A showcase for undergraduate students at Kent State University at Stark who achieved writing excellence.
Letter from the Editors

*The Writing Center Review* is a student publication dedicated to student writers who have shown excellence in their writing assignments at Kent State University at Stark. It is compiled, edited, and written by students with the help of the faculty on campus. *The Writing Center Review* is truly a place for students to showcase their talent and to also learn from their peers. The writing showcased in *The Writing Center Review* also exemplifies the most important goal of writing and writing assignments—to engage in a dialogue with the academic world, both regionally and outside our campus.

Our gratitude is also extended to Jeff Grametbauer and the staff at The Print Shop of Canton, Inc. for their assistance and willingness to work with us to create this publication. We also thank the faculty members who participated on out Faculty Reader Staff.

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Dr. Elizabeth Williamsen

The staff of *The Writing Center Review* would like to extend our thanks to all for the students that submitted this year. Without our student writers, this publication wouldn’t be possible. The submissions this year were fabulous, and the competition was incredibly difficult. We would also like to thank the faculty at Kent State University at Stark that continually encourage their students to submit their papers. Without both the faculty and the students, we would be looking at a collection of blank pages. We also extend our gratitude to our director, Dr. Jay Sloan for his guidance and mentorship in the creation of *The Writing Center Review* and for patience as we learn along the way.

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# Table of Contents

Letter from the Editors.......................................................................................................................... iii

Contributor’s Page.................................................................................................................................... iv

Table of Contents....................................................................................................................................... v

"Military Wives: A Distinct Subculture in the United States”
   Amber Haney......................................................................................................................................... 1

"Worth Every Penny: Building N.A.S.A”
   Jordyn Hall............................................................................................................................................. 13

"Prisoner of my Past: A Memoir”
   Colleen Callahan.................................................................................................................................... 21

"A Call to Action in Raisin in the Sun”
   Patricia Cotter......................................................................................................................................... 25

"The Semiotics of Smallville”
   Melissa Powell....................................................................................................................................... 28

"Demystifying Gender Inequality in The Epic of Gilgamesh”
   Alexander Harless................................................................................................................................. 31

"Acid Mine Drainage Effects and Possible Solutions”
   Nichole Neely........................................................................................................................................ 33

"When no voice replied: A New Look at ‘Porphyria’s Lover’”
   Melissa Powell....................................................................................................................................... 37

"Creating the Ultimate Villain: An Analysis of Motives”
   Nichole Neely....................................................................................................................................... 41

"Traumatic Memory, The Creature, and Mary Shelley”
   Alexander Harless................................................................................................................................. 47

"Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism for Mental Illness”
   Virginia Cole......................................................................................................................................... 50
Military Wives: A Distinct Subculture in the United States

By Amber Haney

Punk, hippie, and party are all examples of distinct subcultures within the mainstream of the United States. What criteria are being used to determine if a group is indeed a type of culture? It could be said that the style, language, or behavior of a certain social group classifies it as a subculture or even as a counterculture. Some of these groups are easily distinguished, but what about those various groups that are hidden? Many groups exist because of the commonality of the members. Others exist because of the function they serve. Culture serves as a frame of reference for an individual, it teaches an individual how to live and function, and it provides answers to questions. Culture ensures a group’s survival by creating and fostering values and beliefs that enable it to thrive. Using this definition, it is no longer as difficult to understand military wives as being a subculture.

Experience is necessary to gain insight into different situations, different beliefs, and different lifestyles. The military culture is often stereotyped and misunderstood. Danielle Milano recounts her experience as a military wife and mother of a two year old. She has been married to her Air Force officer husband for four years now. They lived in Las Vegas for three of those years and are currently trudging through Vince Milano’s second deployment.

How do you define military wives as a culture?

It is a different atmosphere, especially on base. Most of us are away from our friends and families. It is more of an instant bond on some levels because we are all in different stages of the same life. Our husbands are working a lot and gone a lot. They have a very dangerous job and we are left to take care of the rest. For the most part, we are all just trying to be good, supportive wives. It can be nice because we all understand and we can talk to each other about things we may not discuss with people outside the military. We bounce thoughts, ideas, and questions off each other and are able to learn and also help one another.

What do you feel is the motherhood culture?

I think it’s just that sense of responsibility and common goal of raising a healthy, happy child and using the support of each other to do that.

Do you identify with this culture? Do you identify with other moms?

I definitely am a military wife. I believe in the military and the work they do, and I try and be supportive. I feel the emotions that come with deployments and other training sessions and even just his hectic work schedule that takes him away from me, from us. I identify with other moms in many ways. At the same time, I am more like a single mom in many ways. I have stressors and responsibilities that other moms do not because their husband is physically with them.
What does it mean to you to be a military wife? A mother?

I guess to me it’s just doing my best to give Owen what he needs. To teach him the values and ideas we have - the ones we were raised with. I also want him to see both sides of things. I have to be mommy and daddy and that’s ok. I just want him to have both influences and since Vince isn’t here as much as we’d like, that responsibility falls to me. As far as being a wife, I think there is a little more pressure on base to have everything taken care. It sounds more like a 60’s housewife when I verbalize things, but that’s not really how it is when it’s happening or how I feel about it. I don’t know if I’m explaining this well. I take care of everything. I don’t want him to come home to a messy house after working like he has. I don’t want him to have bills that aren’t paid when he gets home from a training series. I don’t want him to have to worry about the cars or anything else. I want to make sure he has clean uniforms, that his bags are packed, that he has good dinners, that he is comfortable and can just relax when he’s home. He doesn’t get to do much of that.

Is there a mommy club? Do you feel a part of it? What does it mean to you?

There is definitely a clique of women with children. I noticed it the other day when Kelly and I were talking in the kitchen and Tina (Danielle’s single, childless sister) walked in and said something. Kelly said, “You wouldn’t get it, you don’t have kids.” I felt really bad because I knew it upset her. I guess you notice it more when you’re outside of it. Mothers just interact differently and talk about different things. Our lives are centered on things that Tina’s isn’t. I do feel a part of it, although, I don’t always enjoy it.

My kid has been screaming and getting his diaper changed all day. I don’t really want to sit and talk about yours. I want to talk about other things. I want to just be me for a second. I love Owen. I love being his mom. Sometimes, I just want grown-up talk. This is another reason why it’s more difficult when Vince isn’t around. I’m in mommy mode 24/7. I think Vince’s friends talk about other things more than mine do. I mean they talk about sports and whatever else. It’s not completely about their children and families. I am interested in those things and want to know about their lives, but I also want to have other things to talk about. Sometimes, I just feel like, in being a mom, that gets shut off sometimes.

Within the mainstream culture, individuals are able to identify with underlying subcultures. This identification can be a product of various criteria such as language, religion, and even personality traits. When identification occurs using group affiliations, it is called social identification (Bankanic, 2009). The construct of military wives is a more specific example of such social identification. Danielle expresses her concept of what the cultures of military wives and motherhood are. Her thoughts capture the principles encompassed in commonly accepted definitions of culture. Attitudes, beliefs, values, and the similarity of environments and experiences are all shared by this group of women. They have a commonality that binds them. Danielle’s understanding of her surroundings and her self-identification within the subculture allow her to further explore an aspect of her identity and to make differentiations between her culture and the mainstream U.S. culture.
Do you feel different from mainstream United States culture? How do you feel different from other moms?

I absolutely feel different. I think we appreciate each other a lot more. I see how hard Vince works and I appreciate that. He has a sense of what I do as well. We are really lucky to be a family and to have each other. That makes up for the random holidays and birthdays missed. We have all of the same problems. We have relationship issues and stress. We are raising a two year old. That’s pretty stressful. We have financial stress and student loan payments just like any other young couple. I think we have other problems as well that many people don’t face. Vince is away a lot. Even when he is home we don’t get to spend much time together. He works nights, so he comes home after I’ve gone to bed usually and then sleeps during the day. I love when he brings his friends over. It’s nice to just sit and drink a beer with them and watch football. I miss my friends at home and it’s nice to have friends out there, to just be normal. I don’t have leftovers and it makes them (and Vince) happy. He thinks it’s cool and makes him feel good. I think it’s different because his job is so dangerous. I mean it’s not like he’s away on business and sitting in an office in Boston a few days here and there throughout the year.

Right now, he is somewhere in Afghanistan (I don’t know where exactly) and could be attacked at any time. He is the one that deals with the front lines kinds of things, so he will get hurt first if anything happens. As a mom, I have to do everything. If something breaks, I can’t wait for him to come home and fix it. I have to, or have to hire it out. I put together toys. I take out the trash. I get the oil changed. If I get lost driving in Las Vegas, I have to find my way home. It’s not like he can come and get me so I can follow him.

