeting real people and taking life slowly all lead to an authentic lifestyle. So rather than making another face on top of the one God gave to us, we should be ourselves because everyone else is taken. Remember that real isn’t how you are made; it is a thing that happens to you.

Works Cited

Love is a four letter word and so is HATE: Romanticizing Violence

Music affects our society and it’s used to shed light on political issues, social issues, and even personal issues. Eminem and Rihanna both have history of domestic violence, and as they perform “Love the way You Lie”, they are showing the kind of Hip-Hop that social critic McBride, might approve, which consist of “socially conscious songs” (McBride 469). The song “Love the way You lie” by Eminem ft. Rihanna is socially conscious: it sheds light on domestic violence and exposes domestic violence for what it looks like. Yet this song isn't very effective in getting the audience to stop domestic violence, it merely shows the cycle restarting by ending the same way it started: Rihanna singing “love the way you lie”. Although the song addresses domestic violence it remains passive in calling for action; it can serves as a realization of what is going on in the real world, or song can be seen as rendering domestic violence acceptable to the audience by romanticizing violence.

Music ranges from message to message. In the song “Love the way you Lie”, the message portrayed is domestic violence. This is a social problem that sweeps through the Nation, whether it’s verbal abuse “spewing venom and these words” (Eminem ft. Rihanna) or physical abuse “you push pull each other’s hair” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). Eminem teamed up with Rihanna in this song in order shed light in Domestic Violence. In this song Eminem and Rihanna separate themselves from the action and they merely advocate this issue. Domestic Violence is when an individual is being attacked whether it’s a female or a male. Domestic Violence is a reoccurring process which affects any individual regardless of gender or sexuality.
The song “Love the way You lie” by Eminem ft. Rihanna shows different steps of Domestic Violence, which allows the individual to have a deeper understanding of what is going on in an abusive relationship. Through these stages Domestic Violence is exposed. The song progresses as the stages of domestic violence develop. Stage One- starts with accepting lies, Rihanna repeats “I love the way you lie” twice in the beginning of her song. Stage Two- The couples are in the honeymoon stage, “High of a Love”. This is when the reader stops and sees that the love he feels might be good or bad. As Eminem says “High of a Love” not High of Love, there’s deeper meaning to his words, he is implying that he doesn’t know what love is, she illusion by what love might be. Eminem refers to love that may not be known, and might not be true, but the thought of love is overwhelming.

Stage Three- When the individual feels tired of the relationship, and tries to leave but comes right back in the “same routine” (Eminem ft. Rihanna), “Where you going I'm leaving you No you ain't Come back We're running right back Here we go again” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). Stage Four-Happy Moments, “When it’s going good it’s going great”(Eminem ft. Rihanna). Stage Five-Bad Moments, “But when it's bad It's awful I feel so ashamed I snap”...“I guess I don’t know my own strength” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). Stage Six- Broken Promises, “I'll never stoop so low again” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). Stage Seven- Repeating on the domestic violence cycle, “Got that warm fuzzy feeling Yeah them chills Used to get 'em Now you're getting f***ing sick Of looking at 'em” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). Stage Eight-Both Members are in engaged in the fight, “Maybe our relationship isn't as crazy as it seems Maybe that's what happens When a tornado meets a volcano” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). In this part the reader notes the reference of a Tornado and a Volcano meeting and causing destruction, which refers to the fight that the couple had that got out of hand.

The couple has accepted domestic violence as a part of their relationship; they both have accepted the cycle. Stage Nine is the feeling like it might be too late to walk away, “I love you too
much To walk away though Come inside Pick up your bags off the sidewalk”…“If she ever tries to f***ing leave again I'mma tie her to the bed And set the house on fire” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). The spouse came back to the other spouse who has no intention of letting her go unless she is dead. Stage Ten- the individual doesn’t do anything to leave the relationship just accepts the lies and repeats the stages. “Just gonna stand there And watch me burn But that's alright Because I like The way it hurts Just gonna stand there And hear me cry But that's alright Because I love The way you lie I love the way you lie I love the way you lie” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). The thought that the character never left the cycle but rather stood in the relationship, raises many thoughts on what the intentions of this song could have been. The thorough description of each stage of domestic violence is done throughout the song, in order to identify with the audience. To give specific examples of the kind of relationship the audience might be involved in.

People might feel that Domestic Violence can be stopped after the first sign of an unhealthy relationship. Eminem says “But when it comes to love You're just as blinded” (Eminem ft. Rihanna) many people in these kind of relationships are usually so in love that they can tell apart what love is and what romanticized violence is. This thought allows the cycle to continue. The reader first hears Rihanna singing “Just gonna stand there And watch me burn But that's alright Because I like The way it hurts”. At this point is when we realize that there is something not right about this relationship. Which is later followed by “Just gonna stand there And hear me cry But that's alright Because I love The way you lie I love the way you lie I love the way you lie” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). The individual knows that their significant other is feeding them lies, yet the individual stays in the relationship and accepts the lies. This speaks on the behalf of people who are in this kind of relationship. It provides a reason for the individual staying in that kind of relationship. Their relationship has justified the cycle. The song starts off with the same lyrics as it ends with them, showing no solution to this reoccurring problem.
These artist are well known in the Music Industry, individually they have a wide range of audience but joined they are able to reach an even bigger audience. This song speaks to people who have been in a similar relationship, and people who have been affected by Domestic Violence. The song sheds light on Domestic Violence, but it isn’t helping its audience stand up against domestic violence. It doesn’t inspire people who are in this current situation to walk away, to break the cycle, and stand up to better themselves. And through the language and specific words it justifies violence “I feel so ashamed I snap” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). In this section Eminem includes himself by saying “I” rather than “You”. In this section Eminem gives a specific time in which domestic violence occurred, this can differ. Later on in the song Eminem speaks saying “When you spit ’em You push Pull each other's hair” (Eminem ft. Rihanna), here he uses “You” instead of “I”, which makes it a larger problem, is not only something he had done, but something that everyone does. By stating “You” he universalizes the problem. Through the word choice used in the song it shows problems that couples in an abusive relationship might come across.

Music is international, and through music a powerful message can be send out. In the song “Love the way you Lie” by Eminem ft. Rihanna, the message was on Domestic Violence, exposing it as it exists. Yet it isn’t effective in getting the audience to think a way out of those relationships. It doesn’t inspire others to end this kind of relationship; it provides the problem and offers no solution. Exposing a problem that affects our nation’s social life is very effective, but not providing a solution can infer that living in Domestic Violence it’s a way of life. The cycle repeats which can make the audience accept that kind of life. Many parts of this song suggest acceptance “You ever love somebody so much You can barely breathe When you're with them You meet And neither one of you Even know what hit 'em” (Eminem ft. Rihanna). Asking the audience to understand why he had to hit his significant other, suggest that is okay to hit one another because it’s a way of love. Romanticized Violence has been mistaken for Love. This part of the lyrics makes an excuse for
romanticized violence. Again when Eminem raps “You swore you've never hit 'em Never do nothing to hurt 'em Now you're in each other's face Spewing venom” suggest that even though you might try your best it’s something out of your control, Eminem feels it wasn’t his fault. Which is untrue due to many couple being able to restrain from Domestic Violence, the line suggest that even with the best self-control one can still be unsuccessful which justifies the violence in the relationship.

Learning to stand up for oneself is very important, at the end of this song Rihanna didn’t stand up for herself and continued in the path of domestic violence. This song exposed the Domestic Violence for what it looks like but it wasn’t effective in getting the audience to understand that Domestic violence is a problem. In our society today love is often confused as Romanticized Violence which only allows the Domestic violence to continue as a social problem.
In the 1970’s and 80’s, a never before seen culture sprouted out of New York City; Hip-Hop, recognized most noticeably by its self titled genre of music, has been fluctuating to match the ever changing United States since its conception. Though New York is famous largely due to the high volume of foreign cultures that have immigrated to the region over the last century, the Hip-Hop Culture began in New York and has emigrated into the world. Quite frankly, Hip-Hop Music is arguably New York City’s single greatest export; the music has evolved from the entertainment of block parties into a global phenomenon. Unlike Breaking/Dancing and Graffiti Writing, two of the four key stylistic elements of the Hip-Hop Culture which serve as visual representations, Deejaying and Emceeing, the other two key elements, combine together to create Hip-Hop Music. The music serves the purpose of being a voice for those in need, this purpose being the reason why Hip-Hop Music touched all parts of the world so rapidly. The music at its best is a tool used to relate struggles in life. Where ever there are inequalities between social classes, Hip-Hop Music can be used tell the tale. In modern times however, the music acts as an S.O.S. message for those on foreign shores more often than at home in the United States. Compared to the rest of the globe, American Hip-Hop Culture is continuously evolving to match American Society in its current form. The corner of American Society that uses Hip-Hop Music as a voice, now standing virtually equal in America, relates far more stories of extravagant success than it does stories about injustice and inequalities.
When Hip-Hop Music first emerged in 1970s and 80s New York City, it resembled a bowl of chicken soup, the kind for the soul. The music consisted of two parts: a mixture of the reality of life in adversity, and the spirit lifting beats and rhymes that brought communities together in the form of block parties. A revolution was taking place through the music, more favoring a Martin Luther King template rather than a Malcolm X type movement. Hip-Hop Music was depicting a dream for those who once had no vision of a future; the music was forcing people in adverse situations to question the consequences of being complacent about their situation versus taking action and responsibility for their own lives. The first generations of American Emcees, like Chuck D, recited lyrics proclaiming that the oppressed class of Americans must band together and “fight the powers that be”; while Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five painted vivid portraits of life in a ghetto, comparing the sheer madness of the surroundings and inability to escape to nothing less than a jungle (*Fight The Power*). In the essay *Hip-Hop Planet*, James McBride explored the domestic and foreign conditions of life that birthed Hip Hop Musicians. What McBride discovered on a trip to Darkar, Senegal is that the “music that once made visible the inner culture of America’s greatest social problem, its legacy of slavery, has taken the dream deferred to a global scale” (472). Decades after Grandmaster Flash used lyrics to paint life in the ghettos of New York, abroad in Africa and other places where there are still great divides between social classes: Hip-Hop Music is still the voice of the lower class, their reigning champ.

For Assane N’Daiye, one of the local youth McBride interviewed on his trip to Senegal, the music he made was based on his own accounts of struggling in life. The rhymes and verses that he translated his life stories into were also his hopes for success. Success for Assane and his friends, they depicted as the ability to aid their parents; “we want money to help our parents”, these were Assane and friends’ words to McBride, “we watch our mothers boil water to cook and have nothing to put in the pot” (qtd. In *Hip-Hop Planet* 471). That is what Assane N’Daiye and his friends describe
as success, the ability to live comfortably. The verses sung by early American Rappers about their struggles, and the persona of success they adopted to portray their dreams does not seem all that inconsistent with the Hip-Hop Music produced by the rest of the world today.

A lot has changed in the United States since the advent of the Hip-Hop Culture. The social inequalities that fueled the first American Hip-Hop Artists to rap are virtually eliminated in modern times. Following suit, Hip-Hop Music has been through many changes as well to get to where it is today; commercialization however, is the best description for what has happened to Hip-Hop Music as a whole in the U.S. between its beginning and today. Although there are still a number of artists that produce thought provoking and conscious songs, the majority of Modern Hip-Hop Lyricists create music based on what the genre’s consumers seem to want to hear: spouting lyrics that are full of violence, degrading to gays and women, and flaunting their extravagant versions of success. It is not that modern rappers lack ability, “a lot of today’s rappers have talent. But a lot of them are driving the car in the wrong direction”, proclaimed Last Poets member Abidodun Oyewoke (qtd. In Hip-Hop Planet 468). Some of the most notorious names in Hip-Hop Music today, 50 Cent, Plies, and many others, are guilty of what Oyewoke is describing, generating music that serves the sole purpose of entertaining audiences and flaunting wealth. The message sent by Soulja Boy and the rest of Mainstream Hip-Hop Rappers cannot be considered profound by any means. For this reason, a stigma is attached to current mainstream American Hip Hop Music.

There is no arguing whether it is good music or not, that decision varies between individuals, but Hip Hop is often viewed as senseless and vulgar. Even Hip-Hop Artist themselves often have negative things to say about the direction the music is heading in. Rapper Wale, in his song titled Lets Ride, proclaims that in order to get on the radio as a Hip-Hop Artist today, “just give them a song, but you gotta give them a song that makes you look like a damn fool […] just look as stupid as possible”. The amount Hip-Hop songs that make it to radio broadcasting with only superficial
meanings vastly outnumber songs aired that contain thought provoking messages. It is very possible though that the decline in American social issues, such as inequality and racism, can be given credit for the lack of social and political commentary in present day American Hip Hop Music, making it acceptable for such a drastic shift in the music to occur.

Even in Alternative Hip Hop, the defiant sub genre of Hip-Hop, the social issues discussed revolve around the absurdity of Mainstream American Hip Hop; ground shaking topics like civil rights and equality, although important, have become back burner issues given that they have already been addressed for the most part. The song Conflict Diamonds, by rapper Lupe Fiasco, is the best illustration of social issues that are relevant in Hip-Hop at its present stage. In the song, Lupe attacks modern Hip-Hop Culture, specifically Mainstream Hip-Hop, for placing a false sense of utmost importance on jewelry. Conflict Diamonds aimed to refute all thoughts that success should be measured in jewelry and other luxury goods. Instead, Lupe wanted to push the message that by glamorizing jewelry, diamonds in the case of the song, “the rapper was helping the raiders of the villagers, pillagers of the schools, Shooters of the innocent, torturers of the witnesses, Burners of the businesses, [referring to Africa’s dark Diamond Trade] and my bracelet was the fuel” (verse 2). Although he acknowledges that he owns jewelry also, “my bracelet was the fuel”, in that same phrase Lupe Fiasco is also addressing his awareness that his jewelry, like all jewelry, might be a source of hardships for someone else. His goal was not to convince the Hip Hop Community, and everyone affiliated with it, that all jewelry is blood stained and is therefore bad; he only wished to spread awareness of the consequences of advertising superficial objects as a necessity.

The next evolution in the American Hip-Hop Culture, as of right now, is unknown. The possibilities for new styles of Hip-Hop Music are endless, the music could even revert to an earlier form of itself; after all the changes that have taken place over the last few decades regarding Hip-Hop, there is no definite answer to what could possibly happen next in the Hip-Hop Culture. I
believe however, that American Hip-Hop music will follow the same trend that brought it to where it is today, taking into account the current social position of the Hip-Hop Community in America and conforming to it. One thing is certain though, as long as there are social issues to be heard about, Hip-Hop music will always be readily available to give a voice to those in need. For now, the majority of American Hip-Hop Musicians will continue to produce songs relating tales of ostentatious success and dreams of wild success. Although there are very few rappers States Side that still write thoughtful lyrics, they are backed up worldwide by those who still rap for the equality and freedoms that were given to all Americans many years ago.

Works Referenced

The Event That Changed Her Life!

Part 1: Story

The roses come in all different styles. Some are red, others blue, or maybe even two-toned. As a young girl, all you seem to notice is colors, shapes; or you imagine objects and shapes within your brain. Imagination rules the way you think and feel about the world around you. Never seeing the signs that say you might be destined for a fate that you were not ready to be a part of. This is the thought that runs through all parent’s thoughts, whether it’s because they don’t think their child can handle what’s out there or maybe because they themselves don’t know what’s out there for their children.

As a young girl Aubrey played with Barbie dolls, bears and other objects she soon realized were all of her creation, along the playground. This was the sole reason why she loved going back to her house every afternoon. This to her seems the only actual memory she has of what her house used to be. Whereas now it was almost like an empty house full of memories she can’t seem to remember herself.

Nevertheless, her mother was always supportive, never criticized her or even argued with her all throughout her childhood. A perfect place for a girl or any child to grow up in, until that day where it all comes crashing down so fast that you barely have time to breathe.

Throughout the years, Aubrey transformed into a teenager; “filling up,” as the boys in her school described the girls that came back from vacation, as if they were a new person. They never once noticed that she as well was making her mark unto this world. Ultimately she went from being
a good girl that always did what she was told, to being someone she had always loathed. Aubrey went from having long black hair to now styling her semi-long, mid waist brown hair into curls.

Having long straight hair never had appealed to her, and once she was able to do her own hair she vowed to never going back to having her hair straight again. She wanted to express herself and, with a hair style that essentially made her look boring, she decided to change it. Once black hair had turned into blue and black hair, then going all the way blonde, and finally arriving at the color that she thought made her most comfortable in her own skin; brown.

To all others who didn’t know her, she looked like a wild child, which was able to do all she wanted without having to deal with the repercussions of her actions. They never realized that she was just a regular teenager which had to obey her parents but was able to showcase who she was. Her clothes along with her hair changed. Aubrey was not the kind of girl who had tattoos or face piercings, but she was also not the kind of girl which wore preppy shirts, skirts and flats. Aubrey was unique to all others; she loved to wear jeans and regular shirts. Where in a normal day would showcase her funny quotes or things others said that she thought would express her feelings.

Aubrey is 5’2”, and with the unique body shape she has she wasn’t able to choose many styles to show who she was. She has boobs that other girls would go out of their way and get a surgery for. With a slightly chunky midsection that led to her small yet figure fitting backside. All other features were normal; blue eyes, regular legs, small ears and regular lips, nothing at all out of the ordinary that would mark her as different or weird looking.

Yet one day, as she was walking home from school, she noticed that something was moving behind the bushes. She never once thought she would encounter or at least come across a scene so horrible that it would scar her for life, that would change the very world she lived in, and make her look at everything in such different eyes.
This occurred a day of the month of October. She doesn’t quite know when it actually happened, but she does remember that it was the month for Halloween, and there is no other month in which this celebration took place.

After being in her room for two hours, listening to music, she noticed that the video that kept playing in her head was the one of that day. Even though this happened two months prior to this moment, she could still see it as if it was happening in front of her eyes again. She had tried to take the images out of her mind, but her efforts were always shot down by the images that emerged without her knowledge.

That precise day Aubrey noticed that it was going bad. Nothing she did came out the way she wanted it to. Her quizzes felt as if she failed both of them, when she knew that she had studied all night only to know the next day she remembered not a single thing that could help her in the quiz. Lunch was pretty boring and quiet, her friends only laughing at things that she didn’t find funny at all. When the day ended she was happy to be going home, especially to take an hour and do what she wanted before she had to get ready because she was going to go out with her friends. They were going to go to the movies because a new movie was coming out that day and they wanted to see if the advertisement for it really was as good as the movie itself.

Aubrey didn’t have a car and so she was forced to walk to school when her mom had told her that day that she could not go pick her up after school ended. Therefore she was forced to take a path which she knew was a risky way to go. People had told her stories about people getting killed and rapped there but after all the times she had taken that route she never noticed anything out of the ordinary, just someone getting high or sometime others buying drugs.

On this day she didn’t pay attention to the way in which she was walking and didn’t notice the sounds in the background. But as she got closer the sounds became clearer.
“HELP!!! PLEASE SOMEONE HELP ME!!!!” This was said in a way that brought her to have goose bumps along her arms. Although she couldn’t quite tell where that voice was coming from, she knew she had to do something to help the woman that was screaming out for her life.

“HELLO! Is anyone out there?” was all that she thought to say at that moment.

“HELP!! PLEASE!!” this voice said and Aubrey hated the fact that she couldn’t see from where it was coming from.

Then, as she was approaching a bush near the corner of the street, she saw the woman that was screaming. In the beginning she didn’t know what to make of the scene that she was now witnessing.

There in the floor she saw there was a girl, looking not like a woman but a girl of merely 16 years old. This surprised her and she stood there taking in the full scene. Making this event be wired into her memory so fast that she could hardly breathe at that moment. On top of the girl she could see this figure moving up and down in such a fast pace that it took her a couple seconds to notice it was a man. As soon as she realized what the scene was, she acted as only she had seen other in her position act before. Never had she encountered this event, but she had seen movies where this was the central focus of the movie.

The girl screamed “HELP!!” one more time before Aubrey’s arms and legs could work. She finally was able to move and help the girl get out from under this man which was hurting her in such a way that made her sound as if someone was killing her in cold blood.

Aubrey picked up a rock and smashed it against his head. At this impact the man fell and lay next to the girl with his pants unbuckled and his male parts being exposed on full sight.

With the man off of the girl, she no longer screamed but gave her a look that said all she was feeling to Aubrey. She had never seen so many expressions run across a person’s eyes before; scared, happy, relieved and most of all grateful. The girl had her pants well below her knees in which this
was fully exposing the area which was being penetrated. It took two minutes or what felt like an
eternity before Aubrey had the idea to help up this poor girl.

Aubrey gave her a hand, and when she fixed her pants, Aubrey held her close to her so that,
if the man would awake in that moment, they would both be able to attack and protect themselves.

When they had arrived at the other street, the girl finally spoke.

“Thank you so much for what you did. I didn't think anyone was around or close enough to
hear me. I was so scared that man was going to take me after he was finished to another place where
he would hurt me further. Again, thank you.”

“Don’t worry about it. I’m sure that I would have been in the same state of mind as you were. I
would sure want someone to come and help me if incase that would happen to me. Don’t worry
you’re safe now and I will walk with you to the hospital or your house if you like.”

“Thank you again for all you have done. I think that I will go to the hospital and from there call
my mom to come and take me home. If you don’t mind coming with me, I would be even more
grateful.”

“Don’t worry, I will walk with you. I don’t want that creep to be behind us and as soon as I
leave do something to you. If you don’t mind, can I ask you a question?”

“Go ahead ask me anything, I owe you my life.”

“How old are you? And who was that guy?”

“I’m 16 years old, and that man just came from behind me as I was walking home from
school. He took me off guard and I couldn’t stop him; he was too strong for me.”

This was what she remembers last because as long as she can remember, the rest is just a
mere blurry image. What struck her the most was that this girl was the same age as her and this
happened to that girl. It’s not that she felt superior to the girl, but although she was glad that it did
not happen to her, she felt sorry for that girl. She never learned the girls name but now Aubrey was
able to see that before that day she was a naïve girl who rebelled against everything, even her mom. After that day she couldn’t look at people the same, at her parents the same or even herself the same way. She had changed in a matter of hours, and she knew she couldn’t go back. Not to being a girl that knew nothing of what the outside world was all about. Now she had experienced an event that caused all her emotions to shift, and make her into a woman which would let nothing like this happen to anyone or herself a long as she was capable of stopping it. This made Aubrey shift from a young girl to a woman in her own eyes.

**Part 2: Analysis**

How do the typical stereotypes of women affect the way maturation stories are being written now? And how does the atmosphere we live in shape the way we interpret the narratives?

Women are most commonly portrayed as the weak creatures, the ones that needed the most help, while the heroes are commonly portrayed as men. The genre of Comic Books best describes the stereotypes between the sexes, where woman are the damsels in distress and the heroes are shown as men. Even though it’s not the only genre which plays the stereotypes, it’s the most common one that settles for men being the heroes of each story. This sets up the stereotypes and the form for writing in which all woman need to be portrayed as weak, in order to let the stories have a concrete message to sell to the readers. Whereas in Oates “Where are you going, Where have you been?” (929-946) the young girl, Connie, is the victim. This continues with the typical pattern in which stories are being written; having the main character be a woman that is naïve and doesn’t know what the world has to offer beyond her home. Meanwhile, in Updike’s “A & P” (967-800) the main character is a man that embodies the stereotypical way men are portrayed, that the men are always the strong ones that get to be the heroes of the stories while the girls are seen as the weak creatures that need protection. In the way in which my narrative was written, I decided to make my character become a hero, because she was able to help another girl from being harmed further,
proving that coming of age narratives usually have a stereotypical ways of portraying woman. Often the woman narratives are centered on a relationship while the men narratives are centered on a traumatic events most commonly dealing with violence. This is also supported by the backgrounds the authors have and their opinion of women and men and the situation in which their character will be placed under, which influences what their characters in that narrative will have face within it. This further suggests that most often authors write about stereotypical people in order to get a wider audience.

Novels are often formed within the same pattern, which contains a hero and a victim, and I decided to change the way woman and girls are seen in stories. Therefore creating a new side of narrative writing where the women of the stories are no longer the weak ones that need a male figure to rescue them. “Where are you going, Where have you been?” (Oates 929-946) is set up with the unique feature that although the event is being described in the moment in which it occurs, the reader can anticipate the actual event the character will go through. Oates by writing the story in this form depicts the stereotypes given to woman within our society. The style in which she presents the idea is quite unique because she includes background information about Connie and then settles into the event which her character will face. The reader can therefore make a conclusion about a future event based on the characters background. Whereas in my narrative, I decided to include background information as well, but because the main character is retelling the story herself, it guides the reader to anticipate a certain event while also tricking them. They are fooled by the procession of the story and believe that Aubrey will be the one in danger, not realizing that the tables turned and she in return is the hero of that story.

Connie is the victim in her coming of age narrative, while it’s also being described in the third person narration, where the way the description is being stated is in the form of a very close third person narration, only describing the things that Connie sees. While in my narrative the style
changes from being a typical third person narrative, where the character is going through that event at that present time to being a third person narrative in which the main character retells her own story as if it’s a memory. As I also include background information about Aubrey, the main character in my narrative, she retells the story as a memory, a replay of what that day felt for her as she was experiencing it. This way of writing enables the readers to get a bigger understanding of the situation Connie and Aubrey are put to face. The different styles of writing lets the readers attain a different perspective on the issues being discussed within that particular writing, because we are placed in that situation as we are reading the narratives.

When the story “A &P” (Updike 967-800) is brought into this comparison you can see that the basic pattern is also there where the male has this hero like quality, that lets the readers anticipate that he will be the hero within that story. “A &P” (Updike 967-800) is written in a first person narrative voice where the idea is that the main character Sammy is retelling the event he went through to the readers. Oates and I present the issue in the third person narrative to prove to the readers the basic outcomes of coming of age narratives about woman. While Updike’s narrative is just written to depict what the character wanted to let the readers know, therefore looking as if an ulterior motive was behind his actions. Because it’s not written in a close third person narrative the reader cannot really see how the actual moment changes the main character. In all, the styles are quite different but the main messages within them are the same, where they are all trying to depict coming of age narratives as they see can highlight that event in a powerful way, bringing to light the situations there characters go through other than in the original form.

This aspect also reinforces the idea that the backgrounds the characters have will influence the actual event they will have to go through within that narrative. Where the actions of the characters affect the outcomes of their story, in which the stereotypical story lines also come into view. Girls are typically showed as naïve to their surroundings, and the guys are shown as more
attentive to the things they encounter, in a way more aware and less immature. Connie has “long dark blonde hair that drew anyone’s eye to it” (Oates 930) showing in full picture the average look of the girls in the narratives being written now, where the beauty of the main character is seen by the readers. Oates with this typical description of her main character plays with the readers mind in order to let the readers acknowledge the things they have been doing wrong in their lives, therefore playing with the stereotypes in order to change them. Aubrey has “mid waist brown hair” (Ayala 1) which she styles “into curls” (Ayala 1), while I’m also playing with the stereotypes of the way that woman look, I didn’t include the typical characteristics which the main character has; that she has blonde hair and blue eyes, helped to show the wider image and effect the stereotypes have on the stories now a days. Even the girls in “A &P” (Updike 967-800) are shown as wearing “nothing but bathing suits” (Updike 967) when “they didn’t even have shoes on” (Updike 968), while the further full descriptions of the girls show the stereotype of woman fully. This is explained in the beginning of the story in order to play with the readers mind and give an accurate description of the place in which he works, while this helps him make more suspense within his story. All three stories play with the idea of stereotypes but they have their own way of showing off the characteristics they want for their characters.

My coming of age narrative was centered on the idea that the main character had the courage within her to be the actual hero of the story. Stories often have specific events which let readers anticipate what the actual ending or major event will be within that specific story. In “Where are you going, Where have you been?” (Oates 929-946) the main character Connie has certain characteristics that helps readers wonder what the event she will experience will be, which is to refer back to the stereotypical way in which she looks. “Gonna get you, baby” (Oates 931), when this scene is introduced into the story you can see the possible threat that Arnold Friend poses to Connie, which leads the reader to guess that he will be a major contribution to the event that will change the story.
Once this little description is given the story follows the same pattern found in most stories. Giving light to the stereotype that women are commonly seen as weak in some way, because the possible threat is coming from a man. This is also inviting the other stereotypes that depict the way men are seen in their coming of age narratives, where they are either the danger women are scared of or the heroes in the other stories, such as “A & P” (Updike 967-800). Whereas in “A & P”, the female is being threatened by a male character; while the hero is, Sammy another man, her “Prince Charming”, that will rescue them; generally portrayed as a man. With this aspect in mind, one can see that even Oates breaks that rule, and lets the ending be a guide into the imagination of the reader, because there is no actual other character described within the story that will come to rescue Connie towards the ending; just another cliff hanger where Connie goes on to an unknown world with Arnold. Where “the vast sunlight” (Oates 942) “of the land behind him and on all sides of him-so much land that Connie had never seen before” (Oates 942) but she knew “she was going to it” (Oates 942) was the last full description we attain of where Connie was going; based on the way Arnold was pressuring her to come with him. This ending can have multiple interpretations based on what the readers background is, making this a significant story, because although Oates wrote the ending in that way it enables the readers to come to terms with the ending she wrote for her story. This makes me believe Oates wrote the story with the purpose to open up the eyes of the many teens which believe in the fairytale love story between two people. Oates writes this story in order to get the image across that there are repetitive patterns in literature which shows the main character being in a hard situation, an in her narrative it’s a woman. In “A &P” (967-800) the endings also collide in the idea that Oates tries to show the event, but in the way the main character is spoken of is taken as if he has some hidden motives that enabled his decision to help and be the hero of the story, “I looked around for my girls” (Updike 972) is said after he says he “Quit[s]” (Updike 971). Then at the very end he suddenly realizes that he “felt how hard the world was going to be to [him]
hereafter” (Updike 972), giving a description of the way in which the hero of the story felt after he saved the girls by standing up for them. This is significant because it gives the readers more insight on the hero’s motifs, showing the hidden intentions of the main character. This aspect of the story supports my thesis because it shows a stereotypical way of why a guy might want to do something. Wanting something in return because he helped the girls in the store, playing with a common stereotype in which men/guys are seen in literature. Whereas in my narrative, in the end I gave the reader the actual ending that enabled my character to show her change due to the event she experienced. This lets the reader analyze further the way stereotypes move in our world and how the stereotypes shaped their way of thinking. Giving them an actual ending, unlike the other two narratives enables the reader to comprehend the change my narrative has brought to light, a new way of thinking about situations is therefore given to the readers after the event that occurs to Aubrey. Whereas in my narrative Aubrey reflects on her life towards the end and the other narratives leave it up to the readers to decide the actual reasons behind the endings of the narratives.

“Aubrey was able to see that before that day she was a naïve girl who rebelled against everything, even her mom. After that day she couldn’t look at people the same, at her parents the same or even herself the same way” (Ayala 5) this shows effectively how she changed after witnessing the girl being raped. Although I have stereotypes in my narrative, I also let the readers have more insight on her life after the event she witnessed. Therefore the ending was a happy one because while she learned from her experience it shows she also changed her way of thinking.

Whereas in “Where are you going, Where have you been?” (Oates 929-946) it can be seen that the main character Connie was able to make an adult decision based on the situation encountered. This aspect is up to the interpretation of the reader whether to decide if Connie by making her decision was a hero or just that she acted that way because she had no other choice. Although to me the decision seemed more of a necessary act to save her loved ones, rather than the
fact that she was the hero of the narrative. The personal backgrounds of the readers would help make them decide how the ending of the story actually was, whether horrific or happy based on their decision to make her a hero or a character that acted that way out of necessity. Nevertheless, the actual event which she had to go through marked her as a weak and vulnerable character. While Aubrey in my narrative showed the big potential women have in making themselves strong enough for them to be the heroes.

This leads to the idea that narrative stories are written according to your gender, where the woman are portrayed as the victims in most cases and the men are most often casted as the heroes. Therefore this creates an even bigger gap between the way both genders are seen as mature, even though men are also victims, but since this is hardly unlikely the position of the victim is given to the weaker creatures; the women. This leads the stereotyping to come full circle, because the girls usually have a worse ending in stories than the men do. For example, in “Where are you going, Where have you been?” (Oates 929-946) Connie towards the end leaves the scene with her going with the man that has just threatened her family, because she can’t see another way in which to help them. Whereas in “A &P” (Updike 967-800) in the end the guy just leaves off after quitting his job and he states that he didn’t know that that moment would mark the way the rest of his life was going to plan out. Giving off the sense that woman usually have the worse endings and the men get the less difficult ending with no harm done do them. This is to say that the men in narratives have it hard in a different way because certain events affect them more than it does to girls. Depending on the topic of the narrative the men have different endings than the girls do, but because Oates’ narrative ended in that typical way, it makes it seem more likely that woman get the worst end of the stick. In Updike’s narrative the ending is also predictable because all he did was stand up for the girls with the attempt to get attention from them, but the event was of lesser value. Not an actual drastic
ending as in Oates’ narrative and my own because the main character was a man, the hero in every sense of the word.

In both stories as well as in my narrative the way in which the characters are described add to the way we as readers interpret the story as a whole. “Where are you going, Where have you been?” (Oates 929-946) depicts Connie as a naïve young girl who although knows nothing outside of her home, spends her time more focused on men than to her surroundings, as well as does all she wants even rebel against her mother. When she comes home no actual authority is present because “their father was away at work most of the time and when he came home he wanted supper and he read the newspaper at supper and after supper he went to bed” (Oates 930). Here one can see that although her family cares about her the actual parent figures are absent from her life, shaping her into a naive child with no care of the world or her surroundings. Whereas in Updike’s “A & P” (97-800) the girls that can be taken as the victims in this narrative, are depicted as girls that dress in bikinis and don’t wear shoes, taking into account that those girls as well are typical naïve teenagers that don’t look at their surroundings. Not enough information is given about the girls’ homes, but one can see that this also makes a scene for the hero to once again be the male lead. In my narrative I decided to change this pattern, and even though Aubrey does begin as this naïve teenager one can see that this changes as soon as she encounters the event of a girl being raped by a much older man while walking home. I included this scene as she was walking home in order to play with the readers thoughts; Aubrey was supposed to be a victim in the story, but in the end she turns into the hero instead. Although I did add a stereotypical view of woman, which is the fact that the victim itself was a woman, I included the aspect that not all women are as vulnerable or weak like others. The many things we live through shape who we are and with my narrative one can see that that event she encountered changed her and the way she sees the world, with more mature eyes. In a way giving the reader more information as to how that event changed her life than the other narratives gave
their readers. Similar arguments can be made about Connie because as she was leaving with Arnold she states that she saw a new world in back of him. Giving off the idea that she was no longer that naïve girl she was before, because now her eyes opened to all the truths of her life.

In the narrative I wrote, the actual event proved that although women are seen as weak creatures they can band together and create a united front. In this story Aubrey was shaped into a character which, even though knew nothing of the outside world, was able to make a decision to help someone in the need of a hero. Reinforcing the idea that woman can be the heroes of their own lives. The stylistic way in which I was able to write the narrative was to present the idea as if the character herself was retelling the event which shaped the rest of her life. Enabling the reader to get an idea of what the character might have to experience. In this way the actual event once presented would cause the reader to over think what the reasons where that Aubrey in the end was the hero and not the one being rescued.

This is a most effective strategy because although some stories cause the readers to anticipate certain things based on the other stories they have read that lead up to that ending. Creating a new way to see the way the roles of woman are being seen. No longer are they the weak ones but the ones that the guys need to watch out for, where they can protect themselves and others in similar situations. First off, the character gets pictured as this person whom is so innocent that she can barely notice the world she lives in, let alone be put up into a situation that will prove she can truly be a hero. Many other situations can be described in order to write a coming of age narrative, but they all have to obtain at least a stereotypical character in order for the actual narrative to work. Therefore working with the stereotypes already established in our world in order to change them and write new coming of age narratives that hold no stereotypes within them.
Work Cited:


In today’s society it is very important to acknowledge the connection between education and writing at the university level and in the world. In my last essay I mentioned how education is significant because it encourages students to gain more knowledge, which can help them succeed in their career. Being able to manage a social life is also important because it is essential to connect with many different networks and to take advantage of all the opportunities that are out there. Lastly technology also plays a key role in education at university level, because in one way it makes learning much easier, but it can also hinder and distract the students from the real task at hand, which is learning. Writing is a key aspect of all these ideas. Writing and education go hand in hand because it helps to communicate and share ideas that are taught in class. It also enables people to communicate socially and through technology. Without writing it would be very difficult to connect with people through networks like Facebook, email, Twitter and the Internet in general. Writing is a major component of university education as well as the world, because it helps students communicate better, it allows them to be creative as well as to think critically.

The first word that comes to my mind when writing is mentioned is communication. Communication is a very vague word that can be interpreted in many different ways, but for the purpose of this essay, it focuses on informing, persuading, and describing ideas. The writer Edward Hoagland wrote an essay titled “What an Essay Is”. In this essay he writes about his ideas of what a writer should and should not do. Hoagland has a clear definition of what an essay is and the purpose that it serves. “Essays are how we speak to one another in print—caroming thoughts not merely in order to convey a certain packet of information, but with a special edge or bounce of personal character in a kind of public letter”(Hoagland 141). What Hoagland means is that essays and writing
in general are used not just to communicate ideas, but also to share the writer’s own ideas and interpretations of the topic. The purpose of writing is to share and express a person’s ideas in a way that can be communicated. Hoagland makes a point that it is important to listen to what people have to say, because this type of communication can generate new ideas. “Even if we think the author is telling us the earth is flat, we might want to listen to him elaborate upon the fringes of his premise because the bristle of his narrative and what he’s seen intrigues us”(141-142). Listening to people’s views and ideas is an important part of communication, because this way people learn to acknowledge others’ opinions and to consider them and maybe even accept them. Writing can be written in different point of view; for example according to Nancy Mairs it can be from the author’s point of view or the character’s. “For simplicity’s sake, we assume that the voice in a work is that of the writer (in the case of nonfiction) or one invented by her (in the case if fiction)”(Mairs 168). Sometimes the authors use the characters to portray their own ideas, but the reader is not aware of the fact that the author is trying to communicate their own beliefs and personal ideas through their characters. Communication is a significant part of writing at the university level because it allows us to share our ideas. By sharing these ideas, this can expand not only our knowledge, but also our acceptance of other ideas.

Creativity is an essential part of writing, because without creativity students’ writing would not be unique and noteworthy. If everyone had the same ideas about writing, there would be no point in expressing our ideas if everyone thinks the same way. The author Langston Hughes has his own tips on how to be a bad writer, which are very true, but ironically his goal is for the reader to do the opposite in order to be a good writer. One of his tips is specifically using details to develop the character’s personalities. “Never characterize characters. Just name them and then let them go for themselves. Let all of them talk the same way. If the reader hasn’t imagination enough to make something out of cardboard cut-outs, shame on him!”(Hughes 146). Hughes uses irony to tell the
reader to do the opposite of what he is saying. What Hughes really wants is for the writers to fully
develop their characters and to create a voice for them. It is important for them to have a voice,
because it makes what the writing more captivating and allows them to relate to the characters
making the story more enjoyable. Another author, George Orwell wrote an essay which list the four
reasons for writing. Reason number two discusses the appealing aspects of writing. ”Pleasure in the
impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story”
(Orwell 521). Taking pride in ones own work is necessary because it shows that you believe in your
ideas and creativity. By being creative you can inspire others with your work, which can develop new
concepts. The writer E.B White has many interpretations of an essayist and how they should act.
White focuses on the way that an essayist acts and how he/she should behave, but he does not tell
the reader what an essayist should write about. “There are as many kinds of essays as there are
human attitudes or poses, as many essay flavors as there are Howard Johnson ice creams”(White
276). White is trying to say that creativity is the key to writing and that there are endless ideas of
what essays can be about. Imagine how boring the world would be if everyone thought the same
way, and if there was no creativity, the world would be extremely dull. As you can see creativity is
necessary in writing because without it, we would have no unique ideas to challenge and to interpret.
This would mean that there is no purpose for education because everyone would already know the
basic skills required.

Lastly in order to interpret and challenge ideas in writing critical thinking is required. It is
important to argue about ideas and themes in writing because this helps develop other ideas and it
creates other possible ways of understanding the main themes in writing. George Orwell encourages
his readers to challenge and questions his concepts. “Desire to push the world in a certain direction,
to alter other people’s idea of the kind of society that they should strive after”(Orwell 522). I believe
that today’s society can be considered open-minded; and I think that writing is meant to convey
people’s ideas and opinions, which allows others to form their own opinions. What Orwell is trying to say is that writing can be persuading enough that it alter peoples’ principles. Earlier I mentioned how Hoagland knows exactly what the purpose of an essay is; now he mentions how the reader’s interpretation is what matters when reading an essay. “You multiply yourself a writer, gaining height as though jumping on a trampoline, if you can catch the gist of what other people have also been feeling and clarifying it for them” (Hoagland 141). The quote illustrates how when the reader clarifies ideas, they are usually inferring the ideas in their own way. Even though the author might want the reader to think one thing, the reader might discover a different meaning in the text. Critical thinking is crucial when interpreting people’s positions because sometimes you might agree with the writer, but other times you may disagree. When disagreement occurs it is essential to be open-minded and to consider all ideas before rejecting or judging them. The writer Richard Rodriguez has similar tenets. “I don’t think we should make people feel settled. I don’t try to be a gadfly, but I do think that real ideas are troublesome. There should be something about my work that leaves the reader unsettled” (Rodriguez 228). This statement shows how Rodriguez wants the reader to test him and his viewpoints; he wants the reader to have questions unanswered after reading his writing. This results in critical thinking because the reader has to decided for themselves how they feel about the claim the writer has made. Critical thinking is an ideal skill to learn especially in college because it helps develop your mind and your way of thinking and processing ideas. It is not just a valuable skill in education but in life as well.

Overall writing and education are essential concepts that are required in college and in the world in order for people to be fully developed as intellectuals. Communication, creativity, and critical thinking are all key ideas that further prove the importance of writing in education. Communication and sharing ideas is essential in today’s fast-pace society because it is what keeps everyone involved in what is happening in the world. Creativity allows students to express
themselves in any way in order to be heard and to get their ideas across. Finally critical thinking is a skill used beyond the university, it is a life skill that can be helpful in certain situations. There is no doubt that education would be worthless without writing and that writing would be meaningless without education.

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Everyone wants to be happy. Why not? It certainly beats being miserable. The United States has specially created this idea that everyone should seek out happiness, also referred to as the “American dream” and the pursuit of happiness. Happiness is not a mental location that people should desire to reach. Happiness is the journey of our lives, the paths we choose, and the people we surround ourselves with. Happiness can be many things to different people in American society, but for the most part the pursuit of happiness is looked as the pursuit of money because people believe that money can buy happiness. Others are led by society to believe that love is the ultimate key to happiness. We see love as a big part of TV shows and now even action movies have an underlining love story. The love of others and God, the backbone of our lives, is essential for human survival. In actuality, gaining riches is only one of the components of happiness; it takes a personal relationship with God and loving relationships altogether to complete the pursuit of happiness.

Since the beginning and more so now, society has accustomed people to believe that only money can bring happiness or buy it if needed. My results were not a surprise; when I thought about happiness I made a list of things that make people in general happy. In the end, I noticed that all of the things could fall into one of the three categories above. Jon Gertner explains in his research driven essay that “[...] for the average person, the obstacle between them and happiness is actually getting the future they desire” (Gertner 399). When we think about our future and how we picture our lives in perhaps ten years, the first thing that usually comes to mind is money or prosperity. Whether it is a good job, a big house with a white picket fence or just money, it is sometimes difficult for people to achieve these things. First, the person must know him or herself and set realistic goals for their future. For example, if you are student with a 1.2 GPA applying to a college
that requires at least a 2.0, the chances are you won’t get in. A more realistic goal would be to start in a community college, obtain a higher GPA, and then transfer into the school of your choice. One of the reasons people believe money causes happiness is because it gives a sense of accomplishment once acquired. People work hard to earn their money, in order to provide for their family and/or just enjoy for themselves. Once people can get their minds set on what type of job or education they want, they can go and pursue it and only then will they enjoy the riches that follow.

Truly there is only one way in which money could buy happiness according to Professor Elizabeth Dunn from the University of British Columbia. In her research Dunn found that “Regardless of how much income each person made, those who spent money on others reported greater happiness, while those who spent more on themselves did not” (“Money Buys Happiness When Spent on Others”). That is not say that money isn’t important or a basic need for survival because it clearly is, but it is not as powerful as we think when it comes to happiness. Giving on to others is far more satisfying than keeping all the money for oneself. In other words, making others happy will in turn make the giver happy as well. Let’s not forget that no money would create a completely opposite outcome than the one we are looking for, happiness. No money or insufficient funds lead to stress and discouragement. The key word is “sufficiency”, how much is just enough? Sufficiency is enough to meet financial needs such as mortgage, cable bill, gas bill, etc. In the case that we have more than sufficient funds people should refer back to Dunn’s conclusion on happiness and partake in the gift of giving. Regardless, without hard work there is no satisfaction, no sense of accomplishment, and no happiness. I agree with Dunn, one person can have all the money in the world but it’s about how he or she spends his or her money, charity, or self greed. Money alone can’t keep people happy forever, money is spent, invested, and will eventually run out. What happens then? There must be more to life than just “hustle and flow”.
Consider this scenario, all the money in the world has run out and everyone is poor? In this situation, some people would feel helpless and in distress. Without money how can people be happy? The answer is God. Church and religion alone can give moral support and fellowship in the situation above, but the church won't give people happiness, God will. He works in mysterious ways, in the midst of our troubles; He is our very present help, support, and joy. God is the owner and creator of all things; He owns everything and provides to our needs accordingly. For a believer like myself, there is no greater happiness than the one God provides, but one can only obtain it through salvation and a personal relationship with God. In Ecclesiastes 3:12 the word of God says, “I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live” (NKJ). The word of God also states in Ecclesiastes 5:19 that “[…] when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work- this is a gift of God” (NKJ). In other words, God knows that we desire to be happy and He alone can make available those things that make us happy.

I have evidence in my testimony that proves God’s happiness to be true. I remember a time when I called out to the Lord and asked him to see my family through a struggle. We were looking for a new apartment to live in when I fell in love with an apartment located on the second floor of a two family home. I was almost obsessed; I knew that this bigger and more comfortable apartment would bring happiness to my family. I prayed to God every night asking that He would allow this apartment to be available to my family because it was out of our price range. In the end, Jehovah-Jireh (one of the many names of the Lord, it means “God our provider”) answered my prayers and even softened the heart of our landlord to make the rent more affordable for my family. Only God the owner of heaven and earth can provide such happiness in our lives. God provided my family with our new home, something material, and also allowed us to enjoy it, God provided this happiness.
Lastly, love completes the pursuit of happiness. The love and acceptance of others is essential for human social survival and most importantly, in this case, happiness. In American society, love is widely recognized as a source of happiness. Love is like a drug; everyone wants it and seeks it. Americans are addicted to that feeling of happiness and joy they gain from this love. We are introduced to this drug the day we take our first breath. Our family showers us with hugs, kisses and other signs of affection, in most cases this love lasts forever. Caffeine is an example of a drug that like love is mostly good for you. Caffeine has recently been associated with the prevention of cancer. It also helps give people a boost of energy to carry them through a busy day. Like caffeine, which is necessary for a great part of America’s working society, love is necessary for the happiness of people. Society is seeking this “high” called happiness only love can give. When I first came to the United States with my family I didn’t know anyone. During that time I only had my family for companionship and support. The love of family is very important, since people spend so much time with their family growing up they ultimately serve as an example of what a happy environment is and how you can recreate that for your own children in the future.

Friends are also an example of love. As philosopher Aristotle said “In poverty and other misfortunes of life, true friends are a sure refuge” (Collingwood). Who do people usually turn to when they have family, or boyfriends/girlfriend problems? When people need help who do they go see? The answer is friends. It is true that we tend to use our friends as our personal diaries in good times and bad, not only to release feelings and emotions, but also in search of comfort. Sometimes we can’t run to family members with certain problems because they would not be able to understand or relate, that is why we have friends. During my sophomore year of High School one of classmates committed suicide. Administration gathered his closest friends in the cafeteria to tell us the news about Tommy’s death, all of us were devastated. Naturally, we turned to each other for support and comfort and became even closer. Friends and family members provide moral support and good
advice in any type of situation which in turn fills us with happiness and joy. Overall friends and family make us happy by always being there for us through hardships, as well as the good times. Imagine not having anyone at all, no family and no friends, would you be happy in the same situation? I believe the answer is no. I know personally that if my friends and family hadn’t been there to hold my hand through Tommy’s wake and funeral I would have completely broke down and it would have taken me longer to deal with with the idea that Tommy wasn’t coming back to school and that I would not see his smiling face anymore.

In addition to the love of family and friends the love of a man or woman is some cases equally as important as the love of family. In today’s society being single is no longer “in”; now people turn to the American dream for a “guide” to happiness. In this guide one will find some familiar goals you may already have set for oneself such as a great job, a nice big family house, children and most importantly a life partner to share it all with. Before the 17th century love had a different meaning. People back then married for financial or social status and marriages were negotiations between families. Today we are free to choose who we want to share the rest of our lives with but society puts pressure in finding that person quickly and ultimately. It takes two people to start a life and a family; it is a team effort where both parties share the responsibility. The shared load, the sense of partnership and love create happiness in a relationship between two people, husband and wife. Of course not every relationship is perfect and in every marriage there will be ups and downs but with time they will be resolved or work themselves out. As long as the love in the relationship is real and genuine there will always be happiness (Kipnis 750).

Based on these examples, money alone can’t buy people happiness. It takes more than just finances to carry out a person’s happiness through life. As long as people have money they will have a house, a car, a big TV and other things known to make people happy. As long as people have God they will have joy, God’s love and guidance and more happiness. And lastly, as long as people have
the love of family and others they will have support, shelter and even more happiness. Alone, these components would not produce nearly enough happiness for that person but when put altogether I can assure people will have the happiness they desire for their lives.

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There are some questions in life that prove if someone is happy or if they are misjudging the things that they want. Those questions are simple such as are you happy right now, what makes you happy, and what do you expect will make you happy? I believe that it’s a combination of things that make a person happy not just one material thing, joyous action, or person. At this stage in my life I am very happy, because everything has led me to this point of making it to college. The things that are and have been making me happy are experiencing unexpected events that impact my life positively, spending time with my family, and understanding and learning new things that expand my perspectives.

I have experienced many situations that have lead to me to an unexpected outcome, which have affected me positively. The cliché “It’s the little things in life that make us happy,” in my opinion is correct. Things that we do not expect to happen that brighten up our day are the things that we did not know could make us happy. Things such as a call from a family member, a hug when you are angry, and noticing a rainbow are experiences that we never strived to achieve. These things are able to make us happy, because we never wanted them. If we wanted them then we could have a chance to fail at getting them and feel bad. It is the things that we do not try to achieve or spend an excess amount of time to complete that make use truly happy, because we do not think about them.

People try to achieve financial success for so many reasons, but the main one is to support and please their family. Spending time with my family as for many others is the main purpose of all our turmoil. I believe that too much time is wasted working and stressing over things that could be used to spend moments and create new experience with our families. The pursuit of happiness is
considered futile in many perspectives, because many people believe that they will be happier when they are successful. Success is defined differently for each person it can mean owning a house, having a good job, and sometimes it means having a chance to be with a family member that is ill. Some parts of society do not realize that they reason why they are working is to support the ones that they care about. Whether it is someone’s mother, father, brother, or sister we, as a society consider our family as the most important thing that contributes to our happiness.

It is said that “variety is the pleasure of life,” and learning new things in my perspective is something that creates bliss in my life. Striving to learn and understand new things in various topics fulfills my curiosity and renews my point of views. Being able to come to the University of Connecticut allows me to expand my knowledge and pursue a career in engineering. All of my past achievements and efforts, as well as the efforts of others have led me to enter college. This balance of all these things makes me a truly happy person.
Some people ask, “What is happiness?” Happiness is a feeling that people get when they are content with results from life. The results of getting rid of some stress, finding a new job, graduating from college, having a new family, or even owning a new car can bring some people happiness. The question is, why does happiness play an important role in living? The simple answer is, to make life worth living. Being happy makes living fun and enjoyable rather than boring and miserable. Some people make searching for happiness a mission from the beginning of life until the last second of their life. As a baby some people seek happiness when their parents make them smile but, as they begin reaching adulthood they try to find happiness in different things. They seek jobs that pay them a lot of money, they want power over others, and they even wish for land where only they were to live. What these people do not realize is that having these things will not make them happy. These things will just temporarily please their mind and never make them truly happy. For example, these people can have jobs that pay them a lot of money but it does not necessarily mean that they are happy because they can hate the hours that they work or hate their boss. They can also have the power to do whatever they want to do but there is no point in having power if everyone else is just going to hate them. As well as, they can have land for themselves but then where is the fun in having land for oneself? It would be awkward being by themselves with no one to have fun with. Aside from these things, having close connections with family, pursuing personal dreams, and living healthy are things that will make these people happy not these fake images that people think will make them happy.

During the early childhood ages, some people do not realize how important it is to have someone to be with them side by side through the fun times and the tough times. It is not until the
later stages in life when they begin to realize it. Personally at this moment I feel that because I have various people caring about me (ex. My mom, my moms boyfriend, my grandfather, my grandmother, my brother). I understand that materialistic things can only make me happy for a small period of time. What makes me happy is having the support of my family in helping me decide which road in life I should take. They have pushed me to continue my education and make something out of my life through it, especially my mom. She never graduated from high school and she has experienced life the hard way. From her experiences, she tells me what kind of decisions I should make and what kind of decisions that I should not make. Having someone guiding me through life’s tough challenges ahead makes me happy because I feel that I am not alone in this world. Not being alone gives some people a sense of belonging and this is what makes them strive to continue living. For the people that do not have someone to rely on, it can be very hard trying to fit in because for a person to achieve happiness it starts with someone caring about them. Otherwise they feel like they do not belong anywhere and wish to never have existed.

It is important for some people to have close connections with family because their family will always be there for them even through tough times. A family will comfort them and give them the emotional support that they need if they are dealing with a serious dilemma like breaking up with their boyfriend/girlfriend, losing a job, or even losing a home. As people grow, they tend to choose things they think will comfort them but in the long run will not. In Jon Gertner's essay “The Futile Pursuit of Happiness”, Daniel Gilbert, a person that Gertner studies, says that he found some people saying that they would much rather be in a newer car than the one they have because the car will make them happy for sure (Gertner 399). Although it could be concluded that the car will make them happier because it might be more comfortable, faster, bigger/smaller, etc than the one they have, these people are still not looking at the right thing. They should be more focused on other things because a car is a car. It will only get these people to their destination and that is it. As a
matter of fact these people should keep in mind these things, that car will not be there when they need to borrow money, when they need a home, when they need someone to give them advice, or when they need someone's shoulder to cry on. A family, in contrast, will find a way to provide money when needed, will provide for a home, will always be there for a needed advice, and will be there for a shoulder to cry on because as Brad Henry, the 26th governor of Oklahoma, says, “Families are the compass that guide us. They are the inspiration to reach great heights, and our comfort when we occasionally falter.” He is saying that family is the greatest thing to have because they will be by the side of anyone who is close to one, through the good and the bad times. For this reason, happiness should not be found in emotionless machines, because although those machines can provide some satisfaction, they cannot provide the care and support that a family does where all satisfaction will remain.

For some people to achieve happiness it is well advised to pursue personal dreams because each day there is always something to look forward to. There is no better feeling than waking up in the morning, living the dream, with a smile looking forward to seeing what each day holds in store. Whether that dream may be owning a small business, having a family, teaching others, etc, whatever it is, there is always something to look forward to. In the business it may be more having more customers that day, while in the family it may be a child learning to walk, or in class teaching a new lesson and seeing the response from the students, etc. So if these things can make some people happy, other people with dreams should do anything in their power to make them come true. For example, there are some people that dream of getting married some day because they feel that having a reliable mate, which they love, for the rest of their lives will make them happy. What if they read an article like the one that Laura Kipnis wrote, “Against Love”? Should they believe Kipnis when she says that:

As love has increasingly become the center of all emotional expression in the popular
imagination, anxiety about obtaining it in sufficient quantities- and for sufficient
duration- suffuses the population. Every one knows that as the demands and
expectations on couples escalated, so did divorce rates. (Kipnis 750)

Kipnis' claim that there are high divorce rates because of high demands in the marriages is not entirely true. The reason why there are high divorce rates is because people tend to marry for the wrong things, not for love. For example, some women marry men that can support them financially, in other cases some men marry women in order to make them their slaves. In these types of marriages there is no sign of mutual love but some people argue that maybe that is how love is expressed in both situations. That statement can be proven false because love does not depend on personal possessions or mistreatment of others. Love depends on how sincere, trustworthy, and caring both people are in their relationship. So if marrying a person, because they love them, will make these people happy, then it should respected. They deserve this right because this is how they want to shape their lives and no one should have the power to take that from them.

For some people, sometimes it is unclear when happiness is obtained because there is not a sign or a note that says, “you have reached happiness!” Happiness is determined by how one's emotional health is too. When people are emotionally healthy, they will be able to handle themselves in a positive manner. For the most part, when people have bad experiences, if they see them as having a positive effect on them, they are more likely to be mentally healthy as well as happy. For instance, a person that gets home from work notices that their unprotected home had been broken into and robbed will suddenly become severely depressed because they had lost some of their valuables. If this person is optimistic, the lesson can be used as a learning experience and next time the home will protected from burglary. If the person gets lucky, they can probably even get their belongings back if they can get detectives on their case. All of this happens from being optimistic, and what are the results in the end? Happiness. David Myers wrote, “The Secret to Happiness”, and
in it he talks about how people achieve happiness. He writes, “Optimism, self-esteem, and perceived control over one's life are among the traits that mark happy experiences and happy lives. Happy people typically report feeling an 'internal locus of control'- they feel empowered” (Myers 1). Myers' point emphasizes how being optimistic will help some people achieve happiness because they have total control of the situations that they are in. If some people do not have the mental stability to see things positively, then their mental health suffers. David says that when control is not present, “people suffer lower morale and worse health” (Myers 1). This causes people to have severe depression and is one of the reasons why people never achieve happiness. Their mind is barricaded with negative thoughts and happiness is impenetrable. As a result, being optimistic and in control can make the path for happiness much clearer rather than being locked up in a cell with any hopes of getting out.

Aside from being emotionally healthy, some people need to be physically healthy to be happy. Being physically healthy makes some people reach new dimensions with their bodies that they have never reached before. When they are physically healthy they are more confident in their bodies. It is certain that physically fit people are happy when they can do things even at late ages in life. Mack LeMouse, a health writer, says that, “Being physically fit means you can do entirely new things that you couldn't before just for their own sake. For example, doing handstand press ups, squeezing cans or lifting friends in the air are great fun and make great party tricks” (LeMouse 1). Would it not make some people at a later age in life happy to be able to do these things? It would only be reasonable if it did because in the later stages in life when the human body is worn out, many people wish to have some type of physical health at that time. Some grandparents find happiness in being able to go out and have fun with grandchildren at an amusement park, at the beach, at the movies, at the mall, etc. Doing these things make being physically fit a goal, in the later stages of life, because otherwise then life becomes dull.
People should not be looking forward to having materialistic things make them happy because in reality they will not. They only make people temporarily happy, making them want more and more new things in order to satisfy that hole of happiness. Some people refuse to accept this idea but it is evident. For example, a rich person that is always buying things like clothes, cars, houses, jewelry, etc is not necessarily happy when they have these things because they get tired of them. They feel empty and in order to try to fill up their emptiness, they buy these things. So why is it that money, “Can't buy happiness?” It cannot do this because a person that has a lot money will only be surrounded by people that want the money and not them. Once the money is gone the people chasing it are gone. Though money can buy a person the things that they want, those things cannot give them the long term happiness that they desire. On the other hand, a person that has less money is more likely to have people that care about him/her as a person and has nothing to lose and therefore is happy for what he/she has and not for what he/she does not have. These people are found to be happy over a longer period of time because in, the end, a family stays but money goes.

Happiness is, in the end, the culmination of achieving contentment in life. Being content makes some people feel like they have lived up to their potential in life. By having close connections with family some people will always have the support they need when challenges arise in life. They will have the comfort of not being alone in the world facing challenges rather, they will have a helping force moving them past that challenge. Pursuing personal dreams will make some people strive to have something that they have always wanted in life (ex. Marriage, kids, home, job that fits the person, etc). There is nothing better than living the dream because then when it is achieved there is nothing that can take it away. Once it is achieved it will become a long lasting happy memory that will bring smiles. In conclusion, it is also important to have a healthy lifestyle mentally and physically in order to be able to think and do things differently. When age catches up with these people, it is
very important to be ahead of it in order to continue the search for happiness. This way they can go camping, fishing, walking, running, etc with other people and have fun in doing so. In then end, putting of all these things together, will ultimately lead to happiness because materialistic things will not do anything except make a person want more and more of it never achieving full contentment in happiness.

Works Cited


2Pac (Tupac Shakur), known as one of the most successful MCs of all time, has always been acknowledged for his real persona: true to himself and his roots. *I Ain’t Mad At Cha*, a single from one of his various prominent albums called *All Eyez On Me* was released on the 15th of September in 1996; an emotional piece dedicated to his friends from the years prior to his stardom. This single represents the idea of staying true to you; to continue being who you have always been from the beginning, regardless of the changes that take place around you. 2Pac is a rapper with a rough past, growing up in the harsh conditions like most rappers of his time who made it big in the music industry. Unlike the others, he remains raw and hood, even after having left that ambience of great struggle and violence. It is a challenge to change and at the same time remain authentic, but 2Pac proves it to be possible.

This song tells a “real story” of American experience, in that 2Pac shares particular events of his life growing up in the ghetto. He tells of his experiences with one main objective: to indicate that he is no different from the individual that he initially was. Change is good for anyone, if it is to remove you from the struggles of the past, as long as you remain the same at heart. In other words, you can never fully transform yourself/your life. You can start off impoverished and end up with a superior financial status, but your character or whatever force that defines you will always be a part of you. Toward the middle of verse 1, 2Pac states, “Oh you a Muslim now, no more dope game,” while a few lines down he adds, “Hmm, knew in my heart you was the same motherfucker bad…When it’s time for roll you got a brother’s back.” In the verse, he refers to a close friend, whom after years apart from him, is heard to have become a changed man (religious and correct) after hitting the penitentiary. At the same time, 2Pac makes it clear that he has no hard feelings, but
has ‘mad’ love for him. He is not mad at his friend for ‘changing’ because he knows that deep inside, his friend is still that same comrade from back in the ghetto days. Basically, if 2Pac were to be involved in a brawl, his friend would be right there with him; he would have his back, like in the old days. This, to 2Pac, is authenticity, because where you originated from and where you grew up is what makes you the person you are; If you become anything different from that, it’s only through appearances; nothing more.

Although his album *All Eyez On Me* was released 7 months preceding his mysterious death, his single *I Ain’t Mad At Cha* was unleashed shortly afterward, emphasizing the heartfelt aspect of his tribute to his friends. Through his tone of voice in the official music video, it is clear that 2Pac truly feels no animosity toward these individuals whom he considers dearly. In the background, he mentions his homeboys that passed away, that are locked in jail, and that lost a loved one, conveying that he is not angry toward them, because they were doing their thing. These words show an entity of respect and understanding, proving 2Pac to be a rapper with an open mind. He is aware that change is a positive substance in verse 2 when he directs his message to his mother: “Don’t shed a tear, cause Mama I ain’t happy here. I’m through trial, no more smiles, for a couple years.” He admits to his mother that he is not pleased with the tainted life that he has been living. Also, he recognizes the strain of the criminal life and admits to being afflicted due to this, which is why he is so comprehensive of his loved ones for changing the direction of their personal lives to better themselves. 2Pac has lived in struggle, so he can relate to them in wanting to change their own ways of living.

When viewing change through other peoples’ perspectives, it becomes clear that 2Pac indeed is handling the situations of change very well, in comparison to his actual friends. In verse 3, 2Pac speaks for all of his friends that look down on him for the changes he has made in his life: “See, first you was our nigga but you made it, so the choice is made. Now we gotta slay you.” 2Pac’s ‘friends’
cope with his development in a different manner; they are struggling in accepting it. They no longer consider him “their nigga.” He is mentioned as their nigga in the past. Also, they are so resentful toward his progression, that they feel the need to knock him down, now that he is above the struggles of poverty and violence. This differs from 2Pac’s perspective of his friends’ shift in living because he repeatedly declares, “I ain’t mad at cha” to show that he holds no ire toward them for changing, nor for judging him.

Accepting change can be a very tough act to practice. Often times, people handle their emotions toward change in an aggressive/cold manner, and sometimes, it is handled passively and comprehensively. It is a challenge for 2Pac as it is for any other individual, for it is only human. ON that note, 2Pac as a gangster rapper, handles it very well, which may come off as surprising to many because rap artists give society the idea that they are all about heavy emotions and a tough heart and mind, but in reality, they have deeper and more heartfelt emotions than that. 2Pac proves that he is handling the changes noticed in his loved ones, throughout the music piece. In the end of verse 1, he affirms, “And I can’t even trip, cause I’m just laughin at cha…Cause I ain’t mad cha.” The reader can tell that to him it is almost taken as a joke, hence, the laughing, but he sincerely is not angry at the fact that friends have moved on. He knows that he can’t get mad at the changed or in that matter at his friends, because he is doing the same to make his way up from out of the steep ditch of unhappiness and suffering. Although they reacted in resentment toward 2Pac’s changes, that isn’t enough to anger him, because being the raw gangster that he is, anger toward the changes made in his friends would show change of character within himself and that, I feel, would go against the moral of the song, which is to prove his authenticity, as well as the others’. Another point in the song where 2Pac demonstrates calmness is right where it initiates, before verse 1. He says, “Shit, I’m wit cha, I ain’t mad at cha. Got nuttin but love for ya, do your thing boy.” He’s with his friend, as in
he’s got his back. 2Pac states that he loves him and incentivizes him to continue doing what he’s doing. It is his way of showing support and respect for his friends, through love and understanding.

Toward the closing of the song, 2Pac shows a bit of alteration in his feelings regarding the changes that his companions have experienced. He introduces a sense of discontentment as a result of their changes. He spits, “So many changed on me, so many tried to plot…So many questions, and they ask me if I’m still down.” These lines reveal that the important people in 2Pac’s life have changed to such an extent, that they no longer view him the same way. They question him and make plans against him, which shows how resentful they are. The following line, he questions, “I moved up out of the ghetto, so I ain’t real now?” 2Pac is referring to his friends that all have something to say about him and how he has changed, just because he is famous, making money, and living in better conditions. They perceive him to be fake, simply for wanting more comfort, success, and happiness in living. But, his authenticity shows once again as he closes off the verse with the words “You niggaz just don’t know, but I ain’t mad at cha.” Although 2Pac should be mad at his friends for going hard on him and his success, his authentic self keeps him from doing so.

In the music video version, Tupac along with other famous musicians are present in the party that takes place in heaven—a happy and peaceful environment. Also, Tupac is dressed in a white suit, which represents an angel up in heaven looking out for those that are still on earth living their lives. The video is of much significance because it brings reassurance to the listener/viewer that is in doubt of whether 2Pac is genuinely accepting of his friends’ decisions or if he is being facetious about it. His pure, innocent, and radiant smile, which he cracks multiple times during the video while he is rapping, transmits an explicit aura of sincerity. The soft instrumental beat, accompanied by the sound of the old traditional piano also represents tranquility and helps to convey his message of authenticity.
In conclusion, 2Pac’s authenticity influences his decisions and allows him to earnestly accept whether or not his friends changed for the better. The fact that he was able to remain true to himself by not allowing the external changes of his life (such as money, women, cars, etc.) to alter his inner self, plays an important role in his thoughtfulness concerning the changes he notices in his friends because it enables him to view them similarly to how he views himself. 2Pac believes in his own essence and due to this, he is able to find that same essence within his friends; through his belief of changing the life you live in the outside world, but remaining the same at heart. His ability to be genuine by remaining raw and hood, even after shifting into the luxurious lifestyle exemplifies his ability not to be “mad at cha.”

Work Cited
What does it mean to be a celebrity? When you think of the term celebrity you think of people that are in the music/TV/movie industry, the kind of people that are “role models” to our youth. However, Casey Anthony has come to acquire the title of celebrity through infamy. Her story possesses one of the many characteristics that are stereotyped when one thinks of a celebrity and that is what Neal Gabler expresses when he points out that “[we] see celebrity-watching as a ritual of empowerment through deconstruction” (Gabler). Nonetheless her story does not follow the conventional format that Gabler describes in his paper, which is what makes the story appealing.

Throughout her trial and even to date Casey is considered an emotionless monster. She is not seen as the protagonist of her own story, she is rather seen as the antagonist and we’re motivated to keep watching to see if the villain, as she is portrayed by the media, will get what she deserves as it usually happens. Ultimately, though we do not get any pleasure or joy from engaging with the narrative, we do get to experience the extent of the lies and of how far someone is willing to go in order to get and keep the spotlight on themselves for as long as humanly possible. Gabler would not know how to examine this celebrity example because when he referred to celebrities, he analyzed them in such a way that they seemed similar to us, with the same insecurity that we go through on a day to day basis. He gave them the same humanity that we tend to assume isn’t there. Gabler has the idea that we tend to be fascinated by the celebrity narratives because we can relate to them in some way, shape, or form seeing that in reality many people go through the same melodrama, except it is not as amplified as the celebrity drama. This, however, is not the case for Casey because our attention isn’t sustained because of Casey’s humanity; it is rather sustained with her lack of humanity and how she does not show any emotion at the disappearance of her toddler. This enables us to easily judge and
crucify her seeing as she is a monster in the eyes of the media. She does not show any real emotions, therefore there is no way for the audience to relate to her situation. In essence we are attracted to her neurotic story because she lacks the familiar notion of what humanity truly is. Her reaction towards the situation is the opposite of how any rational mother would have reacted. We are intrigued by how someone is capable of being so inhumane and apathetic towards their child’s disappearance.

The story of Casey Anthony does not completely follow the conventional format that Gabler describes in his paper. He describes the format in three “rituals”. The first ritual according to Gabler consists of “a vicarious fantasy that lifts audience out of the daily grind” (Gabler). This is the idea that we are interested in a celebrity because this celebrity is able to transport us from our boring ordinary lives into an adventure. In other words, we imagine what our lives would be like if we were them. The indicated ritual does not apply to the Casey Anthony narrative, seeing as no individual that is rational would want to trade places with the notorious woman that allegedly killed her toddler. Furthermore, he or she would not want to experience what Casey is feeling since a rational person would be crushed if this occurrence were to happen to him or her. The second ritual as stated by Gabler is the custom of “celebrity-watching as a ritual of empowerment through deconstruction” (Gabler). This ritual somewhat relates to the tale of Casey Anthony seeing as we do attempt to bring Casey down even further than she has managed to do to herself. The media portrays her as a monster. This gives us a sick satisfaction knowing that even if we disappoint society in any way, it cannot be seen as worse than the pathological liar that craved the spotlight with such a deep desire that led her to disregard her maternal instincts. The third and last ritual used by Gabler is that “the rulers of the media, attribute the rapid rise of celebrity to mundane financial considerations” (Gabler). This observation applies somewhat to Casey Anthony, seeing as her abrupt rise to “stardom” was because the media exploited the story of Caylee’s disappearance. This
consequently led to the sale of more newspapers and new stories by exploiting the sad event surrounding the Anthony family.

Casey Anthony is portrayed as the wretch in her anecdote. This is because we, as the spectators, often have the need to have a villain in every story. However, one would think that her being the mother of the victim would gain her sympathy from the American public, and it did until her lies started getting obstructed. She showed no emotion as she was being questioned about her daughter’s disappearance and she blatantly lied to the authorities about her daughter’s whereabouts. She felt no emotions nor was she remorseful when her daughter’s skeleton was found a few steps away, in her parent’s backyard. She knew where her daughter had been from the very beginning; furthermore she decided to keep up the act until she was forced to “confess” what really happened. Casey decided to come “clean” after her daughter’s body was found which caused us, the perceivers, to not believe in her innocence and perceive her as a monster. No rational mother would let anything bad happen to their young, and if something did happen they would not take it as nonchalantly as Casey Anthony did, because they would let their maternal instinct guide them, something I strongly believe Casey lacked.

Our fascination with this story started off as a mere curiosity of where Caylee, the missing child, was located, but it soon turned into an obsession to comprehend Casey Anthony’s train of thought. Casey Anthony was labeled as a pathological liar and changes her story when it becomes convenient to her portrayal in the media; in the wake of her daughter’s disappearance she showed no concern for her two year old toddler, lying about how a nanny purportedly called Zonaida Hernandez-Rodriguez had allegedly kidnapped Caylee. She justified her constant partying during the first month her daughter had vanished, by saying she was seeking out information about the fictional nanny’s whereabouts in the club. We must keep in mind that at this point she knew her daughter was no longer living, so how can one justify her reaction towards her daughter’s death? She even
went as far as to accuse her father of helping her bury her daughter’s body, and moreover she accused him of sexually abusing her, and used it as an excuse to why she did not tell the truth from the start. This is what kept us glued to our television screens and buying the newspapers, to find out what new low Casey Anthony would reach in her quest to modify her image in the media’s eyes and in order to come out looking as the victim in a situation in which she was obviously the villain.

We cannot empathize with a person that does not show any humanity when her own flesh and blood is missing and later on found dead. Gabler points out that “Each of us, to a greater or lesser degree, is fighting the same battle as the celebrities” (Gabler). In Casey’s narrative her atypical reaction to her daughter’s disappearance and death does not make her relatable to us. This has led me to the conclusion that we are not interested in this story because we can in some way or another relate ourselves to Casey Anthony. We are transfixed by her bizarre narrative because we cannot fathom the thought that a mother would do that to her own child. Casey Anthony incarnates the qualities of inhumanity. The more we watch her narrative the more we judge and criticize her because we are not accustomed to seeing other individuals without empathy and as cold as Casey Anthony is depicted. We use her as a guideline of how one should not respond in that situation. We judge her because she acted the way any other human being would not have done in this eccentric situation. But the fact of the matter is that Caylee was her daughter and there is no sign that Casey attempted to save her daughter. As matter of fact, Caylee’s biopsy showed that she was still alive before tape was put over her mouth and she was stuffed in the back of her mother’s car where she is believed to have died before she decomposed (Investigation). It is believed that Casey Anthony drove around with Caylee’s cadaver in the back of her car for a few days before she disposed of the body (Investigation). So she consciously and maliciously continued lying in order to have the spotlight on herself. She resorted to lying in order to keep up an image of herself that was not true, which led us as the audience to doubt her humanity and her ability to empathize. She did not feel any empathy
for Caylee so why should we feel any empathy for her. When her lawyer was asked on a July 13th interview if she would let Casey Anthony babysit her children or grandchildren, she shamelessly avoided the question and answered it by changing the subject (Sawaya). We should not believe in Casey’s innocence, because her own lawyer who is supposed to believe in her innocence does not trust her around her own children; we should take that as an indication of what kind of a person Casey really is.