I handle all of the money, all of the doctor appointments. I’m the one who has to protect my child when and if I allow workers into my home. I am the one teaching Owen about things on a daily basis - taking care of him, playing with him, disciplining him, loving him. I can’t get sick because someone has to take care of Owen and Vince just can’t, as much as he’d like to, he just can’t. We don’t go on dates alone. It is always me, Vince, and Owen. Sometimes it’s kind of like being a single mom only I do have a husband. I do have someone who loves us and supports us and provides for us. Being home, I look at Kelly (Danielle’s 21 year old sister) who is a single mom, but she has her mom. My mom is actually doing a lot of the raising of Valerie. If she needs something or wants something, she goes to my mom. I can’t just ask my mom a question or show her something. I have to rely on myself and those around me.

Krista has a lot more freedom and can go out and do things whenever she wants because there is always someone she trusts there to babysit. It can be last minute. I don’t have that. Even now, being home, I don’t have a car, so it’s difficult to get things done (when I want to and how I want to). I do get to do some things without Owen now. I can go to the grocery or to the doctor and I do have people I trust to watch him. I have to plan that all out though. I can’t just say, “Oh, honey, I want to go pick up some chips or whatever I’ll be back in fifteen minutes.” It is planned out, very structured, when I leave him at my parents or when I take him with me. I’m not trying to complain at all. This was our choice and I’m honestly very lucky to have the life I do. I’m just pointing out some of the differences I see. On the positive side of all of this, I am there
with my child. I don’t have to put him in day care or leave him with someone. I can take him with me.

Sometimes it is hard. He’s two, but at the same time, he’s used to it. He is learning a lot about things. He is learning behavior I want him to learn. I have time to sit and teach him his colors and his letters. I get to be the one to discipline him the way I choose. No one else is telling my kid “no” or spanking him or letting him get away with whatever he wants. I get to give him a bath and put him to bed every night. These things don’t always happen. I don’t have to work. I get to be the one running my household. I don’t have to depend on my husband for everything. I am not docile. It has definitely taught me a lot about myself. It gives me a sense of myself. My priority was to graduate and establish myself in my career (practicing medicine). I always thought that kids could wait. I’m so grateful that’s not what I’m doing right now. I still want those things someday, but I wouldn’t be able to be this type of mom if Vince wasn’t in the military.

When did you become aware of this?

Oh, it’s definitely been a process. I never had this lightning bolt of “Oh, wow, how lucky am I,” or “Oh, I’m so different.” I see things as I go and I’m constantly learning and being shown more. All of the thoughts and feelings I have come and go (just like anyone). I mean, I’m not super wonderful. I’m not made of steel. I hurt. I get sad, lonely, angry, frustrated. I take things for granted and so on, but for the most part, I realize I get to choose. I am not a victim. I can be positive and happy and grateful more often than not. So, I mean sometimes I feel different, sometimes I don’t. I don’t know.

What are the traditions of this culture? Do you follow these traditions or “old ways”?

I’d say the traditions would just be having your husband serving and being a housewife and mother. I think traditionally the family lives on base and even if they face deployment, the family stays on base. We are following some of that. My education and career goals are on hold for now. I am a stay-at-home mom. I want to have everything taken care of so Vince doesn’t have to look at it or worry about it when he is home. He can just relax and play with Owen.

What traditions do you follow with regard to holidays, foods, religious practices, festivals, family structure, or career?

Well, last year at Christmas time Vince was deployed and he was training for Thanksgiving. We just have everything on other days. We don’t usually get to spend the holidays with our families, so we try to keep everything as close to that as possible. A lot of other families do that as well. It’s more of a community thing so it becomes a norm. Vince is such a family guy. I love that. It’s helping Owen in the long run as well I think. He is seeing that the holidays are more about that family time and togetherness. I always make a lot of food and make a big deal out of Thanksgiving and Christmas. It’s what Vince and I were both raised with and that’s how we want to raise Owen. Some of the single guys on base don’t get that. I like it when Vince brings his buddies home for dinner or when they can come to our house for the holidays. We are like a big family and it’s nice to be able to give those same feelings to the guys that are missing their actual families.

Where did these traditions come from? Why are they important?
Most of the traditions we follow came from my mom and grandmas. Vince (or his mom) will tell me what they ate or what they did that was special and we incorporate it all in. It is so important for us. It gives us a sense of normalcy. It’s about that cohesion for us. We get to learn more about the traditions and customs of our families. We get to have those conversations and I think it wouldn’t be that way if we were home. It brings us closer. I get to do these things and it gives me satisfaction and a sense of confidence. Our moms would be doing the cooking and decorating and entertaining if we were home. We would be the ones traveling and dealing with a small child out of his element and away from home in a stressful atmosphere (for a kid). It provides comfort and stability. We are together and it feels really good to be there in that moment with my family. These are the values we have and what we want to give to Owen.

Prejudice arises from the overgeneralized characteristics of a group and the stigma associated with them. Often people show disdain for what they do not understand. However, there are times when this disdain is a reaction to conflict or competition. Stereotypes are not necessarily based on personal experience with an individual or with a group, but they can help us to navigate and to understand future experiences.

Did you learn any stereotypes about the mainstream U. S. culture? Where did this come from?

I guess just about what it meant to be a wife and mother in general. I had that belief that a family is traditional and that they don’t like or accept any unconventional families. I don’t know that we’re unconventional though. I mean all of this really seems normal to me most of the time. This is our life, this is what we know.

Did you learn any stereotypes about your own culture?

I hear all kinds of things about military wives. They are lazy. They don’t do anything all day. They are cheaters. They are after the money. There really aren’t a lot of good things that are said about women in and around the military. I also read an article written by a military wife. She was in line at a grocery store behind a civilian woman who was behind another military wife checking out. She was young and kind of messy looking, like her hair or whatever (the one checking out). She was asked for her ID. and on base we use our military IDs for everything. I haven’t needed my license at all. So, she just used that. Well, they were at an off base store and the clerk asked her for another ID. So, she looked a little further down the line of cards and gave him her license. No big deal, it was just habit for her. The civilian woman turned around and was talking to the third in line (she didn’t know that woman’s husband was in the military too). She started complaining about “all of these military wives” and how they are just “gold diggers looking for freebies from the government and that’s the only reason they are married. Why can’t they even take care of themselves?” (because of how the young woman was dressed). She just went on for a while. Well, the woman she was complaining to had been married to her Navy husband forever and she was a journalist with her own income and she informed the woman about it. Ha ha. Then she wrote the article. I’ve gotten comments like that before, about being out for something free, that being the only reason I married Vince, those kinds of things.
Have you found any of these to be true? False?

I cannot even tell you how many stories Vince will come home with. Some of these guys have really horrible wives. There is quite a bit of cheating. There is quite a bit of cheating in general. It happens a lot overseas. It is really disgusting and sad some of the things that have happened to some of the guys Vince works with and is friends with. For the most part, all of the women that I personally talk to regularly are very busy. They aren’t lazy by any means. They are constantly couponing, writing blogs, taking the kids here or taking them there, sharing recipes, cleaning their homes. I mean they handle the home life while the husbands make that a possibility by handling work and safety. And, with the article one, the author pointed out that this woman had no clue what someone else was going through. She could have been raising small kids alone because her husband was deployed and she was worried about him. She may not have had time to put on makeup and fix up her hair.

Values are the standards used to judge the desirability of characteristics, beliefs, and values (Bakanic, 2009). The meaning that is attached to these ideas, according to a symbolic interactionist perspective, is how society creates structure (Bakanic, 2009). These ideas, being held as truth, are then used to label one’s self, as well as others. Labeling theory expresses this in terms of deviance. However, it can also be applied as an explanation for some of Danielle’s thoughts and feelings.

What did you think about this? How did it make you feel?

Like I said, I don’t feel amazing all the time, but it doesn’t generally get to me. This job makes Vince happy. We chose this as a couple. I don’t feel like it makes me any better than any other wife or mom, but I don’t feel it makes me any worse. I don’t like it when people assume things about me or Vince or our family. I don’t want to be judged the way I am sometimes. I guess I’m happy that I can feel that appreciation for and from my husband and that I know I am doing my best as a wife and mother. I don’t feel sorry for myself. I don’t sit around and cry with a bottle of wine on Valentine’s Day because Vince isn’t here. We decided a long time ago those things weren’t necessary or important for us. This is our life - the life we chose - and we just make it work the best we can, so I guess I feel acceptance as well.

Did your perceptions of yourself change? What about the group?

I never really thought I’d be the mommy type. I’ve always had more fun hanging out with my guy friends and watching a game and drinking some beer. I don’t think I had a very clear idea of what a military wife did. I bought into some stereotypes. The more Vince and I discussed this way of life and the more we live it, the more I respect others who do it, the more I admire them. I feel better about myself. I feel more capable. I see what others do and how strong they can be and how they help other people. I love my roles and wouldn’t trade them for anything. I always joked I’d be the mom that would say, “Bring mommy her martini.” Ha ha, it’s just not like that. I love the time I spend with Owen and appreciate the personality he’s starting to show. I always thought I was meant to be a take-charge career woman and if my husband stayed home, that would be great. I could never do that now. I’m so glad I don’t have to.