Casey Anthony’s narrative is extremely controversial for the fact that no one knows for certain if she murdered her child, especially because there was so much evidence pointing towards her being guilty. It came as a great shock to America when she was acquitted by the state of Florida. The American public was not very happy about this decision. This decision consequently keeps the Casey Anthony narrative going and it keeps us watching in order to find out the conclusion to this very captivating story. Will Casey have another child and do the same thing that she did to Caylee? Will someone take justice in their own hands and kill her? We have to keep watching in order to find out.

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Alfred Tennyson’s “Crossing the Bar”

Alfred Tennyson’s, “Crossing the Bar,” was written in mere minutes during the time it took to sail from the Isle of Wight, where he had been living in relative seclusion, to the mainland and is best understood by analyzing the components of its background: the location where it was written, Mr. Tennyson himself and the seclusion he was leaving behind; as well as the poem lyrics themselves.

Being its author, Mr. Tennyson is obviously the largest component of the poem. At the time of its conception, in 1889, Tennyson was eighty years old and had been the poet laureate of England for nearly forty years. The subject matter of the poem, a reflection of death and afterlife, fuels the widely held stereotypical view of Tennyson as the voice of eulogy and death. The subject matter of the poem is better attributed; however, to the seclusion that Mr. Tennyson was leaving behind—a withdrawal from the world to grieve his losses.

Death and potentially fatal illness was an especially difficult occurrence in the life of Alfred Tennyson. In 1831, Alfred was forced to abandon his studies at Trinity College in Cambridge. His father had died and his passing bought an end to the allowance that the family had enjoyed from Tennyson’s grandfather. The second death that had a monumental impact on Tennyson’s life was that his dear friend, Arthur Hallam. Only the previous year, his brother Charles had become addicted to opium; while another brother, Edward, had suffered a severe mental breakdown. Tennyson was thrown into a deep depression; the result of his brothers’ misfortunes, the venomous reviews that his latest publication had received from the pen of John Wilson Croker in the “Quarterly Review”, fears for his own sanity, his desperate financial situation and the grief brought on by Arthur’s death, who died of apoplexy while traveling Vienna with his father. Mr. Tennyson
continued to write poetry through these hard times but refused to publish a single poem in the ten years between 1832 and 1842.

In terms of serious illness, the family suffered from epilepsy and mental illness. The epilepsy served to be a two-edge sword: it was also a shameful disease to be in the family as epilepsy was believed, at the time, to be brought on by sexual excess and it caused Alfred to refrain from relationships out of fear of passing the disease on to his children—it was in this precaution that he didn’t marry his wife, Emily Sellwood, until over a dozen years after he had met her. The climax of Tennyson’s sense of loss, however, came with the death of his second son Lionel—after which, he pursued a desperate search for spiritualism and proofs of immortality. The frequent deaths that made a presence in Mr. Tennyson’s life, whether it be an actual passing of a person close to him or the shadow of death that lurked about him throughout his life in the form of illness that plagued him and his loved ones, was evident in many of his works and “Crossing the Bar” is no exception.

Considering the depressing influence and background for many of Tennyson’s works, (including “Crossing the Bar”) as mentioned briefly above, the positive outlook and the lack of pessimism can hardly go unnoticed. During his last stay in a hydropath hospital, a doctor reevaluated his condition and concluded that the trances that Tennyson had been suffering from were not epileptic in nature but “merely a form of gout that prefaced its attacks by a stimulation of the imagination that is very like the ‘aura’ that often warns epileptics of the onset of a seizure.” A biography of Tennyson’s life says of this event that “had it been in Tennyson’s nature to rejoice, he could have done so at this time, for there was no longer any reason for him to fear marriage, paternity, or the transmission of disease to his offspring.” A rejoicing Tennyson, however, did not emerge from this revelation and his obviously dark, brooding, pessimistic disposition sharply contrasts the hope and optimism of “Crossing the bar”—one would never expect a man of Tennyson’s character and temperament to face the issue of death and afterlife with such positivity.
Many of the biographies of Tennyson suggest that poetry had always been his means of dealing with his hardships and dilemmas: “Tennyson began composing poetry at an early age, as did many of his siblings. He used verse as a way to take his mind off his problems, making up phrases as he was doing other activities, then memorizing them for future use.” Another source would suggest that the poem’s positivity can be credited to the location where it was written: the small stretch of water between the Isle of Wight and the mainland. Whatever the case may be, the location where the poem was written is a monumentally important component of the work.

George Saintsbury, “one of the most influential English literary historians and critics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,” praises Tennyson’s aptitude for conveying visual imagery into the mind of the reader through the verses of his works. Of this talent, Saintsbury acclaims,

“There have been poets, though not many, who could manage sound with equal skill; and there have been those, though not many, who could bring with a few modulated words a visual picture before the mind’s eye and almost the eye of the body itself with equal sureness and success. But there have hardly been any, outside the very greatest Three or Four, who could do both these things at the same time in so consummate a fashion. The very musical poets are too apt to let the sharp and crisp definition of their picture be washed away in floods of sound; the very pictorial poets to neglect the musical accompaniment. Tennyson never commits either fault.”

Saintsbury continues by identifying Tennyson’s earliest employment of this ability in his works “Palace” and the “Dream.” Surely enough, to show the consistency of this talent, Saintsbury
also makes mention of an excerpt from one of Tennyson’s later works: “Crossing the Bar.” His comments in that regard include,

“And at the very other extreme of the poet’s poetical life, in those famous lines which united all competent suffrages (though one egregious person I remember called them ‘homely’ and divers wiseacres puzzled over the identity of the ‘pilot’ and the propriety of his relation of place toward the ‘bar’), this master faculty again appeared. ‘With such a tide as moving seems asleep, too full for sound or foam,’ are words which make the very picture, the very foamless swirl, the very soundless volume of sound, which they describe.”

Albert Tennyson’s “power of filling eye and ear at once, so that it is almost impossible to decide whether you hear the symphony or see the picture most clearly,” as described by Saintsbury; coupled with the picturesque landscape he was sure to have witnessed on his short, yet productive journey between the Isle of Wight and the mainland, led to the work we know today as “Crossing the Bar.”

The four stanza poem of four lines each features what Saintsbury refers to as a “mode of linked and long-drawn out sweetness [where] he has hardly any single master and no superior.” The poem’s rhyme scheme follows an ABAB pattern and although the line lengths vary among the stanzas, the first and third lines are always a couple beats longer than the second and third lines.

The first line of the first stanza reads, “Sunset and evening star,” a rather peculiar way to approach the subject matter of the poem. However, its use shows the visual imagery that Tennyson creates so adeptly and its widespread recognition widens the audience that the following lines will captivate.
Tennyson also employs a ricochet effect between the first and third stanzas—significant in that it progresses the passing of time (from sunset to twilight) and, although at first glance may seem repetitive, serves to further and emphasize the message of the first stanza. The first lines of these two stanzas each begin by establishing a picture of the time in the reader’s mind. The second lines of each of these stanzas begin with “and”—they also end with an exclamation point. The last two lines of these two stanzas end with the same message: the subject of the poem, an elder who has seen death and realizes the proximity of his own, asks that there be neither moaning nor sadness of farewell when the end comes.

A similar ricochet effect is found, on a smaller scale, between the second and fourth stanzas. The first two lines of each of the two stanzas can be read as an allusion to life they also have an excessive quality in common: the tide “too full for sound and foam” in the second stanza and the distance in time and place in the fourth. The last two lines of each of these two stanzas carry the same message in that they assert a return home—a message furthered in the fourth stanza when the subject “hope[s] to see [their] Pilot face to face.”

The spirituality of the last two lines of the poem is not to go unnoticed. Tennyson had become increasingly spiritual after the death of his youngest son, Lionel. The Pilot, referred to in the fifteenth line, symbolizes a deity figure; along with the symbolic meaning of the bar (the barrier between life and death), the last two lines can be understood as the subject’s hope to see God after their life has ended. The second, less apparent, religious symbolism in the poem is in the word ‘crossing’ itself. It was not only employed to mark the subject’s crossing from this life into the afterlife but also to conjure up the visualization of the traditional Catholic gesture.

Through the analysis of the previous components stated earlier; the location where Tennyson’s poem was written, Mr. Tennyson himself and the seclusion he was leaving behind; as well as the poem lyrics themselves, one can conclude that though death was such a common
occurrence in Tennyson’s life it, it did not have the effect one would expect. Despite the deaths life has thrown at Tennyson, as portrayed in his poem “Crossing the Bar” the poet has accepted the mortality of men.

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Louis Diaz

The Route to Happiness

It is easy to assume that a major priority for many people is to gain happiness throughout their lives. The problem is that the wrong type of happiness is usually trying to be found. Many people pursue happiness because we conform to modern American society and cultural ideals of having large amounts of money and many material items. Sadly this pursuit isn’t what really results in true happiness. This “happiness” does not last because the money and items only bring happiness for a limited time. Once the happiness runs out, there is a search for newer and more glamorous items. The roots of true happiness come from the constant search for meaningful things such as family and finding true passion.

Many people assume that money can buy them everything including happiness. The major flaw with this idea is that the happiness does not last very long. People believe that if they go out and purchase the newest item in the market that it will give them eternal happiness. The happiness may happen immediately but for that instant is the peak of the happiness. The initial feeling is the peak because it is the best feeling that a person will receive from money. After that peak it is all a decrease of feelings. In “Futile Pursuit of Happiness” Daniel Gilbert states that many people overestimate how things will make them feel. Gilbert says that if a person gets a BMW, he will assume that their life will be perfect, but it will not have the same “affect” assumed previously (qtd in Gertner 398). It is easy to agree with Gilbert because I have fallen to this “happiness” when I purchased a new pair of headphones. As I waited for them to arrive, I thought that they would make me happier and excited. I was so excited because I thought they would make listening to music so much better. I had the expectation that once I had the headphones that I would not need anything else to make me happy at the moment. Sadly, when I finally received the headphones, I immediately
noticed that that I overestimated all the feelings from before. After a week I also noticed that the headphones were nothing special anymore and the happiness was no longer there. Gilbert refers this to thinking to as “miswanting” because we mistakenly expect what will make us happy correlates to us picking things to get happiness from (qtd in Gertner 399). He means that if someone expects something to make them happy they are more likely to picking the wrong items to achieve that happiness. Just as with my case I thought a material item would make me happy leading me to make the wrong purchase. There seems to be no point to try to gain happiness from these things if they do not even last. Something that does not have a sentimental meaning could not give a long term happiness. Just random purchased items only give a feeling of satisfaction which does not last long. This idea is similar to eating a meal, when someone finishes eating a meal they feel satisfied, but shortly after that person will get hungry again. Once hungry again that person will want more just as someone would want more material items. It would be more logical to find something that will bring happiness for longer periods of time.

Although money and material items are nice they will never be able to compare to the feelings that meaningful things could bring. These meaningful things consist of things that could never be purchased, such as completing goals, relationships with family and friends, being stress free and having a passion. These are the reason people should pursue the meaningful things are because those things are irreplaceable and priceless. Unlike material items, meaningful things cannot be purchased again if anything happens to it and they cannot be upgraded or replaced at any moment. Meaningful things also produce memories and sentimental feelings that are never forgotten because there is an emotional attachment. This attachment can never be forgotten because meaningful things are kept close to people’s heart. It is close in the sense that all those things are special feelings that aren’t forgotten. These feelings come from being stress-free and having a passion that only that certain person can feel.
The common belief with happiness is that once achieved there is no need to continue to search for it. Sadly that’s the farthest from the truth because happiness is only temporary so there needs to be a search to keep gaining it. Accomplishing goals is a major source of happiness. Gilbert also mentions that the problem of finding out what makes us happy is finding what item whether it be a material item or meaningful thing that will have a higher payoff and make a person happy (qtd in Gertner 399). I feel this “finding out” appears to be setting goals and thus leading to have payoffs which brings happiness. Gilbert makes a very valid point because there are not many other things besides setting and accomplishing goals that could have a high payoff. It would not make sense that money and material items makes someone happy because those items do not have payoffs leading to the lack of happiness. This idea is shown in the movie *Freakonomics* when a student from the Chicago area gets an incentive of fifty dollars if he can keep his grades above a certain mark. The boy doesn’t achieve the goal at first, but he strives more to raise his grades for the fifty dollars. At last he finally reaches the standards and receives the money. It is easy to see that once he completed his goal he was very happy. One of the best feelings to have is the feeling of accomplishment of a goal and it was displayed in the boy. The incentive may have had an effect on the how much better the feeling of completed the goal was, but the completion was most of what the boy had felt. The money that the boy had gain will only last a few days, while the feeling of being able to accomplish a goal will last much longer and make a person feel better.

Goals are very helpful to making a person happy temporarily but the happiness that will last longer mostly come from family and friends. What makes family and friends much better than money and material items is that family and friends will always be support for someone. Unlike money and material items will never help a person in need, but family and friends will help a person through rough times. When a person goes through rough times such as a need for money or a favor, their family will be there for them. Family will always have the emotional supporting factor that
could never have a price tag on. In a survey conducted by the Associated Press and MTV it was shown that about 20 percent of people enjoy being with their family. Although the 20 percent appears to be small, in reality it was the highest chosen answer of the survey. What was also very notable about the survey was that money was not even a high contender (AP). That happened because no one felt that money made them happy, which is positive. The results of the survey shows that many people are getting the idea that family is more important. The survey may have only had about 1500 people, but this small sample can reflect a changing society. It shows that people may be changing their beliefs about what makes them happy. This percent of people notice that family and friends are important because they show care and support which cannot be purchased.

What also helps with making most people’s life a happier one is being stress-free. This logic means being content with one’s life and having very few worries. Although there are exceptions to this idea because certain careers have high stress level, the ending feeling is will have less stress. There is always short term stress that happens in the moment, but that brings long term happiness. For example in the article “20/20 Friday: What Makes People Happy?” there is a cab driver in New York City. Having that job he has dealt with some of the most stressful workers ever. He takes it upon himself to try to make the workers smile by telling jokes (Costello). Although the cab driver probably gets yelled at by these workers he is still able to have an optimistic outlook on life. He is able to realize that his job may be stressful, but the stress is in the moment and he will be fine later. As stated in the “Optimism Bias”, Tali Sharot mentions that being optimistic has benefits of having lower stress (Sharot). Since the cab driver is optimistic on life, he is most likely not worried about stress as much. He knows that having a positive outlook will cause less stress and he will be happy. With this lower stress due to be optimistic, he will be happier because he will not be worried about the little things. Having money may cause a better life because of financial stability, but money cannot buy optimism and being stress-free.
A source of happiness that is usually overlooked is the passion the person has for something. This passion or love for an activity is known as “flow” in the psychology field (Psychology Today). This is an essential part of being happy because this “flow” is the feeling that people get when they are experiencing something they strongly care for. In the 1970’s there was an experiment in Chicago called the Experimental Sampling Method that required a person to write numerous things about where they were, what they were doing, etc from viewing a virtual strip of their daily lives. These virtual strips were replication of what a daily life would be like. The results showed that the “flow” was mostly found when someone was doing their favorite activity such as gardening, listening to music, bowling and even cooking a good meal (Psychology Today). These results show that people are happy when they are doing their hobbies. People feel happiness during these events because they feel very strong in what they are doing. These activities are things that are personal in feeling and cannot be replicated. For example, Costello states that an abstract painter explained “flow” as something that a person have no control of, the feeling is natural and controlling of the body. The painter’s words could sum into one word which is “love”. He loves painting and he cannot help what occurs during the process, and feels happy during the whole process. This love for an activity cannot be gained by buying it, but it needs to be found.

Even though much of society believes that happiness comes from money and material items they are wrong. Those things will not leave an effect in a person’s life. These meaningful things will give feelings that are unlike feelings that money and material items could ever bring. There does seem to be a bright outlook in the sense that some people are beginning to see what happiness really is and what it should consist of. Although everyone will not have the same outlook, it is positive to see that people are changing. There are many more sentimental things that could bring happiness that otherwise could never be achieved. Although with age there seems to be different roots of
happiness, as people mature things change from little toys to ultimately the meaningful things. This is the process of life and one day everybody will see the change and find their happiness.

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“Literacy is your key to a better life” my dad would always say I really didn’t comprehend what that really meant until I read “Superman and Me” by Sherman Alexie I couldn’t help but agree with my father and Alexie. “Superman and Me” is about a Native American boy who had to face every obstacle that was thrown at him in order to teach his self how to read. Although the battle towards success was a rather long fight it was mine and Alexie’s only way out of poverty. Alexie had known how to speak English and grew up knowing English, unlike my family and I who came to America without knowing English and didn’t have a reservation to stay on, we were simply alone. Alexie and I were seeking the same thing in life to simply achieve a higher level of education. The expectations of the reservation were to stay on the reservation while very little standards and goals were expected of you. Just like many minorities’s your bound to fail, it’s whether you break the chains and move one step closer to a better education or remain where you had stated. Although I do agree with my dad and Alexie that literacy is the key to a better life, I also think that some people may feel prejudice against minorities’ success that is often swept under the rug showing that this is another obstacle that needs to be overcome.

Most assumptions about people from a different nationality are that they have a greater advantage towards achieving his/ her goals and dreams. Some people assume that you were hired for a job because you’re a woman, minority or simply the company/school is just trying to establish the percentage of diversity that they need to achieve. These people never look at the positive side of things for insistence you may have been hired for the job because you’re a strong highly educated women or because you’ve been faced with every reason to fail and none of those reasons were good enough for you to just simply give up.
In my case, people would automatically assume that my life is perfect and that every opportunity was handed to me because I speak a different language and because I’m a different race. But the truth is adapting to the American Culture was one of the hardest transitions my family and I had to make. Growing up in America was a struggle for us. My parents came to America in their late 30s with two young daughters, no money, and no job. They made a brave although risky decision to leave their families and friends back home in Egypt, just so my sister and I can have the opportunities they never had growing up. In Egypt, my father worked as an architect for years but he decided to sacrifice his career and move here to live the ‘American dream’. My father’s first job here was at Dunkin Donuts working third shift for minimum wage.

Growing up, I have always known I was different than most of the kids in school, my parents never attended the Parent Teacher Conference, they were never involved in the PTO because neither one of them knew how to speak English, they just know the basics in order to get by. But it wasn’t until my senior year of high school when I realized it was more then just that, it became more relevant when colleges started sending out acceptance letters to my classmates and I. Usually, when a person gets into the college of his/her dreams, he/she will want to share the good news with everyone but when I got into the college of my dream, I hide it from everyone, it like it was a secret. Because the minute I told my classmates what college I got into, the first thing they said to me was, “the only reason you got accepted to that school is because you’re Egyptian” and because of that comment I felt that despite all my passion and hard work I put into my education, I still couldn’t escape people’s negativity and feeling belittled. The reason I got accepted into college is because I’m a hard working individual that had nothing to start with and had to accomplish everything on my own. I have always viewed school as a whole - not black, white or even purple. So I began to question why people didn’t see me the same way, as a whole.
When my parents had first come to America they had finally enrolled me in pre-school at the age of 5. Since Egypt’s school system is different than the United States I had to stay back a year because of the language barrier and I didn’t have paper work stating that I had attended school. My parent’s way of teaching my sister and I English was by going to school and watching cartoons. Not once did I ever think of my parents as not doing enough to help improve my education. They had sacrificed everything they have had to provide a better educational opportunities for my sister and I. Considering most kids in Egypt stop going to school at the age of 11 they didn’t want to take any chances of having to force my sister and I to stay at home or even go out in the work field to make $1.50 an hour back in Egypt. Since coming to America was tremendously expensive. We didn’t have much money left over forcing my parents to move into the urban area of Bristol Connecticut. My parents could barely afford our apartment and at the time my sister and I were starting to think that the urban area was the best thing ever since coming to America, which didn’t put my parents at ease seeing that they wanted us to expand beyond the ‘ghetto’. This had forced my dad to start looking for a higher paying job and my mom to go into the work force to help get us out of the ‘ghetto’ before it was too late. Alexie stated that “…we were poor by most standards, but […] middle-class by reservation standards” (14). While Egypt considered my family and I middle class but in reality and according to the United States standards we were considered poor. At times we barely had enough money to pay the bills and had to file for an extension period. My parents had also made a sacrifice to walk 4 miles to work and then another 3 miles to pick my sister and me up from daycare.

As a child, my parents were always at work and even when they were at home, they couldn’t help because they couldn’t understand my school work. In the story titled Superman and Me, Alexie stated “…I am breaking down the door” (14). Alexie was referring to the people who are holding him back from his goals. Not just his teacher, kids in school or other Native Americans. He wasn’t just going to let anything get in the way of his future and was just going to tackle every obstacle that
comes his way while he’s trying to better his future to something beyond the Reservation. Everyday Alexie would have to study extra hard to be able to excel in his school work and ignore all the other kids in his class and on the Reservation to stay motivated. When it was time for my family and I to look for a new house other Egyptians weren’t supportive and always found a negative side to our dreams. My father’s friends would always get jealous they’d say things like “how can you only be here for 5 years and your already getting a house when we’re still living in apartments.” My dad would just refer to it as jealously because his main focus always was to better our life and get my sister and me one step closer in order to live the ‘American Dream’. No matter what, people will never understand the kind of person an individual is or the different kinds of backgrounds they may come from, unless they take the time to understand what that person went through to be who they are. Even if I was valedictorian of my school, some students would still assume that the role was given to me just because I’m Egyptian. It’s hard to admit but at first I was ashamed of who I am, I always felt like I was the outcast and that no one accepted me for who I am. As I grow up, I began to realize that when people can’t accomplish the things they want to, they will try and put other people’s achievements down, in order to feel better about themselves. I have worked so hard to achieve my goals in my life. And I began to ignore the people who found happiness in my failure, I knew I was here for a reason and that’s what has kept me going through everything.

Throughout all the hard work my parents have done, I’ve always known that I want a better life for myself and my family. I worked as hard as I possibly can during school and even went the extra mile to perfect my work, even if that work was a non-graded homework assignment. Just like Alexie, when he stated, “A smart Indian is a dangerous person, widely feared and ridiculed by Indians and non- Indians alike” (15). Alexie was considered an outcast because Native American children who failed were accepted and those like Alexie who excelled weren't. Even though, Alexia was talking about his Indian nationality and how people ridiculed him, I had gone through the same
thing during my life. At times, teachers seemed to put me done in school, by telling me that my dreams are unrealistic. Even though my parents couldn’t help me out with school work, they have always been the reason my drive has never faded. I remember coming home from school crying because I didn’t think I could achieve my dreams. My parents were the ones that always have faith in me and knew I could accomplish any task I put my mind to while making a positive difference in the world. I wouldn’t have been able to make it without my families’ tremendous support. Their support for me had made me want to push ten times as hard to achieve my goals of making it to the next level. Alexie said it best, “…I refuse to fail” (15). Native American children were stereotypically supposed to fail in the classroom and most typically did. Alexie has the same positive drive in him that regardless of what happens he’s going to battle anything that gets in the way of his future, just like me. I have always had to depend on myself to understand my school work, making it rather difficult for me. Yet, not once did I ever doubt that I could make it. Just like Alexie states, “I’m breaking down the door.” (14) As for Alexie and I, we’re not going to allow any chance for these doors to be built, to stop us for reaching our dream. We’re not going to let anything get in the way of my future or stop us for reaching our goals and dreams. I’m following Alexie’s footsteps in bettering my life, while trying to help out the younger generation and those in need.

People that come from a different cultural background have a lot more to overcome. For instance Alexie states that “They [his students] are trying to save their lives” (16). Just like Alexie I also hope to become an early childhood teacher, an open-minded and well-rounded Egyptian American female. I’d like to pay it forward and help young kids that are in a similar position as I was. The only way to accomplish that goal is by branching out while experiencing new opportunities to better my life as much as possible through hard work and higher education. I have come to infinitely value the educational opportunities in America. Having been fortunate enough to have a chance of education that most kids in Egypt don’t have, has made me value school and teachers.
Looking back on my school work, I’ve accomplished my goals. Being in accelerated, advanced placement and college credit classes while maintaining sports, activities and a part time job in high school has always been something I’ve strived for and finally accomplished. The entire struggle Alexie and I have gone threw to make it this far is a far less complicated path then to just have been born American citizens with parents who know how to speak the language and can easily sit down and help them with their homework. Although the journey to a better life was rather hard at times, it bought my family and I even closer together. My parents have always reminded me that when facing the unknown, an individual cannot be scared.
Professional athletes are some of the most glorified people on earth. They are well known throughout the world by everyone. Even someone who does not watch basketball can tell you who Kobe Bryant is. However, these athletes are not just known for their stellar performance in their respected sport. If you ask someone about Kobe Bryant you will get hundreds of different answers, some positive and some negative. The world looks at Professional athletes through magnifying glasses. Everything they do is magnified to the extreme. Nonetheless, one group in particular adores pro athletes. Pros are role models to high school athletes. These students dream of one day being in the footsteps of their favorite basketball player or football player. These footsteps can be a great goal for students to pursue, but on the other hand, some of these steps can be corrupting high school athletes before they even get a chance to reach the professional level. There is no way to control who high school students use as role models because they will make their own choice. One thing that many high school athletes try to duplicate is the time management that pros live by. Pros also promote unhealthy habits by their poor behavior in public. High school athletes are picking up on the negative attitude and sportsmanship that is displayed by pros. Also, Professional athletes are influencing the brands of clothing being worn by high school athletes. The influence of professional athletes toward high school athletes is definitely present. However, the type of influence will be negative or positive depending on who the athlete is and how they are being viewed by the student.

Some athletes who look up to professionals tend to live their lifestyle according to that individual person. The daily schedule of a typical high school student can be vigorous, much more than any professional athlete. Nonetheless, many high school students try to plan their agenda similar to a pro. Have participating in a sport for four years in high school, track and field; I can
personally express how busy a high school athlete is. For the majority of the day a student is in class. Immediately following classes, practice starts for several hours into the late evening. Once we reach home, we are devoured with school assignments. However the schedule of a pro athlete is much more flexible and not nearly as demanding. It seems as if pros have plenty free time on their hands. All they do is train for the sport that they enjoy playing and maybe a few meetings here and there. The clash comes when students in school think they can live this same life. Many of my peers decided to follow this example by showing up to class occasionally but still managing to attend every practice. They tried to act as if they were just like pro athletes and didn’t have school to worry about. The main difference between high school students a pro is that one has school 5 times a week and the other doesn’t. School work is very demanding which limits the practice time for many students. They would rather be in a gym perfecting their jump shot than be in class. This is a negative influence because many of them ended up failing those classes which ultimately is preventing them to reach a professional level in their sport.

However there were athletes in my school who were able to manage their school work with practice. These students had different athletes to influence them. These athletes tend to be the pros that usually graduated from college and now has an organized life in a league. Some may argue that pros can’t be role models in this topic because they don’t have school work, so therefore they cannot compare lives. In reality, many athletes do have a tight schedule. For example, LeBron James has a 6 year old daughter that he raises. Along with that big responsibility he finds the time to volunteer at numerous events, attend dozens of meetings and still have enough time to practice his sport.

One individual I know that appreciated athletes like this was my track teammate Seth Devalve. He received a full scholarship to play football at Princeton University. I got the opportunity to ask him who influenced his time managing. He told me that “I look at athletes such
as Emeka Okafor who have made it to the pros and was still able to graduate from college with a
degree. People like this show me that it is possible to excel in both athletics and academics”. Seth
has been influenced positively by professional athletes. He modeled the practice habits of pros so
that he could be the best at his sport. But yet, he still fit in a sufficient slot time for school work. In
this case modeling the professional’s schedule was beneficial. It all depends on who the athlete is
and they are being viewed. Influences like this are positive for high school athletes because an
athlete that excels in schools has a lot of opportunities. They have the opportunity to compete at a
collegete level and display their talent to professional leagues.

Something that professional athletes seem to never avoid is being the main focus of the
media. The media loves to catch athletes doing something wrong because that is what the audience
wants. In the act of their actions that are being publicized, Pros promote unhealthy habits by their
poor behaviors that are seen by the public. Athletes such as Barry Bonds and Lance Armstrong
have been criticized in the news and tabloids for being accused of using steroids for an unfair
advantage in their sport. Lance Armstrong was and still is one of the most inspirational athletes of
all time. Several high school athletes including myself looked up to him. People knew him for having
the determination to continue is sport after surviving cancer. He personally inspired me to become
more determined in my sport. All of this changed once the word about him using steroids got
around. I somewhat felt betrayed because this is someone who has influenced me. But what did all
of his other millions of fans think. I’m sure that many high school athletes that looked up to this
person got the idea that maybe steroids are a good thing. Well it’s obvious that they aren’t. Pros are
also influencing high school athletes to use recreational drugs. The Olympic medalist Michael Phelps
was suspected of smoking marijuana. Think of the message that this sends to high school athletes.
They are going to say “Well he smokes weed and he is an Olympic medalist, so maybe I should do
the same thing. This is clearly a negative influence for the simple fact that high school students
should not be experimenting with recreational drugs. Also, when a student gets involved with contrabands, they are jeopardizing their future. Some consequences are being arrested or kicked out of school. All of these results can prevent young athletes from ever becoming a professional athlete.

But on the other hand, high school athletes can learn a valuable lesson from seeing athletes go through such a rough time in their lives. I personally chose to stay away from drugs in high school because I have seen too many athletes ruin their career because of their poor actions. I’ve learned that the consequences are not worth the risk. The penalties can range from being fined thousands of dollars to being kicked off of the team. I could not imagine how disappointed my team would be at me if I was not able to contribute to the group because I chose to do stupid things. So regarding drug use, high school athletes are influenced by pro athletes. Some get the impression that drugs can in fact make them excel in their sport and some learn that drugs and sports don’t go well together. I also had my own reasons for not using drugs. People who say that they use drugs because they are influenced by athletes are using that as an excuse. Kwame Appiah said in his reading that “Talk of cultural imperialism structuring the consciousness of those in the periphery treats people like Sipho as blank slates” (618). High school students are not babies that just came out of the womb. By the time students get to high school they have a clear understanding of the consequences of drugs. They have already been introduced to it from health classes, parents, and friends. So there for athletes who say athletes influences them to use drugs are actually just using them to just prove their reasoning for using. And for students who never had intentions on using drugs can use the results of many athletes as examples to continue their soberness.

High school athletes will pick up on the negative aspects of a pro regardless of whom the athlete is and who they are looked at. A lot of star athletes have the reputation of being offensive to certain individuals in public. These actions are done both physically and verbally. For that reason, professional athletes promote poor attitude and sportsmanship to high school athletes. Lots of
popular athletes are known for their obscene taunting such as LeBron James and Terrell Owens; LeBron is known for eyeing down opponent’s bench after making a three pointer along with his unique hand gesture. And Terrell is known for just flat out trash talking before games. Some say that this is just all fun and games. However, high school athletes are getting the wrong perception of these acts done by their favorite athletes. I have heard of several fights that have started at high school games as the result of taunting. This is corrupting high school athletics because in high school athletes should be learning the true meaning of sportsmanship. Taunting the opponent is in no way a way to express this.

Another athlete that is a poor leader to follow is Allen Iverson. In his career he has made several vulgar comments towards his coaches and teammates. There really is no punishment in the NBA for this action other maybe a fine. Nonetheless, high school athletes follow the footsteps of athletes like Allen Iverson. I knew a track teammate who always talked back to the coaches and criticize the team because he felt as if he had the power to. He followed many of the same actions as Iverson. The difference in high school is that you are not under a contract, so there for you can be let off of the team. Unfortunately, my friend was unable to turn his act around and he was cut off of the team for his behavior. Pros display themselves as divas. They act as they can do anything and get away with it. Therefore high school athletes try to copy them. But when this clash happens, the results are much different. The consequences are much more serious when at a high school level compared to a professional level. Also, this is a negative influence to students because they should not be taught that it is ok to act this way. They will take this attitude with them as they grow up and act the same way at their job whether it is in the pros or not. For the students that did not make the pros and that picked up on the idea that it is all right to challenge administration, will be in for a rude awakening once they start their job. So altogether, the attitude that students copy from professional athletes will end up hurting them in their sport career and their future life.
Professional athletes sign deals with clothing markets for a huge amount of money. Therefore they advertise these clothing every time they have the chance to. Because these specific products are always being worn by these athletes, pros are influencing the brands of clothing being worn by high school athletes. These brands that athletes flaunt are not cheap. They are actually some of the most expensive items on the market. But I know if I saw my favorite athlete wearing the latest basketball sneakers I would be eager to buy them. However, money is an issue; Appiah mentions in his writing “The Case of Contamination” that “The claim is that they can’t afford to do something that they’d really like to do, something that is expensive of an identity they care about and want to sustain” (616). High school athletes want to prematurely live the life of a pro by having their look. The problem here is that most high school athletes don’t have jobs and consequently don’t have money to buy these things. This is preventing them from living the life that they want so bad.

Parents see this as a negative influence because now we will beg them for money. This does not teach maturity because in real life, you can’t ask your parents for money whenever you want it. Pro athletes are also influencing the style of clothes we wear. Many kids in my high school attempted to pull of the sporty casual attire every day in school. I am even guilty of this. This is just another way of high school students mimicking the lives of pros. I guess this can’t be seen as either negative or positive because the style of clothing is not obscene but also not looked highly upon. The rare positive influence of pro athletes is that they persuade high school athletes to wear proper clothing for their sport. A lot of guys at a young age think that you are weak or soft if you wear a cup. Well since pro athletes wear them proudly, students start to realize that there is a reason behind wearing them. This is a positive influence because it protects the safety of high school athletes.