Have these perceptions changed as you got older?
I do believe some of this is just getting older. I think some of it is actually living it and having more experience. I am not as selfish as I was at one time. My priorities have definitely changed. I have a clearer idea of who I am, what I want, and how to get it. I appreciate my mom more. I think that a lot of young women go through this as they get older. A lot of it has to do with being forced to do things. Like I said, my mom just does things for Kelly and Val. I didn’t have that. If it was going to get done, I had to do it, so I think I have more of an understanding of what goes into everything.

The acknowledgement of her identity within and as a product of this group and how her perspective (of herself) has changed is comparable to the labeling theory (Bakanic, 2009, p. 57). The perception of the action or behavior is based on how the majority views it in relation to their norms. Labeling something as deviant can perpetuate similar behaviors and reactions. The appraisals become significant. Applying this theory to Danielle, it would seem that once this aspect of her life was accepted it became part of her identity, thus, changing her reactions to others and changing the reactions of others to her. The reactions of others toward Danielle are important in an additional way. Looking glass self is another concept that helps to define our identities (Bakanic, 2009). Self perception is based on social referencing and appraisal. Individuals conduct themselves in conformity with what they think the social norm is and how they believe others view them (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). Using the idea of the looking glass self, it can be hypothesized that positive experiences should increase Danielle’s self esteem and that negative experiences should decrease her self esteem.

Have you ever been treated differently because of this?

This isn’t because they knew Vince was in the military, but the first time Vince was deployed and I was flying home, I had Owen and Ruby (Danielle’s dog), two carry-ons, and a diaper bag. Owen was fussy and Ruby was barking. Someone bumped into me while I was carrying Owen and almost knocked us over. I look really young, and they just looked at me with disdain, like I was 12 or something (I get that a lot). People don’t know. I wouldn’t have been in that situation if Vince wasn’t going overseas. I obviously did not want to be traveling that way as much as they didn’t want to be traveling with me given the circumstances. It was unnecessary to be yelled at, talked down to, and bumped into without an apology. I have had people make snide comments about me. We were driving home from Vegas when I was pregnant. We went into the gas station and Vince was outside waiting for me. I didn’t see him and walked toward the car. One of the women working there who was outside on break said, “What a shame” (I was really huge at this point). Vince yelled out to me, “Oh honey, did you get everything you needed wife of mine?”

The woman looked confused and shocked. When I’m out running errands with Owen, people will make comments or give me dirty looks. I get a little upset, not sure why the ring or checkbook with both of our names on it doesn’t clue you in, but I’m sorry my husband can’t be here with me so you know I’m married. He’s just a little bit busy right now. People assume that I got pregnant and Vince joined the military and I married him to get benefits. It is really insulting and ridiculous. I’m not sure why it’s anyone’s business. I don’t want Owen to be seeing and hearing these messages. Other times,
people who find out that we’re a military family thank me. I mean, I guess it’s nice to know that Vince is appreciated, but at the same time, it isn’t necessary. It is his job. It is what makes him happy. That’s what we do. I don’t like the attention.

Was this a positive or negative experience? How did it make you feel?

For the most part, they are usually negative. It usually just makes me angry. I don’t like people stereotyping me or trying to make me feel badly. I have nothing to be ashamed about and they don’t know what it is like to be in my shoes. I guess it makes me feel a little more separated and leery of people. I don’t want to let people into my world as much. They don’t understand.

Generally speaking, anger is a response to pain (emotional or physical) and fear. Danielle’s reaction to these negative situations may be expressed as anger but could be a sense of hurt. She is, at times, judged and she is privy to stereotypes and to the actions of those who hold them. Danielle expressed stereotypes of motherhood that are often based on traditional values such as marriage, adulthood, and protestant work ethic.

For example, the woman at the gas station seemed to value being a married adult first and then having children. Along with those values, she also seems to value the protestant work ethic in that she expresses pity (an affective attitude) over seeing someone young (or not an adult) expecting a child. The pregnancy is not seen as a joy to this woman because she seems to feel that Danielle is a deviant, and further, that she will not be able to work and support herself alone. This may be a projection (by Danielle and the author), as this woman did not directly express that these were her beliefs, but it is easy to point out the many underlying thought processes or cognitive attitudes often used to categorize and to store information and attached meanings (Bakanic, 2009). These cognitive processes have functions in our society. The value expression function serves to define and defend morals and values of the society and could be used to label what the woman at the gas station was attempting. By showing her disdain, she may be attempting to protect and secure the values in which she believes, in this case, marriage. The construct of Danielle’s identity is influenced by her surroundings. Identity and the ideas an individual believes about himself or herself are created by cognition as well as through experiences with others who are part of the culture and with those who are not part of the culture. Hence, personal beliefs change one’s perspective in other areas of life as well.

Do ever feel like you want to hide this aspect of yourself? Why or why not?

I don’t feel like I have to hide the fact that Vince is in the military, but I don’t broadcast it either. I don’t want special treatment. It’s a job. I’m a wife, I’m a mother, and I’m a person. Vince is a husband, a father, and a person. He changes at the airport so he isn’t flying in uniform because they will upgrade him to first class. He doesn’t need to be in first class. He needs to get home to see his family. That’s his priority and mine as well. Most of the people we know are like that. It is what it is. I definitely don’t expect anything because I’m a military wife. It’s a part of who I am, not all of who I am. I’m not going to fall on my sword because of my husband’s job.

Have you ever experienced a feeling of us versus them?
I don’t know if it’s necessarily that kind of feeling. I know there have been times when people didn’t understand or I knew they couldn’t and I needed the support of other wives. There have been times I’ve needed some of the resources the military offers us, and I have taken comfort in those supports. There have been times I’ve been labeled or judged and it’s made me feel separate from people. I don’t know that it’s that clear-cut though, like there are just two separate categories. Sometimes I feel like it’s us (my family) against the rest of the world (outside the military), but it’s when my head isn’t right or when I’m feeling judged in some way. I don’t know if that answers the question or makes sense.

Have you found ways that your culture has worked to your advantage? Disadvantage?

I mean people and businesses will, over perks or discounts or whatever. If it is like a well known thing or whatever, we will use it, but I don’t feel like just because he serves I should get a discount on getting my hair done or whatever. I don’t expect anything like that. He brings home a paycheck, but at the same time, there are those advantages. I don’t know if I’m explaining the distinction well. My dad works at Timken, he gets a discount on his cell phone and at AAA and things like that. Obviously, he uses it. I guess that’s what I mean by a discount. I’m not just going to walk in somewhere and be like, “Hey, my husband is overseas can I have this free?” There are many resources available to us through the military that make our lives easier. So, that’s an advantage as well. I guess some of the disadvantages would just be the judgment and things people say and do. Sometimes it is hurtful and gets to me.

Attitude has much to do with levels of stress and resiliency. In the ABC-X model of stress (in which A is a stressor event, B is the meaning attached to the stressor, C is the resources that are available, and X is the product or the crisis), sometimes the only factor that can be changed is an individual’s or a family’s perspective. Danielle asserts that it is being positive and continuing to live life that helps her while Vince is away. Also, maintaining a sense of gratitude is a necessity for her.


Everything has changed. I went from being a college student a half hour from my hometown, very small hometown, to being a wife, mother, and living in Las Vegas. It’s a little bit different. I am definitely more confident. I feel more pride and respect for the military. I take care of things when they need done. We have a steady income that provides what we need. Those are the obvious ones. There have been other changes throughout our marriage. I mean I’ve had crazy thoughts. I’ve had loving, sane thoughts. I’ve had probably every emotion possible. I have established a routine that works for us where we are right now. In a year, that will probably change too. It really is just a process, just a relationship with its ups and downs, just parenthood.

What are your goals? How have these been influenced?

I really want to finish school and be a doctor. These goals have been put on hold for now. I want to be a good wife and mother. These have been shaped by our life, our environment, and our home lives growing up.

What do you get to do?
I get to do so many things. I really and truly am blessed. All of the things with Owen, all of the times I spend with Vince when we are able to just enjoy time together, all of it is what I get to do.

Do you ever feel selfish? Do you ever feel guilty?

Of course I do. There are times I miss Vince or just want him home. I feel like I'm being whiny or ungrateful. I feel guilty that I get to spend so much time with Owen and he doesn't. I feel guilty that I know him so well and Vince doesn't get that relationship I do.

How do you balance and keep your own identity?

I guess just by watching t.v. and reading what I enjoy when I can. I still keep in touch with my friends and I spend time with the wives and girlfriends of Vince's friends when I can. Making dinner for the single guys Vince is friends with helps too, because then we all just hang out. It helps too that when he has been deployed I have gone back and worked at the restaurant just to be doing something to stay busy and stay social. There isn't really one thing that I can say is me. A lot goes into my identity, you know? I'm a mom and a wife. I'm a daughter, a sister, a friend and on. All of it makes up who I am.