There are very few positive influences that pro athletes have on high school athletes, and unfortunately the negative ones out weight them. In the end, the person that looks up to a certain athlete can make their own decision on whether or not what they are viewing is positive or negative.
Some will see an athlete losing his edge for whatever reason and take that as a warning. However, there are some who will see an athlete going through a similar scenario and get the perception that this is a good way to live. There is nothing we can do to help this issue because it will all come to who are the role models for high school students and how they are looked at by each individual high school student.
Part 1: Story

When I woke up I still felt a little dizzy from the anesthesia and my head was pounding. I looked around the room to find myself lying down in an all white bed, under some white sheets. Her head was lying down near my feet. She fell asleep sitting in the chair next to the bed I was in. I looked around the room again and as if for the first time I realized how nice the room was. The only lighting in the room came from the lamp on the other side of the room. It gave the room a very calm feeling to it, a relaxing feeling. The light was enough to light up the room but it was dimmed keeping the room still a little dark. The walls were beige and half down the walls it turned into tiles; the tiles were dark green with a white fog design running down the tiles, like marble maybe. Across from my bed was the wooden bathroom door. It was cracked open and from where I was sitting I could see the sink. On my right there was a large window that ran along the whole wall. It was covered by some brown curtains but I could still see the lights from the buildings outside. On my left was the door to leave the room. I lay down softly on the bed again so she wouldn’t wake up. Laying there staring at the ceiling for a while I finally remembered why I was there in the first place. I sat back up slowly and I started to stare at her. As I watched her I became flooded by anxiety and sorrow. I imagined her crying loudly when she received the call from the hospital. She probably drove like mad all the way here and once inside she asked the administrator impatiently for me and as soon as she found out where I was, she ran off looking for me. I imagined her trying to push through two nurses who were holding her back because they had to rush me into the emergency room. All as if it was a scene from a movie. Once the doctor decided I was stable they transferred me to this room. She walked in, dragged the chair closer to my bed and just sat there; waited for
hours until she fell asleep. That's just like her too; she would do something like that. I look at her and then I started to stare at her hands, they are worn-out from all the work she does. She works one full time job and two part time jobs. Yet she organized her schedule so she doesn’t work in the weekends. She did it like this because she wanted to spend time with me. In reality it never happened. During the weekend she sleeps until noon and I'm never home in the weekends. I always go out with my friends just to be away from that house. Nowhere near her. I clenched my fist tightly and felt the pain rush through my whole arm. I was angry, at myself. Angry for all the horrible things I've done and said to her, for not dedicating even half the time she spends on me. Every time she wanted to spend time with me I always turned her down. She bought tickets to go to the carnival that was here that month one day but I told her I already had plans. I walked out the front door and drove my bike around the corner and sat in front of the little convenience store for hours. When I returned I went to her room and opened her door softly, she was already sleeping. I went to my room and went to sleep. I lifted my shirt up and saw all the bandages going around my abdomen and ribs. They ran sideways all the way to my right shoulder. Each time I took a breath I felt a sharp pain on my ribs and trying to lean forward while sitting was exhausting and the pain prevented me from sitting for too long. It was my fault I was in this condition. It was my fault she had to suffer and stay awake all night long worried sick about me. That day seems like it was so long ago. I don’t even remember it all, I only remember her walking towards me talking. Next thing I know the talking turned to yelling, I yelled something at her and she slapped me across the face. Her eyes full of tears. They weren’t tears of anger but of sorrow. Her dark eyes staring straight at me. Eyes full of sadness. Eyes full of regrets. Eyes full of sleepless nights. Eyes that were always rejected; neglected by others. Eyes full of pain that cried themselves to sleep. I stared back at her. My face expressed rage. I clenched my fist and ran out the front door. As I continued to run I looked back past the closing door and saw her fall to her knees. She covered her face with her hands and cried softly. The
door closed and I kept running towards the car. I opened the door, started the engine, and left as fast as I could. I was driving in no particular direction; I was just driving to where my rage led me. I just wanted to get away as fast as I could. I somehow ended up in the highway and started driving faster and faster, the faster I went the angrier I became and the harder I stepped on the pedal. The anger blinded me and all I thought about was driving faster. I heard the screech of the tires as I tried to take the turn. My anger disappeared and my heart was pounding rapidly as the car got closer and closer to the edge of the road. I opened my eyes and I can barely see a person trying to open the door to get me out of the car. The car was turned over. I closed my eyes. When I opened them again I saw the paramedics talking rapidly. I couldn’t understand what they were saying. One of them pumped oxygen into my mask and another wrote on a clipboard. The light was so bright it blinded me. When I woke up I was already in this room and she was already sleeping near my feet. Just thinking about all of this made me realize that she never did anything terrible. I was the one pushing her constantly out of my life, while she tried desperately to keep what’s left of the house together. It’s been so long I don’t even remember why things ended up like they are. But I already decided that once I’m out of this room I will get a job and help her so that she can quit one of hers. I’ll try to fix all that I’ve broken in the last three years. I will start taking responsibilities for my actions and look after her. Not a second later I heard a groan. She sat up slowly and then she turned and looked at me. She looked straight into my eyes and tears started to run down her face. She reached out and hugged me tightly. I’ve forgotten how it feels to receive a hug from her. It’s a warm and tender hug, one that completely bypasses all of the bad things I’ve done. It’s been three years ever since but it feels as if this one hugs makes up for it all. She holds me tightly and I can feel the warm tears up against my shoulder. I raised my arms and I hugged her back tightly, and I said to her softly “I’m sorry for everything… thank you mom.” She cried softly and held me tighter. It’s been three years since I called her mom. But after today it won’t be the last.
Part 2: Analysis

When confronted with some type of struggle humans adapt to it and eventually overcome it, but this change won’t occur until the obstacle presents itself. This necessity of having to confront something can be a great asset because a lot of the struggles that do appear can be potentially resolved. In the other hand it can also be a horrible curse because the change won’t occur until the last very moment, this is why humans can sometime be blinded and not realize the damage they cause or the danger they’re in until the very last second. Joyce Carol Oates with “Where are you going, where have you been?” and John Updike with “A&P” where able to implement this human nature into their stories. They demonstrated how people will not change until a certain event occurs that can then lead to maturation. Therefore how do these events make a person mature? What kind of event must occur for humans to realize what’s right in front of them, and what are their real feelings towards a subject?

Connie is the protagonist in Oates’s coming of age narration “where are you going, where have you been?” she was very self center just like any fifteen year old girl would be. For instance the first line introducing us to her says “she had a quick nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors, or checking other people’s faces to make sure her own was all right” (Oates 930). The fact that she had a habit of making sure she looked good at all times indicates that she is very self centered. Not only does she checks herself out she also looks at others faces to make sure hers was ok. Looking at others appearances is something that’s sociably acceptable in our society. Connie always being so concerned with her looks; she looks at others’ appearance so that she can compare them with her own. This is done so that she can reassure herself; a way to keep your self-confidence.

Later in the story it says “Connie couldn’t help but to let her eyes wander over the windshields and faces all around her … She drew her shoulders up and sucked in her breath with the pure pleasure of being alive” (Oates 931). Connie is the type of person that is always daydreaming, her mind tends to wander off into her own little world where she fantasizes or think about her
surroundings; The fact that she is able to carelessly daydream all the time shows that she still possesses the innocence of a child. Being able to carelessly daydream indicates that there is no sign of stress or responsibility in the person’s mind, which are all part of growing up because you start to be responsible for yourself. These qualities of her persona indicate how she’s still a young girl at heart because she can be considered conceited and also very dreamy.

The most important thing to take in consideration about the story is her relationship with her family, specially her mom. Her dad is never home and he is there only for supper and then just goes to sleep. Her sister June is twenty-four and is loved by her mom who always scolds Connie about why she isn’t like June. Her mom is always picking on everything she does, even the way she looks at herself in the mirror because she no longer has those looks. All of this has definitely affected Connie’s relation with her mom, “Connie’s mother kept picking at her until Connie wished her mother was dead and herself was dead and it was all over” (Oates 930). Connie is very self-conscious but at the same time is also distanced from her family. The fact that there is a very weak relation between her and the family, and the fact that her mom is always mentioning Connie’s flaws can be the cause of Connie’s self-centeredness. Connie is a still young but she doesn’t receives much encouraging from her family and overtime the fact that she is always being picked on is why she always looks herself in the mirror. Being picked on all the time lowers your self-esteem and makes you unsecure; Thus, leading to the habit of needing to reassure yourself that your OK. Also the consistent bullying from her mom weakens the bond between them so much to the point where hatred becomes the center of the relation; this is why Connie whishes her own mom died and the she was dead also just because she is tired of dealing with it.

Taking into consideration the way Connie’s life is and referring back to human nature and how change won’t occur until some event leads to it; the way Oates’s expresses this change in her narration is great example of how this is possible. Towards the end of the story Arnold who is the
antagonist says: “if you don’t come out we’re gonna wait till your people come home and then they’re all going to get it.” (Oates 940) this is the event that presented itself to Connie, which is what will affect her mindset. To think that Connie will even consider helping her family no matter how weak the bond between them is it’s quite impressive, especially because Arnold told her that nobody would sacrifice themselves for her like she did. This statement made sure she didn’t forget that her family was never there for her but she still followed through with her decision. When Arnold threatened Connie’s family was the moment when she started thinking more about her family than herself.

The way she overcame this event was by abiding to Arnold’s request, “you don’t want them to get hurt,’... ‘Now get up, honey. Get up all by yourself” (Oates 942). This is the change that symbolizes Connie’s coming of age. It’s incredible to see how Connie throws away her childhood in an instant just to save her family. Connie is part of a family that doesn’t really share any times with each other and her mom is always picking on her and trying to make her feel bad to the point where Connie wished she was dead, yet when the time came to decide for herself or her family she chose her family. Connie went from a self conscious teen to a compassionate daughter and this changed happened when her family was threatened; Arnold became the milestone she had to overcome to reach maturity.

Unlike Oates, Updike’s story was written only in a single moment of the protagonist’s life but it still grasps the conditional change of human nature. Sammy works in A&P and one day three girls walk in. for most of the story Updike speaks about the girls’ appearance, the store’s environment and the customers just to make it seem like it was just a normal day. Towards the end of the story the girls finally go to his station to pay for what they were looking for and this is when it happens, “Girls, this isn’t the beach…We want you decently dressed when you come in here” (970). This is what Lengel says to the girls who walked in because the girls came in wearing beach clothing.
Lengel continued to tell the girls to leave which caused a very embarrassing scene in the store. In the scene the girls were overpowered and just left the store like stated in the book and this is when Sammy finally decides to ‘change’ and stand up for what he believes in, “The girls and who’d blame them, are in a hurry to get out, so I say ‘I quit’ (Updike 960-971). This is when Sammy speaks up by saying he’s quitting the store, however, looking at it in a more social perspective it states Sammy is tired with how society is run and wants the policy to change.

In this coming of age narration the protagonist plays the Hero/outcast role where as Connie plays the compassionate victim role. The quote that shows how Sammy decided to make a statement states, “That’s policy for you. Policy is what the kingpins want. What the others want is juvenile delinquency.”(Updike 971) this refers to the fact that policy is created by those who have power so that they can controls those beneath them while the rest of the population must abide with this policy and any other say would be considered a crime. Now the way Sammy became of age was by ending his conforming to society and standing up for what he believes. Lengel who represents the policy, the girls that represent freedom and Sammy who is the by-passer that always followed the policy represents the rest of the population. During the moment where the girls were embarrassed Sammy decided to make a statement and show how he really feels about the policy. This might not necessarily look like a coming of age event but in reality a child does not has the capacity to confront social norms because he is still too young to understand the meaning behind them. However an older person who isn’t blinded by this policy can see how messed up it can be and therefore be bold enough to actually try to change it; this is a sign that the person is mature enough to understand society isn’t perfect.

Also the fact that he did deviate now makes him susceptible to criticism from others in the society. He himself realizes this as stated in the book, “my stomach kind of fell as I felt how hard the world was going to be to me hereafter.”(Updike 972) He knew this was coming because after he
decided to make a statement no one followed and after he quit everyone returned to their normal business. The fact that he didn’t receive support and that now he feels sick to his stomach can also symbolize maturation because when you’re an adult you start taking responsibilities for your actions and the world isn’t as bright and optimistic as you thought it was when you were younger; now that he decided to stray from the society he can’t expect society to support him.

In my narration, “It’s been Three Years” I decided to write a story about someone who took his mom for granted. The story took place in the room of a hospital where the person was in the bed and his mom next to him. “I looked around the room to find myself lying down in an all white bed…Her head was lying down near my feet.” The story keeps going back and forth between flashbacks and current time to describe the relation between him and his mom. The relation between them is very bad because the son constantly rejects his mom for something that might have happened a really long time ago. But it’s been so long he doesn’t even remember the reason. Even though he always tried hard to push his mom away, that day that he woke up in the hospital his mom was still there right beneath his feet. This is the event that leads to the main character’s maturation; while sitting in that hospital room he had an epiphany and realized how he always tried so hard to stay away from her but she never gave up trying to keep them together. He decided that after he healed and got released from the hospital he’ll go for a job so that he can help his mom since she has one full job and two part-timers.

The ending of the story is the only place where there is actually any dialogue which is when he calls her mom. “It’s been three years since I called her mom. But after today it won’t be the last.” This is the event that shows when he changed and is now willing to leave everything behind and start to take responsibilities for his actions. It took for the guy to get in a car accident to realize that no matters what happened his mom will be there, and that he also needs to start contributing to the household by bringing in his own share. The fact that decided to change in a way that will benefit
their life style is a great demonstration of maturity; He’ll start helping instead of hindering their bond because he understands the damage he has been causing this whole time and regrets it. It took this specific event for him to realize his mom cared and the damage he caused for the past years. This event made him realize that beneath all that hatred and anger he felt towards her he still cared for her but this feeling didn’t emerge until that day at the hospital; this is when he decides to change the way he treats her and start to help in the house.

Coming of age narratives all have the ability to capture the conditional change of the human nature. This nature needs some event to happen for a certain change to occur. The event can be anything from just witnessing some type of social oppression like in “A&P”, it can be the sudden appearance of a sinister person that corners you into making a decision where your family and your innocence are at stake like in “Where are you going, Where have you been?”, or it can even be a sudden tragedy that brings back families together by making the person realize what he possesses like in “It’s been Three Years”. All of this events lead to the character’s developing in a more mature person, where maturity is defined differently in the different concepts. For instances maturity in “A&P” is standing for what you believe in, In Oates’s story was self-sacrifice for the people you love, and in mine was redemption of the damaged you caused and trying to fix it all. All these changes required for some event to happen before the change was triggered which is why these narrations do a great job and demonstration how certain events make a person mature and realize their true feelings and intentions toward the actions they take and the things they’re exposed to. Even maturity can be conditional at times.

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People are always advised to do something through various ways: through writing, through advocacy, or even through actions. Lupe Fiasco inspires people through his music. For example, in his song “The Show Goes On” he tells people from the ghetto to overcome obstacles and pursue a better tomorrow despite their origins or what people expect them to do. His lyrics depict how people from the ghetto are out casted from the rest of society, thus he advices them to have an optimistic attitude and move forward even though the odds are against them. Through ungrammatical sentence structure, repetition of particular phrases, and specific scenarios; Lupe Fiasco’s song tells of a typical and shameful story in America. However, he does not address the issue that people from the ghetto cannot move on because of the absence of resources. At this point his words of aspirations are unearthly to me because he doesn’t sing about practical ways for people to surpass illiteracy, poverty, or violence.

In this particular song Lupe Fiasco focuses on the American story of unfortunate natives of the ghettos. James McBride in his essay “Hip-Hop Planet” would approve of Lupe’s song because hip-hop songs should define particular societies and their issues, as he stated in his writing. Lupe does this effectively through the use of ungrammatical sentence structure such as, “they be”. This English mistake makes the song sound smoother to listeners because the sentence is not slowed down to properly pronounce these words with the correct tenses and it also portrays how they speak. For instance, in this song it reads,

“...they be lying through they teeth

hope you slip up off your path
I don’t switch up I just laugh…” (Lupe Fiasco)

The use of “they be lying” is improper English telling the listeners that that is how they speak in the ghetto, which addresses the illiteracy problem among them. His lyrics also refer to those that deceitfully lie to those who are uneducated or are desperate for a second chance. In other words, there are people in this world who give others false promises in order to take their money or cheat them off an opportunity. Lupe’s reaction in the third line clearly says to not believe in sneaky scoundrels and to continue following one’s dreams. However, he does not address their incapacity to speak properly and have grammatically correct sentence structures.

An even more effective approach to catch the listener’s attention is by repeating significant phrases. Throughout Lupe’s song he reiterates the phrase “the show goes on” and the word “up” to inspire listeners to persevere, especially in difficult times. Repetition is used to influence listeners to believe in a positive message abstract or not. If a person has the mentality that he will fail on in an exam, of course he is going to panic and forget information that’ll help him pass. Lupe presents another great way to directly instill in the people from the ghetto to persevere through harsh times. These times can be struggles or obstacles, but to make his point stand out he uses an extreme burden in his song:

“They treat you like a slave, with chains all on your soul,

and put whips up on your back…” (Lupe Fiasco)

With the vivid image of chains, whips, and a slave, Lupe stresses the intensity of difficult times. For people in the ghetto or not, the severity can be paying off bills, finding a job or trying to survive on ends-meet. Also, the “They” Lupe is referring to could be the employers that cannot pay enough for families to prosper or it can also be anyone’s oppressor. Once again he urges people to surpass adversity even if it’s as intense as getting treated like a slave. However, he does not mention how exactly to overcome poverty.
One would think that Lupe’s song left no room for an example where a person cannot have the courage to move forward. However, in the second verse he uses a specific scenario; the children in the ghetto and the drastic difference in the culture outside the ghetto. The verse reads:

“Three in the air for the kids in the ghetto
Four for the kids who don’t wanna be there
None for the niggas trying to hold them back
Five in the air for the teacher not scared to tell those kids that's living in the ghetto…
that the World is theirs!” (Lupe Fiasco)

Children must be under incredible pressure to succeed and make it out of a world where is ridden with drugs, violence, and gang activity. Furthermore, there are also people in the ghetto telling those children that there is no hope for them to move on and make a difference in their lives, as it reads in the third line. Although teachers may play an important role in these kids’ lives, are these children equipped to escape the ghetto’s culture? In other words, do they even have the resources to move on to college or even move out to a better lifestyle if they lack proper education because of funding? Nowadays, for a person from the ghetto to move up in society is as if one was trying to find a needle in a hay-stack. Lupe Fiasco does not address these issues, but makes it clear that “the World if theirs!” enforcing these kids to continue to move on despite the absence of resources. His words of inspirations are somewhat hypocritical because he doesn’t mention how these kids should combat something that is unbeatable, violence.

Despite Lupe Fiasco’s song being up-beat and entertaining, it also portrays a sign of hope for many receiving the back-end of society. With the use of ungrammatical sentence structure, repetition of particular phrases, and specific scenarios; Lupe insists on people to pursue a better tomorrow deifying their origins or what people expect them to do. McBride wrote in his essay that hip-hop
“…made visible the inner culture of America’s greatest social problem…”

(James McBride, Pg. 472)

Likewise, Lupe Fiasco’s song tells of today’s great social problem, lack of attention to ghettos and the people who live there. This unjust story in America is heard across the United States and the world because of Lupe’s talent and vocation to help those in need through his music. Although, looking into show business and the music industry; is James McBride correct in saying that,

“[Hip-Hop] was once the purview of black America… [but has] gone commercial…”?

Well, as it seems Lupe Fiasco is a prime example of this bold statement because he has commercialized this song to please listeners instead of finding ways to advice the people from the ghetto to excel obstacles in a practical way. However, the reason why he does this is to make a living for himself as a musician. To what extent should Lupe Fiasco be critiqued for giving people from the ghetto an imaginary dream and not realistically focusing on solutions for the issues in front of them? Also are all artists hypocritical in some way through their music?

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Consider these two groups: the contingent of people who “dive in Dumpsters” and the secret-society Enlightenment group, the Illuminati. One is a group of people who scavenge, forage, rummage (or whatever adjective said group members choose to identify with) through dumpsters to make “one man’s trash, another man’s treasure.” The other group is a group that is comprised of people that, according to the New Oxford American Dictionary, are “people claiming to posses special enlightenment or knowledge of something.” Given these two general statements of these two groups, one would think that they have nothing in common except for the evident fact that they are, well, groups. However, Dumpster divers and the Illuminati are more alike than society cares to admit. Ignoring the Dumpster divers who do it for “recreation,” the other Dumpster divers and the Illuminatus of the world join because it is the last alternative for them. But when they join their respective groups, they find solace in it because their group is filled with others like them that accept them without judgement. It doesn’t matter what drove someone to join a group (coercion, free-will, etc) because in the end they are apart of an organization that accepts them.

For these people, there were no other ways to go about their lives without joining these groups. One could almost say that they were forced into the life of their respective groups. The homeless and financially struggling population of the world can rely on food banks and homeless shelters for so long. Food banks only operate as long as people donate food and people are around to run them. Most homeless shelters operate on a first-come-first-serve basis and have occupancy limits. And even so, not all homeless or struggling people choose to go to food banks and homeless shelters for whatever reason. So, when that moment arrives when the homeless and struggling have no other options, what are they to do?
An answer to this question is explored in Lars Eighner’s essay entitled, “On Dumpster Diving.” Eighner had to dive in dumpsters because of the situation he was in: he was without a job and homeless, living day to day on the streets wondering when he and his dog Lizbeth would get their next meal and where they would sleep that night. He actually started scavenging in Dumpster a year before he became homeless, but gave no reason as to why he started doing that at that point. In spite of that, when the point in his life arrived in which he became homeless with no means to support himself financially, there were not many courses of action for Eighner to take. He could have went to food banks during the year before he became homeless and was trying to get by each day. And when he did become homeless, he could have went to homeless shelters each night for a meal and a bed. But again, Eighner did not cite any reasons for not taking up one of those options before he started Dumpster diving. In spite of that though, the fact of the matter is that he took up Dumpster diving because it ended up being the last alternative for him. Based on this, I infer that with the paths laid out in front of him, Eighner chose the more logical of the various paths laid in front of him (to become a Dumpster diver). With his chosen plan of action, Eighner could now be identified as a Dumpster diver (not a recreational Dumpster diver). Given this fact, he can also be identified with the other non-recreational Dumpster divers of the world. Eighner does not reveal any shame or indignity at the fact that he is a Dumpster diver. But that cannot be said for all Dumpster divers. Some do feel shame at the fact that they scavenge through Dumpsters. Eighner describes how “At first the new scavenger is filled with disgust and self-loathing. He is ashamed of being seen and may lurk around, trying to duck behind things, or he may try to dive at night” (Eighner, 360). He captures the embarrassment of the new scavenger eloquently, “He [the new scavenger] can wipe the egg yolk off the found can, but her cannot erase the stigma if eating garbage out of his mind” (Eighner, 360). For the new scavengers, just being apart of the unofficial band of Dumpster divers could be the saving grace that they need. Referring back to the New Oxford
American Dictionary, the definition given for the word “group” is: a number of people or things that are located close together or are considered or classed together. When the new scavenger comes to realize that he is not the only Dumpster diver in the world, that there are thousands just like him or her, he will probably (and hopefully will) feel some sort of comfort in that fact. There are others just like him/her that he can relate to, maybe not on a personal level per se, but on a level in which they both participate in the same venture (change word; don’t like it). If he or she were to ever come across another Dumpster diver, then they would both be able to connect because of the mutual activity they participate in. S/he would not be able to relate with a non-Dumpster diver because they would not be classed together because they have nothing in common. It is like a group or club at a high school or college. For example, there are a number of students that all participate in a certain group. These group members all feel connected because of their mutual interest and involvement in said group. People that do not belong to the group will not be able to connect with the group members as well because there is no mutual interest between the two (the group members and the non-group members). The same scenario can be applied to the Dumpster divers and the non-Dumpster divers. Dumpster divers can connect with other Dumpster divers and not feel alone or ashamed because there are others like them that they can connect with.

Now, most of society, I assume, judge Dumpster divers to be lower on the society chain/scale. Because they rummage and scavenge through random Dumpsters and trash receptacles, people that are not Dumpster divers themselves view them as lower than them and not worthy of their respect. Due to the judgment Dumpster divers receive, one could go so far to say that they are outcasts since they are constantly rejected by society for their scavenging ways. These non-recreational Dumpster divers are typically struggling, homeless, and/or poor. While they can utilize homeless shelters and food banks, that can only last for so long. Because of the inevitable failure
they will most likely encounter with trying to rely on food banks and homeless shelters everyday, they have to turn to their last alternative of becoming a Dumpster diver.

A group that is very similar to the Dumpster divers illustrated in Eighner’s essay is the Illuminati. The Illuminati refer to various secret society groups that were made up of individuals claiming to possess special enlightenment or knowledge of something. Comprised of freethinkers, philosophers, mathematicians, scientists, and anyone who possessed some high knowledge, the Illuminati were probably both feared and respected. They were feared because their thoughts, ideas and knowledge went against what was commonly accepted during their respective time periods. They were most likely respected, however (despite their thoughts), because of the knowledge and brain power they possessed. Most of society would probably believe that these higher thinkers were not basic, lower-level members of society; they were more than likely at least middle-class to upper class members. At least, that is how I believe they would be viewed and judged as. Since these higher thinkers would be viewed as higher on the social chain compared to the Dumpster divers who are on the lower end of society’s spectrum, they will receive more respect and acceptance than the Dumpster divers. However, this respect and acceptance only goes so far because of the fact that the Illuminati is based on the fact that its members are people who go against the social norm and what is socially accepted.

Now, the Illuminati are not alike in comparison to the Dumpster divers presented by Lars Eighner by conventional means. That is to say, that they are not similar for reasons like the interests or ideas that make up each group. They are not similar because of the type of people that each group attracts/is geared towards. Both the Illuminati and the Dumpster divers are alike because each group was not created as a last alternative for their current members, rather, it served as the last alternative for their current members. The Illuminati was the, for lack of a better word, savior for the higher thinkers. Society did not accept their beliefs, ideas and thoughts so they had no one to share their
thoughts with. But with the Illuminati organization in existence, these thinkers could freely come
together in a place where they are accepted. What other option did they have but to join the secret-
society of the Illuminati? It would be impossible for them to live out their lives with the rest of
society because they kept being shunned and pushed out for their beliefs. The same notion can be
applied to the non-recreational Dumpster divers (like Lars Eighner) which makes these two separate
almost identical. When the homeless, the poor and the struggling members of society reach the
point in their lives when the can no longer utilize resources for people in their situation like the
foods banks and the homeless shelters, the last option they have is to go Dumpster diving. Because
these groups provide a haven in which the members that they appeal/attract to can go to when there
is no other options for them, the Illuminati and the Dumpster divers of the world are more similar
than society would believe.

Work Cited

Today it is clear that “cultural contamination” is inevitable. More people are beginning to meet other people of other cultures, race, etc. Especially, within America, “the melting pot” of the world, cultural contamination is everywhere. I, for one, come from a life where “cultural contamination” was accepted and not looked down upon. My father is Puerto Rican and my mother is German; two cultures from very different sides of the spectrum, so to speak. One would typically think that this is an odd mix, and it may be to, but over the years, family, friends, and colleagues have been able to see that this relationship was beneficial to them in a way that pleases many, and pleases them in the sense that they may now enjoy various cuisines from the cultures themselves. Food, from both of the cultures, has been able to bring “a lot to the table” so to speak as we have learned to accept and incorporate each one into the other. My mother, being the cook of the family, is an individual who can prove that cultural contamination may be for the better as opposed to being a “contamination”. Kwame Anthony Appiah, in *The Case for Contamination*, depicted various situations where cultural contamination takes place and how people either supported it or disproved of it. My mother will be able to show people through her exquisite cooking with the incorporation of foods from two cultures that such a “contamination” within ethnicities can be beneficial. Appiah’s different examples tried to discuss how cultural contamination may be a good or bad; bad in the sense that one may be apt to losing their own culture because they have been more engaged in another. That may be the case to some, but not everyone. So who is to say that “cultural contamination” is a bad thing? Truth is, it may not be. Cultural contamination, in reality, can be beneficial for everyone. Appiah talks of how people can become exposed to new things and see that such an experience can be a learning one. Therefore, what is the harm in mixing cultures? In fact,
there is none; there are just a bunch of misconceptions surrounding negative words such as “cultural contamination”.

So, why is cultural contamination viewed as such a negative thing? Such an ugly word as “contamination” may lead many to see it as negative when that may not necessarily be the case. A joining of two cultures is very beneficial for individuals on both sides. One may simply gain an eye-opening experience to things the other culture may do and incorporate it into their own culture to maybe make things even better or more efficient. Appiah, himself, expresses in his work that “cultural contamination” can be a good thing; a good thing in the sense that people will gain something from it. If two people are getting married from different cultures, it should not be seen as negative, but instead, as an inspiring situation.

This was the case with my parents. My father was born and raised in Puerto Rico (he eventually moved to the United States around his early teens) and my mother was born in raised in Germany. My parents had met each other in the early-1980s in Germany; my mother was living there and my father was stationed over there through the Army. And one thing that was a very clear obstacle between my parents was the language barrier. My mother spoke very little English and my father spoke very little German, so it was hard for them to communicate. But one way that my mother always told me of how she would speak out to my father about what kind of woman she was, was through cooking. She always felt that a woman can show a lot of how she truly is through the food that they cook. My mother would kid around saying that a good cook is a woman who can be a great wife; were as, a bad cook tends to be an awful wife. But that is just how my mother was raised. In Europe, my mother grew up learning how to cook and how to create new German dishes, especially for when her parents would work. So, why not show my father that she had such a great talent, that she does something well AND loves doing it? Isn’t a relationship started and then grows when people are real and show who they are? And that is exactly what my mother believed. It was
clear that the food between the two cultures was fairly different so my mother figured she would
cook my father a German cuisine for their first date to open him to the food she so well knew. My
father was used to eating the typical rice, beans, and dark meats that Puerto Ricans tend to eat as
well as various types of food that was eaten in America. My mother, on the other hand, was used to
only eating, as well as cooking in this case, German cuisine because that is what she was raised on all
her life. My mother had once said to me, “I only ate different cuisines when the family would go on
family vacations and occasionally out to dinner” (Gonzalez, Gabriele); so she was not really used to
eating different kind of foods regularly, and more so, exposed to cooking various foods. So, a
German dish was the best bet for her to cook if she wanted to show my father how she really is.

How, then, can my mother really make German food appealing to my father if he was used
to Spanish food? German food, in general, is made with a lot more gravies and sauces; Spanish food
is typically cooked using a lot of herbs and spices as well as rice and plantains. How, at all, do any of
these mix? Eventually, my mother would see that the various sauces she used to cook would benefit
the Spanish meat and vice versa. It seems, over time, as though my family embraced such foods as
they had my parent’s marriage and learned how to incorporate and accept foods from both sides.
Everyone was exposed to two cultures with very unique tastes within their foods that, further on,
allowed them to see new things as well as taste new things.

As the years went on and as my parents officially moved into the United States as a married
couple in the late-1980s, my mother began to learn how to cook American food as well as Spanish
food because my father’s side of the family was open to teaching my mother if she taught them how
to cook German food in return. Everyone was not simply rejecting the idea of learning how to cook
certain recipes from the other culture; they were more so open to the idea and realizing that it may
be for their benefit if they ate something different for once. I know that as I was growing up,
everyone loved coming over my house to eat because they knew that my mother would be cooking
something different as opposed to the typical everyday foods such as pork chops, rice, and pasta. It never hurt anyone to eat different things once in a while.

But my mother doesn’t completely change what she is cooking all the time; she likes to cook many foods from the German culture to keep traditions alive and eventually teach me how to cook as she does, and over the years my mother has neared perfection in her cooking. As my mother practiced cooking more, she started incorporating dishes of both cultures into one another. For example, *chuletas* (pork chops) were being served with red cabbage and goulash was being served with *tostones* (fried plantains). And as my mother started cooking like this, more and more members in my family began to realize that it was very creative to do so. My paternal grandmother is always telling me, “your mother is a blessing to our family; she is a wonderful woman AND she can cook!”(Gonzalez, Josefa) This just shows that my mother is a fine example that coincides with what Appiah was arguing in his piece.

In, “The Case for Contamination”, Appiah talks of how researchers have done many tests to see how cultures may be affected, and one was on Zulu college students and the effects they had after watching “The Bold and the Beautiful”. And after watching the soap opera, it was clear that the Zulu students did not completely change in the sense of losing their culture. They still had pride in their culture; they just simply had different viewpoints on certain issues. For one, they were given a new viewpoint on relationships and how two people should sincerely mean it when they tell someone they love them; also, they learned that it is perfectly normal to talk to your father about various things- which they sensed that many Americans do upon watching the soap-opera.

Wouldn’t it be safe to say that the Zulu students were mirroring the same situation my mother was in? Here were the Zulu students being questioned whether or not after watching the American soap-opera, that they would completely alter their cultures. And here was my mother, marrying into a bi-racial marriage and having, society in an indirect way, question whether or not she
herself would completely transform her culture into that of the Spanish culture. And in both situations, those were not the case. The Zulu's simply gained something to benefit them and took it as an educational experience. And, in a way, my mother had done the same thing. My mother went into the marriage with an open mind to learn new things and find more about the culture that her husband had come from. And my mother simply did not abandon or change her beliefs towards her culture, but more so expanded it and learned new things from it. Throughout section 3 of Appiah’s work, he shows how such a mix within cultures is beneficial. Appiah stated,

“Talk of cultural imperialism ‘structuring the consciousness’ of those in the periphery treats people like Sipho [one of the Zulu students questioned] as blank slates on which global capitalism’s moving finger writes its message, leaving behind another cultural automaton as it moves on. It is deeply condescending. And it isn’t true” (Appiah, 618).

This statement proves that it was such a misconception is false. The mix of cultures can be more beneficial as opposed to a negative thing.

But what about those who feel it is a negative thing? Unfortunately, there are people who feel that the mix of cultures is a bad thing and should not happen. Appiah, at one point of his essay, stated that at the Kumasi’s Wednesday Festival, there were visitors from England and America who would show that they didn’t agreed with the traditions that were going on that day; they more so had a disapproving look on their face, because they were not used to seeing such a thing. Western mass culture had been completely implemented in their minds and everything else seemed odd to them (613). For these kinds of people, they do not like to experience other cultures coming into their own. They, for the most part, can be very narrow and not understanding of how cultures can be beneficial for one another. The only way that cultural contamination can be completely “harmless” would be if cultures would totally forget about their own upon mixing with another. But most of the time, that is not the case.
Cultural contamination can be good. It is good for cultures to learn from each other, while continuing to represent their culture as well; for their roots are just as important as any others may be. My mother, despite falling in love with Spanish food, still kept close to her German roots and cuisines. She was not ashamed or thought little of her culture; she just simply saw that she may enhance a very important factor in her culture, food, by incorporating other techniques from other cultures into its recipe.

All in all, my mother broke down misconceptions and barriers regarding “cultural contamination”. Those two words are misconceptions, plain and simple. The intertwining of cultures is both educational and eye opening. One may not necessarily see or understand something throughout their lives, but if they experience it, or even come across it, while being open to the different culture, it may help them learn and grow from it; this doesn’t mean that they will completely abandon their culture. But, it always depends on the person and how they may take in a certain culture. My mother embraced my father and his Puerto Rican culture and realized that it was engaging and that both my father’s culture and her culture were passionate about food. If everyone would go into a certain situation with the same mindset (open to embracing the other culture), they would see that cultural contamination, or more so, such “cultural embracement” is a wonderful experience to encounter and learn from.

Works Cited

Alice Walker’s essay “In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens” and Virginia Woolf’s lecture, “In Search of a Room of One’s Own,” both discuss the topic of women who have been intellectually and/or artistically oppressed. Each takes on a different form. Walker’s essay takes on a more personal form; she talks about personal experiences and refers to other women’s experiences (especially African American women), while proving her point through discussing what these women went through. Woolf’s lecture takes on a more argumentative form. She gives a persuasive and analytical take on the topic she is lecturing on. Through Walker’s and Woolf’s contrasting presentations of their similar topics on women under artistic and intellectual oppression, through the following essay one can see that in this case a personal essay is exceedingly more effective than the analytical lecture. The personal essay really touches the hearts of anyone reading it, accomplishing the task of evoking much sympathy and emotion from the reader, where the analytical lecture just analyzes, suggests, and argues in a cold manner, evoking nothing but a hopeless view of what has been presented.

The goal of a personal essay is to stimulate the reader’s emotions. It does this by involving a story that is personal to the author and that most likely has the capability to become personal to the audience in an emotional way. The authors come to conclusions from how that experience affected them so that the reader will become emotionally attached to the subject of the essay. The goals of Walker’s essay are to evoke feelings of sympathy and respect from the readers for her subject. She does this by making the entire essay personal to herself and also to the entire audience. She talks about “Our mothers and grandmothers”, to draw the audience to awareness; Walker wishes to make sure the audience knows she is not just speaking of her family, but everyone’s (Walker 352). This is not just about her past and present, but everyone reading. She gets the reader involved emotionally
and intellectually by asking questions such as, “Did you have the genius of a great-great-grandmother who died under some ignorant and depraved white overseer’s lash?”, or “was she required to bake biscuits for a lazy backwater tramp, when she cried out in her soul to paint watercolors for sunsets, or the rain falling on the green and peaceful pasturelands?” (353). The reader is now forced to wonder what had really happened to her own great-great-grandmother. Who was she? What had she gone through? Also, the reader may be interested in knowing about their grandmother’s experiences so they could sympathize and feel even more deeply connected to their roots. The reader may now feel passionate about educating herself about her heritage. I also know that when I read questions like this I wondered about my own relatives, although they were most likely not slave women. I was moved by the imagery Walker used when she says things like, “when she cried out in her soul to paint watercolors for sunsets” (353). The imagery and depth she uses when she talks about art as well as the women’s souls completely draws my emotions and attentions into the text. When she talks about the slave women’s life experiences, the goal is to make the reader sympathize and respect the slave women for what they went through. Walker uses examples from the lives of these slave women to accomplish the goal of making the reader sympathize for and respect the women. In the beginning paragraph of the essay, Walker says, “creatures so abused and mutilated in body, so dimmed and confused by pain, that they considered themselves unworthy even of hope” (351). She starts with bringing the reader in with something they can sympathize with. Later in the essay she goes on to talk about how much work it was for her own mother to keep the household going. She says, “During the ‘working’ day, she labored beside-not behind-my father in the fields...There was never a moment for her to sit down” (357). Anyone reading this who can relate to having a mother or grandmother who led this kind of life would feel respect for their own mother/grandmother or Walker’s mother. Anyone living a life of hard work and no rest would most definitely relate. Walker’s essay is the perfect example of how a personal essay does an exceptional
job of getting through to the reader’s emotions; it is the perfect example of how a personal essay meets its goal.

Personal essays imagine their audience as people who will respond and relate well to the topic of the essay. Walker’s essay speaks to its audience as if they are all agreeing on what it is talking about, and on its goals. It imagines them to be African American women who can relate well with and be moved by what Walker has to say. We can tell Walker has this in mind when she writes things like, “Black women are called, in the folklore that so aptly identifies one’s status in society, “the mule of the world,” because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else-everyone else-refused to carry,” emphasis on the words “Black women” and “we” (356). She takes advantage of the fact that she has identified everyone reading with black women by declaring a goal for all of them. She declares, in a most uplifting and inspiring way, “Therefore we must fearlessly pull out of ourselves and look at and identify with our lives the living creativity some of our great-grandmothers were not allowed to know” (356). She assumes that the readers are asking certain questions, or would be if they were able to ask her in person. An example of this is one such as when she asks, “But when, you will ask, did my overworked mother have time to know or care about feeding the creative spirit?” (357). After speaking so much about other slave women and every one’s grandmother’s/mothers in general, and then about her own mother, she makes it even more personal by saying, “Guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and a respect for strength-in search of my mother’s garden, I found my own” (361). Walker brings this out in the end so that all the women reading can have hope that they too can find their own garden. The essay speaks to the readers as if they want/need this inspiration. Personal essays speak to its reader's hearts to get some kind of emotional response.

The personal essay has both strengths and weaknesses. One of the weaknesses, or dangers, of a personal essay is that certain people reading may not relate to what is being presented. Also, the wrong emotional response could be generated; things could be taken in the wrong way. There could
be no response or the person may not care. When Walker says things such as, “If we could locate this “anonymous” black woman from Alabama, she would turn out to be one of our grandmothers- ,” she is speaking to specific readers (358). Obviously if the reader is a white male or female from America, or even someone else from any other part of the world who is not emotionally attached to slave history in a very personal way, they will not be able to relate very well, or even at all, with what the essay is talking about. One of the strengths of a personal essay would be the fact that the people who the essay is meant for will relate well with its topic. Walker’s essay speaks to a female African American audience. Her essay presents her ideas and seeks to inspire with the knowledge of who the audience is. Walker says, “And if we ask ourselves why, and search for and find the answer, we will know beyond all efforts to erase it from our minds, just exactly who, and of what, we black American women are” (354). When seeking to reach into the hearts of readers, to be personal with them, to make the feel alive, the personal essay in the perfect approach. It does have its weaknesses, but it seems to me by far that its strengths outweigh them.

Opposed to the goals of a personal essay, the goals of an analytical lecture are to educate; to provide facts, information, research in order to come to conclusions. It can be dry, interesting, or maybe humorous...as humorous as presenting research can get. The goal of Virginia Woolf’s lecture, “In Search of a Room of One’s Own”, is to educate an academic audience on the historical evidence she found about the average woman throughout history. She hints throughout her essay that there is no hope for the creative or intellectual woman. Unlike the personal essay, the lecture does not do a good job of connecting with the audience in an emotional way; it does not get them involved much. Woolf’s essay is a true example of this. She presents new ideas based on her studies and on information. She presents points such as, “Once more, I looked up Women, found “position of,” and turned to the pages indicated” (Woolf 382). She is simply talking about how she goes about looking for her evidence. She then presents her evidence by reading to us what exactly she found.
She presents this by quoting the books she read. She then comes to educated, opinionated conclusions based on her readings. Woolf’s lecture finds meaning through facts, or through facts she doesn’t find. She gives details such as, “But what I find deplorable, I continued, looking about the bookshelves again, is that nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century” (385). She uses words and phrases such as “evidently”, “according to”, and “I concluded”, which show how this lecture embodies what it means to be an analytical lecture (385).

The analytical lecture imagines its audience as one that is there to absorb information, facts, and new ideas/conclusions. The analytical lecture does not have much regard for the audience’s emotions, opposed to the personal essay. Woolf’s lecture, for example, is there to spark a new way of seeing things in an intellectual way. She speaks in first person throughout the entire lecture, only saying “us” and “we” once in a while. Throughout the rest, though, it is all “I”, what “I conjectured” (394). Woolf’s lecture is also very inclusive. Although she is speaking to an academic audience, she could really be speaking to anyone, especially when she says “one remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in” (382). She is speaking to humans in general here when she says “suffering human beings” followed by “we”. Analytical essays usually work in the way that they can speak to anyone who will listen, because they are presenting facts and information.

The analytical essay also has its own strengths and weaknesses. One weakness is that they don’t have much of an emotional connection with the audience unless the content involves emotional facts. Unlike personal essays, where every essay seeks to bond with the readers emotionally or relationally, analytical lectures present facts and evidence to support an argument. Evidence and facts can be cold and dry, and presenting them in an analytical form can come across in the same way. Woolf’s essay gets stale when all she talks about is the facts she has found. Although she has spiced it up with imagery, in the end it is just facts and conclusions. Another weakness is that the audience may feel like the information is useless. I know that when I read her essay I was interested in her findings at first but
there was so much information that I became disinterested and was unsure of why the information she was presenting was even important. That did not happen when I read Walker’s essay. When I read Walker’s essay I was immediately drawn in emotionally because of the way she presented her topic. She did not present it coldly, it made me feel, it got me involved as a reader. One strength of an analytical lecture is that after one is done listening one doesn’t feel like one has anything to owe towards what the speaker is talking about. They most likely won’t take anything in the wrong way emotionally. Also, analytical lectures give new insights into new ideas discovered through research, and give the mind something to think about. Learning is a vital part of keeping the brain fresh, moreover analytical essays educate and accomplish just that. To really have the information stick with a crowd, though, I believe that the personal essay is a much better approach. If someone is emotionally involved they are more likely to remember the topic.

Provided that Woolf had written a personal essay, or had done a personal lecture instead of an analytical lecture, I believe that her audience would have been able to relate better with what she had to say. Because the personal essay has great emotional and relational capabilities, it does a much better job of conveying information and meaning, as we can see in Walker’s essay. Walker’s essay involves the reader, brings them in even though they might not be able to relate too much with African American women and their historical sufferings. The emotions run deep and the reader is captured. The consequence of a personal essay is a lasting impact on the intended reader, which is important. The consequence of an analytical lecture is that knowledge is gained and heavily analyzed, but, in most circumstances, without the glue of relationship. I conclude with wholeheartedly declaring that a personal essay, after reading Walker’s against Woolf’s, is considerably more effective than an analytical lecture in this case.
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Role of Writing in Education

The essays written by Langston Hughes, Edward Hoagland, Nancy Mairs, Richard Rodriguez, and E.B White exemplify why writing is important for education. The main purpose of an education is to produce a successful person who is constantly searching for ways to improve their thought process. Writing plays a major role in this because it is one of the many components of education that is responsible for making a person as successful as they are. One might go on to argue that all writing does in education is help a student write an A paper for class but in actuality writing does so much more. Writing is a fundamental for all courses not just literature. The way writing accomplishes to make a successful person is by challenging their thoughts, allowing them to be creative and helping them keep their thoughts open to other ideas. Whenever someone hears of the word challenging they want to run to the corner and hide. But why is this? Life isn’t made to be easy. People have to learn how to find ways to overcome them. This is where writing comes into play. Writing offers us the benefit of learning how to overcome challenges. One way writing does this is by setting up ways in which writing can turn out bad. The purpose of this is so writers can challenge themselves to omit certain information and figure out what other information they could add in order for their essay’s to end up sounding elaborative and worth reading. In fact, Langston Hughes, even mentions these ways in his essay, “How to be a bad writer.” In his essay he talks about ways to write bad and in one of the examples he states, “Use all the clichés possible, such as he had a gleam in his eye”(146). In this quote Hughes uses irony in order to tell readers that they should not use clichés. The reason clichés should be avoided in writing is because they are unclear and very broad. A way to overcome a cliché is for a person to express what they mean in their writing and elaborate. It’s a challenge to omit words and elaborate. However, a writer needs to be able to test...
their brain and achieve this challenge because they want their readers to be able to understand what they mean in their writing so that they do not end up making the wrong assumptions of what the text is trying to say. Another example of challenging ones thought is shown in Nancy Mairs essay, “Finding a Voice,” where she talks about an incident where she was stupefied when an individual asked her to explain how she found her voice because she had no idea how to answer it. In the essay she states, “In the beginning, remember, was the Word. Not me. And the question, properly phrased, should probably be asked of my voice: How did you find (devise, invent, contrive) your Nancy”(Mairs 168). In this quote Nancy is showing us how she challenges her brain and finds another way about answering the question. In the beginning she didn’t know how to answer the girl but she started breaking the question down and using resources. She explored the question. In the end she found a way to benefit herself and was ready to answer the question again in her own terms. This way of learning, challenging ones brain, is essential in education because it assist in thinking of new tactics of overcoming obstacles. It allows us to think outside of the box, which can be a motivation factor for other classes. Therefore, next time this same student crosses paths with a challenge in another course they can remember what they learned from writing and that is there are other ways to overcome it. It will result in the development of a more thoughtful and successful person, which education strives to achieve.

Another beneficial aspect of writing, which contributes to success, is that it allows one to be creative. Being creative is a gift because it allows a person to have an excellent thought process. When a person decides to write, they have many topics to choose from and many ways in which they can approach their essay. One can either choose to write to persuade their reader, inform their readers about their thoughts, motivate their reader or entertain their reader. A person has choice and they get to express themselves in their writing. One writer, which exemplifies this in his essay, is Richard Rodriguez. In his essay, “Writer’s Identity” he writes about his view on diversity and how it
plays a part in certain ethnicities on their decisions of choosing role models. In one section of the essay he states, “For me diversity is not a value. Diversity is what you find in Northern Ireland. Diversity is Beirut. Diversity is brother killing brother. Where diversity is shared—where I share with you my difference—that can be values” (Rodriguez 227). This is a great example of creativity because Rodriguez is using his own thoughts and beliefs to define what diversity means for him. Yes, readers may not agree with him and criticize him but that does not faze him. His response to those kind of behaviors are, “I sort of like that” (228). He likes it because at least he got his thought across and did what literature is intended for and that is make the reader respond to the text. He is making his text become a conversation and that is very creative. Usually people sit and enjoy literature for pleasure, but when literature strikes a reader as much as some people were struck by Rodriguez’s literature, then creativity is to thank. Rodriguez found a way to inform his readers and that’s what all writers have the capability to do. Another creative part about writing is that when deciding to take a test on a book a teacher usually has students do a written test rather than a multiple choice test. A multiple choice test only tests what one knows. But written test broadens a persons view and makes them think of a new topic other than the one literature offers. Also, each person has a different view on a piece of literature, so his or her answer will vary. There is no right or wrong essay. This is helpful because it allows for the person to express their thoughts and view about the literature rather than what they remember about it. This is a creative learning process because a person learns how to respond to a piece of literature in their own way and they will always remember it because they are the one who came up with it, not the teacher. This is important in education because it allows one to get out their comfort zone and explore. Exploration is big in education due to the fact that one never knows what opportunities lie behind an untouched thought. Creativity plays a key role in this because if one gets out of their comfort zone and discovers new ways then they are exploring and
that is when they will trigger that thought and opportunities will emerge out, from coming up with a way to answer questions to expressing oneself on paper.

The other aspect of writing is that it allows writers to be open to other ideas related to writing and not just their own. This helps them become successful because it motivates them to be open-minded for everything. One thing that allows writers to be open-minded is their ability to take criticism on their papers from peers and teachers. For example, a person writes a paper. They give it to their peers and a teacher and they make their comments. Then the writer gets back the paper with numerous comments and decides if he or she wants to discard them or acknowledge them. The ones who acknowledge it benefit. The reason they benefit is because it shows that they are willing to take advice from others nicely. They’re willing to take account for others’ thoughts to try and better their essay. This is a good skill to have since the ones who acknowledged the feedback now get another point of view of their essay and have new topics that they can add to their essay to enhance it. In the essay, “The Essayist,” by E.B White writes about good essay writing and in one section he says, “Each new excursion of the essayist, each new attempt differs from the last and takes him into new country” (White 276). Here White seems to be agreeing with the idea of working and editing on essays. Each new essay leads a person to a new idea and new thought and that is why White used a metaphor of new country to represent that each new attempt took him to a new idea. Other than being open to criticism, another tip that helps people be more open-minded is being able to understand other pieces of literature and being able to write about them and add to them to make readers aware of the true meaning. In Edward Hoagland’s essay, “What an Essay is,” he talks about what an essay is and what it should compose of. In one part he states, “You multiply yourself, as a writer…if you can catch the gist of what other people have also been feeling and clarify it for them” (Hoagland 141). This means that if a reader understands what an author is trying to say, they should take it upon themselves to add their own input and get a clear meaning out of it. This is
important for education because it helps bring out the issue of teamwork. If a writer is able to read another piece of literature and he or she feels they can add to it then they should do so by using that piece of writing to come up with their own thought. This is teamwork because a writer is using another piece of literature to expand that idea of thought through their writing. This kind of teamwork is necessary in education because it gives people an opportunity to help each other benefit. For example, if a person needs helps with math then another person who already knows can help them, and then in return that person who was helped can help the other person with something. In this scenario the two people are feeding of each other to improve. Teamwork goes a long way in life as well, from working with coworkers to playing sports with other team member. It is a very useful characteristic and writing aids in its development.

Overall, writing is important factor in education. It is essential for creating a successful person. The critical role of writing in education is that it helps a person develop a thought process that they can use to better themselves. The way writing achieves this is by challenging the person’s thoughts, allowing the person to use their creative side and helping them be an open-minded individual. Writing is a tool that is beneficial for life, not just essay writing.

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Hip-Hop Is Dead

Hip-Hop music like most other genres has the opportunity to be very powerful. The true deeper meaning behind hip-hop music has changed. Hip-hop use to be the inspiration to strive for a better life, but now it promotes superficial ideas as to what life should be. James McBride, the author of “Hip-Hop Planet”, was born and raised in Harlem located in New York City. He grew up in the era of the birth of rap music in the 1980’s. James McBride being a jazz lover, when he first heard rap music, he did not like it. In his story “Hip-Hop Planet”, he talks about how rap music originated in Africa. He compares the rap music made then, to the music made today in American Culture.

Hip-Hop originated in Africa. It started with Africans suffering in poverty, and wanting a way out. The Africans used rap music as hope that one-day they will be able to get all of the things that they need. In the story “Hip-Hop Planet”, James McBride says “We want money to help our parents,” [...] “We watch our mothers boil water to cook and have nothing to put in the pot.” (McBride 471). These Africans lived with close to nothing. Their lives were really tough, that eating, and having clothes became their luxury. The Africans began writing about their hardships. Their music came from their personal struggles, and how they dreamt of being able to help their families get out of poverty. James McBride says, “But rap music represents a deeper dream: a better life,” (McBride 471). The Africans saw music as a way out, or an escape into a better world. The Africans felt as though, “Rap doesn’t belong to American culture [...] It belongs here. It has always existed here, because of our pain, and our hardships, and our suffering.” (McBride 471). Once the American culture got ahold of hip-hop music, it was changed forever.

James McBride says that, “At its best, hip-hop lays bare the empty moral cupboard that is
our generation’s legacy. This music that once made visible the inner culture of America’s greatest social problem, its legacy of slavery, has taken the dream deferred to a global scale” (McBride 472). He claims that hip-hop can be a great positive influence on the listeners of hip-hop music. It used to bring light to all of the major problems facing black people. This music at it’s worst can just as easily promote all of the wrong things. If a music video depicts using drugs and alcohol as being a good thing, listeners of these artists will most likely end up drinking alcohol, selling, and/or using drugs. Teenagers especially, are very easily influenced by what they see their favorite artists doing on television, or what they rap about in their songs. Not all, but most rappers have come out of poverty growing up, so they mostly write about how they sold drugs, and did other illegal things to get money. The fans of these artists start to think if they are in similar situations, then doing those same things will get them fame and stardom. A majority of the time, those in the drug business end up dead or in jail. Some artists like T.I. say that he only talks about doing those illegal things to show how others going through the same thing should not follow in his footsteps. Even with this, kids often do as they see, not as they have been told. Sometimes writing about those types of things still cause some listeners to get into them, despite artist trying to prevent it.

Good rap music is all about the artist telling the listeners their story, telling them what life is to them. James McBride thinks that “The nice thing about rap music, […]is that it] deals with truth [and] really gets to the point and takes you places, just like a good book will.” (McBride464). Rap music used to inspire listeners to do better for themselves. It was there to let them know they are not alone, and that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Rap music served as a symbol of hope to many things such as: equality, money to help the family, strength to succeed in life, and many more. The hip-hop culture at its best is very helpful and is a strong movement. James McBride says that, “Hip-hop culture is not mine. Yet I own it. Much of it I hate. Yet I love it, the good of it.” (McBride 472). What he is trying to say is that even though he did not like a lot of the music in Hip-hop he
was still a part of the culture for the good it brings. He grew up in the era where males that were minorities usually did not have jobs, or enough money to pay all of their bills on time. This new epic culture became a way out of the poverty, and the depressing state they were in.

Hip-hop portrays a different dream than it once did. Things like getting enough money to cover all the bills, helping out their families, equality, wanting a better life for themselves, or getting out of poverty were the kinds of things artist back then, and in Africa use to write about. Music use to be important, it kept listeners encouraged and positive. Any kind of music can be an escape from reality. Like James McBride said, rap music can take a listener somewhere just like a book. Rap music took those discouraged listeners to a place where dreams were possible. Like James McBride acknowledges there is the good and bad of everything. So there are some artists out there who still stay true to the real meaning of hip-hop, which is speaking about the truth. One example of an artist today who realizes the change is Kanye West. In his song “All Falls Down”, he admits that he is very superficial because of the how other rappers flaunt their riches, and now he finds unimportant things as ‘necessities’. In this song he says

“Then I spent 400 bucks on this just to be like nigga you ain't up on this! And I can't even go to the grocery store without some ones that’s clean and a shirt with a team it seems we living the American dream but the people highest up got the lowest self esteem the prettiest people do the ugliest things for the road to riches and diamond rings”

In this part of the song he explains how he spends a lot of money on unimportant things just to show other people he can buy more expensive things than they can. Now he is accustom to a certain way of life, like not leaving the house without brand new sneakers on. Even though these famous musicians seem to have everything they want, Kanye says that they have the lowest self-esteem, and just for the money, and riches some people will do anything for it. Kanye West also shows how these material things are only there to cover up bigger problems within. Another part of
his song states “We'll buy a lot of clothes when we don't really need em things we buy to cover up what's inside cause they make us hate ourself and love they wealth that's why shortys hollering ‘where the ballas' at?’” Rap music today depicts these things for their listeners. They make videos with them flashing money around in really expensive clothes, and cars. In their lyrics they talk about how they can spend millions in one day. Kanye shows how our values have changed so much. Now instead of a woman wanting a good caring man, they are only interested in how much money they have, shopping sprees, etc. It is not that rappers are forcing listeners to want these things, but when they are shown all over television it makes some people believe that is what they need to live. What they have now will not suffice anymore. Americans today are rarely ever satisfied with what they have. They always want more, and rap music encourages this want. For some listeners making music is not an option right away so to get the money they see on television they start selling drugs or doing other illegal things.

If the music from the beginning of the Hip-Hop culture were compared to the music made today, there would be drastic differences. More artist coming out today have changed the sound of hip-hop. In T.I.'s song “Live Your Life”, he says, “I got love for the game but ay I'm not in love with all of it. I do without the fame and the rappers nowadays are comedy. The hootin' and the hollerin', back and forth with the arguing. Where you from, who you know, what you make and what kind of car you in. Seems as though you lost sight of what's important with the positive.” In the song he talks about how even though he is out of poverty, he gives back to them with the success he has now. He also talks about how he loves hip-hop but the ‘rap game’ today is a joke, and how rappers now only care about who can make more money than whom, who has nicer things, and who knows more people. T.I. realizes that artist these days have lost sight of what hip-hop music is actually about, so he makes a point to rap about it in his music. This makes the listeners aware that
most of the rappers they are listening to are not talking about reality, so they should be able to separate the real music, from the superficial music.

One point that James McBride does not fully address is that there are many artists today who see what is wrong with the music, and they actually rap about it to the public. So in their own way they are trying to make the listeners aware and hopefully make a change. If fans stopped buying certain Rapper’s albums because they talked about trash, and only bought the ones that talked about real situations, then those rappers would change their techniques to make more sales. Rappers today only talk about money, cars, and things like that because that is the kind of music most of the public listens to. Artists like Lupe Fiasco who only talk about the truth never make as much sales compared to artists like Drake who talk about going to parties and throwing money around. So it really comes down to not only the artists, but the people who listen to this music as well. We all have to make a change before things get even worse.

Even with all of the negatives in today’s hip-hop music, there is good and bad in everything. The most important thing to do is embrace the good that we do have so it does not fade away. Hip-hop is not only music; it is a culture that is made up of the listeners and the artists. So it is up to both to change the culture for the better because hip-hop at its best does way more than entertain. It can change lives.

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Love is a mysterious feeling one has towards another characterized by strong affection and attraction. I believe that love is an uncontrollable force that sometimes really can’t be explained, and one doesn’t truly understand until he/she experiences it first-hand. Society places love as one of the highest goals that one can accomplish alongside with making a lot of money. The stereotyped view of happiness is having a lot of income and finding love. Laura Kipnis wrote the essay “Against Love,” criticizing what love really brings to society. Kipnis brings up many flaws that are derived through the love experience but what she states isn’t exactly what love is all about. I am in complete opposition with Kipnis, I believe in love, I’m all for it, and I’m currently in love myself. Love is about the emotions that are applied along with the commitment for one another and the process that two have to experience together. Love may be conflicted or cause many emotional pains, but at the end of the day, nothing is more valuable than obtaining it.

The emotions and feelings derived from being in love are unmatched by any other feelings. Love generates a feeling of happiness that is uniquely different from any other feeling of happiness. It’s a feeling that casually and unexpectedly produces a smile on ones face, or a warm feeling in one’s heart. Kipnis argues against love by stating how relationships don’t always last, and she states how there is a shocking rate of divorce peaking at 50 percent (Kipnis 750). “We, by contrast, feel like failures when love dies” (Kipnis 750). Yes I agree with Kipnis that breaking up, and losing love brings a ton of pain. Along with love comes the constant joy, or it can bring immense heartache. I know that finding and maintaining love is a difficult thing, but from my experience so far, I wouldn’t trade my relationship for anything. The feeling of truly falling in love with my girlfriend is one of the best feelings I’ve ever experienced in my life.
One of the key factors to have when one is in love, is to have commitment. Kipnis views love and a relationship as a sort of burden to the individuals. Kipnis lists in her essay that when one is in a relationship one is really restricted to what habits he/she can maintain in the house, for example: being a slob, saving the dishes for later, eating healthy, etc. (Kipnis 753-754) Kipnis believes it’s an enslavement or burden that love brings to an individual, but I call that commitment. If one truly loves someone, then he/she should be ready to be committed to the other person and sacrifice some of the things he/she is normally accustomed to. For all that assume that love is easy to manage; I'll tell you right now that you’re wrong and maintaining a good relationship takes an immense amount of care and effort. Step one is to be committed in the relationship, and once you are committed, then the rest is then slowly approached.

Experiencing the process of love and finding our significant other is what we all live for. Kipnis states throughout her essay that during the process of love, people need to find good communication, honesty, and understanding. I agree with Kipnis that those factors are very important in a loving relationship. Kipnis feels that fulfilling these requirements are troublesome and not worth it, but I am in complete disagreement, I know for a fact that I try my best to fulfill these categories. I always find ways to improve communication with my girlfriend and I try my best to understand her. I have also been honest with her since day one, and not a single time did I lie to her. For me, these requirements weren’t difficult to fulfill like Kipnis implied; I actually feel like it’s expected from me to do and it makes me happy. The process of love is a really unique thing. One can suddenly feel much attached to his lover and many internal feelings slowly emerge. A couple slowly starts to miss each other's company, or they start worrying more about one another. Through the whole process of love, every moment is special, whether it is the first time you hold hands, the first hug, or the first kiss, it is all unforgettable.
So is love really worth it? Maybe Kipnis is right, and love is too much of a burden in our society. I believe that one should look forward to the love experience, the undefinable feelings, and the commitment that love brings. Being in love is a big responsibility. If you truly love someone, you have to be able to bestow their personality and flaws. One has to love another for who they are. Falling in love is risky in a way that may cause heartbreak or continual stress, but if there’s even a slight chance that one can find his significant other, it would be well worth it. Is the whole idea of love being exaggerated? How powerful are the words, “I love you”? In my opinion, I feel the warmest and most affectionate feeling when my girlfriend says those words to me.

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We choose the groups that we belong to in relation with our past experiences, sentimental or intrinsic value, and subjects or lifestyles to which we are attracted. Groups are formed as the result of certain individuals arising together and striving toward one specific goal which attests all of each person’s individualized needs or values. Certain groups one joins may also deal with a sense of pride for certain individuals. In accordance with their social or ethnic backgrounds, particular individuals feel an immense attraction to certain groups which eventually leads them to joining that specific group. Whether be it actively or passively, everyone feels the need to be part of or relate to something bigger than them, and joining groups makes them feel accepted and as if they have some form of impact or effect on the world.

In the essay on “Dumpster Diving” Lars Eighner…A year before Lars Eighner actually became homeless he was vastly interested in learning more about that group of people and their unusual lifestyle. Eighner had been going through financial problems and the stability of his life was uncertain. What direction it would take was unknown. Before he even needed to scavenge through dumpsters he was interested in them already and had acted upon yearning to know more by contacting resources and learning more about the actual word dumpster. Eighner actually prepared himself for the future by becoming more familiarized with a fate he knew he may have soon been part of. Before he actually took part in the feat of dumpster diving, Eighner had already reserved an early liking to the subject. Receiving information about the word dumpster sparked a deeper interest within Eighner for both the subject and the lifestyle itself. That’s when he really got into the art, or rather forte of dumpster diving. Shortly after being enlightened, Eighner stated “I have learned much as a scavenger. I mean to put some of what I have learned down here, beginning with the
practical art of dumpster diving and proceeding to the abstract.” The yearning to learn more about the specific topic allowed for Eighner to articulate his own ideas into the art itself and become part of the movement itself rather than be attracted to it.

As time would pass, Eighner found himself engaging more in-depth with the action of dumpster diving itself. The more he took part in it, the easier it came to him. Eighner’s attraction to the lifestyle itself grew and after learning much about it he eventually began dumpster diving for recreational purposes. Although there isn’t an exact committee devoted to creating regulations or rules for all of the dumpster divers of the world, Eighner is one of many who knew that there were specific things you should and shouldn’t do when searching for necessities. He realized many things which were unacceptable. For example divers should not make it a drag on fellow scavengers by being unorganized, only take and carry what you would need short-term, (with the exception of warmth products in the summer which would be rare to find winter come around.) anything you don’t want or need at the moment should be placed to the side in plain view for others to take advantage of its uses.

As long as we feel that the action we are engaging in is clearly acceptable by others, the sense of doubt or confusion in the action or thought of engaging in it becomes nonexistent. Long after becoming homeless, Eighner states “I learned to scavenge gradually, on my own. Since then I have initiated several companions into the trade. I have learned that there is a predictable series of stages a person goes through in learning to scavenge.” Eighner “initiated” several people into what is dumpster diving, basically proclaiming that this group of people has many followers and many others who not only must become part of it but wish to become part of it as well. Although he need not been elected to be the leader position or some sort, Eighner had an immense amount of useful knowledge which seems very useful in the actual struggle of engaging in the action of dumpster diving.
Eighner took all he had already known and created his own set of rules and regulations which people must go by and stood by it. He felt a sense of belonging the more that he engaged in dumpster diving with others.

In becoming part of the group, Eighner received many strategies and useful knowledge on behalf of being able to survive on the streets. He and his companion dog, Lizbeth both learned new and insightful skills, as Eighner states in his essay *Dumpster Diving* “The worst of the living and near-living hazards of the Dumpsters are the fire ants. The food that they claim is not much of a loss, but they are vicious and aggressive. […] One advantage of bringing Lizbeth along as I make Dumpster rounds is that, for obvious reasons, she is very alert to ground-based fire ants. When Lizbeth recognizes the signs of fire ant infestation around our feet she does the Dance of the Zillion Fire Ants.” Apart from acquiring many skills himself, Eighner actually engaged in teaching his loyal companion how to survive in the streets on her own.

The palpable truth is that at one point in our lives, probably many points actually we all engage in activities which other have thought of as well. All people who think of these activities as useful, fun, constructive or whatever intrinsic value they receive from it, eventually, gradually but certainly find a way to collide and form some sort of movement. The movement mot need big, the length of time in which the goal is met might not even matter, but the fact of the matter is that eventually we all find somewhere we belong.

I, too once belonged to a distinguished group motivated toward a specific goal, *Gear Up*, an academically based group which helps students develop a different perspective on life and helps them reach for any academic goals which they set for themselves. Before actually becoming a part of the group I already had a well-developed idea of where I stood academically and what were the things I wanted to improve on. The group was full of kids whom came from underprivileged homes or families, just as me; as soon as I realized this my interest for the program had grown
incontrovertibly. Like Eighner, the more I seem to have learned about the group, the more I seem to have wanted to be part of it. I felt a sense of belonging the more I engaged in activities with my fellow peers.

Eighner writes about “Dumpster Diving” and the lifestyle because it is what represents him and is something which he personally had to go through. Though unfortunately he was brought to the strange and unique world of dumpster diving as a result of financial stability and undesirable circumstances, Eighner was able to face it all with a bright future in mind. Everyone searches for that one thing that they’re good at or that they enjoy taking part of for whatever reason being. Eighner not only had the chance to become extremely talented at a skill he would’ve never learned had he not been forced to in order to fulfill his survival, but he was somewhat of a leader in it. Granting there isn’t any actual ritual or initiation to officially consider one’s self a dumpster diver, Lars Eighner definitely met the criteria to be considered a very skilled one and a very successful one at that. Although he had no choice but to take part in these actions to assure his survival, Eighner sought after it with an open mind and joined a group of people whom looked down and frowned upon.

The yearn or feeling of wanting something will always determine the final outcome, and on behalf of groups, everyone feels the need to relate to something bigger than them, and joining groups makes everyone feel accepted and as if they have some form of impact or effect on the world.

Having an initial goal in mind will always help you strive towards it and work harder for it. As humans, we sometimes unknowingly become parts of groups as a behalf of circumstances we are presented with. Other times we become parts of groups simply because we want to, also agree on what they stand for and they relate to the same individualized goal a person desires. It feels good
working towards something, but it feels even better working to achieve something and knowing that you have an entire team of people behind you working towards the exact same aspiration.

As a sense of belonging, we all feel good when we are doing things in a group because rather than feeling awkward, strange or just wrong about it, that sense of “they’re doing it too” comes into play. When others are engaging in a mutual activity with you and one feels as if it has now become “good” or “okay” to engage in such actions because others are doing it too, we deem it suitable to the situation. So apart from it being acceptable through one’s perspective, it seems as if it has become acceptable from all other participating perspectives as well. As a result, groups of differently oriented cultures and goals are formed and work hard together towards one specific goal which satisfy the individual needs of all participating persons.

The formation of a group comes into play when a small number of certain people whom enjoy or take part in mutual activities come together, planned or unplanned and begin engaging in those activities together. Eighner’s life began started taking a turn for the worse when he had run into some financial problems and it appeared as if he could no longer afford to pay the rent for the space in which he was living. He then took a liking to a certain subject he knew may be helpful to him in the near future: Dumpster Diving. It was not by mistake which he took a liking to this subject, for humans naturally take liking into the things that will benefit them in the future. Eighner willingly took part in actions which related to dumpster diving, or as he preferred to put it, “scavenging.” He then found out that he was rather good at it and there was actually an entire unorganized organization behind it all. Those whom were part of the “organization” knew the rules and the regulations, all others were either can scroungers or just right-out messy. Everyone looks for that one thing which makes them feel like they are doing something, like they’re actually having an impact on the world, and doing it alongside people whom share the same goals feels extremely pleasing.
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Hip-hop can have a good influence on its listeners, as well as bad. It can motivate a person to change their life and see it in a way they have never seen before. In “Hip Hop Planet”, James McBride portrays Hip-hop artists, “with gold teeth, a do-rag…, muscles popping out of his arms and a thug attitude.” (464) Now the question is what a thug is? A thug can be defined as a violent person who is defiant, and arrogant, this is where McBride is wrong; not all Hip-hop artists are thugs, they may have the appearance of one, but they do not have the same attitudes. Recent hip hop artist Nas is still expressing his thoughts through his music. He tries to let the audience know that one can still “change the globe”. In Nas’s song, “I Can”, he states that nothing is impossible and if a person “work[s] hard at it, [they] can be what [they] want to be”. Nas is an example of an activist who is trying to decrease this stereotypical view of hip-hop artists that McBride portrays. His song contains many stories that promote one thing: determination to learn lessons, to grow and become something great.

Music is relatable, that’s why we listen to it, it is so we have this one person who knows exactly what we are going through and feel. Through listener’s point of view, Hip-hop music is classified as music that promotes sex, drugs, and violence, but they don’t realize that not all artists talk about inappropriate behavior like such. Many famous artists send positive messages to their listeners that promote them to get motivated to live a good life. Writers put their thoughts and feelings into words, phrases, and then sentences; until they have a final product to share with the world. Sentences aren’t made up of words, but rather create an image of what is being said; because of this, a song is often a technique to relieve stress, it helps people get motivated and make a
connection with others. Many hip-hop songs are very calm, depressing, violent, and happy. Throughout the world, different hip-hop artists talk about various topics through their music.

Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones who performs under the name Nas, is an American hip hop artist from Queens, New York who writes songs that come from his heart and from what he has seen in his life. He began his career as a teenager and developed his way to get to the status he is today. His lyrics are usually to the point and very motivating. Nas’s, "I Can," has been the most uplifting single that hit the radio and listeners for a long time. The lyrics of this song takes the listeners through a new adventure and makes them gain hope/give motivation to children. He also, identifies how the youth now-a-days jeopardize their lives. Nas states in his music,

“Hung with the wrong person, Got her strung on that, Heroin, cocaine, sniffin up drugs all in her nose...Coulda died, so young, now looks ugly and old, No fun cause now when she reaches for hugs people hold they breath. Cause she smells of corrosion and death. Watch the company you keep and the crowd you bring. Cause they came to do drugs and you came to sing. So if you gonna be the best, I'ma tell you how, Put your hands in the air, and take a vow” (Nas).

He wants the listeners to realize that when people get caught up in drugs and violence it causes one mental and physical pain. It causes many people to go through pain. Other Hip-Hop artists like Lil Wayne and R-Kelly talk about topics that shouldn’t be heard by the youth. Nas wants the listeners to really listen to the lyrics of songs before liking them. Many hip-hop artists’ music sound good put have a bad point. McBride wants to make the same point throughout his short essay. He doesn’t want his daughter to marry a rapper because he thinks that all rappers rap about sex and drugs
whereas Nas is trying to decrease situations like that. McBride states that, he “owns hip-hop yet he hates it” (McBride 472). The phrases and words Nas says in his music really inspire people.

Nas’s great storytelling throughout the song delivers an encouraging message to the listeners that should not be ignored, and according to top hip hop music companies, it isn’t. Throughout Nas’s lyrics he talks about, the pain and struggles that the world goes through because of the impact of some rappers. Nas states that, “Nobody says you have to be gangstas… [One can] read more, learn more, [and] change the globe” (Nas). Even though, Nas has been in the hip hop industry for a while, he tries to learn from others and change their attitude. Nas doesn’t want children and the modern world to learn about drugs, but rather go to college and educate them to have an opportunity in their lives to live a good life. Nas says that, “B-Boys and girls, listen up, you can be anything in the world, in God we trust, An architect, doctor, maybe an actress, But nothing comes easy it takes much practice” (Nas). Throughout, many years in his life, he has seen that not everyone has had a successful life, that is why Nas is promoting and motivating listeners to educate themselves instead of wasting their life and sitting at home. He doesn’t want kids to drop out of school and suffer the pain he suffered in his old days. There is a thought that hip-hop is only for people who are not educated and for people who don’t have a career, but these are the stereotypes that are destroying what hip-hop is now.

“Save the music y'all, save the music y'all, save the music y'all, save the music y'all, save the music,” is said my Nas towards the ending of the song “I Can”. By these phrases, Nas doesn’t just want people to forget hip-hop, but wants the listeners to improve and help save the music. He wants the viewers to stop thinking stereotypically and let them know what hip hop really is. “To confess a love or a music that, at least in part, embraces violence is no easy matter, …[even though] our national anthem talks about bombs bursting in air” they are not talking about killing people, they are
talking about the history of America, and how every one’s life changed after that moment (McBride 472). When one compares the lyrics of the national anthem and the lyrics of one of the songs by Lil Wayne, the listeners can find a huge difference. While the national anthem is talking about saving the country and saving lives, Lil Wayne is talking about killing people, getting in to gangs, and taking drugs. “At its best, hip-hop lays bare the empty moral cupboard that is our generation’s legacy. This music that once made visible the inner culture of America’s greatest social problems, its legacy of slavery, has taken the dream deferred to a global scale” (McBride 472). Music is an aspect of every one’s life, it can help people lead a better life and it can push all the hard work down the drain.

“The music is calling. Over the years, the instruments change….the drums are pounding out a warning. They are telling us something. Our children can hear it. They question us: Can we?” (McBride 472) As time passes, music gets worst and better depending on the type of music one listens to. A person has a choice to listen to whatever they want. They have the choice to listen to something that is inspirational or something that can hurt someone’s feeling. Being a hip-hop artist doesn’t mean that the person is a thug out committing crimes. Not all artists talk about inappropriate topics. In Nas’s hit song “I Can” he describes how the youth is jeopardized and how one can save themselves from it. Stereotypes such as, hip-hop artists are thugs because of their appearance, affect the goals rappers like Nas have; these stereotypes serve as a hindrance and almost negate Nas’s argument on the importance of bettering the youth’s future. Even though, Nas may appear ghetto or like a thug, through his music none of that is shown. Nas wants the listeners and the kids to know that nothing is impossible in life. Nas states, “I know I can (I know I can). Be what I wanna be (be what I wanna be). If I work hard at it (If I work hard at it). I’ll be where I wanna be (I'll be where I wanna be)” (Nas).
Adrian Lawrence

King James

Schadenfreude, a German word, is the pleasure derived from the misfortune of other people around us. Although at first thought, we might think that this would never be something a normal person would do, after further thought we can recognize that we all are often guilty of this. Whether it is seeing someone you’re not fond of trip, or seeing someone that cheated get back a bad grade, we all utilize schadenfreude- at some point. In recent months, National Basketball Association superstar LeBron James (LBJ) was subject to such behavior from the American public and most of those in the sports field. Because of his decision to leave his hometown Cleveland, the place that had shaped him into who he was today, the country resented him and labeled him as a traitor. However, I believe there is some level of selfishness that our society accumulates that went into the hatred towards James. Neal Gabler, in Our Celebrities, Ourselves, speaks about the idea of “empowerment through deconstruction”. As we break down the celebrity or public figure, we bring them back down to earth. The reason we would want to do this lies behind schadenfreude, because we find pleasure and delight from their deconstruction. We tend to subject our celebrities to a sort of “moral code”, for example, the idea that they should only play for one team, they should be loved by the spot light; they should have a lot of money and have all the endorsement deals. Our society fails to think about the feelings and emotions of others, and tend to simply think about what we want, neglecting the needs of the individual. We tend to feel a sense of schadenfreude because these individuals violate the “moral code” society subjects them to.