Cultural pride?

I am absolutely proud of Vince and what he does. I am proud of our country. I am proud of myself. I am proud of Owen. I love my life and my family and I wouldn't change it.

What options and resources do you have available to you?

Oh my goodness, we have so many things to help us. There are loans that are offered if you want or need them. There are support groups and magazines. We can find chat rooms on the web, and on base there are different programs. We have a day care and we get spousal privilege which just means that we will get hired before a civilian at like Starbucks or wherever on base. Oh, and we get surveys sent to us that ask about how we feel, how we handle the deployment, what we're stressed out about. Those kinds of things. The military does want us to be happy and really wants to take care of us. I get to choose whether I will stay on base while Vince is away. That's why I don't have my car. They will pay for my housing if I leave, but I would have had to pay to ship my car and household stuff. They don't necessarily want you to leave base, but they allow it. When we moved houses the last time (on the same base but to permanent housing), they moved everything and came in and unpacked it all and got it set up for us. That was nice because I was really pregnant at the time and it would have just been too much. Vince wouldn't have had time and I really couldn't have done it. There are a lot of women on base too. That helps a lot. We just kind of share what we know. It helps because if I don't understand something or am just trying to figure it out, someone has already encountered it, so I can ask them questions and know what to do and likewise they can ask me.

The above summary of resources available to military wives is not exhaustive regarding the support available to military wives. They provide each other with guidelines and structure as well as emotional and, at times, physical support. The attitudes and beliefs that Danielle expresses are those of other wives as well. She continues to learn and grow in this role along with the other women in her subculture. Danielle was
hesitant to participate in an interview at first because she previously had not been conscious of her position within a subculture. However, as she answered questions and thought about her responses, it became clear to her that she was a member of a subculture. She was able to see where she shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors with this group, as well as, differences between the mainstream culture and her (e.g., her sister).

I have known Danielle since we were children. I have seen how her life changed since she met Vince and, more specifically, since they married and moved to Las Vegas. Her personality has not changed drastically (as she made reference to her past experiences and past friend preferences), however, she has grown. She has grown as an individual, as a woman, and as a wife and mother. She has adopted a slightly different set of values and priorities. These were described briefly when she expressed her love for motherhood. She was driven to be a successful doctor and she was well on her way to achieving that dream. Now, she is driven to be a successful wife and mother. Danielle has often talked about the women she has met and about her life on base. I am proud of her, perhaps, in a way, similar to how she is proud of Vince. She was able to spend some time at my house while we discussed these aspects of her life and of her newly acquired cultural identity.

My awareness of military wives and mothers has increased greatly. I have felt the difference between mothers and myself in the past. There is a bond present within that culture that I do not share. It is apparent in many of the aspects of the culture. I value my time and freedom. I do not know all of the baby jargon. I don’t necessarily enjoy sitting and talking about children and the really cute things they do. At times I do, because I do care about my friends, but there is a difference for moms. They all seem to share the same attitude; one of admiration and gratitude for their child. There is a sense of identity stemming from the role of mother.

Danielle definitely expressed this and I have witnessed it in other scenarios and conversations with her. It is a wonderful thing to witness. I was more unaware of what life looked like for her on base. I knew she had friends about which she spoke with high regard. I knew she was alone most of the time (without Vince) and that she carried out most of the household responsibilities. I, for some reason, did not fully conceptualize the degree to which this affected her daily living and how critical the support from her social group was. She doesn’t talk about the military (with her civilian friends) very often. There is exclusion about that aspect of her. “You wouldn’t get it” seemed to be the unspoken sentiment. I can compare this to a social group to which I belong. This social group helped form my identity and offered the support of friends with whom I share a common bond and goal. There are aspects of this subculture that I can share with others, but “They don’t really get it.” I hadn’t considered these components of my own cultural identity in this manner before my interview with Danielle. Upon completing the interview, I felt a sense of pride. I had believed some stigmatizing stereotypes about this group of women. I don’t believe I held the same respect for this culture as I do now. I did not see them as the strong, innovative, and highly capable women they are. Additionally, I felt a renewed sense of gratitude. Not only gratitude for Danielle, for her family, and for those in the military, but also for my life. I gained a sense of comfort in knowing that we all are right where we are supposed to be, and, despite
any differences in environments, we can help and learn from each other.

Studying culture and diversity is important for various aspects of life ranging from day-to-day living and functioning to understanding the variables that form identity. Specifically, when examining military wives as a culture, it is imperative to understand the issues they face and the supports that are already in place. From a helping professional’s standpoint, this knowledge is essential for devising effective treatment plans. There are several phases of deployment that may cause a stress pile-up. Depending on how these are navigated, a crisis may occur and the family unit may stop functioning at an optimal level. It is important to understand how much of a woman’s identity is comprised of the military (or of motherhood). Too much of any one aspect creating a sense of self and purpose could cause issues with codependency, with enabling behaviors, and with crisis events occurring when changes happen. Many women may face challenges when carrying the bulk of responsibilities for daily family life. They may build resentments, or face loss. These issues and many others need to be navigated from a cultural standpoint when one works with women from this subculture.

References


Worth Every Penny: Building N.A.S.A.

By Jordyn Hall

Since its inception, NASA has attracted some of the brightest scientists, technicians, and engineers in the country. Leaders in chemistry, biology, robotics, mathematics, astronomy and physics have been recruited by NASA into doing what many deemed impossible. Despite its historically low budget in terms of United States government spending, NASA has managed to achieve a number of accomplishments in its relatively brief history. The organization placed men on the moon, explored the surface of Mars, and sent probes into the far reaches of space, all in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. NASA has been such a prolific engine of scientific discovery that roughly 1 in 1,000 U.S. patents are granted to someone working for or with NASA.1

While NASA’s primary objective has been to discover ways to survive space travel, nearly all of NASA’s innovations and technologies have been adapted for the general population. Smoke detectors, first used in 1973 on Skylab, are now standard in most homes.2 Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Computer Assisted Tomography (CAT), now commonly used by doctors and technicians to diagnose patients without invasive or painful procedures, were originally conceived by NASA. These digital signaling and imaging technologies were initially developed to process images from space.3

NASA’s continued funding is essential, especially for the practical benefits its research has on society as a whole. Particularly in the medical, environmental, and commercial fields, NASA has been one of the leading innovators and its inventions and research have provided the basis for much of the technology that most Americans use on a daily basis, whether that is through active or passive participation. It is due to this reason that a continued, and even increased, NASA budget is essential for continued innovations and success in the environmental, medical, and commercial realms.

These breakthroughs in science and engineering, translated into commercial products, are enhancing the lives of Americans everywhere. In addition to contributing to U.S. economic growth, these technologies are improving the quality of life in the United States while finding new ways to protect and preserve it. To illustrate this point, this paper will preview several technologies in the area of conservation that were made possible through NASA’s efforts. It is the intent of this piece that the audience may see the virtues of funded programs such as NASA, and the potential setbacks that can occur if such funding were to desist.

The birth of NASA was in large part due to necessity. The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, each vying for the influence over the rest of the world, saw each side championing the merits of communism (Soviet Union) and capitalism (United States). As a way to garner influence, each side engaged in a technology and arms race as a means to increase their presence in the world. One of

3 Ibid.
the greatest, and deadliest, threats to come out of this race was the engineering of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of launching warheads from thousands of miles away.

New scenarios available through the use of ICBMs was not lost on either country, and each soon began to devise ways to launch new technology into space, mostly for the purposes of surveillance. In this realm, it was the Soviets who succeeded first. On October 4, 1957 Soviet scientists and engineers launched Sputnik I and became the first humans to put an object into orbit around the Earth. Sputnik II was launched exactly one month later, carrying Laika, the first mammal to travel to space. To say that the Americans were alarmed by these Soviet advances would be an understatement. Citizens were essentially in a state of panic, constantly fearing what the Soviets would rain down upon them from Sputnik I and II without a moment's notice. In response, early the next year the United States Army launched Explorer I.

Perhaps awakened to the possibilities that space exploration might hold, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, providing for research into the problems of flight within Earth's atmosphere and in space. As part of the act, a civilian-ran organization called the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was designated and began operations in October 1958.

Part of the act that created NASA also dictated the creation the Technology Utilization Program. Mandated by Congress, this program's sole purpose is "promote the transfer of aerospace technology to the private sector." To this end, in 1973 and 1974 NASA created an annual report that extolled the benefits of aerospace technology in the commercial sector. The technologies in these reports created interest in the technology transfer concept, its successes, and its use as a public awareness tool. The reports generated such keen interest that NASA decided to make them into an attractive publication.

Since then, NASA distributes a yearly magazine that highlights the transfer of NASA technology to the private sector for that previous year. Copies are given to politicians, economic decision makers, company CEOs, academics, professionals in technology transfer, the news media, and the general public. It serves as a tool to educate the media and the general public by informing them about the technology benefits and dispelling the myth of wasted taxpayer dollars. It reinforces interest in space exploration and demonstrates the possibilities of applying aerospace technology in different environments. It highlights the ingenuity of American inventors, entrepreneurs, and application engineers, and the willingness of a government agency to assist them. Finally, it continues to ensure global competitiveness and champions American technological leadership. The following is a showcase of products and services resulting from partnerships between NASA and conservation efforts. NASA initially created all of the technologies mentioned hereafter in order to overcome an obstacle that presented itself in a situation in space. Through technology transfer and the ease that NASA has released patents, the NASA-based research has been "retrofitted" to allow citizens to enjoy all the benefits of these technologies. The technology

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mentioned in this paper are only but a small part of the technology that NASA has helped achieve. Its prolific research has spawned the creation of hundreds of companies, each on the cutting-edge of technology, innovation, and achievement.

Arguably, NASA's most important work comes from the realm of conservation. Related to the medical reasons, NASA is interested in how to conserve the resources aboard space shuttles, stations, and laboratories. Naturally, then, the same principles that drive their research are applicable to Earth conservation. Breakthroughs in organic food production and water conservation are being made at a relatively brisk pace, allowing companies to experiment with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and using naturally occurring flora (such as the hyacinths, discussed below) to filter drinkable water. Pollution clean-up has been a top priority for NASA since the 1970s, especially since the waste from rockets presents a major health risk for humans, animals, and plant life. Animal conservation is also a beneficial side-effect of other areas of NASA research, and zoologists have benefited from seemingly unrelated forms of technology (ex. solar powers).

Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center are the sites for most of NASA's rocket and shuttle launches. Their presence on the coast is primarily a safety precaution; if a launch has to be aborted, it is safer to try and direct the shuttle in the ocean rather than on land. However, the price of being near the coast is costly. One of the most destructive forces for NASA equipment is the corrosive effect of saltwater ocean spray and fog; it rusts the gantries that surround launch sites.

To combat this, researchers at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland discovered that coating the equipment with a protective layer containing zinc dust and a chemical known as potassium silicate would help thwart the costly rusting. The potassium silicate sprays easily, adheres readily, and can be heavily loaded with zinc particles to provide uniform coverage in a single coat. In the 1980s, a company called Inorganic Coatings Inc. used the concept to produce a nontoxic, water-based coating.

The end result, an inorganic compound known as IC 531 zinc silicate, readily bonds with steel and dries within 30 minutes to a hard, ceramic-like finish. The coating has been applied to bridge girders, pipelines, oil rigs, dock equipment, buoys, tractor-trailer truck frames and even to the exteriors of U.S. Army tanks. In the mid-1980s, 225 gallons of the coating was applied to the inside of the Statue of Liberty to help prevent further deterioration. Stanford Research Institute has measured an annual market in excess of $2 billion in painting highway bridges, utility pipelines, nuclear reactors, and rail car hoppers. Other suitable markets include offshore drilling facilities, railroad bridges, and ships.

Still, much is unknown about the chemical. While researchers are confident the chemical generates no volatile organic compounds nor hazardous chemical waste, no one can say for sure how long IC 531's effective lifetime is. Some of the original Goddard test applications of 1976 are still going strong after lengthy exposure to the heat, salt and moisture. Inorganic Coatings own scientists are optimistic: "IC 531 offers virtually permanent protection for steel. We

8 Ibid.

https://digitalcommons.kent.edu/wcr/vol18/iss1/1
predict it will protect structures for well beyond 25 years. If necessary, it is infinitely maintainable; if damaged, it can easily be touched up with more IC 531.\(^9\)

After NASA launches a rocket or shuttle into space, a slew of fuel and chemical waste remain on the launching pad and surrounding area. One compound in particular, trichloroethylene, also called "trike," takes a long time to break down naturally in the ground. It is also known to cause damage to the nervous and endocrine systems, pose reproductive and developmental risks, and cause cancer.\(^10\) The situation becomes more alarming when one considers the fact that, before conservation became a serious issue in the mid-1970s, cleanup was not a priority.\(^11\) In fact, trike waste was placed into the ground, under the assumption the compound would evaporate.

NASA quickly caught on and devised a method to break down the waste before the damage was irreversible. Rather than physically removing it, NASA scientists Jacqueline Quinn and Kathleen Brooks Loftin invented a solution that helps break down trike into nontoxic byproducts with no harm to the environment. The thick solution, called "emulsified zero-valent iron" (EZVI), can be injected into groundwater where it neutralizes toxic chemicals that pose a threat to the environment.\(^12\)

The technology transitioned easily into commercial markets, with chemical, manufacturing and oil companies purchasing the solution to remediate land contaminated with toxic matter from their businesses. In fact, the solution became so popular that as of 2010 it is the agency's most licensed technology.\(^13\)

For the last several years, work at NASA has focused heavily on aeroponics (growing plants in an air or mist environment without the use of soil or an aggregate medium) and hydroponics (growing plants in sand, gravel, or liquid, with added nutrients but without soil). Plants are considered crucial for the hopes of prolonged spaceflight, as flourishing plants would aid astronauts in many critical processes such as food production, oxygen release and waste recycling. Earth-based hydroponic systems have traditionally been complex, however, so NASA researchers started looking for a substrate that would eliminate many of those hassles. In essence, researchers were looking for a means of keeping plants free from infection, without having to rely on the use of pesticides.

In the realm of hydroponics, this led researchers to explore an option known as zeolites, which are naturally occurring minerals with honeycomb structures that can be modified to house essential nutrients until plants are ready to consume them.\(^14\) This

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\(^12\) Ibid.
development in slow-release fertilization is now being applied commercially in places like golf courses and playing fields. Zeoponic products are better at delivering nutrients to plants, so much less is lost to surrounding soil and groundwater.

In aeroponics, leading agri-biology companies united with NASA to design soil-less plants, aimed to gauge the effectiveness of a non-pesticide solution on the immune responses of bean plants. This research developed a new-age field known as bio-pharming. One of the bio-pharming products is the Genesis Series V aeroponic system. With this rapid-growth system, plants can be started from cuttings taken from a mature plant by placing them in the openings on top of a growing chamber. The resulting plants rapidly develop root systems and grow in an enclosed, air-based environment, made moist by a hydro-atomized, nutrient-rich spray that is released in timed intervals by a microcomputer and finely misted onto the growth subjects.

Aeroponic methods can reduce water usage by 98 percent, fertilizer usage by 60 percent, and pesticide usage by 100 percent, all while maximizing their crop yields by 45 to 75 percent. 15 Another product derived from NASA research, BEYOND, has several advantages: it eliminates the need for pesticides, promotes faster seed germination, increases the survival rate of seeds, revives sick or infected plants, increases growth and yields, adds natural nitrogen to soil-based flora, is 100-percent biodegradable, and has an indefinite shelf life. 16 The practical benefits of these technologies are obvious. The ability to cultivate plants without adequate water or proper soil would revolutionize the agriculture industry and would allow food to be grown in areas otherwise unsuited for planting. Natural disasters such as acid rain and droughts would have the potential to have relatively insignificant effects on food supplies.

NASA astronauts do some of the most intense training to prepare their bodies for the rigors of space travel. The limited supply of basic necessities such as oxygen, water, and food are on the minds of NASA's scientists, and much of the research done by NASA labs is concentrated on extending the life of limited items, or researching ways to grow and store food and water, respectively. To ensure that the water astronauts drink is safe, NASA instructed its scientists to create special water filters in the 1970s to make certain astronauts had clean water in space. Working with Umpqua Research Company in Oregon, NASA crafted filter cartridges that use iodine to clean water supplies from the shuttles. The technology, called the Microbial Check Valve, has gained momentum in cleaning water for municipal water plants. 17 It has paved the way for devising other ways to filter the resource for human consumption. Such filters become especially important in areas where chemicals have contaminated groundwater supplies.

Researchers in the 1970s and 1980s discovered and developed water filtration techniques that took advantage of unique traits possessed by water hyacinths, an invasive species of plant life that have been shown to have great potential in waste water treatment. Water hyacinths provide a distinct advantage over the conventional water treatment plants that require expensive

15 “Progressive Plant Growing Has Business Booming,” NASA  
16 Ibid.

17 “Pure Water from a Pure Genius,” NASA  
equipment and valuable energy to run. Hyacinths need no artificial heating and little aeration, can survive in heavily polluted waste water with no problem, grow at exceedingly rapid rates. The hyacinths are also excellent at removing heavy metals and toxic chemicals from the water that other treatment methods are not effective against, so the end result is incredibly clean. NASA partnered with Wolverton Environmental Services, Inc. to build an artificial marsh to test this method of waste water treatment.