LeBron James will always be a gargantuan being in all of sports that few can duplicate or measure up to. LeBron was born and raised in Akron, Ohio, and played basketball for St. Vincent – St. Mary High School in the city. By his sophomore year in high school, he quickly drew comparison
to Kobe Bryant and Michael Jordan, at the astonishing 16 years of age. By the end of his high school career, his accolades included: 3x State Champion, 3x All American, National Player of the Year, and countless tournament MVP. LBJ decided to go straight to the NBA, signing for his hometown team, the Cleveland Cavaliers. He made the entire city a national attraction whenever the great “King James” played. We were all made witnesses. Even the city’s economy depended on the revenue LBJ brought in for visitors and game attendees. After 2 seasons with the best record in the NBA, LeBron failed to make a deep run in the playoffs, being eliminated by the Boston Celtics and the Dallas Mavericks. After his 8th season, he made the ultimate decision to follow a path to South Beach Miami, forming the "Big Three", with leading figures in the NBA and great friends with James, Dwayne wade and Chris Bosh. The nation looked at LBJ as a villain, the man who let down every one who loved him because he had no faith in them. However, Gabler said, “celebrity is just ordinary American life writ large and more intense” (6). In reality, LeBron was just a simple man who wanted the best for himself. He saw the opportunity to play the game he loves with friends he loves.

Prior to the display of schadenfreude towards LeBron James, there was a tremendous backlash towards his actions in the weeks before. If one took the time to Google “LeBron James Miami”, one would not fail to find the countless “LeBron sucks!” and “James the Traitor” articles, videos on why James should be hurt, and reasons why he was to them, the worst person to ever walk on the earth. At the press conference where LeBron announced his decision to join the Miami Heat, the video camera displayed the jaws being dropped all over the United States, people crying in bars in Ohio, and his trademark “James 23” jersey being publically burned all over the city. He was even voted “most hated sports figure”. Was this all necessary? The sports community had placed James up on a pedestal where, to them, he could do no wrong. We set moral guidelines for our celebrities, that if they violate, we turn on them in on instant. Because LBJ did not follow the path
“we”, the outside world, wanted him to follow, he is treated as the enemy, and we search for any sign of failure.

The public found the pleasure they were seeking as LeBron and the Miami Heat slid through an early slump in the performance at the beginning of the season. On October 26, 2010, the Heat had their much anticipated season opener to the Boston Celtics in Boston. All the talks and discussions were put on pause, and the Big Three of Miami look to take on the veteran, tested franchise from Boston. As soon as LeBron’s name was announced over the loud speaker, he was booed from the start of the game till the end. LeBron tried to play this off and play a strong game, but it came in a loss. Following this game, the onslaught of negative commentary began towards James and Miami. After slumping to a 9-8 record, the Miami Heat was the subject of worldwide criticism. Analyst and commentators would often say “they can’t expect to be great overnight”. Arena after arena, and city after city, the public wanted the Heat, and specifically James, to simply fail. They viewed this misfortune early on in the season to the Heat as ‘punishment’ for the moral code LeBron had broken. Because James ‘did not do what they want him to do’, they desired this misfortune and thrived off any evidence of downfall. In the minds of sport fans around the league, LJ had violated the moral code they set up for him. He was made to be “the dedicated basketball player that had complete love and support for his hometown that would never leave” (in the mind of the Cleveland supporter). Society tends to set up our own structure and impression of who these celebrities should be. Whether this is the villain, or the individual that battles the evil source in his/her life, through media, they are made into a person that the individual sometimes have little control over. In this case, this was the evil NBA player that had turned his back on all that loved him (as seen by the countless sobbing and crying in homes and public gatherings all over Cleveland watching The Decision). This has no consideration on what the other party wants for their life, but since they did not follow our expectation for them, we strive off their failure and feel happy within
ourselves because this would be the penalty that they deserve. In the mind of society, he brought this chastisement on himself.

Instead of being pressured and weighed down by the negativity, LeBron used this hatred as a driving force to help him reach success in his career. LBJ was about to use the detestation from the people around him as a tool that also allowed him to see the true people that mattered to him. In Cleveland, LeBron was surrounded by people whom he thought wanted all good things for him. These were the people he grew up with in Akron, and people he has been with his whole entire life. However, after his decision to move to another location, these ‘friends’ instantly turned on him. Since LBJ did not follow the guidelines they had created for him, he was loathed by these people. As a result of this, James was able to see the people that truly had sincere care for him. These were the people that supported him through his adversities and changes, and saw the world through his eyes and saw the steps he wanted to take. These were the people that supported him and proved to be a supporting structure throughout this whole ordeal. In his Nike commercial James said, “What should I do? Should I not listen to my friends? They’re my ‘friends!’” LeBron used his actions following his move as his way to write his narrative. According to Gabler, each celebrity has their own narrative or story that goes with them. This can be created by the public or even the person themselves. In LeBron’s case, he had the option of playing the role of the villain in this situation, or rising above the hatred. In his commercial, he quoted Maya Angelou saying, “Shoot me with your words, you may cut me with your eyes, but still, like air, I rise.”

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Tyler, the Creator, Breaking Barriers in a Unique Way

Odd Future Wolf Gang Kill Them All’s or (OFWGKTA) own Tyler, the Creator has songs which represent his personas which have defeated some of the musicians outrageous moments such as Madonna, as an example. More specifically, Tyler, the Creator’s song “She” featuring Frank Ocean which goes into detail about Tyler stalking a young woman and preying on her with a high degree of violence, has many jaws dropped. With that said, Tyler, the Creator’s song has outdone the hip hop genre when it comes to his musicality and also of his extreme nature of the lyrical content he presents in his music Tyler, the Creator breaks all the barriers and his music is very unique to others in the hip hop genre.

While going into the song, Tyler’s vocabulary on how he is stalking against a young woman is very vulgar to almost offensive. During the bridge, Tyler, the Creator goes into detail on how he wants to drag her lifeless body through a forest and fornicate with her corpse because he is in love with her. In juxtapose with the bridge, the second bridge elaborates on how Tyler used to masturbate to the girl and had finally built enough courage to finally ask her out on a date and hopefully everything will work out in the end. Within the first bridge, Tyler, the Creator says that if she says no that eight would be the number of bullets he would use to kill her (Tyler, the Creator). If he doesn’t get what he wants, she has to suffer because of it. In the second verse, Tyler talks about how that she will have her “down in earth quicker if you diss me tonight/but I’ll be the happiest if you decide to kick it tonight” (Tyler, the Creator). Throughout the whole song, the message that oozes out is that Tyler is so obsessed with this girl that he will do anything to be with her. For the song being very graphic, he is doing this because he wants to shock people with what he does. Tyler’s shock value that he adds to his songs is different amongst many artists. He reproduces
mainstream music but gives it his twist with his creativity and imagination that makes his music very unique and “one ups” other artists. Tyler’s styles in his songs are one that is different to himself which makes him an artist worth listening to.

In being very graphic, it happens to be Tyler’s nature and it has worked very well for him as a musician. As an example, in his song “Yonkers” the first line to the song is, “I’m a fucking walking paradox/ No I’m not threesomes with a fucking triceratops” (Tyler, the Creator). For that song, many of the lyrics had contradicted with each other so that when Tyler would say one lyric, another lyric would contradict it. For “She”, he also happens to drop the word “cunt” twice in the song. For being a very harsh word, Tyler uses it in the song “She” to refer to the girl he is stalking and is also obsessed with. Tyler uses the word “cunt” to not only add an extra spark to his song, but also give an image of how he truly is obsessed with this girl to the point he can hate her for her not noticing him until he finally asks her on a date.

While the vulgarity of Tyler’s song “She” is high, the song also happens to do things that a lot of musicians have not in their music. With the many expletives he uses in his song and also using the subject of rape as the theme throughout the song, Tyler does it to show he can write a song and gain a lot of popularity with it. Many hip hop artists have gone into writing songs about having intercourse with women but Tyler goes into writing about stalking and preying on a girl and in the first hook he says, “Gorgeous baby your gorgeous/ I just wanna drag your lifeless body to the forest and fornicate with it because I’m in love with you…cunt” (Tyler, the Creator). There, he shows his obsession to the point of hatred towards the girl because when he said in the second hook, “I just wanna talk, and conversate/ cause I usually just stalk you and masturbate/ And I finally got the courage to ask you on a date/ So just say yes, let the future fall into place” (Tyler, the Creator). It goes against where he stated on how he was going to drag the girl into the forest and fornicate with her lifeless body because in the second hook he says how he used to stalk her and he finally built up
enough courage into asking her out but at the end of the hook he still calls her a “cunt” as a way of resentment he still holds against the girl. He (Tyler) holds tentative feelings towards the girl and what he says from asking her on a date to killing her in a forest and then fornicating with her dead body, in comparison. Tyler holds these feelings because he loves her and at the same time he hates her for her not wanting to go out with her or even considering him.

James McBride, who wrote “Hip Hop Planet”, described hip hop as, “music seemingly without melody, sensibility, instruments, verse, or harmony, music with no beginning, end, or middle, music that doesn't even seem to be music” (1). There was a time in which I agreed with McBride saying hip hop doesn’t even seem to be music but when I first listened to Tyler, the Creator it opened my mind. I saw that it had meaning in all his songs, even though the messages were not always positive such as how “She” is about stalking and rape and “Transylvania” includes a lot of lyrics about misogyny.

To see how this song would rank as being a song that would last throughout the ages or just derivative fluff, I see this song lasting for a long time. Many people have not heard of Odd Future yet alone of Tyler, the Creator. By the time that they do hit it so that everyone hears about them, they will be remembered for years to come. With the musicality Tyler has in which he doesn’t follow anything other musicians do and also of the extreme content he discusses in his songs such as “She”, many will find Tyler unique and brave and praise him for the music that he releases. What is also different about Tyler is that he is only twenty years of age and has been performing for three years. OFWGKTA has big plans ahead of them which include Tyler’s release of his new album in 2012 and the formation of Odd Future Records which will be a branch off of Sony's RED (Markman).

The success of Tyler the Creator has gotten immense along with his group and I see his song “She” to relate to teenagers mainly. With Tyler being very young himself along with his group, their
target market to be teenagers is easy to reach and their cult following has been huge since many teenagers understand what goes on in many of the songs such as “She”. The content of the song deals a lot with stalking which happens very often among teens. The hook by Frank Ocean goes, “The blinds wide open so he can/ See you in the dark when you’re sleepin’/ Naked body, fresh out the shower/ You touch yourself after hours/ Ain’t no man allowed in your bedroom/ You’re sleeping alone in your bed/ But check your window, he’s at your window” (Tyler, the Creator). While the girl feels safe in her room, there is someone watching her throughout the window. In many teenagers life, stalking is very common within the age group. To the point where it appears in much of pop culture, stalking in the teenage community is not seen as uncommon and for it to appear in the song may seem cliché, but in fact it hits a sensitive spot for many people who have endured that experience.

The music video that goes along with the song shows how the obsession Tyler has for the girl is really big. While the girl is sleeping in her bed, Tyler is seen standing at the corner of the bed watching her sleep. Later in the video, the girl is riding her bike and the camera cuts to him riding his bike very frantically while she rides her bike calm and collectively. They met each other at a lake and he asks her on a date. However, Tyler gets arrested and ends up back at the girl’s house in which he still continues to stalk her to show how much he is obsessed with her. The video shows a lot of the dedication Tyler has to continue to stalk the girl and the end of the video shows how the whole situation was on a TV and the same girl being stalked was watching it. This is an example of symbolism because it was if all that had happened was a big fantasy. The fantasy is of how creative Tyler is and shows his fantasy of stalking the girl. To see whose fantasy it really is, it would be both Tyler’s and the girl’s. Tyler’s because he stalks her and imagines all that goes on between the two shown in the music video. Mostly, it’s the girl’s fantasy because at the end of the video, you see the girl watching the whole conundrum on the television as if she was watching the whole thing in the
safety of her own home. Then, Tyler is standing behind her, still stalking her, and it leaves a question wandering in your mind as whose fantasy was it? I imagine it being both of their fantasies but it is left for the viewer to decide.

Tyler’s musicality and his lyrical content are different and unique to his talent. In comparison to McBride, his music may not please McBride but his music speaks out of the American experience, especially those of teenagers. Tyler’s music will be remembered for a long time and also of the other members of OFWGKTA. The song “She” will especially be remembered because of the message being conveyed of stalking and the two sides of Tyler the Creator. His music does have a beginning, middle, and an end with each song telling a story in itself. The message may not always be a positive one but in “She”, Tyler expresses his love for the girl even though it’s not in a healthy way in comparison to his other songs such as one of his songs titled, “Bitch Suck Dick”.

In conclusion, Tyler the Creator’s “She” shows Tyler’s musicality and his extreme content have a message and most definitely break barriers. While many mainstream musicians have thought of breaking barriers, Tyler actually does. He is not afraid of being considered a “sell out” or even remaining “underground” for the rest of his career. It will not bother him and with the musicality of Tyler, the Creator and how he “one ups” other musicians with his music which range from different topics are always here to impress with his unique touch to music for years to come.

Works Cited


I heard the familiar sound that the mailbox made when mail was put into it. A white and blue envelope stuck out of my mailbox just waiting to be opened. My eyes scanned the very first word “Congratulations”. I was overcome with many feelings. As I kept reading certain words began to jump out at me. “Student Support Services” and “Contingent” were words which halted my joy. I had not heard about SSS before and I was not quite sure what it was. I began to do my research; it began on the university website. It gave me a brief description but I did not really fully grasp the true meaning of what the SSS program meant. I waited until the University of Connecticut open house to ask questions. I asked the basic questions, could the accepted students bring a television? Were we allowed to leave every weekend? And the most important question of them all did we even get into the University of Connecticut?

All my questions were answered during the welcome presentation and the question and answer portion of the day. I realized that the SSS program was a chance given to a selective group of high school graduates who fell into certain categories. These selected few were chosen by their “high school grades, class rank, SAT scores, family educational background, and/or socio-economic status (SSS Mission Statement)”. The presentation also allowed the students to see the many support groups or staffs that were available in the summer, from the residential assistants to our SSS counselors or even “study groups, First Year Experience courses; supplemental instructions; as well as academic, cultural and social group activities (SSS Mission Statement)”. I sat in the auditorium looking at the many faces and the new people that I had met. I saw my new friend Latisha who was graduating on the 27th and Cynthia who went to Manchester High School. Of course I had taken notice that our high schools were rivals. I knew that this summer was bound to help me succeed.
As I sat there listening to Leo Latchet I did not know why other people were chosen but I knew why I was here. My parents did not go to college so I was considered a first year generation college student. I knew my SAT scores were not the strongest because Math and English were my weakest point. I did not really have a problem with the rules during the presentation because I knew this program was created by “the University, the U.S. Department of Education” to only benefit me when the fall semester began. The SSS program is placed to give us the students the support, and the most guidance needed to not only “increase the enrollment,” but also increase the “retention, and graduation” of students who might not have the strong family and educational support at home (CAP Mission Statement).

Not only will I by the six weeks be able to know the campus thoroughly, but be instilled with strong work ethic, and strong study skills. There really aren’t a lot of students on campus; this allows our counselors to get to know each and every one of us. If you ask Joanna Rivera what does Rosemary Manu want to be she will probably say “Oh let us not go there”. Joanna knows I am still searching but with her guidance I will find my place.

As I read my acceptance letter in my room I had no idea what I had gotten myself into. But, when I arrived on campus I knew I was the type of student that really needed this program. I had felt lost after graduation. I was not really sure what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go but getting into the SSS program, I know I am in good hands. I know there is support whenever I need it, or whenever I slip up. I know I am capable of reaching new heights and possibly starting the fall semester year with seven credits. As my friend’s back home work and party, I am here waking up at 6:30 in the morning, going to Jacob Suggs, and after Emily Dolan. There is nowhere else I would rather be right now in my life. My path seems like it is taking a turn for the better, I see nothing but success ahead.
People now in the society of America, and even other countries, have a first impression of others by the way they communicate. Although some individuals may not be able to speak the society wants them to, they still have potential to succeed in life. It is really hard to learn a new language and in certain environments you will become an outcast and won’t get enough support if you don’t speak properly or don’t have the “acceptable” accent. I personally had a bad experience, not with learning, but with the accent I had for a while in school. I became an outcast and hated it. But because I was being judged on a regular basis I also developed the bad attitude of judging others on the way they talk sometimes because of what happened to me in the past. I know it is wrong, and I am trying to change that but it is not really easy, especially if it becomes more of a habit.

One of the authors who really caught my attention and indirectly helped me write about my personal story was Amy tan. She is a Chinese woman who had a rough childhood because of language. When she was young she had to face difficulties that kids should not deal with because of the limited language of her mother. She had to translate everything for her because the listener would several times pretend to not understand what she was saying. She was also confronting another problem later on because she wanted to be a writer; and Asians don’t normally become writers. She had teachers pushing out of the writing path. In college she decided to major in English which was very unusual for a young Chinese girl. But she was stubborn and never gave up her dreams even when nobody believed that she could actually become a writer and eventually showed that the society can be wrong about stereotypes. Her story gave me the strength and writing skills necessary to write mine.
When I first came to America a year ago, I had to learn English pretty quickly. Of course, I had taken English classes in the French school I was before but this time it was really different: everything was in English. So basically, I had to learn it the hard way by trying to understand why the teacher was saying and doing some research at home for the words that I did not understand. I was also reading some English books even though at first I had no idea what the stories were about. It was pretty tough, but after three weeks I was able to have a conversation with someone. The only problem left was my accent that was pretty bad. When I would talk in school, nobody took me seriously. They always thought what I was saying was a joke and they would always laugh, even the instructors. Sometimes they would just act like they do not understand what I was saying or just ignore me. And because of those embarrassing moments, I became aware that trying to speak with a bad accent was useless and I became really quiet in class. I was starting to lose self-confidence and even to this day, it somehow still affects me today.

This is how the society generally works. If you don’t speak proper English and you are a minority, they will most likely put you in the class of “dumb” people who live in the U.S. Even though I consider myself being a smart kid, a lot of doors were closed for me in the early months here. My counselor did not let me take higher level courses for senior year because she thought I would not be able to understand them. I could write and read English at that time, but she just did not believe that I could do it. She told me later on that she really regrets doing that but I was still hurt that she thought like that of me when I first came. The same thing happened with an older woman I was talking to, and she could not believe that I was taking Advanced Placement Biology because the English level was too high. This is how discriminating people can be. Another example would be when I went to an interview for a scholarship; the person who was interviewing me clearly showed that he was bothered by the way I looked and speak: he would either not pay attention to what I was saying or stared at me with an awkward look. He then decided not to give it to me.
because he said that he could not really understand what I was saying. I was really sad because I tried my best and I knew he could understand me. But to his opinion accent was more important than necessity and skin color.

But I came to realize that after a while that even I could become embarrassed of the way that my father speaks English. I would sometimes be ashamed of him and sometimes ignore my father when he would try to talk to me in public because he does not speak proper English. This particular scenario reminded me of a quote from “Mother Tongue” where Amy tan tells us: “I was ashamed of my mother’s English. I believed that her English reflected the quality of what she had to say” (Tan, 251). The fact was that I was exposed to judgment for so long that I developed the behavior of automatically judging others. I was not proud of myself but it just happened. That is another issue in our society: bad habits from others can influence your life and that is why so many Americans those days labeled people who speak broken English as being “dumb” because they see other doing it. They don’t need to know what your backgrounds are or what problems you have already experienced in the past; if you meet the requirements for being judged, you are judged.

Unfortunately this kind of prejudice doesn’t only happen in the U.S. but pretty much everywhere around the world. In my country it was worse but it was already poor so the individuals from the lower class were really being discriminated, and there was no way out for them. In Haiti there two main languages: French and Creole. People there labeled others by the way they speak French because it was the language you had to learn in school. So if you speak it with an accent the people from the higher class will label you as an uneducated individual in the society; it was that simple. Language is one of the reason opportunities are closed to a lot of really promising young individuals worldwide. They are being pushed aside before they even have time to prove themselves to the leaders. Because of that our society is not really providing equality to everyone.
I was also being exposed to a new world as well because I had to translate everything for my father; things that I never paid attention to before were now exposed to me. For example one time at the bank, my father and I went to create a new account for me, and I had to talk to the bank teller instead of him. And this teller happened to be really impatient, especially when I had to translate everything my father had to ask. Normally I would let him deal with this issue and walk around; but this time the roles were switched: I was the one getting pushed around by this woman and he was the one standing there. Call me soft but it really hurt my feelings when she was talking to me in a really rude manner. I never faced a situation like this before and I did not really know how to react. My father tried his best to help but his English was just too limited. And the end of that day, I was shocked and unfairly mad at my father. I knew that it was not his fault but I could not help it. I could not understand how not being able to speak English was such an issue for some people.

Another factor in the inequality of our society is the individuals suffering from it just accept the fact that they are inferior and just live with it, especially in the language world. For example, the way that a black man from a poor background speaks has him being labeled by the others in the higher class as a bad guy, a “thug”. The issue is that he will not make the effort to change; because they see him as a bad guy, he becomes a bad guy. So it’s not entirely the society’s fault but also the fault of the some of the individuals being judged. When I was an outcast a year ago, I decided to try to speak properly even though I had an accent.

But some of the individuals don’t make that effort to change, to show that the stereotypes can be totally wrong. They just accept their situations and follow the path that was already predicted to them. In “Superman and Me”, by Sherman Alexie, he showed how the other natives did not like him because he was trying to fight the stereotypes. But he fought and made it out of the reservations: “I refused to fail” (Sherman, 14). But the others just play dumb in school even though they were not really stupid. They did not want to change: “Those who failed were
ceremonially accepted by other Indians and appropriately pitied by non-Indians”. This is how it was supposed to be.

To summarize, language is a powerful tool in human society. You get judged, liked, hated, and labeled as an outcast because of it. It is very hard to live in a new environment where the language is not the same and the others living in the same environment are sometimes not the kindest people on earth and take it very seriously when someone can’t speak their language. Unfortunately I had to suffer from that roughness in attitude from them as well. It is not fair because that will not help the individual improve. That is why instead of judging we have to show support to those who can’t talk and tell the judges how their behaviors towards them are just demoralizing.

Work Cited

Richard Miller

Cultural Clash

In the immediate society we live in, and outside of it, we notice that all groups of people have certain cultures that they follow. Culture, is one of the elementary ways to distinguish people apart, other than skin color and language. Comparing two different countries like America and Ghana, both have two very unique cultures. However, over the years, the cultures of these two countries have clashed which created one of them to be highly influenced by the other. In this paper, I will argue that Western/American music culture and lifestyle has had a great influence on Ghanaian music culture which is a change from traditional Ghanaian music to a copy of American style music. This in turn has influenced the values and behavior of Ghanaian youth culture towards clothing, attitudes and speech. The cultural change is not always bad; however, when directed towards these values, it poses as a bad influence due to fear of the depletion of the culture itself. Depletion of the culture will mean that, there will be difficulty in distinguishing between cultures and learning from each other.

The style of Ghanaian music has been greatly influenced by Western/American style music. Traditional Ghanaian music has been influenced to the point that the style of the music has been altered. The Ghanaian artists are using more English in their songs that the original native languages spoken in Ghana. Either their songs are in complete English or a mixture of the native languages and English. The Ghanaians have now adapted to electronic ways to make music rather than the original ways. The beats and melodies are now made electronically instead of using instruments. By originally, I mean the way the Ghanaian music style used to be before the change in culture a good few years back. Basically, the originality of the traditional Ghanaian music style is depleting slowly. The Ghanaians used to utilize acoustic/natural instruments which gave the Ghanaian music style
this originality. This has caused even Ghanaians who have a passion for Ghanaian music to slowly depart from Ghanaian style music. Not every Ghanaian approves of such a change. For example, my father is one who loves Ghanaian music when spoken in the original native language since he grew up speaking the native language. He gets upset when his favorite Ghanaian artists change from using the native language in their songs, to mostly English. Even I don’t agree with such a change because, just like my father, I like the traditional style music that used to be. Change of music style destroys its originality and its taste. Ghanaian music influences some aspects of Ghanaian culture (values and behavior, i.e.; clothing, attitudes, Religious beliefs, and speech). Ghanaians are influenced by music which therefore influences these aspects of Ghanaian culture.

One aspect of Ghanaian culture which is greatly influenced by music is clothing. The Ghanaian artists before encouraged the utilization of cultural clothing in their songs. The Ghanaians are adamant about wearing clothing that covers up most of the body, when referring to girls and they also encourage boys to keep their pants waist level and wear clothes that fit them properly. Due to the influence of American style music on Ghanaian music, Ghanaians are influenced by the clothing of the Americans. Now, the Ghanaians are influenced by the American clothing by the lyrics of the American music, and also by the music videos they watch. Ghanaian girls wear skinny jeans and skimpy blouses to show more cleavage, trying to copy artists like Nicki Minaj and Lil’ Kim. These two American artists are the top music role models who influence their fans by the clothes they wear: blouses that expose cleavage and short bottom attire that show most of their thighs. Ghanaian girls are also showing more skin by wearing short skirts and shorts, all in attempts to copy the American/Western music artists. The Ghanaian boys are also trying to copy the dress code of the American music artists. They are beginning to wear baggy clothes and sag their pants below their waists trying to copy artists like Eminem, Busta Rhymes and Dj Khaled. For example, in the song “I'm so hood” by Dj Khaled, the lyrics clearly sate: “I wear my pants below my waist”
(Dj Khaled), thus influencing its listeners to wear their pants below their waists. Also, Ghanaian boys wear skinny jeans to copy artists like “New Boyz”, who wear such attire in their music videos and on covers of magazines and posters. Ghanaian boys are also wearing chains and fitted hats just like several rap artists in attempt to copy them. In my opinion I believe the change has no upsides at all. Change from dressing appropriately to what is mentioned above is a complete downgrade. Even some few Americans agree that such dressing is repulsive. For a Ghanaian to alter from dressing neatly to sagging pants and showing body parts is undesirable.

Ghanaian attitudes are beginning to change due to the influence of the Western/American style music. Attitude is one of the biggest aspects of Ghanaian culture that all Ghanaians are known for. Much has changed over the years regarding the attitudes towards dating, relationships, and religion. The attitude towards adults has been depleted due to the sudden change in culture. The Ghanaian youth show less respect to adults and their elders in public. This change is bad and because respect should be granted to everyone especially adults. Adults know more than the youth when the topic of experience (life) is brought up, therefore they should be granted the utmost respect in society.

The influence on Ghanaian music has also influenced the Ghanaian thought about dating. The original mindset of dating from a Ghanaian point of view was to wait till the age of about 19 to 20 years old. In the American society, dating is allowed or encouraged at the age of about 15/16 years of age. The American music style encourages dating at early ages in life. For example, young American artists like Miranda Cosgrove and Demi Lovato who are around the ages of 16/17 sing about having a boyfriend/girlfriend therefore sending a message of dating at such an age. In Ghana, dating will be prohibited at such an early age, however, the youth find a way to date other people without the knowledge of their parents which, in my opinion is very bad. Once the youth start disobeying parents starting with dating, they will begin to disobey in other aspects of life.
The relationships between adults, especially parents have changed dramatically. The Ghanaian youth is becoming less respectful to parents due to the message sent out by the American artists through their music. Some of the American artists send out messages such as freedom which the Ghanaian youth takes as, the ability to do whatever they want. For example, the rock band Black Veil Brides sends out such messages towards the youth. One of their songs, “The legacy” sends out a clear message of freedom, referring to the lyrics: “So listen closely, and don't stop working no one can tell you who you are” (Black Veil Brides). This is a reconfirmation of the view of Kwame Anthony Appiah, author of “The Case for Contamination”. He states in his piece that “Cultural consumers are not dupes. They can adapt products to suit their own needs, and they can decide for themselves what they do and do not approve of” (Appiah 618). What he basically says here is, a culture uses the influence that they adapt and change the meaning of that influence to their advantage. For example, a friend of mine back in Ghana used to be very respectful to his parents and his elders. Over three years, he began to be rebellious against his parents and the adults he grew up with. He had the mentality of “I can do whatever I want” which most of the other Ghanaian youth had. Having this mentality, they show less respect to their parents which will also change the beliefs that their parents have instilled in them.

Religion in Ghana has also been greatly influenced by the American music culture and lifestyle. Ghana has always been a religious country no matter what religion a person was, they abided by that religion no matter what. Unfortunately, the influence of the American music culture has influenced Ghanaians to sway from their religions, meaning that they do not abide by the rules of their religion as they are supposed to. About five years ago, a good friend of mine who I went to church with back in Ghana used to follow all the rules in Bible and always kept reminding me to do so. However, he began to listen to music containing cuss words, and messages opposing Christianity. It started with an inspirational song by rapper and song artist, Eminem, which caused
him to download and buy Eminem’s songs and listen to them. Now, he does not go to church anymore nor does he follow the rules of the Bible. Now, bear in mind, this does not necessarily mean that my friend was not strong enough to hold on to his beliefs. Influence is meant to change people, and I can say it did a pretty good job on my friend.

The American music culture and lifestyle has also influence Ghanaian music culture in such a way that it has infected the speech of some Ghanaians. By speech, I mean some of the words and terminology Ghanaians have started to use. The Ghanaian music artists began to use words like, “nigga”, “the hood”, and the F word; words usually heard in a rap song in America for example, Jay-Z and Lil' Wayne. By doing this, these artists have influence the Ghanaian youth to start using such words. Of course, some Ghanaians were shocked by the use of this terminology but because the youth adored the musical artists, they decided to follow. I was shocked by this because I found it extremely repulsive and out of the ordinary for any Ghanaian to use such language in a song due to the extreme vulgarity.

Western/American music has indeed shown a great influence on Ghanaian music culture and lifestyle. This influence has undoubtedly revealed a great change in the values and behaviors that the Ghanaian youth had towards clothing, attitudes religion, and speech. Some people may not view this change as a bad thing because it may open Ghanaians to new views and thoughts from the society around them, but when the originality of the Ghanaian culture starts to change and eventually deplete, it could be viewed as a bad thing. This cultural change is not necessarily an awful thing, but when directed towards these values, it could be a bad influence in regards to the originality of the culture being depleted. Culture, is one of the many ways to distinguish people apart, other than skin color and language and with the depletion of culture, we would not be able to do so. Distinguishing between cultures is necessary because, we as human beings need to be able to learn from each other.
Works Cited


In Lars Eighner’s essay entitled “On Dumpster Diving”, he discusses how he became homeless and how his life was as a dumpster diver. He describes the lifestyle of a dumpster diver and the particular group of people that dumpster dive. He discusses some of the items that the dumpster divers find and how they sometimes work as a group, helping each other with locations of particular dumpsters and the items in those dumpsters. Eighner argues that one of the main aspects of being a dumpster diver is the idea of being self-reliant and taking responsibility into your own hands. Eighner says “I think of scavenging as a modern form of self-reliance” (Eighner 364). The dumpster diver is part of a group of dumpster divers, but each individual dumpster diver is responsible for their own actions. Nobody is going to force a person to do something when they are part of a certain group; the person has the right to choose what they want to do and when they want to do it. Many groups do have rules that the members have to follow, but no one is going to force the members to follow those rules. The individual has to be his/her own advocate within their own group. In this essay, I will focus on the roles that individuals played in the Dumpster Diving group and the roles that individuals have in the current Student Support Services program that I am a part of. When someone is part of a group, it is thought that the people within the group do not make their own choices. The fact is that this is the total opposite; Individuals within groups have their own set of choices and rules that they choose to follow.

Whenever someone joins a group, there is a specific initiating process that takes place. Every group has a different process in which the potential members participate in until they are officially part of the group. When Eighner discusses he process of scavenging and Dumpster Diving, he says “I have initiated seven companions into the trade. I have learned that there is a predictable series of
stages a person goes through in learning to scavenge” (Eighner 360). Even though Eighner is responsible for his own well-being and the choices that he makes, he still has helped new “companions” get familiar with dumpster diving and the process. This shows that dumpster divers are not selfish and can help each other when they want to. Even though

The first stage of Dumpster Diving is when the scavenger is filled with disgust and self-loathing. “Every grain of rice seems to be a maggot. Everything seems to stink”(360). After the scavenger gets some experience under them, they realize that the items they find in the dumpsters are not that bad after all. When Eighner describes the scavenger after the scavenger realizes that he/she sometime find items in perfect condition in the dumpsters, he talks about their reaction and says “The diver, after all, has the last laugh. He is finding all manner of good things which are his for the taking”(360). Just like joining any other group, the Dumpster Divers have their own initiation process. Eighner says in his essay that many of his “companions” have gone through this similar process when they start scavenging.

Every single group has their own sets of rules and obligations that the members must follow when they join the group. Some might believe that once a person joins a group, they have no individual rights or choices. The group might be binding the person to do certain things and give them no other option. That is not the case with many groups. The Dumpster Divers are an example of a group in which the individual members have their own rights and choose what they want to do. Even though many of the Dumpster Divers had no choice but to become a dumpster diver due to the circumstances around them, the members do have rights and choices when they join the group.

When a person becomes a dumpster diver, they have many options and choices within that group. Each individual dumpster diver can choose what dumpster to look through, what items to keep and they can also leave the group whenever they want to. The dumpster diver can also become a can scrounger if they choose to, which means that they just go and search for cans. When the
scavenger feels like they are done digging through dumpsters, they can leave the group whenever they want. The dumpster diver is not bound to any rules or obligations of the group. Even though there is no “larger” figure telling the divers what to do, they do have some rules between the divers. When Eighner describes some common practices and rules among scavengers, he talks about some of the courtesies that true scavengers have and he says

“There are precious few courtesies between scavengers. But it is a common practice to set aside surplus items: pair of shoes, clothing, canned goods, and such. A true scavenger hates to see good stuff go to waste and what he cannot use he leaves in good condition in plain sight” (360).

There are a few courtesies between the scavengers that only a true scavenger knows. These courtesies are somewhat of an unspoken rule between the scavengers. The scavengers choose to follow this rule because they feel as if it is a waste to see items in good condition put to waste. Another rule that Eighner talks about that he created for himself was not going through individual garbage cans. “But my strongest reservation about going through individual garbage cans is that this seems to me a very personal kind of invasion to which I would object if I were a householder” (362).

There was no one telling Eighner that he could not go search through individual garbage cans, he just thought it was an invasion of privacy and if he was the householder, he would object to it. Many dumpster divers probably do look through individual garbage cans because they might find it more convenient than a dumpster, but Eighner decided it was his own choice not to because he felt as if he was the person whose garbage he was looking through, he would not be very fond of the idea. Eighner made it his choice not to search through individual garbage cans. For Eighner to look in an individual garbage can, it feels like he might be invading some people’s personal life because the stuff that is found in individual garbage cans is much more personal than stuff that is found in dumpsters. A person can tell what kind of food the family eats, the type of bank they have, where
they shop, and many more facts about the family from looking at one individual garbage can. On the other hand, if a person searches a dumpster, the stuff in the dumpsters is collective from many families; therefore, it might be harder for the scavenger to distinguish which items belong to which family. Eighner is trying to prove a point by saying that he does not search in individual garbage cans. He is trying to prove to society that even though dumpster divers might be a group of people desperate for food and items to survive, they are still a group of people that have boundaries, ethics, and morals. Just because the dumpster divers have pretty much lost everything else in their life, they still have their inner moral.

Just like the group of Dumpster Divers has a particular initiation process, the current Student Support Services program that I am part of has their own requirements to be considered into the program. I had the choice to be part of this program or not. If I did not attend, I would have to go to a different university or college. I had no option on whether I would attend the University of Connecticut without attending this program. It was either I attend this program or I do not attend the University. The SSS program has specific requirements in which a person has to meet in order to be eligible for the program. The person can either be of low income, first-generation college student, or low SAT scores and grades in high school. Everyone in the SSS program is considered a group because we all share similar qualities; many of the students in this program are of low income households and are the first ones to attend college in their family. That is the similarity that connects the individuals within this group. Many of the individuals are also connected as a group because we all want to attend the University of Connecticut and that is why we are here.

The SSS program provides students with every tool needed for them to be successful; there are always tutors, teachers, and advisors here to help the student, if they come and ask for it. Once a person is part of the program, they have the option to follow the certain rules and obligations. There
are certain components of the program which are mandatory, such as the group meetings and advisor meetings. On the other hand, every student in SSS has the choice of studying or not. Study hours are mandatory from 7-10 P.M. every night Monday-Friday, but the student can easily hide in the library and sleep somewhere if they choose to. The student has to be motivated to succeed and get good grades in the classes, the advisors and teachers are there to help the student, but the student has to want it. The student can easily fail the classes if they do not care about them or study for the tests. Even though it is mandatory for the student to be in this program, the student controls their own destiny in the classes. As the individual within the SSS group, the student can care about the classes, pass all the exams, and go to every team meeting or the student cannot care about the classes, fail all the exams, and not go to one tutor, advisor, or team session. Unlike the dumpster divers, who have to rely only on themselves; I have a support team around me in this program that will do everything in their power to help me succeed and graduate UCONN. The choice is up to the student if they want to take advantage of these resources; no one will physically force the student to do anything they want to if they do not have the motivation within.

A group might be many people united together for a certain cause, program, or similar interest. When people think of groups such as the National Honors Society, it automatically brings up the image of intellectual high school students because that is the focus of the group. Even though groups might send a specific message about the people that are involved in the group; the individuals in the groups have their own choices, ethics, morals, and rights by which they can believe in. As an individual within a group, the person has many rights and choices by which they can be part of the group by. The individual might join a group because it might be a group that goes well with their interest, but the individual is not obligated to change themselves for the group. The individual can still be their own person while following the rules of that specific group. Many
individuals compose one group; every individual has their own choices in any group, it is up to the person to decide what they want to do with those choices.

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George Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant,” tells the tale of his experience living in British-ruled Burma in the mid-1930s. He is faced with a situation in which he chooses to shoot an elephant that has wreaked havoc on a small town. Orwell has a position of power, as a British officer, and although it is clear he is confused as to whom he is, he has many choices on what he can do with his life. Overall, free will is something that Orwell has but does little to assert it and have control over his life. Many may see Orwell as a man that is forced to go against his beliefs because it seems as if imperialism, in the form of the British Empire, has taken away his free will. However, Orwell is in full capacity to make his own choices, but simply chooses not too because he is too week and knows his life will be much harder if he decides to speak out. Throughout the story, he is offered many chances to make his own decisions, but always takes the easiest way out, which in most cases goes against what his free will wants. Orwell, who reigns others, finds he cannot control his own life and he even refers to himself as a puppet. The one thing he is certain of from the beginning is that imperialism is evil, however he chooses to do absolutely nothing about this. Instead he actually supports it by continuing living his life under the British rule and not standing up for what he believes in. It’s because of people like George Orwell in this story that imperialism and injustice continue to exist. He knows that what the British Empire is doing is wrong, but he does not stick up for what is right.

A clear example of Orwell being weak and immature is at his first mention of his job. Orwell let’s the reader know very clearly that he detests his job by saying “As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than perhaps I can make clear.” (244). Instead of just saying that he hated his job, Orwell exaggerates a tad so that the reader can really understand the level of hatred he held for
his position. He even goes on to say, “oppressed me with an intolerable guilt” when describing his duties as an officer which apart from all ready hating his job, Orwell tells us that he had an incredible guilt that perturbed him from just going to work daily. With all this hatred and guilt the question of why Orwell didn't just quit his job arises. The answer of this is that even though George Orwell had the choice to leave this career he hated so deeply, he chose not to simply because he was too weak to do otherwise. Nowhere else in the text does one find Orwell giving a justification as to why he stayed, he only rants about how much he truly disliked his job. Orwell even mentions that, “the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better.” (244). If Orwell would’ve quit his job, he would have done what his free will wanted him to do in the first place, but this would have also complicated things for him further. He would have failed his duty to partake and contribute to the British Empire. This means that Orwell would be looked down on by the British, who where the only group of people that he belonged to.

As a British officer, George Orwell is supposed to be proud and in accordance with the empire. Yet, once again the reader finds several instances where Orwell is anything but patriotic. As a matter of fact, Orwell is secretly and completely against the British Empire and everything they are doing in Burma. He makes this known in the following, “Theoretically-and secretly, of course-I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British.” (244). In this quote, Orwell tells the reader that he was completely against everything he was doing as a British officer. Ironically enough, Orwell sides with the people he is oppressing as an officer for the British Empire. He is caught in between these two groups of people, the Burmese and the British. Orwell also makes it clear that he knows that imperialism is an evil thing, but however does nothing to speak out against it or stand up for the Burmese. Orwell’s weakness prevents him from saying anything that may make his life a bit more difficult. If he were to speak out, Orwell would more than likely be ostracized from the British Empire. Since he’s all ready the outcast of the small Burmese town he’s stationed in, he would have
absolutely no one to fall back on if he spoke out. However it is this same fear and silence that allows injustice to occur in daily life because most people, like Orwell, are too scared or weak to question and to stand up for what is correct.

Perhaps the most important evidence that George Orwell is a coward is the fact that he shoots the elephant. The moment in which Orwell fires the elephant rifle is the moment where the reader truly sees his weakness. From the moment the story of how the elephant is wrecking the small town, George Orwell has absolutely no intention of killing the large animal. Even up until the point where he sends for the elephant rifle, he still does not want to kill the animal. He states that in the following, “But I did not want to shoot the elephant” (248). Orwell had the choice whether to shoot the elephant or to walk away which means he had the option of doing what he genuinely wanted to do, but he chose to take the easier way out. The whole paragraph in Orwell’s story that follows the quote previously stated is full of reasons as to why he should not shoot the elephant. This gives even more evidence to the fact Orwell knew deep inside that shooting the elephant was the wrong thing to do. After Orwell shoots the elephant and realizes that it is still alive, he sends for his rifle and completely empties the remainder of his bullets into the animal’s heart and down it’s throat. This signifies the guilt Orwell dealt with and how he really felt about shooting the elephant.

Adding to this, Orwell goes on and on about how the elephant was taking tortured breaths and gives many details about seeing the elephant struck down and laying on the ground bleeding. He tells his readers that, “In the end, I could not stand it any longer and went away.” (250). The extremely guilty Orwell felt drove him away from the scene, as he could no longer stand to see what his actions had caused. In reality, Orwell shot the elephant simply so that he would not look like a fool. This simple fact was greater that doing the right thing for the immature Orwell. One could argue that the Burmese pressured him into shooting the elephant, but however they did not force him too. Orwell still was the man in authority and had the choice to walk away. His weakness to stand up for himself
and for what is right overflows Orwell and he shoots the elephant in turn. This is exactly why things can never change in Orwell’s life unless he uses his voice to speak out against the evil that is imperialism.

George Orwell has many choices and options throughout this story, he may be pressured to act against his free will by others, but ultimately he is who gets to decide what happens with his life. He is too weak to make his own decisions and he lets others push him to do things he is completely against. Contrary to popular belief, the shooting of the elephant was something that was completely up to Orwell. The only reasoning he gives to justify this action that went against what he truly wanted to do was because he didn’t want to look foolish in front of the crowd of Burmese. George Orwell’s weakness allowed others to rule over his life because he would not stand up for what he believed in. When someone does not stand up for himself or herself, they are swallowed up into a crowd of people that just follow the leader, no matter what the leader does. This gives way for the many unfair acts of the world, from something as small as teen peer pressure to the Holocaust. The moral of this essay is that we must stand up for what is right, even if it means making our lives uncomfortable. This is the only way the human race will ever overcome injustice.
People often wonder why certain bad events in their lives occur. They might lose their jobs, be unable to pay for higher education, or even be unable to pay for rent. They may blame themselves for these problems, but usually, these are problems that are beyond their control. When the individuals affected by the conditions blame themselves, problems may arise. It can leave the individuals in a state of hopelessness. However, by using the sociological imagination, one can determine that losing a job may not be your personal problem, but may in fact be a public issue (Neubeck and Glasberg 2004). The sociological imagination can be used in conjunction with the biography of an individual to figure out why certain events took place.

The sociological imagination is used to understand how macro structure developments and changes can affect an individual. These include global, national, and community problems that affect a large amount of individuals.

As stated by Mills (1959):

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. (P. 5)

The sociological imagination as explained by Mills is a tool used by sociologists to analyze how national and global events can affect the individuals living inside those social structures. Public issues are those problems that are to do with the economy and government that affect the individuals. These issues can sometimes be perceived by individuals instead as personal problems, or problems in which the individuals themselves are at fault (Neubeck and Glasberg 2004). Say, for example, that
because of an error in civil engineering, a streetlamp falls on a car, belonging to a single mother. The insurance company refuses to pay for it, and through some loophole, they get away it. Now this poor mother, through no fault of her own, no longer has a car. In her head, she must think: “Oh no! How will I get to my job, I should have never parked my car there!” She is making this a personal problem, but it is, in fact, a public issue. How is it her fault that the streetlamp was engineered incorrectly by the city? How could she possibly have control over her auto-insurance company’s policies? If she used the tool of sociological imagination, she could realize how these problems in her city may affect other people as well. She could see how these problems are not hers to deal with, but instead are and should be the problems of the community, the city government, and the federal government. It is a problem of the community because these streetlamps are falling on vehicles. It is a problem of the city government because they are hiring inept civil engineers. It is a problem of the federal government because they are not protecting the rights of the citizens in the country by taking action against this evil auto insurance company. The mother could form a protest, join with like-minded people, and demand that these problems be dealt with. This is one example of how sociological imagination can be utilized to see how large-scale issues can affect individuals.

In the 1990’s, Peru was going through some severe problems. Political and economic turmoil were rampant. And, it so happens, my parents met in 1992. Within six months, they married, and in 1993, I was born. Now, everything tends to change as soon as you have a child. Suddenly, you don’t only have your own well being to take worry about, but also that little child’s as well. And then in 1995, they had another. And in 1997, they had another. It developed into a problem, mostly due to the fact that as economic stress grew larger, so did our family. Like most great parents, my Mom and Dad thought quite a lot about the futures of me and my siblings. Because of the terrible spot the country was in back then, the most rational decision it seemed was to simply leave. Ahh, the United States. My dad left first, in 1999, and we followed suit about a year later. Using the sociological
imagination, one can see how Peru’s terrible political and economic components could have coaxed individuals (my family), to leave the country. There is no way we could have controlled how the economy worked in Peru. It was a public issue because it affected so many people. The economy has a terrible effect on my father’s job in Peru. He worked in manufacturing, and because of the economy, his hours, his wage, and his benefits were all cut. These public issues influenced us to leave the country, and to seek a better life in the United States. These opportunities suddenly opened up, and now, I’m at UConn!

The next step was the paperwork. My entire family had gone on a visitor’s visa, but of course, we decided to stay. Now, even though we were in the United States, it was not the shining pool of hope and opportunity that we had been looking forward to. Oh and the lawyer. We hired an immigration lawyer to help us out with the paperwork, but he just took advantage of our situation. He demanded enormous amounts of money, and he set us back three years in our quest for a green card. He was a terrible person, and most likely, still is. However, we managed to pull through. We hired a new lawyer. We waded through interviews, applications, and terrible working conditions for both my parents. But our family pulled through, and because of them, I am here today writing this essay in the school library. The sociological imagination can be used to interpret this problem we faced. The terrible working conditions offered to illegal aliens is definitely a public issue. Millions are affected, and they get no benefits and low wages. It affected us individuals because we were illegal aliens. As for that lawyer, he can also be seen as a public issue. The way he scams and abuses illegal aliens out of money, without ever doing anything for them. He was (and is) a public issue for the entire community. It definitely affected my political stance on issues such as immigration and work issues. There were also some opportunities that could have been taken, such as me going on a trip to Canada that could have been taken advantage of. All of that wasted money could have gone toward my college fund, or renting a better apartment faster, or just simply paying off debt. But those
opportunities were gone then. However they reappeared when we got that green card. We started to matter in the community. In the end, we pulled through.

The sociological imagination can help put light to many situations. Using the sociological imagination one can see how national, global, and community problems can affect the individual. The sociological imagination can also help distinguish personal from public issues, such as that poor theoretical mother described earlier. By using the sociological imagination, I understood a bit better why certain events in my life played out the way they did. I saw how some events influenced the decisions of my parents, and how some things were just beyond our control. We pulled through many hardships as a family, and also through many triumphs. In the end, the opportunities we lost didn’t matter because of all the opportunities we gained. It all balances out, and now I am pursuing higher education. All is well.

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Poets, writers and artists have tried for centuries to describe what love is through their arts. But none of them have yet come close to defining the complexity of the most simplistic but meaningful word in our vocabulary, which is love. Love comes in many different shapes and forms that we can easily identify, but at the same time are intriguing and mysterious to us. Love has been present since our earliest years in the form of a woman whose tender hands and careful eyes are with a feeling we can recognize but no yet identify. As time goes by, we learn that this feeling is called love and that it is in our capability to love as well to be loved. As we experience the world, we come across many different kinds of love such as the love of a family, a friend, a pet and a woman or man. But what makes all those kinds of love so different from one another, but at the same time they shared the same name? I think that all those different kinds of love need to be integrated in one’s life in order to experience everlasting love. In her essay Against Love, Laura Kipnis talks about how romantic love in modern times has transform into self dependency and a way to make us miserable. However, in my opinion, she fails to see that there are many other kinds of love that are essential components to make romantic love everlasting as well how love is present in our lives in some way.

An everlasting love can be achieved by having the right foundations which are set by experiencing other kinds of love that help us to bring together all components necessary to love genuinely. When we were born we received our first kind of love which is the love of a mother or father. The love of a parent is vital for the development of a child’s ability to feel and form intimate connections. It is proven that when a child is deprived of the special bond of love with their parents; they most likely will grow up lacking the skills to make connections as well the ability to communicate. Our parents teach us to love by setting an example of what love is and how one
should care for those we love. Then we apply those lessons to our own lives and the cycle continues. But what happens when the cycle is broken and children don’t experience the parental love essential to a healthy upbringing? In my opinion the chain that leads to many other forms of love is broken and therefore we cannot bring other kinds of love into our lives. Our first experience with love is like a building block that sets the foundation to achieve a successful relationship with a woman or a man.

The love of a family and the effects it has in a person’s life is what determines the values and the morals you will bring into your relationship, which can either succeed or fail. The percentages of marriage that end up in divorce are higher than in past decades which lead us to believe there’s no such thing as a ‘happily ever after’. Kipnis talks about the ability to understand and listen, which are key components to mutuality. She mentions how they are essential in order to coexist with your partner for a long time (752). In my opinion, we learn to understand and listen to other people through the examples we are shown in our family situations. The love of a family is a key element in a person’s life. When a person has a family environment where love, tolerance, respect, understanding, and virtue are the main components, that person will bring those qualities into their own relationships. But when a person only experiences hostility, disrespect, hatred and apathy in their family, this negative environment will be projected in some way through their relationships. Considering that parental love is the foundation to other kinds of love, the love of a family is the core to forming healthy lasting relationships, where coexistence is achievable.

To love somebody for their personality and character and to be loyal to a person in a relationship is a lesson that is first learned by experiencing the love of a friend. We don’t have the opportunity to choose our parents or families; however we do chose our friends. Friendship is one of the strongest bonds that can be formed between two persons. By experiencing this kind of love, we learn to share our deepest thoughts and feelings with someone different from our own family. A
sense of trust in another person is then developed, which helps us to learn the meaning of loyalty. Friends are your first and most faithful companions through hardships because a friend’s duty is to commit to be there during happy and difficult times. To fail this commitment means to fail your friendship and therefore the relationship can end. In her essay, Kipnis mentions that “you may think you know how to hear, but that doesn’t mean that you know how to listen” (752). In my opinion we learn to listen to someone else not by obligation, but for pure concern by hearing our friends when they are going through bad situations. When things turn bad one of the first people you will go to is your friend. This helps us to understand the complexity and the value of listening to someone. This will consequently help us to have a good relationship with our partner in life. Your husband or wife is your best friend; they are that special friend that you go to when things turn bad. If a person does not experience the love of a friend, they will not know what loyalty and listening truly means.
Happiness is equivalent to the gift of life itself and it is something that Americans desires to have. Being happy should give one a sense of belonging and hope for the days ahead. Americans strive to pursue happiness throughout their entire lives and have labeled it as the “American Dream.” It is the dream of both the materialistic and idealistic; it consists of living in a mansion, owning a pet, marrying the perfect spouse, having expensive cars in the garage and nurturing the perfect set of kids. Though this is often a dream deferred or void, being happy is never mentioned because people think that from this happiness will come. Individuals think that in order to be happy material possessions must be the main factor or they will never experience true happiness. If one should be blessed with all the material things that life have to offer, there should be an emotional attachment; not only being be drawn to them because it is a privilege to have. Physical attraction should not surpass the emotional value of ones earnings. Being a part of the materialism phenomenon will eventually lead to a road of gloom; people will eventually become wrapped up in their belongings and forget the little things that really matter. The little things can be as small as celebrating holidays and simply spending quality time with family members and friends. Contentment is the root of happiness but most importantly indulging in the emotional and not the physical joy can make the experience of real happiness be a part of people’s life.

Although it is a part of human nature to strive for being financially stable and hopeful of experiencing the “good life,” one should pursue being happy because getting caught up in a world of vanity only leads to unhappiness. Having the mindset that material objects will make living happier is completely the wrong way of thinking. In the essay entitled “The Futile Pursuit of Happiness” by Jon Gertner agrees when he writes “[…] you are wrong to believe that a new car will make you as
happy as you imagine. You are wrong to believe that a new kitchen will make you happy for as long as you imagine. You are wrong to think that you will be more unhappy with a big single setback […]” (397). Gertner highlights how materialistic objects are not the real root of happiness. He reinforces that being happy does not necessarily mean life is always going to be stress-free, because obstacles will always be a part of living. A new car or a newly furnished kitchen can make one feel happy for the moment but at the end of the day if there is no one to share them with it would never be emotionally satisfying. Instead people should focus on overcoming them and learn from their experiences, rather than dwelling and not looking at the bigger picture. When people are self-assured and loves the person who they are then being happy is a feeling that will gradually come, because all the elaborate items will be seen merely as extra baggage.

Nevertheless it is a part of human nature to crave a life of luxury, envisioning only the material aspects; but being happy is more important because when people get to such a point in their lives they will be appreciative. The approach to be truly happy is not staying focused on the material objects but appreciating the things that can have a positive impact on life itself. Things that have a positive impact on life are companionship, the love of a family member and self-acceptance. There are many individuals in this world that has money and is living a life filled with misery because their possessions cannot replace their need for living a happy life. In an online article titled “It Is More Important To Be Happy Than To Be Rich,” J.D Roth says,

You don’t want to be rich — you want to be happy. Many people mistakenly believe that the former leads to the latter. While it’s certainly true that money can help you achieve your goals, provide for your future, and make life more enjoyable, merely having money doesn’t guaranteed happiness.

This statement reinforces the cause and effect of materials objects vs. happiness. It highlights the importance of having money and the many purposes it serves but, at the same time states that
having money does not guarantees happiness. Though many are bent with an illusion that if they achieve and accumulate whatever they desire in life, happiness is certain, the fact of the matter is happiness comes from deep within. In relation to Roth, although money is essential to life it does not promises living in comfort. Money can give you all the elaborate things but at the end of the day it cannot give the love like a family member. If one stays true to themselves with a greed for life and not vanity then they are already happy. The goal in mind should be the driving force for the need to succeed; otherwise people greed will lead them to failing.

In addition to how people should go about attaining all goals desired becoming successful does not promises being happy. This is because if people should get caught up in the material things, they will never experience the true depth of happiness. For people to be truly happy with their material possessions, they have to share and appreciate them. In order to live a happy and prosperous life people have to learn find a deeper meaning in everything rather than making judgments based upon cost and worth. The article entitled “Social Connections and Happiness” briefly stated,

This is why people who win the lottery, for instance, usually find themselves at the same level of happiness they had before they won. Close relationships, however, may be an exception. In contrast to material goods, we are more likely to continue to want our close relationships, even after we attain them, and to continue to derive positive emotions from them.

This passage strengthens the point of how money cannot buy happiness, because nothing is enjoyable unless it is shared with someone else in order to make memories. If people should seclude themselves from their social and personal lives, sooner or later the materials things will fade away and they will have no one to turn to in a time of anguish. No matter what one achieve in life or how much money one earns there is nothing that can replace being love. People must stay appreciative
and thankful for what they got no matter how small it might be, because that brings about happiness.

In relation to how one finds happiness, things that make one happy are of no value and are often intangible. In contrast, luxuries items will never make someone fully happy though it provides temporary delight, it always diminishes. One’s childhood, first time receiving straight A’s on your report, the birth of a first born or even participating in the local talent show are all factors that can cause one’s happiness. Barry Schwartz a psychology and economics professor at Swarthmore College says in his article The Tyranny Of Choice,

“[…] more than a quarter of Americans report being lonely […] We spend less time visiting with our parents, and much less time visiting with other relatives. Partly this is because we have less time, since we are busy trying to determine what choices to make in other areas of life” (840).

This selection from the book depicts how people tend to forget the importance of family life, as a result they miss out on things that really matters. Schwartz basically focused on how people are affected by the choice they make and not looking at the long term effect. Learning how to love and being loved is equivalent to being happy with one’s self. For example when one reminisces on cars and houses there will never be a tingling sensation deep within, but looking back at what happened at last year’s family barbeque when the reconnection between long last family members brought up long lost stories, these are the intangible joys that can causes one to simply smile and feel happy.

Moreover, happiness is a choice and it is of no cost to people who are willing to purchase it. Being happy involves one loving life and waking up every morning with a purpose. One’s determination can cancel out all thoughts of failure and fear of hopelessness. When one is happy there is no need to be caught up in the world of materialism because being humble, free of
insecurities and being content with being one’s self are what makes a happy person. George Santayana state in the article Being Happy: Secrets Of Happy People, “Building your character is essential for happiness. When you are true to yourself and others, you will be in peace.” Strengthening that happiness is a choice made, Santayana basically highlighted that happiness is given in abundance but in order to receive it endlessly one’s attitude has to be in the right place. In order to do so, changing the company one surrounds one’s self with to people that are positive and only feed off others success can aid in this situation. There has to be extrinsic motivation from one's surroundings as well as being intrinsically motivated. It concludes back to the fact that one can always choose their destiny but it is based upon how they approach it for the end result to be happy. This simply means not trying to go about achieving desired goals short-handedly but instead working hard for what one wants.

In conclusion, happiness is appreciating the concrete rather than having a greed for the abstract aspect of life. Happiness involves being content with one’s self, humility and an environment filled with the love of family and friends. Happiness includes sorrow because without hardship there will be no driving force to better one’s self. People should live life taking risks and their mistakes should be lessons learned and not regrets. For example, if one should attain financial riches and desires to a buy a house and a car. Though they are able to afford a life of luxury one should not abuse it even though it was rightfully earned. This is because purchasing in excess will never give one a chance to be truly appreciative of the things they have. There will always be a desire for more because when one is like this there will be no satisfaction. Someone who is happy is someone who is satisfied and compassionate. A happy individual has a positive mindset and an optimistic outlook on the days ahead.
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Brittney Robinson

Women vs. the Stereotypes of Society

The voice of the female race has been silenced for as long as I can remember. Instead of the actual physical difference between men and women that is well understood, women as a priority have become second to all things. You would think after movements such as women’s rights, feminist, etc. that the innate separation would desist. However, the reminder of these rights and privileges are around as discussions, empowerment sessions, etc. and I question why because men aren’t being reminded of their rights or privileges. They didn’t have movements to try and signify their place in society. From experience, I’ve come to learn from an early age that women have been expected to take things as they are and never question the decision of a man. It is as if it were set in stone when it comes to a man’s opinion but written in invisible ink when it came to a woman’s opinion. Though both genders were created at the same time and women birth the nation of people as we know, we are always seen as the “lesser” sex by men. In the book A Writer’s Presence I read an essay entitled “Throwing Like a Girl” by James Fallows based on the gender discrimination of women and men in sports. Although my topic doesn’t relate to just sports, his ideas that ultimately women can compete at the same level as men tie into my whole argument. This piece was written in 1996, well after movements for women were declared showing that stereotyping of our gender is still in full effect. With the society that we live in, we conclude that what we know is that it is normal to deal with the stereotyping against women because we have differences from males that clearly “proves” that we are totally incapable to complete most tasks that men are capable of completing. Whether it’s throwing a football or being a construction worker, our capabilities are not limited. I want to remind you all that our voice and our will to do as we please are our own. No one can take it away and the minute more women realizes this, our gender will be much better off.
Fallows’ was the first article opposing the stereotyping against women that I have come across. Before Fallows’ I was convinced that stereotyping of women hasn’t been seen as anything disrespectful. In fact you can find it blatantly printed in many newspapers, magazines, etc. or broadcasted live on television and never ever once thought as a form of disrespect. When the Clintons’ through the opening pitches for the Chicago Cubs and the Cleveland Indians, Mrs. Clinton’s throwing ability was publicly scrutinized and was titled as “throwing like a girl” without the slightest remorse that the phrase was not only hurtful to the First Lady herself but to other women that may toss an object form time to time. (Fallows 387). In my experience, throwing like a girl was a term I knew very well. My family comes from a background of sports: from my uncle Charles Rone previously from the Miami Dolphins to my cousin Rudy Gay of the Memphis Grizzlies. However as I said before, “From experience, I’ve come to learn from a early age that women have been expected to take things as they are and never question the decision of a man” and for my family woman had four roles: the cooker, the cleaner, the washer, and the care taker. So when I say my family comes from a background of sports, I should really the MALES in my family come from a background of sports. Personally, I was one of those women that believe that a woman being stereotyped into this category of four roles was the way of life for my gender.

Let me ask the audience a question, particularly for the men. Would I taking all the male individuals in existence and placing you guys into a category giving four titles that will demonstrate your life anger you? Does the fact that I’m totally disregarding you all as individuals and placing you in one single group that’s not based on your individual characteristics but by the one thing you have in common which is your gender upset you? If it does, welcome to the feeling of anger beyond disbelief, a feeling the women of this nation have know all too well.

A stereotypical scenario such as a woman that is a construction worker is something that is not accepted. Seeing as construction work is seen as a “mans” job, if a female so chooses to be one,
her quality of work will more than likely be questioned. Questions such as how is she able to pick up heavy construction related materials such as wooden planks, certain machinery, etc. or how is she able to deal with the extensive work hours, work conditions, and the amount of labor required to complete the job. Stereotypes to follow are sexual orientation. However, this something that women and men have in common surprisingly. A female construction worker’s sexual orientation is questions simply because of her job title because a construction worker equals to wanting male qualities and desire therefore dames her as a lesbian…correct? Same way for males because there is no way possible he could be a fashion designer or a choreographer of ballet without being gay right?

Analyzing a bit more, in my experience I heard the comment from a male to another male saying “your gay” being taken in a comical way. However I also heard a similar comment from male to male saying “you’re a homo” (meaning homosexual) and heard the response “yo I ain’t no girl!” The words homosexual and “gay” (in a slang term) mean the same thing but one is offensive while the other is seen as a joke. Is it because a homosexual is term used from both males and females? Is it because that word has the capability of disregarding a males role in society and equalizes the two genders?

Fallow’s counter argues that gender is the reason why women ‘can’t’ do what men can do. In his example he explains that throwing varies from how that individual is taught at an early age, “It’s not gender that makes the difference in how they throw.”(qtd. In Fallows 386) and that gives proof that many of the reasons presented that woman can’t do tasks that men can are based on opinions and unwritten laws that this country was brought up on. The stereotyping of women is very much so aware of but nothing is done about it.

Men are known for thinking that they are able to do everything and women not being able to do anything. Women have been brought up, in most cases believing that being submissive is the way to go. A woman is sought out to be someone who obeys and never creates. There is this theory that
the stereotypes towards woman are based on how a man succeeds and fails. If a man fails at something, it’s an automatic thought that there is no way a woman can complete that task. In my experience, this is very true. Even though I am a female, I’ve been attracted to what was kept away from me because of my gender. I liked comics, action figures, fighting shows, etc. but most of all I love the game of basketball. At the age of five I was able to shoot three pointers with great accuracy and consistency, but because I am a girl I never got recognition for it. Even if a man is to succeed at a certain task, it is still seen that a woman either is going to have the most impossible time trying to complete the same task or can’t do it all, and I did do it but It didn’t matter until my male cousin did it by chance and was suddenly named the next Michael Jordan of the family.

The oversight of female gender is solely on the physical being of a woman. The jobs such construction workers, a CEO of corporate company, or even a music producer is something that most see being jobs designed for men and ONLY for men. Woman aren’t seen in roles like these jobs because it causes high power and that’s something that we always had to fight for. Since the time of ancient Greece, woman had to fight for rights that were otherwise simply handed to men. The right to vote, the right to work, the right to voice an opinion, etc. and we are still fighting today because though the rights are established by laws, the mindset of men hasn’t change.

A woman that tries to break these barriers is looked at like an outcast. Women are stereotyped so badly that they started to think that what was being said about them is in fact the way to be. Take for example the idea of abusive relationships involving a dominant male and fragile woman. In many cases, the woman suffers this life style for years because of this idea that a man’s word is golden and therefore has no wrong to it. No matter how strong a person is to be, constant badgering of their self character and individuality will cause anyone to eventually give in. The emotions we all have are triggered in the same way, and those who choose to express those emotions are ones that aren’t afraid to be themselves. Rosa Parks was a woman of great virtue
because though she was a woman whose voice has been choked by the ways of the world, she took it back by refusing to allow her gender and race to be badgered any further. Elizabeth “Bessie” Coleman began to break the barrier that woman can do just as much as a man can when she became the first women, African American woman at that, to become an aviator or a pilot. Along with her was Amelia Earhart who did something a man never did before which was fly around the world. Madam CJ Walker was one of the barrier breakers because she became the first recorded woman millionaire through he own products and her own work leaving the working public not just for a male anymore. We tend to forget what women are capable of because we are stereotyped based the flaws we have and what is presumed we can’t achieve.

A woman may be the first to cry but there are also the first to care for someone other than themselves. They may be the first to yell and get upset but they are also the first to defend someone. They may even be the first to cut someone off completely but will almost always be the first to apologize and move on. Women are exceptional creatures. Men use stereotypes as a way to control them because it is well known that a woman’s knowledge is unlike anything known to men. The logic behind a women’s thinking is something that has bewildered this nation for many years. The idea that women can do as men do and possibly better is becoming more and more realistic, and quite possibly is making many nervous. But if it was known that women only want to be treated equal, the society we live in would be a lot easier to live in. But as of right now I’m here speaking for one purpose, to give women hope. You take these words and you live by them daily. A change will happen if we band together and say no more to the stereotypes deeply embedded in our society today. Day by day and step by step we can slowly unweave the harmful thoughts and opinions that are known about woman and start to create, together, a brand new society that is held together by a stronger fabric of hope and equality.
Work Cited

“Plan B” and Responsibility: An Aspect of Maturation

Part 1: Story

“Good team. Keep it up. Only 30 more seconds left and we’re walking away with the championship! Everybody keep your defense tight! Ok?” exclaimed Coach Lawrence. “Yes Coach!” replied the team. “Ok, now go out there and bring this one home!” The team walks out to the court as the buzzer sounds and Coach Lawrence pulls Mike to the side. Mike Davis is a 19 year old senior at Springfield High School who is the starting point guard for the varsity basketball team. He’s known as “Mr. Popular” to all of the socially impaired students that group together at one lunch table in the corner of the cafeteria. “Don’t let this game slip away Mike, you hear me?” Mike gives a casual head nod to assure the coach that he was calm and capable of winning the game. “Alright now, go win this.” “Lets go Warriors!” yells a dad in the crowd almost sounding like a warrior himself.

The score is 70-74 with the Springfield Warriors in the lead. The Rocky Hill Bobcats have the ball and they bring it down the court. One bad pass is all they need. When Mike is on defense, a decent pass is all they need. And that’s exactly what they get. With the time running down, Mike steals the ball and avoids the intentional fouls. The Warriors; State Champions. Is what everyone on the team was thinking about. You would think including Mike, but her was only focused on the scout watching him. His dream was to make it to the NBA, and as soon as the opportunity opens, he was going to take it.

At home, Mike’s mother answered the phone. Mike was going to be in the NBA draft. The family was ecstatic so you can only imagine their emotions during the draft. Mike was drafted to the New York Knicks. Not his team of choice but that didn't even cross his mind. He was in the NBA.
Week by week, Mike progressed into one of the best in the NBA. He won rookie of the year and for the first time in seven years, the New York Knicks made it to the Play-offs. They lost in the second round to the Boston Celtics but this was a good start for Mike.

In the Season opener for Mike's second year in the NBA, the New York Knicks were going against the Chicago Bulls. In the middle of the third quarter, Mike had the ball and was coming down the court. One quick juke and he was past Derrick Rose and was on his way to the basket. Defending the paint, Joakim Noah, throws a hard foul while Mike is in the air. He lands on his right knee and turns on his back in pain. This was it and he knew it. His career was over.

After getting surgery from his torn ligaments and broken knee, Mike goes into rehab. The doctor told Mike that his basketball career is over and he needs to start thinking of a second plan. Mike later leaves rehab and was picked up by his mother. They sit in silence for a while.

“Mã?”
“Yes Sweetie?”
“What am I supposed to do now?”
“You heard the doctor. You're never going to be able to fully recover. I don't think you'll ever play again. You need to get an education now.”
“Well what colleges are going to want me now! I turned down so many scholarships to so many different schools, and now that I can't play ball, no college is going to want me.”
“Even if that's so, there's always community college. Basketball may be over but you still have your whole life in front of you. Everything is going to be fine. But for now on, you have to be more responsible. You're not going to be paid thousands of dollars like you made last year so you have to really focus.”

**Part 2: Analysis**

In my short story “Plan B” I've created a coming of age narrative in the third person perspective. The protagonist, Mike Davis, turns down multiple scholarships to colleges to play in the NBA. In his second year as a point guard he experiences a career ending injury and as a result, chooses to attend college. This is a sign becoming responsible. The reader can see a sign of change within Mike because he makes the right decision at the end of the story. He could have been seen as irresponsible for turning down colleges to play in the NBA in the beginning of the narration. My
coming of age narration along with others analyzes the protagonist's behavior. The decisions that
the characters make are emphasized and are a big part of the narrations. The purpose of this is to
help the writer send the message out to the reader of what the purpose of the narration is. For
example, in John Updike's "A & P" the reader learns about the character just by focusing and
analyzing their actions. Sammy is a store clerk at A & P and when his boss was disrespectful to
three female customers he decided to quit. This is a sign of responsibility because he was making a
statement by quitting his job. The way responsibility is introduced in stories may differ but there is a
purpose for it being present. Overall, the purpose of coming of age narrations is to help the writer
inform the reader that a part of maturity is making morally responsible decisions to create a better
future.

Coming of age narrations usually have multiple themes to explain how a character is either
mature or immature. One that appears often is the theme of responsibility. It can be portrayed in
different ways and still allow the reader to reflect on their life. Also, different perspectives can differ
from one another when concluding if someone is mature. A narration allows readers to get a
different view of what is really going on. In "A & P", Sammy quit his job to stand up for something
he believed in. To other characters in the story like the manager and his parents, Sammy was being
irresponsible. "'Sammy, you don't want to do this to your Mom and Dad,' he [the manager] tells
me. It's true, I don’t'" (Updike 971). This is Updike's way of showing the reader that both Sammy's
parents and manager will be disappointed in him if he quits. To the readers, they can see that
Sammy is actually responsible. When Updike added responsibility to the character's traits, he was
adding to his argument that this was a point where Sammy was being mature. Similarly to my
coming of age narration, "Plan B", I added responsibility to help build up the maturity point in
Mike's life. Him considering college after being a NBA star shows that he is being responsible and
is also a sign of maturity. This is being mature because he is making the right decision to create a
better future for himself. I point out this theme because it is a common way that coming of age narrations are constructed. Updike’s better future is for women not to be disrespected as they were in his narration. He goes about telling the readers that they have to make a stand by doing what is morally correct from the example of Sammy.

A coming of age narration allows the reader to reflect the story back to their life. It gives them a better idea of being mature and examples of someone who isn’t responsible, is responsible, or someone that becomes responsible in the midst of the story. Mike is an example that I’ve created to emphasize how a huge part of being mature is being responsible. In my narration Mike was irresponsible. Differently from Updike, both the reader and the characters in the story seen that he was not mature. He didn’t attend college after high school and turned down multiple good opportunities to receive a well education with little to no expenses. Near the very end, you see a sign of maturity in Mike which then gives the same argument of what maturity is as “A & P”. You see this maturity when Mike decides to attend college as his back-up plan. In “A & P”, you see this maturity when Sammy stands up for something to try to make a change for the better. Being mature is being responsible and taking action of what you believe in by making the right decisions. Both narratives imply that making right decisions builds you to become mature. To Updike, the right decision he created was for Sammy to quit. The idea he made was that being responsible can also be to make decisions that are morally correct. His purpose is to inform the reader that the decisions you make should come from what you believe is correct because people are always meet a disagreement. What you choose to do in the eyes of the society might be the wrong choice but they're not necessarily correct. My narration says that taking an educational route is always going to be a mature decision.

Responsibility isn't the only aspect that narrations add to describe the maturity of the protagonist. However, it wasn't coincidental that it appeared in both “A & P” and my coming of age
narration. What is the purpose of it? Responsibility goes hand and hand with maturity. It makes one of the strongest arguments and gives one of the best examples of a character becoming mature. It can be argued whether or not someone is responsible before they become mature, but in either situation, the reader gets a different perspective of what being responsible has to with maturity.