In recent years, NASA has doubled down on its water studies by creating units that can more efficiently recycle human waste such as urine into safe drinkable water for astronauts. Though the prospect of venturing to Mars seems far off, the potential of providing the space crew with the water it needs may not be. In 1989, NASA awarded several companies new contracts to develop a system for continuous iodine release over long periods for use in the International Space Station. In 1993, one company demonstrated the Regenerable Biocide Delivery Unit, and NASA granted it an exclusive license.

Today there are ample reasons one might argue not to continue space exploration. Some arguments assert that with the poverty and economic distress at home, it is unethical to spend millions of dollars going into space when the money could be used to feed the homeless. This was precisely the case in 1970, when a Zambia-based nun named Sister Mary Jucunda wrote to Dr. Ernst Stuhlinger, then-associate director of science at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, in response to his ongoing research into a piloted mission to Mars. Specifically, she asked how he could suggest spending billions of dollars on such a project at a time when so many children were starving on Earth. He claimed that although indeed the money could have been transferred to feed the children, it would be a short-term solution to a larger problem. As this paper has alluded to, NASA scientists have spent a significant amount of time trying to figure out how to grow crops in high risk environments. If scientists are able to figure out a sustainable solution, it may very well go a long way into solving the hunger crisis.

The other major argument that people throw toward NASA relates to the economy. Opponents argue that with the economy in a state of disarray (a subjective assessment, but nonetheless valid), the government should not be spending "money it does not have" on programs to, for instance, to send a man to space. To begin, these accusations are largely unwarranted. Most Americans are unaware how much of the federal budget goes toward NASA. In 2007, the majority of Americans surveyed believed that NASA accounted for one fourth (24-25%) of the federal budget. In actuality, NASA's budget for that same year was 0.5%, and at its peak in the 1960s was 5% at most. As for its role on the economy, the amount of research that comes out of NASA and is

19 Ibid.
used by other companies can hardly be considered a negative. This idea is most likely due to a misunderstanding about what NASA as a whole does, and will likely be rectifiable with proper education and aggressive advertising campaigns.

The question whether we should explore when there is so much that needs to be done on Earth is both an ethical and a public policy question. Aside from the short term benefits of applications satellites, national security, jobs and inspiration to the young, much of NASA’s impact is long-term. One simply has to imagine what the world would look without the aforementioned technologies. Flights would be a great deal riskier. Breast cancer would be significantly harder to detect. It is possible to make the argument that these technologies would have eventually come into fruition, and logically that would be true. However, as the saying goes, “necessity is the mother of invention.” These technologies came about because there was an immediate problem that needed solving. Without this urgency, the technological speed for these inventions could have been decades slower. Also, if the argument is about money and the economy, nearly all of these technologies have spawned businesses and companies that exist to sell or produce that product. That translates to thousands of jobs as researchers, developers, managers, support staff, salespeople, laborers, manufacturers, and a myriad of others. So, while it is always tempting to sacrifice long-term goals for short-term needs, NASA’s work and the boons it grants are worth the short-term “sacrifice.”
Bibliography


I’ve often wondered how my Dad explained the disappearance of our Mother, his wife, to his three young children. I was the eldest at four years of age and much too young to remember the day she walked out of our lives never to return. My Father was only twenty-four years old when he found himself a single parent raising three children under the age of four.

I never had the opportunity to ask my Father this question as it only recently has begun to haunt me. My Father suffered a major, life-ending heart attack on the eve of Saint Patrick’s Day in 1980. He was only 39 years old. I remember holding him in my arms as I waited for that haunting siren approaching from the distance; the ambulance that would take us all to the hospital where he would be pronounced dead at 2:35am. I was 18 years old when he passed, turning 19 on the day of his funeral.

Over the years, I’ve heard the details of my mother’s departure. The facts are a bit sketchy. My father was at work, a rookie Deputy Sherriff in Orange County, California. My mother placed a phone call to the dispatch asking that they locate Deputy Callahan and send him to his home. She told dispatch she was leaving the home, and she was leaving the children their alone and unattended. Then she hung up the phone, grabbed her bags, and walked out the front door of our three bedroom suburban home and never came back.

How does a young Father tell his children that they would never see their mother again? What an awful burden for him to carry, I do know one thing for sure; he loved her until the day he died, of this I have no doubt. He was a good man; he did not deserve to be abandoned like that. He raised his three children the best he could, and we never had a day without laughter. He had a sharp wit, a wicked sense of humor and most importantly, he loved his children.

I recall becoming very curious about my ghost of a mother at the age of eleven. I approached my Father with two questions: “What happened to my Mom, and why did she leave us?” My Father replied straight-faced and without hesitation, “She left to join a Hippie Commune where she lives with Hippies and grows vegetables.” Years later, I realized how outlandish and funny this really was; though I believed him at the time. She never did leave us to live in a Hippie Commune and spend her days tending a garden. She left us to be with another man and start another family. I have two half-brothers and one half-sister from that union.

I began to fantasize about my mother. I idolized her, not knowing the truth of her departure. I dressed like I thought she would dress, how I thought a hippie might dress. I had a closet full of gauze skirts, halter tops, and floppy, over-sized straw hats. My long blonde hair grew to the length I envisioned her hair to be. I wanted to be this woman I had never met. I wanted to be her, and I wanted to be free.

This was a time that I began to believe nothing is permanent. It was the beginning of my inability to live in the “now”, as I was
always chasing a dream. I believed that anywhere would be better than where I was. If I could only find my “Fantasy” mother, my life would be perfect. My father had re-married and though their relationship was very off and on, it was as if he introduced the darkest and most dangerous plague into our home. These were not the best of times.

My step-mother was “Miss Palm Springs”, a beauty on the outside and a rattlesnake on the inside. The more she spat and bit, the more I envisioned how perfectly angelic my real mother surly must be. My step-mother had many guilty pleasures: affairs with other men, shopping at Fredericks of Hollywood, and a charming elixir of Vodka and cocaine. We feared her for most of our childhood, and when I say “we”, I include my brother, sister and my father! For me, the fear ended when I was 16 years old. I finally found my voice and stood up to the “Viper”, though it took a little liquid courage to do it.

I had been at a high school Friday-night party, consuming my first Schlitz Malt Tall, a thick dark beer that’s musky scent would send my stomach lurching today. I came home well after my curfew to find the Viper waiting up for me, coiled, and ready to spring. As I walked in the front door, I was immediately struck by her never-ending use of profanity as she came up with some very creative adjectives to describe what she thought of me. Now, if I had not been under the influence of the beer and the false sense of confidence and courage it provided me with, I would have high-tailed it into my bedroom and locked the door. Instead, I met her head-on, matching her descriptive words with some beauties of my own. But what came out of my mouth next would change all of our worlds forever.

Though we all knew my step-mother was engaged in a tawdry affair with a man named Jim, nobody dared confront her, until the night I consumed my first beer. I was locked and loaded, and ready to engage in a war of words, and my words would turn my step-mother’s life upside down. As she continued her barrage of deafening put-downs, I aimed and fired my first round, “Everyone in this house knows you are having an affair. We know his name, and when the phone rings once, we know it’s him.” I re-loaded and continued, “I am sick of you hurting my Dad, I hate you and want you to leave us all alone.” I would have continued, but the next thing I remembered was a closed fist making contact with my face, the Viper had struck, hard.

I didn’t exactly see stars like in the cartoons, but I was stunned at the force of the blow. Within seconds, my younger, scrappy sister was on my step-mother’s back. Like a spider monkey, she attached herself and was pulling at the Viper’s platinum blonde hair. I could hear her screaming, “Don’t you hurt my sister!” I was on the floor watching my step-mother swirl and reach behind her as she failed in her desperate attempts to remove my sister from her back. My sister was small and yet the rage she had within her was nothing our step-mother could contend with. The next thing I felt was a hand on my shoulder, my father’s hand. He picked me up and rushed me into my bedroom. Next, he detached my sister from my step-mother’s back and placed her in the room with me and shut the door.

My sister and I both ran to the closed door and placed our ears against the cold wood trying to make out the words that were being exchanged by the adults. My father was not a man that ever raised his voice, but this night being the exception. Within five
minutes, my step-mother was squealing out of the driveway in reverse; her olive-green station wagon disappearing into the night. I took one look at my sister and said, “Well, I guess it’s no longer a secret, do you think she’s going to her boyfriend’s house?” My sister unclenched her fists; she had a clump of platinum blonde hair intertwined in her fingers. We both watched as the hair floated to the ground. We laughed, cried, and then I threw up all over the floor. I never consumed a Schlitz Malt Tall again!

My father never spoke of that night, just as he never spoke of my real mother. But things had changed, secrets were revealed, and tensions were high. My step-mother returned to our home five days later, we all pretended that what happened didn’t happen. But we knew, she knew, and I could sense her fear. She feared me, and I no longer feared her.

My step-mother and I spent the next couple of years avoiding each other. Though her affair did not end, she did not flaunt it as she once had. I continued to secretly pine for my real mother, never talking about it with my siblings or my father. A storm was brewing, and the winds had changed. The house became cold, and death was knocking on our front door.