After reading “A & P” I started to generate my own opinion of what it means to be, and what it takes to be mature. The one that stuck out most was being responsible. When creating my narration, I realized that the protagonist also became responsible to reach his maturity point. Mike decided that he was going to college. This shows maturity because he is thinking about his future. In most ways, a coming of age narration is tied in relations to creating a better future. In “Plan B”, the message that is given off is that becoming responsible creates a better future. A better future means with a higher educational route. You expand your job opportunities and even increase your salary by attending college. In “A & P”, a better future is one where everyone is taking part in trying to stand up for what they believe in. And in this situation, it can be for women to be treated fairly.

The way that coming of age narrations are constructed, many readers reflect the idea of becoming mature to their life. These narrations basically show you a perspective of becoming mature, and then allow you to identify points in your life that shows signs of you becoming mature. The purpose of coming of age narrations making the readers reflect upon their life is because of the writer’s perspective of the society. Writers possibly want to change something about the world as it is. In “A & P” Sammy refers to things that can make the reader start to reflect back to their lives. Also, he quits his job to make a change of how the women were being treated. Updike's intentions are to enlighten the reader of some problems in society so everyone can try to make a change. It takes more than one to make a difference and he shows it by not creating a positive affect to Sammy's actions. Everything was the same after Sammy quit. Therefore, Updike's purpose can be to convince the readers that everyone needs to be responsible if they want to better a society.
Another reason for constructing a coming of age narration is to attempt to prevent the society from becoming unproductive. Updike's narration seems as the story is being told by Sammy in the future. The reason for this may be to inform the readers that what you do today can change what happens tomorrow. It’s almost like a warning that we cannot become unproductive or irresponsible or it’s going to lead to bad things in the future. His construction of his narration is intended, in so many aspects, to enlighten the reader that things have to be done to create a better future, starting with becoming responsible and mature.

Coming of age narrations also can try to change the reader’s habits. Society can be irresponsible and this can show them how important it is to be responsible. In “Plan B”, if Mike was responsible, he would have been accept to a university with a full scholarship to play on their basketball team. After his basketball career was finished, then he wouldn’t have to go back to school. Now he has to use his own money to pay for college. When I created this, I was showing an example of what many athletes do. I, myself believe this should change because an education is important. After I analyzed my paper, I then found a similarity between Updike's “A & P” and “Plan B”, being that narrations can be powerful when sending a message and they always have an intention.

Constructions of coming of age narrations usually differ in style, as writers have different styles of writing. These narrations are similar in the sense of focusing on one issue and trying to solve it. In my narration “Plan B”, my focus was on how a person’s point of maturation is dependent on when that person becomes responsible. This narration’s purpose is also to tell the readers that responsibility is very important, and is crucial when making decisions. The right decision given in “Plan B” was to take any opportunity you get to go to college. In Updike's “A & P”, he gave the message that the society cannot continue to be irresponsible. If a change is going to be made, it is going to take more than one person. The right decision to Updike is to make morally
correct decisions like standing up for females. The way he presented this idea was to make Sammy do something that seemed irresponsible; telling the readers how important it is to stand up for something you believe in. This bring me to the conclusion that coming of age narrations intentions are to solve an issue, and not from coincidence, both Updike and I believe that it starts with people becoming responsible that leads to becoming mature.

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Although the word happiness can be defined in the dictionary, what creates this happiness cannot be set into one definition. There are countless ways and reasons why people become happy with situations or their lives. No one will achieve the same happiness from the same aspects of life because it all comes down to the individual and the way he thinks. Happiness is context specific, anywhere from setting, background and situation. Where someone comes from and their lifestyle has a lot to do with what they can and will achieve in life and what achievements, whatever they may be, will make them happy. People tend to judge others by what they have and their actions. In this case, people judge what makes others happy without knowing the basis behind why they do what they do, why they bought what they bought or even if they are truly happy. What people fail to realize is that there are individuals out there that will put up a front to give off the perception that they are living a great life and are happy. Happiness has evolved from personal satisfaction to people basing their own happiness on their perception of others’ lives.

People influence others and we believe that what makes someone else happy will do the same for us. In “The Futile Pursuit of Happiness,” Jon Gertner states, “that we humans understand what we want and are adept at improving our well-being [but] we falter when it comes to imagining how we will feel about something in the future.” We always want more even if it’s out of our reach. Someone can be wealthy, have a great education, and be living a seemingly perfect life but they believe they are missing something and need something else to make them happy. It has become more common to want more than what is given to a person and to try and get to the ultimate goal of satisfaction. Where we go wrong is not choosing the right things that will eventually get us to that point. Our actions, explains Gertner, “are based on our predictions of emotional consequences of
these events” (Gertner 398). People don’t have the ability to foresee how any action will make them feel in the future, even though they believe they can. Life is all about taking chances; but because one person may take a certain chance at something, doesn’t mean that the next person should do the same just because it turned out well for the first person.

Equally important, we live in a society where we are free to make our own decisions, but do we always take advantage of all the opportunities that this country holds? Everyone has the freedom to choose whatever path they see fit; according to the Declaration of Independence, each American citizen is guaranteed the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Although Americans have the right to follow their dreams, they don’t always do so. Because society looks at a farm worker on a different level from someone that works on Wall Street, that person that wants to be that farm worker won’t follow his dreams because society doesn’t see it as success. Every so often people just decide to go along with what everyone else sees as success and achievement; they push aside their true passions and true motivation. Eventually, this passion and motivation to succeed in life becomes impersonal and not for one’s self; they will end up taking away someone else’s happiness in place of their own. People go from doing something that they love to becoming just another person trying to keep up with others’ happiness and this will eventually tear apart that person’s life.

On the contrary, there may be something holding someone back from pursuing their happiness. Stated above, happiness is context specific and all depends on the person and their predicament. Levitt and Dubner went into depth about names and the fact that they affect everyone’s future. They gave us Temptress as the first example. She grew up in the projects, didn’t have an ideal childhood, and ended up getting into trouble with the law. But did her name have anything to do with the way she lived her life and will it affect her life in the future? A temptress is a woman who tempts someone to do something, typically a sexually attractive woman who sets out to
allure or seduce someone. Hearing her name right off the bat would give anyone the wrong
impression of her. They would immediately start to judge her. The name has everything to do with
the parents and who raise that person. And a child is the reflection of the parent(s). With a name like
Temptress, she couldn’t have had a good household or parents that cared about her. These are all
the things people will most likely think about Temptress. With humans already being very
judgmental, that couldn’t have been a good look for her. Temptress has lost out on many
opportunities due to her name. With jobs, no resume or application has a face but someone will pass
prejudgment based on the name. The employer knows of all the future employee’s qualifications but
nothing else when it comes to the way they look and present themselves; one’s name will eventually
put a face to the resume. Levitt and Dubner let us in on the experiment with employers and names
of the applicants; results showed that more people with the names Greg and Becky were chosen for
jobs over people that were named Tyrone and Shauniqua. It was also said that it’ll take a person with
a more ethnic name 15 days to land a job while a person with a white name will find a job in 10 days.
In certain situations, people have no choice but to go after a dream that’s not theirs because in
people’s minds. In some people’s minds, it is set in stone what another future will hold based strictly
upon their name. This is one of those cases where living up to one’s name is not a goal in life, but
the goal is to live up to someone else’s name. For people with ethnic names, it’s a goal to go after a
person’s dream with a white name because there’s no other way to make in the word than to succeed
at what people don’t expect you to succeed at. They do not want to live up to their life’s’
expectation; they want to go way above it.

Always being concerned with what others have and what is going on within their lives will
lead to jealousy and competition. People have become jealous about what kind of cars people drive,
where they lives, and their type of lifestyle. It doesn’t stop there though; it has progressed from
material things people have to the relationships they possess. Finding love is one of the most
beautiful things on this earth, and I believe I speak for everyone when I say that love is one of the aspects of happiness. Sharing happiness with the person one loves is fulfilling and indescribable. Every couple has their ups and downs but it’s their decision to either let outsiders into their relationship or not. In most cases people in a relationship with issues will act like they are not having any problems in public but behind closed doors, their relationship is toxic. Writing in *Time Magazine*, Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman explain that, "Half of all marriages end in divorce." But it's not a random coin flip. At the time of a couple's wedding, there are odds that can raise the divorce rate to as high as 70%, or lower it to nearly 20%. The first thing to keep in mind is that the divorce rate has stabilized. An average couple now has a 57% chance of seeing their 15th wedding anniversary. If they make it that far, most will reach "til death do us part" (Bronson and Merryann).

Jealousy can be very toxic as well and it all goes back to society. Society has a set image of what a good relationship is: a wealthy mate that has a good career and can support and care for someone. With the type of marriage society says is a “good one”, it also expects everyone to stay committed and married to that person until death do them part. Although the divorce rate is quite high, divorce is definitely frowned upon, but if you marry someone that society sees as a perfect, that doesn’t necessary that you'll end up happy and he'll end up with a divorce. From the outside looking in, someone’s relationship can look picture perfect and it may resemble a relationship that everyone would love to be in but to become envious of a situation one does not know anything about can be damaging. They’ll end up chasing a person that may not be that right person and will sooner or later make them less happy than when they even started. Someone going through life wishing he lived someone else’s life is damaging, everything happens for a reason and if one was supposed to be a wealthy man working on Wall Street and marrying a stock broker, it would have happened.
The lesson that comes into play is that people should not care about the world going on around them; instead, they should be concerned with what makes them happy and no one else. Barbara de Angelis, Ph.D., is one of the most influential teachers of our time in the field of relationships and personal growth. Angelis states, “No one is in control of your happiness but you; therefore, you have the power to change anything about yourself or your life that you want to change.” Having the power to change what makes one happy doesn’t mean that they should weigh it up to what makes other’s happy. Although having to define their own happiness has become a difficult task, that doesn’t mean that people should completely shut down what their dreams and aspirations for what society or even what others believes is happiness. One perception on another person’s life can be totally wrong and even though it may be right, there’s still no reason to go after another person’s dream. One’s pursuit of happiness is special and should be gained by self-made choices.

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In “Hip-Hop Planet,” James McBride argues “Much of [the Hip-hop culture] I hate. Yet I love it, the good of it” (472). This love hate relationship McBride feels toward the Hip-hop industry is because of the explicit and vulgar lyrics the songs are now saturated with. He loves the origins of the Hip-hop music: “that once made visible the inner culture of America’s greatest social problems [and] its legacy of slavery” (472). The song “I Can” by the rapper Nas shows “America’s social problems” and even mentions the “legacy of slavery”, however this isn’t enough to even get him on the Billboards. If you do not rap about sex, violence, having power, degrading women, then you will not sell any records and you will not be a successful rapper; in the Hip-hop industry it is as simple as that.

Nas shines a light into what is wrong with not only America, but problems that occur globally. In the first stanza Nas tell the story of a “women who’s [on her way to] becoming a star” until she got involved with the wrong people. Her new crowd “got her strung on Heroin, cocaine, sniffin up drugs all in her nose.” Instead of glamorizing drug use, Nas shows what can happen; he shows dreams that can be ruined, we can become “ugly and old”, and mentioning that “she smells of corrosion and death.” In the first stanza Nas is able to tell his audience, young children and adolescents, drugs will ruin your goals, appearance and affect who you are. To end the stanza Nas gives the audience advice to watch who they hang out with and remember their goals. He shows the affect peer pressure can have on people through this anecdote and goes beyond to give advice on how to avoid falling through the cracks. Although Nas feels empowered just by giving his fans advice to a better future, for the rest of the Hip-hop listeners these words of wisdom are not enough to leave them feeling empowered.
Lyrics, like any type of text have an attitude and create a tone. In Hip-hop the main tone is one of empowerment. This tone shows the rapper is confident, feels in control, is powerful and feels undefeated; this attitude will spillover onto the fans and they too will feel the same feelings the rapper experiences. The rapper's fans and audience don’t want them to keep it safe, they want to hear music that “debases women and gays” (469), they want music “by rappers who brag about their lives of crime”(469), because this music is exciting to them and safe is boring. They live under this illusion that for the moment the song is playing, they too were there doing what the rapper was saying. Therefore, if the rapper feels undefeated and confident the fan will also feel undefeated and confident.

Lil Wayne is confident and isn't afraid to let the world now it. In his song “3 Peat”, he exclaims “ S**t get on my level you can’t get on my level you would need a space shuttle or a ladder thats forever”. When Lil Wayne exclaims this he creates a tone of superiority, and celebrates the fact that no one can be as great and cool as he is. His sense of superiority doesn’t stop their, he continues to say “I control hip hop”. Throughout his song he chose his words carefully to let his audience know he is the best in the world. To finish the song he says “I'm me…so retreat or suffer defeat”. Lil Wayne goes as far as to tell his audience they are nothing compared to him. The astonishing thing is even though he puts down his listeners they love him more than any other rapper. The reason for this is because he feels undefeated and confident, this confidence rubs off on to his listener because once they repeat those same lyrics they are showing that same confidence and that same attitude Lil Wayne has.

Along with the attitude portrayed in song lyrics, there is also this physical image they have to maintain. Around the same time Hip-hop made its debut on MTV, New York was experiencing an increase in crimes and gang involvement. These Hip-hop artists wore the same clothes they would wear out on the streets, the same clothes gang members, thugs and criminals wore. The result
of this has given Hip-hop its negative reputation that today’s rappers portray, this image of being cool and thug-like, “with a mouthful of gold teeth, a do rag on his head, [and] muscles popping out of his arms” (464). If rappers, like Lil Wayne and Nas want to be recognized as true Hip-hop artists they need to look the part, which requires the do rags, the baggy pants and big shirts. Yet these clothes do not define who these rappers are, they are just costumes.

Rappers like Lil Wayne, feel he not only has to look the part of a thug, but he also has to act the part and let the world know he is a thug and he is cool because he engages in illegal activities. Unfortunately, being a thug is what drives today’s Hip-hop and is the prominent prototype for what a Hip-hop artist is. Fans no longer find an appeal in raps about religion, or going to college not to party, but to get an education. Instead of rappers expressing themselves and showing how they overcame their struggles or rapping to inform of the history of slavery, their fans want them to degrade women, they want songs about sex, violence and extravagant spending. McBride discusses why children enjoy such vulgar topics; yet he fails to show why rappers have to appear cool by participating in illegal activities.

Since 1999 there was no album to go platinum that did not call women derogatory terms such as h** or B**ch.(Ogbar) In the Hip-hop industry today if you don’t rap about drugs, shooting people, smoking and treating women like your sex objects you will not make money on your albums. Rapper’s do not make money if the fans don’t buy their music; so if their music is boring and lacks this excitement that causes the listener to feel an adrenaline, they will not make a profit. For example, “I can” appeared in Nas’s album “God’s Son”, he raps about real meaningful things, religion, education, problems in the world. His album only sold a measly 156,000 copies in its first week(Wikipedia). Whereas the rapper Lil Wayne, who raps about smoking weed, getting shot, degrading women and treating them as nothing, but sex objects, sold a whopping 1,005,545 copies in its first week alone (Vulture). Again you need a citation. Both artists look the part of a so-called
thug, the difference is Lil Wayne empowers his fans by degrading women and showing that he is superior. Whereas Nas is trying to give his fans a better life, somehow that is not enough to leave them feeling strong and in control of their lives. McBride discusses why children enjoy such crude topics; yet he fails to show why rappers have to act the part of a thug and use vulgar, explicit and derogatory terms to sell albums and make money.

Why is it that rap fans prefer to listen to “you can get it tonight ho[e] Don't you ever fix ya lips unless you bout to suck my d**k” (Lil Wayne, “3 Peat”) then, “be careful, some men be rapists, so act your age, don’t pretend to be older than you are” (Nas, “I Can”)? Why is it that rap fans rather hear degrading demands, than knowledgeable advice? “I Can” is the old Hip-hop, the one that McBride sees to have a real message. Nas continues to show the lies of the glamorized life of participating in illegal activities portrayed in today’s Hip-hop and how it prevents “the youth [from] grow[ing]” and being able to “change the globe”.

“The Hip-hop culture is not [ours], yet [we] own it.” (472) in the sense that we tell the rappers what we want to hear. If we buy their albums and attend their concerts we are letting them know we like their music. If we choose to buy music that is degrading, sexual, violent and discusses illegal activities, we are encouraging the rappers to continue using these vulgar, explicit, lyrics. By not buying their music and boycotting today’s Hip-hop that lacks morals we will be sending them the message that we no longer support their derogative music and they will have no choice but to rap about something meaningful. This is the only way to revert today’s Hip-hop into yesterday’s Hip-hop. We have to “Save the music y’all, save the music y’all.”
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I can Lyrics, Sing365. Web. July. 2011


Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, Friday Lecture (Spoken)
A difference can be very minor or vast. Whether or not, change may always affect me as an individual, perhaps will be something that I tend to ponder on about in the future. However, there is one thing that I have been able to alter myself, my name. It has always been irking me in the back of my head. You may think changing your name seems meaningless, but in fact -- it might be the biggest change I have ever made in my life. and Gish Jen being I believe that Maya Angelou in the anthology, “What’s Your Name, Girl?” the main character from, “Name Dropping” would also agree with that being the biggest change. The three of us have all been victims of having a name that does not fit our perceptions on how we feel and view life as, and our beliefs. Even though we have fallen due to the sufferings of our original names, all three of us are guilty of discovering a new way for our individuality to be articulated freely.

A name can be defined as a label placed on a person to define ones identity. This could be given in a special ceremony, or possibly through ones experiences through life, or even through your ancestors. Our names may hold a lot of pressure because it is usually how we understand each other and our relations around us. Even if you do change your name, you will still be the same person that you were. How can you still be the same person when you change your identity? The name of a person can define oneself on the inside, but the change can assist in helping discover an identity that is more authentic to his or her own views. Having a name that fits a particular identity is vital because living a life that is not one’s own is not acceptable. Therefore, change can be needed.

Changing our names is something that is done for our own good, for our individuality. Sometimes the reason why changing our names can work into our favor can be so the names we were originally given do not give us the implication to live by it. That is what I did. My name is
Gregorio Velez III; however I go by the name of Gregory Velez. Everyone refers to me as that. In certain cases it is a tradition to take after your fathers’ name, so I guess that was the case for me. From the beginning I was not able to receive a unique name because my name was already chosen for me by my father. People always have these assumptions that I have a name to live up to just because my name has been passed down to me, making me the third. That is not the case. If anything I feel like my father and grandfather should live up to me. It is obvious that I do not like the name Gregorio. I always say my name is Gregory because I already dread the feeling of taking after my father. Already looking like him in my eyes is bad enough. If I go by the name of Gregorio the thought of my father comes into play, not only in my mind, but in the person that is usually asking how is it that you pronounce, “Gregorio”? My father possesses many qualities that I do not and I am glad I do not. When people compare me to my father I take it personally and get offended; I wish that was not my name but, it is and I have to accept who I am. Although, not being my father, but something greater, I am me, I am Gregory Velez, and I have accepted that. That slight change in my name is what was needed to give me the identity that I continuously longed for.

Growing up I always mentioned to everyone that if I had a son, his name was not going to be the fourth. I wanted to put an end to the generation so my father’s name would eventually die out just like his heart did many years ago. In time the realization that my son would not be brought up to be like my father like I was meant to be, but me instead. There was a change in my heart that grew over time, so if I ever have a son his name will be Gregorio Velez IV. As shown, my name does not define me. Neither does it define who I may become. The history and the stories of my name will continue on. I, Gregory Velez define my name.

To the outside world Gregory may just seem like a regular nickname that was originated from Gregorio, just one of those minor changes that were mentioned earlier. Gregory is not just an
Americanized version of what I was named after or just another name that I go by. That assumption is incorrect. In my eyes, it is a very big change. Hearing the name Greg, in my mind I know it is because my peers and whoever was referring to me by that got it from Gregory, not Gregorio. It is as if the two names are entirely different. Unlike Gish, another person that holds the same stance as me, had to make a bigger change to her name, but even though my change was smaller, that was all I needed to feel like I had regained my identity. That was the change I needed to feel like I was not living in my father’s skin anymore; the change that enabled me to live freely in my particular identity.

Going by the name of Gish, Lillian is able to express individuality and inner beliefs. Lillian Constance Jen was her birth name. She goes by the name of Gish because she feels as if her real name does not suite her well, just like me going by the name of Gregory. Needing something that reflected how she felt in the inside was necessary. Gish needed that change to define herself because the feeling of her name not fitting her personality was something that could not be taken no more. The standards of living according to Gish’s mother were not the standards Gish felt inclined to follow. “Jade Lotuses did not wear miniskirts so short they had to be sure their underwear was clean. No Jade Lotuses made straight A’s, even in conduct, and wore their hair in braids and never considered the length of their eyelashes. They did not feel doomed because their bra brand was AA-OK” (Jen 171). Lillian was the girl that was supposed to be involved with not wearing miniskirts and just getting straight A’s, not Gish. It is obvious to see that Gish is living in a mold that she does not believe her identity can fit into. She does not want to live by her mother’s standards of living all due to the name “Lillian”. She is living for herself and not living up to her name because of her name change. She was already labeled at birth as something that she was never going to grow into. So it is easy to perceive that this change is good, isn’t it? Gish afterwards, began to live her life as she pleased.
“I snuck out of the dorm at night, propping a certain door open; I returned at dawn. I drank beer. I stopped wearing a bra. I wore itty-bitty cutoffs instead of the twill midthigh camp shorts with cuffs my mother had insisted I pack” (Jen 174). Gish Jen sees her name change as a form of acceptance and expression after all now. It is wrong to be feeling as if the life being lived is filled with constriction from living a particular way. Having a name change can easily solve that predicament. It is easy to see why that statement is true because as seen above you can tell the difference of how Gish is now, with her name change, and how Gish was supposed to be as a “Jade Lotus”. Maya Angelou also faced problems dealing with identity.

Change was needed for Maya. In early 1950s the thought to change her professional name to "Maya Angelou" came into place. This was because her managers at San Francisco strongly suggested that adopting a more theatrical name would suite her well. It turned into a name that assisted in capturing the feel of her works; her dance performances. It had nothing to do with heritage like how in mine, it was a tradition to take after the father’s name. She got the name Maya from when she was younger. This name change was better for her; she felt more alive and was able to express herself in an enhanced way. What became a problem was that Mrs. Cullinan thought it would be acceptable to just call her Mary, although that was not her name. “I left the front door wide open so all the neighbors could hear. Mrs. Cullinan was right about one thing. My name wasn’t Mary” (Angelou 21). This is where she regained her identity and became more power structured. She was defiant on who she was and who she finally became.

Names play a bigger part in society than one can ever be able to imagine so it is important that if this name change is needed, that change is received. Gish Jen’s relationship with her name compares to mine because we both came up with different names for identity purposes. So did Maya Angelou. If the three of us can have new and improved names that can better describe who we are, why not have them? I have the name Gregory so it would not seem as if I was meant to take
after my father and my grandfather. Lillian has Gish to better represent herself. Margaret has Maya to enhance her particular identity. Something as small as a simple name change can no doubt about it be the only change one needs to live a life happily.

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Do you remember walking into the lunchroom in middle school or high school and seeing cheerleaders sitting with other cheerleaders, athletes with athletes, and musicians with musicians? Essentially, it’s normal for people to want to be around others who share similarities with themselves. Nowadays, people, especially I in many cases, feel uncomfortable around people who do not have similarities with those around them. Those similarities may include activities, hobbies, race, even the littlest things such as being lefties instead of righties—as long as it exists, it functions as an invisible comfort for many people.

Given this, the saying “opposites attract” is completely inaccurate because it states something that many may argue is true, but in reality poses as a struggle for many today. The larger issue is that people are unable to easily attract to others without similarities, and are refraining from interaction with people outside of their realm of normality, which does cause dissonance. If people are unwilling to reach out to get to know people outside of what they’re use to, this may contribute to stereotypes amongst people, and may also get to a point where people truly don’t understand or accept the differences embedded within others.

There are certain levels of connection amongst people including friendship and relationship. Friendship is a less personal level, meaning it relates more to the “friendly” connections we make with people. Relationship, a more personal and individual level, relates to the romantic connections we make with individuals. The levels of friendship and relationship tie alongside the main idea of opposites not attracting because within both of these levels or categories, people are forming connections with one another based on the similarities between them.
Firstly, “friendship” is a term I’m sure everyone knows the literal meaning to. Though, have you ever really delve into the underlying implications of friendship? Friendships resemble only the people we are able to cultivate connections with. Would you have a friend that you had nothing in common with, or one that you had nothing to talk about with? How about one that showed a significant amount of differences from you? Even if you tried to befriend someone who was entirely different from you in every way, how long do you think the friendship would last? For instance, imagine a person (A) really enjoys listening to music and partying; yet another person (B) really dislikes music and would rather the quiet of reading. Also, imagine person (C) really likes music and partying also, and person (D) would prefer reading. Is it very likely that person (A) and (D) would become friends? Though there is a possibility, the likelihood is very minuscule. Therefore, the saying “opposites attract” does not reflect reality. In the example, person (A) and (D) were complete opposites. One preferred to stay in and read, and the other is practically a party animal. Even if they attempted to be friends, the differences they each have from one another would continue to generate dissonance between them. Many might say that very different people face situations that force them to become friends, and that this is a great way of growing friendships between unlikely people—for example, two different people being put together to do a project. This may be a situation that occurs plenty, but this doesn’t mean the two people are comfortable with the situation. They weren’t able to attract to each other for friendship on their own without involving the project, so this still does not prove that opposites attract to one another.

Another example of how opposites do not attract on a “friendly” level would be my high school lunchroom. Walking into the lunchroom is like segregation working at its maximum abilities. Though race isn’t the main focus within this argument, it is a major factor of why individuals are unable to easily connect to opposites even on a friendly level. The lunchroom would consists of tables filled with just blacks, some filled with just whites, others filled with just Asians, and the list
goes on. People were breaking up according to their race. What does this symbolize? Even on a friendly level of connecting with people, there are drastic requirements for one to feel comfortable doing so. This would mean that in some cases people require the person they attempt to befriend to be a specific race. In essence, the saying “opposites attract” does not correctly mirror people today because even on a friendly level, many are unable to look past the differences, and even if they attempt to, they may still not feel comfortable or secure befriending people outside of their comfort zones.

Secondly, would you have a girlfriend or boyfriend that you had nothing in common with? Similarly to friendship, people need connections in order to form relationships with one another. For instance, a girl begins to like this boy she’s known since she was little. What exactly about him attracts her? Those who believe opposites actually attract might say she’s attracted to something about him she lacks within herself. Though this may potentially happen in some cases, the girl is most likely attracted to something she can connect with, a similarity between the two individuals that causes her to grow feelings for him.

This situation is covered within Celeste Stewart’s article: “Is It True That Opposites Attract.” In the article she discusses an experiment researchers at the University of Iowa did on 291 newly married couples, which tested their attitudes, personalities and relationship qualities. The main goal was to locate the similarities and differences between the couple. Stewart states: “The results of the study concluded that the couples shared similar attitudes and values however they didn't necessarily share personality similarities such as extroversion, attachment, or emotions. The study found no evidence that opposites attract.” The experiment concluded with no real evidence that opposites truly attract. The couples did show many similarities between one another, which does question the validity of the saying “opposites attract.” If opposites do attract than the married couples should have shown some differences that may have contributed to the attraction between
them. Some might say that there can be exceptions, and that all couples may not show vivid signs of differences. Though this may be true, 291 couples were tested, and at a number of couples that large, there should have been more evidence between some of the couples that supported the fact that opposites do truly attract.

Moreover, even though the saying is inaccurate and that many today find it hard to attract to opposites today, there are reasons that can explain some people’s discomfort around different people. For example, I had to fill out my college dorm application in which I stated a few points of my personality and habits, and will be paired with someone similar to myself. Assuming that I will become good friends with my roommate, I’m almost encouraged to be around someone or people similar to myself. I will be living with this person for an entire school year, and this will definitely negatively affect my comfort around people that are not similar to me. This represents how on a friendship level, people may be pushed towards being around similar people. On a relationship level, for example, there are countless match or partner-finding websites including the following: match.com, eharmony.com, Zoosk.com, OkCupid.com, perfectmatch.com, and matchmaker.com. What all these websites have in common is the simple fact that they pair-up people based on the similarities between them—even the names “match” and “harmony” suggest similarity. These websites will ask certain things about one’s personality and hobbies, and pair people up based on the resemblance in answers.

Furthermore, though there are reasons that can explain why some people are unable to feel comfortable around opposites, others may just be uncomfortable around different people. What does this affect? On a friendship level, people who are so very different from others may completely be rejected from everyone, even society. Since they’re so different from everyone, no one is able form a connection or bond with them, and they end up isolated. Also, differences between people can include sexuality as well, and since people are uncomfortable around people unlike themselves,
people that are gay, for example, can be rejected from people who cannot accept gay people, which probably contributes to the increasing gay-teen suicide rate today. Essentially, there are serious repercussions for our inability to accept different people.

There are various ways of being able to feel comfortable around different people. Firstly, one needs to strive to get to know different people. Today, people may get so caught up with themselves that they forget there are other people out there with differences they could get to know. Also, within schools nowadays, I think there could be more school programs or activities that emphasize the differences between everyone. For example, in my middle school every year we had “International Day,” in which everyone presented a different aspect of their background to the school. The activity definitely opened-up our minds to different cultural backgrounds, and helped many understand the differences between people. Activities like these, do contribute to breaking down the borders many have up against dissimilar people today.

Hence, the saying “opposites attract” is a very inaccurate statement because many people today have a far ways to go until they are actually attracted to differences in people. Many find it easier to attach themselves to people who are similar to themselves, and there may be factors such as media that contribute to this issue. There are many ways of fixing or decreasing issues as such, such as creating more programs and activities in middle or high schools that strive to break-down the borders many have up against being around different people. In conclusion, the saying “opposites attract” mainly means that things that are opposite will attract to one another based on the differences between them. For example, a magnet with a positive charge will attract to another magnet with a negative charge simply because of the difference in charge. Also, two magnets with the same charge will repel each other. The saying “opposites attract” may hold true for magnets, but humans aren’t magnets, we have personalities, we have comfort-zones, and we have a long way to go to diminish the issue of repelling ourselves from other’s differences.
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Hip Hop was born in the early 1970’s in the streets of South Bronx, New York. A new culture had been born, one with a new music style, form of expression and dances. Hip Hop started out as party music, that then transformed into a way to express social issues in the communities where the infamous artists and rappers where emerging from, and is still evident in today’s music contrary to popular opinion. In the essay “Hip-Hop Planet”, James McBride – a writer, journalist, and musician- claims that most rap songs “unabashedly function as walking advertisements for luxury cars, designer clothes, and liquor.” In addition, McBride also claims that most commercial artists /rappers spout violent lyrics that debase women and gays, and acknowledges “gangsta” rap as what Hip Hop has become. If this is no longer the same Hip-Hop, McBride grew to love, then he would agree with Nas –a multi Grammy award winning Hip Hop artist from Queens, New York— and his claim that “Hip Hop Is Dead”, which also happens to be the title to one of his hit single songs. However, modern artists like Lupe Fiasco work as a counter example to McBride’s claims by showing that not all rappers from the ghetto are “gangsta” rappers who rap about money, hoes and cars. Instead, Lupe Fiasco has a more socially conscience rap style in this modern day that defies McBride’s claims.

There is a truth to the matter, in McBride’s opinion that some rappers do in fact debase women in their lyrics. Such qualities of certain Hip-Hop songs are what influence McBride’s love/hate relationship with the genre. Just like McBride’s personal feelings Lupe Fiasco, also felt the same way about Hip Hop at one point. In Lupe Fiasco’s song “Hurt Me Soul”, the first couple verses reflect on how some artists debase women through world play and rhymes.
“Now I ain't tryna be the greatest
I used to hate hip-hop... yup, because the women degraded
But Too $hort made me laugh, like a hypocrite I played it
A hypocrite I stated, though I only recited half
Omittin the word "bitch," cursin I wouldn't say it
Me and Dog couldn't relate, til a bitch I dated”

(Lupe Fiasco, Hurt Me Soul)

First, you can break down Lupe’s lyrics by parts and meaning. The first line reflects on his humility as a rapper and artist. He acknowledges the fact on how other rappers boast about themselves and what they have in an indirect way by starting out his song with such a humble line. The following line is by far one of his most interesting lines written as a Hip Hop artist, especially one of his magnitude. Lupe hated Hip Hop because he used to be put off by the misogyny and objectification of women in rap, yet he was a victim of Too Short’s music which was about “pimpin” women and using them as sexual objects, but in a lyrically brilliant and entertaining way. Still, Lupe Fiasco did not agree to call women degrading names, although he did listen to music in which women were degraded by name, as if Lupe was a hypocrite for it. In the last lines of the verse above, Lupe Fiasco uses wordplay to point out that artists use the word “bitch” to refer to women in a degrading way, yet he can use the very same word, and make it so that he is not degrading a woman. The line “Me and Dog couldn’t relate, til a bitch I dated”, refers to Too Short as Dog (also known as Short Dog), and Lupe’s unwillingness to be able to relate to Dog, by calling a woman a bitch, until he dated a girl who called herself a “bitch” (used in the manner of being a woman with
an attitude). In this song Lupe continues to express the same Hip Hop, McBride fell in love with, even as a contemporary artist he still expresses socially conscience lyrics.

Hip Hop music started out with African roots that were noticeable in the improvising, as well as the call and response elements of the music. What started as party music became a way to express social issues in the communities through lyrics and rhymes. This is still true, although McBride argues the opposite. The same Hip Hop McBride speaks of, is still evident today. Although it is true that Hip Hop in general has become more commercialized, and some artist have fallen under the category of rapping about the same things, Lupe Fiasco still bring forth the rhymes that tie our history with our present, and rhyme about social issues of today and past.

“In the mix with my realities and feelings
Living conditions, religion, ignorant wisdom and artistic vision
I began to jot, tap the world and listen, it drop
My mom can't feed me, my boyfriend beats me
I have sex for money, the hood don't love me
The cops wanna kill me, this nonsense built me
And I got noooo place to gooo
They bomb my village, they call us killers
Took me off they welfare, can't afford they health care
My teacher won't teach me, my master beats me
And it huuurts mee sooooul”

Throughout the chorus of this song, Lupe takes the chance to express a few of many social issues in America. He starts the hook of the song with “Living conditions, religion, ignorant wisdom and artistic vision” as things that influence his writing process of his lyrics. The Living conditions
and ignorant wisdom as well as the artistic vision are then represented throughout both parts of his chorus. Lupe hints on poverty, domestic violence, prostitution, and other social injustices in our nation. What is most interesting about the chorus of this song is that it also ties past social issues into the lyrics. For example, when Lupe says “my master beats me”, he reflects and ties the oppression that was once faced by African Americans during slavery, to the oppression they face now.

In addition, Lupe’s music is also conscience of the reality of commercialized rap. McBride makes it clear that he believes that Hip Hop has become commercialized, but as he does, it seems he uses rap and even “gangsta rap” to refer to Hip Hop music, as if it was only that. The fallacy with this, just as McBride believes, rap has in fact become the face of Hip Hop, although it does not embody Hip Hop as a whole. The following lyrics of Lupe Fiasco’s song, brings forth the commercialized rap reality of Hip Hop:

“So through the Grim Reaper sickle sharpening
Macintosh marketing
Oil field augering
Brazilian adolescent disarmament
Israeli occupation
Islamic martyrdom, precise
Yeah, laser guided targeting
Oil for food, water, and terrorist organization harborin
Sand camouflage army men
CCF sponsorin, world conquerin, telephone monitorin
Louis Vuitton modelin, pornographic actress honorin
String theory ponderin, bullimic vomitin
Catholic priest fondlin, pre-emptive bombin and Osama and no bombin them
They breakin in my car again, deforestation and overloggin and
Hennessy and Hypnotic swallowin, hydroponic coughin and
All the world's ills, sittin on chrome 24-inch wheels, like that’

Clearly, Lupe Fiasco is aware of the commercial society we live in. He not only expresses this commercialized system in the world, but also alludes to it, in the songs of others. When Lupe says “Hennessy and Hypnotic swallowin, hydroponic coughin and all the world's ills, sittin on chrome 24-inch wheels, like that”, he is referring to the commercialized rap music. These are the types of lyrics that would seem as if McBride would write himself, but Lupe Fiasco takes it even further and raps about the commercialized world as a whole.

In all, Lupe Fiasco has worked as a perfect counter example of McBride’s claims on Hip Hop. When one takes the time to realize that “gangster rap” is not entirely Hip Hop, but a product of Hip Hop, and that the traditional Hip Hop is still alive, then one can still appreciate Hip Hop for what it really is. Over the last couple years, Hip Hop has been scrutinized and critiqued as if it was a single art piece. In reality, Hip Hop is a culture that demands change. Not change in the sense of tradition, but change in people and issues to express ourselves upon. Nas said “Hip Hop Is Dead” in 2006, but Hip Hop is still alive today. Different generation Hip Hoppers such as Lupe Fiasco, keep the Hip Hop flames burning. At the end of the day, the same social revolution known to be as Hip Hop, has become an evolution of ideas worth expressing and stories worth telling, in a beat, to a hook, and a rhyme that never dies.