If an Irish man is to leave this world, he couldn’t have picked a better day then Saint Patrick’s Day. Bob Callahan departed on March 17th, 1980. The man that had raised three babies on his own was now about to leave three teenagers on their own; he was thirty-nine years old the night he suffered the great heart attack. And in the end, it was just as it had been in the beginning. My father was surrounded by his children: just us and no one else. I held him, and I begged him not to leave. But, death had other plans. I’ve learned that death does not bargain, and it does not care what promises you make. It could care less about your tears or your fears. My father could not speak as his heart was in a vice. He looked at me, and I knew. I told him I loved him. I told him he was the best father in the world. I told him I could not live without him, and then death took him from me. Fade to black. Turn off the siren.

My Father had his sweet revenge in the end. It had been 4 weeks since his passing, and I was in my first year of college, my sister and brother both in high school. We all came home to find an empty house: nothing left but our beds, linens, and three dogs. The Viper had struck again, slithering away with every earthly possession my father owned. She had discovered that the trust funds set up in my father’s name by ancestors from long ago would not end up in her bank account and instead would be inherited by his three children. My father had never allowed her to legally adopt us, for if he had, she would have had complete control of the monies in the trust. I am sure she would have disappeared on that first train to Vegas.

Bring in the angels, God knows we’re due. An attorney friend of my father contacted me upon hearing the story of my step-mother’s leaving. He held my hand as we walked through the court system where I became legal guardian of my brother and sister, secured a rental property where we all could live, thus allowing us all to stay together while they finished high school. I had a part-time job at Grand Tree Furniture, and the owner of the company upon hearing about my father’s passing and my step-mother’s leaving told me to walk the showroom and pick out any and all furniture we needed. He had the furniture delivered to our empty home within twenty-four hours. He refused to take a penny. It was his gift.
Eight weeks after my father's Irish wake, I found myself parentless, the legal guardian of my brother and sister, and standing at the front door of my mother's home in Seattle, Washington. My fantasies and dreams of her filling my head, but the fantasy was soon to become a reality.

I knocked softly, terrified and yet ecstatic at the notion I would be looking into my mother's eyes in about two seconds. My sister stood by my side as we waited to hear the footsteps from inside her home fast approaching the door. I watched as the rusty, brass doorknob rotated to the left, not able to take my eyes off the device that would open the door to all of my unanswered questions.

The door slowly opened. I cautiously and shyly moved my eyes from the door handle and looked up. I was looking in a mirror; this stranger looked just like me, I was looking at myself. Standing in front of me was my mother, the mystery, the fantasy—no more.

The illusions I had created in my mind were born of a primeval protective mechanism, an inherent genetic survival technique that saved me from my truth. The truth cannot be denied, and it will tap you on your shoulder relentlessly, whispering in your ear, "Open your eyes and see. Fear not, I must be dealt with." My Mother was not the angel with wide spread wings I had fantasized about. Though we looked alike, she did not have long, blonde hair flowing down her back. She did not dress in wrap-around gauze skirts or wear over-sized floppy straw hats. She did not have the wings of an Angel. She was a woman who walked out on her three young children and her husband and started a new family. Though we looked similar, we were not the same. Reality is painful, and forgiveness is the cure.

My known world was one of abandonment and endless searching for love and security. I have always been two steps behind or two steps ahead, always fearing connection. I have learned that my survival skills are impressive and that my ability to stay optimistic even during the most challenging times has never wavered. I am a dreamer. I believe in the "Fairy Tale" ending. I am a work in progress, still painting my own canvass.

I have had many symbolic keys in my possession during the course of my life. At different times I have inserted random keys into the lock, in hopes of opening the door that releases me from my past. I have recently discovered a new key. I hold it in my trembling hand, and this key is different. This key has substance; it is stronger than the rest. I gently insert the key into the lock and turn it to the right, nothing. This is where I need my courage. This is the point where I just have to trust in my own powers to unlock this door. I grasp the key a little firmer and turn it to the left, nothing. All of the fears and insecurities flood my heart, and yet something tells me to keep trying. Love must conquer fear. There comes a time when the fear of being trapped behind this cold and lifeless door becomes more unbearable then the risk of opening the door and walking through and into unchartered territory. I cautiously turn the key ever so slightly to the right... "Click", the most beautiful sound in the world. Will I find the courage to step into the unknown; trusting my instincts, trusting myself? There is no better time than now.
A Call to Action in *Raisin in the Sun*

By Patricia Cotter

Since Lorraine Hansberry wrote the play and the un-filmed screenplay of *A Raisin in the Sun* in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, I believe that she would have been profoundly influenced by what was happening around her, not satisfied with a mere recounting of oppression and deferred dreams, but rather coding the text with a plan to action for change. This plan of action is not visible in the movie, but it stands out in the screenplay in Asagai’s conversation with Beneatha after Walter has been robbed by Willy of all the leftover insurance money his mother entrusted to him. The movie version omits much of the dialogue in favor of the romance of the scene, which is unfortunate because the scene furnishes a valuable meaning to the end of the play.

Critic J. Charles Washington states that “the primary meaning of the play [is] the tragedy of Walter’s reach for the American Dream” (Washington 112). I disagree. The text is rich with layers that can be analyzed, but, in my opinion, it is supported by an underlying structure on top of which clings a setting of surface phenomena purposefully crafted to approach the plight of African Americans from every conceivable angle in order for Hansberry to convince black viewers that she thoroughly understood their plight and was credible enough to push them into action, since Hansberry was raised “in one of Chicago’s wealthiest and most prominent black families, an upbringing that led her critics to wonder whether in fact she could be trusted to speak the truth of black poor and working class lives” (Kodat 155).

Another reason I believe that the call to action in order to achieve change was the primary theme of *A Raisin in the Sun* is that an artist’s work is inevitably influenced by his or her life experiences. Lorraine Hansberry was raised by a man who showed by example that it was possible to stand up against what was wrong and affect change. Her father attempted to move his family into a white neighborhood, and they were “ordered to leave the home by a local court, which upheld the neighborhood’s racially restrictive covenant” (Kodat 156). Carl Hansberry would not accept this verdict, presenting his case until it was finally heard by the Supreme Court who, in 1940, ruled...
against the constitutionality of racially restrictive housing covenants (Kodat 156).

Since the lines which emphasize my thesis were deleted from the film version of *A Raisin in the Sun*, I will have to resort to a step-by-step review of the screenplay’s scene between Beneatha and Asagai. The movie shows Walter disappearing into the bedroom after his discovery of Willy’s betrayal, and the viewer never sees Walter’s reactions to their conversation. However in the screenplay, Hansberry wrote in three scenes where Walter is seen listening. By the third scene, Walter has left his bed and “his head is pressed against the door as he listens” (Hansberry 186). This signifies to me that the scene has an impact on the meaning and resolution of the play, because Hansberry didn’t have to place Walter intently listening at the door. She could have left him in bed or ignored him as the movie did.

The scene begins with the arrival of Asagai who has come to help with the packing. Asagai notices that something is amiss and is determined to unearth the matter. Beneatha challenges him with, “You with the dreams of the future think you will patch up all Africa. You are going to cure the great sore of colonialism with independence” to which he replies with an emphatic, “Yes!” (Hansberry 184). She then asks him what will happen when the new government takes over and turns out to be as corrupt as the old. Asagai’s answer is — “That will be the problem of another time. First we must get there” (Hansberry 184). Beneatha is looking for an end to the struggle, but Asagai sees struggle and living as synonymous. To Beneatha, living is circular, traveling over the same paths with a different cast of characters without affecting progress. However, Asagai believes that life is linear “and because we cannot see the end, we also cannot see how it changes. And it is very odd that those who see the changes are called ‘idealists,’ and those who cannot, or refuse to, think they are the ‘realists’ …” (Hansberry 185). Next, Asagai tells Beneatha that the Younger family’s hopes and dreams depend on the insurance money from their father but that the money could have just as easily not been available, so that it was not a reliable foundation to build upon. Instead, Asagai spells out what I believe is the underlying structure to the screenplay when he praises Lena for her “greatness” and says, “for all of her ignorance, for all of her groping ... she moves, she acts, she changes things. She is the substance of the human race. You—in your present state—you are but another burden for her. Something to carry along, to bolster ...” (Hansberry 187). He says that Beneatha’s attitude is to give up the struggle, because it is meaningless. To which she retorts that Asagai doesn’t have an answer, and he replies, “I live the answer” (Hansberry 187). Asagai is a doer. He and others like him will “return home [to] work and teach, and things will happen; the sudden dramatic events which make history leap into the future. Because we make it so” (Hansberry 188). His challenge to Beneatha is—“Stop moaning and groaning and tell me what you plan to do” (Hansberry 88).

Lena and her husband were people of action and dignity. They didn’t sit around waiting for the world to change to accommodate them. Lena explains her husband to Walter Lee—“You got hurt and pain in you? Well, I used to know a man who knew how to live with his pain and make his hurt work for him. Your daddy died with dignity; there wasn’t no bum in him. And he known some hurts in this life you ain’t never even heard of!” (Hansberry 140). Big Walter provided for his family the only way he knew how, working himself to death and buying into an insurance policy to
give them something after his death. He would say, “Seem like God didn’t seem fit to give the black man nothin’ but dreams – but he did give us children to make them dreams seem worthwhile” (Hansberry 70).

Asagai was correct in lauding Lena, because she saw a problem and acted immediately on it. Even in the past, Lena realized that she must move North to escape southern racism, and “she was a fighter who took the step ... in order to make a meaningful change in her life ... she is still a fighter, and she proves it by buying the house to bring about the change she now feels is needed for her family’s welfare” (Washington 113). As she explained to Walter, “I just seen my family falling apart today in front of my eyes. We couldn’t have gone on like we was today. We was going backwards ‘stead of forwards – talkin’ ‘bout killing babies and wishin’ each other was dead” (Hansberry 127).

When I finished watching the movie version of *A Raisin in the Sun*, I remember questioning the wisdom of Walter Lee’s decision to move the family into a neighborhood where they were not wanted. After reading the screenplay, I realize that his decision to move was the only one he could have made if he ever wanted to realize his dreams. Some might say that the move prevented him from realizing his dreams, because his family would be financially strapped. However, I believe a bigger issue was at stake. I believe Hansberry was telling her black audience that the time to stand up with dignity for their rights and to lay claim on what was theirs had come. Lena and alter Lee would act in a small way and so could her audience. The collective assertion of civil rights in small acts across the nation could bring about major change, and, as we know from history, it did.
Smallville was an American TV show that aired on the CW network from 2001-2011. Its premise revolved around Clark Kent/Kal-El before he became Superman. Throughout the series, the semiotics become increasingly apparent. Lois Tyson would explain that “semiotics examines the ways linguistic and nonlinguistic objects and behaviors operate symbolically to ‘tell’ us something” (Tyson 216). Roland Barthes semiotic analysis of professional wrestling is very much like Smallville in that Smallville “can be interpreted as a language with a very specific purpose: to provide the audience with the cathartic satisfaction of watching justice triumph in a situation that (unlike real life) makes it very clear who is good and who is evil” (Barthes, Tyson 217). Smallville uses everything from subtle techniques to obvious tactics in order to convey a clear message to the audience: the hero always saves the day.

One subtle technique used to signify the villains and heroes in Smallville is the use of color. The main villain, Lex Luthor, is always wearing black, which is known to symbolize authority and evil (Cherry). Lex is the ultimate financial power in the story, coming from a background of money. Lex is also responsible for many deaths, both by his own hand and through indirect involvement. Not only is color used for the main villain, but for minor villains as well. Each time Clark Kent faces opposition, dark colors symbolize their evil. On the other hand, Clark Kent is always wearing blue and red. Aside from those being the main colors of Superman’s outfit, red and blue are the colors of the American flag, exemplifying Superman as an all-American hero. The color blue symbolizes calmness and serenity (Cherry). It is Clark’s main purpose to keep the people of Earth calm and keep life as tranquil as possible. The color blue also signifies the sky, and the sky is where Kal-El’s spaceship came from. The color red symbolizes intensity and excitement (Cherry). Superman is a very intense person in many aspects. He is intense with his love interests and his passion for saving humanity. The color red also signifies the fire he can shoot from his eyes, which is ignited by sexual excitement when he first discovers this ability.

Interestingly, the use of colors does not stop with the heroes or villains. Lana Lang is the object of Clark’s desire, and, at the beginning of the series, she is dressed humbly and modestly and usually in soft, pastel colors. Once she starts dating Lex (eventually marrying him), her wardrobe turns from innocent farm girl to dark business attire. This symbolizes that Lex’s power easily takes hold on those around him. Likewise, after Lois Lane is introduced and slowly begins to take Lana’s place as Clark’s desire, she is transitioned from wearing many colors to wearing primarily red and blue. Like with Lex and Lana, this creates a bond between Clark and Lois.

Another signifier is a subtlety regarding the major villain and Clark’s love interest. In at least one episode of every season, the main villain’s face, first Lex Luthor then later in the series Tess Mercer, is spattered with blood. This signifies not only the blood spilled by these two characters, but the evil and opposition these characters represent. In the same respect, both of Clark Kent’s two main love interests are shown in a hospital.
bed at least once each season. This shows them as the damsels in distress whom Clark will always rescue. An exception occurs in the last season when Lois Lane is shown in a hospital room, but not actually in the bed. These details signify the special bond that Lois and Clark have and how big of a threat Lex Luthor poses to humanity.

Yet another signifier in the series is the barn on the Kent Farm. The structure of the barn itself symbolizes Kal-El’s life as Clark Kent. The Kents made Kal-El the man he is and strives to be. Many times each season, the barn is destroyed in one way or another. Using his superhuman strength and speed, Clark is able to rebuild the barn in no time. The constant destruction of the barn symbolizes the hardship Clark faces in his everyday life. His constant reconstruction of the barn, regardless of how many times it needs done, symbolizes his integrity and strength as a person. The rebuilding of the barn also symbolizes that it isn’t always the genes that make the man, but his surroundings as well.

In addition to these clever techniques are the major tactics used to differentiate the hero from the villain. Kal-el gets his superhuman powers from the sun. Many times he can be seen basking in sunlight, and it is through direct sunlight that major wounds can heal quickly. The sun as a signifier gives Clark Kent the appearance of a savior from the heavens whom the heavens shine down upon. There are even instances when Clark is shown in poses imitating Christ being crucified on the cross. These images symbolize Clark as the savior of humanity.

On the contrary, in Smallville Lex Luthor is the epitome of the Byronic hero. The definition of a Byronic hero is “an alien, mysterious, and gloomy spirit, superior in his passions and powers to the common run of humanity, whom he regards with disdain. He harbors the torturing memory of an enormous, nameless guilt that derives him toward an inevitable doom. And he exerts an attraction on other characters that is more compelling because it involves their terror at his obliviousness to ordinary concerns and values” (“George Gordon” 608). In all of Lex’s endeavors, the only person he takes into consideration is himself. Lex sees all others as being beneath him and uses them as he pleases. Lex also has no qualms using his name to gain power and control. The “torturing memory of an enormous, nameless guilt” involves the death of his younger brother, Julian, when Lex was a child and Julian was an infant and the resulting suicide of his mother. Lex is haunted by the memory of his brother and mother throughout the series. He attracts the innocent Lana Lang through lies and guilt, forcing her into marriage. Detail by detail, there is little doubt that Lex is the embodiment of the Byronic hero.

The preceding is only a preview of the semiotics at play in the series Smallville. As Tyson explains, “For semioticians, anything can be a sign. The whole world of human culture is a ‘text’ waiting to be ‘read’” (219). With that in mind, one doesn’t need to be a semiotician in order to read the world, and its culture, as a text. Semiotics are a part of every TV show we watch, every music video that airs, and even in the pictures on our favorite DVDs or CDs. There are signifiers in our everyday lives that symbolize many things, many of which we aren’t even aware of, but could easily identify if we stopped to pay attention.
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Demystifying Gender Inequality in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

By Alexander Harless

In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the representation of Mesopotamian women seems alien in comparison to the modern or contemporary literary representations of westernized women. The narrative often represents women as objects of sex, but also works to oppress women in different ways. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* never entertains the notion of representing women as equal to their male counterparts, nor does the language signify that any trace of equality existed in Mesopotamia. Although this was written in a different time, it is important to understand the socio-cultural implications of gender inequality so that readers may better understand how those inequalities may still be in effect.

From the start of the epic, the language representing women is, in modern standards, offensive. One of the first representations of women involves that they are like objects. As Gilgamesh tells his mother a dream, he claims that he loved an axe as he did a woman\(^1\). If he could love an axe the same way he could love a woman, then the value of women must be low considering that he compares them as equals to objects. The language representing women demonstrates the privilege gap between the sexes and it continues throughout the epic.

Referring to a specific woman called a harlot\(^2\); contemporary readers may be shocked at the language. However, the harlot as a female character isn’t truly oppressed by her title as such. The context does not seek to offend the character, or reader, by calling her “harlot” because this was her occupation or role in Mesopotamia. The absence of this woman’s name not only marginalizes her as a character but also allows the narrative to objectify her. The text represents this female character without an identity. The only important aspect known about her is that she has an art\(^3\), or a skill, of seducing men. Concerning the plot, the only reason the harlot exists is to sexually please Enkidu\(^4\). Not only does the plot force her into a position where she is viewed as just a sexual object, but she offers no protest to this unequal treatment. The normalcy of objectifying and oppressing women in Mesopotamia can be shocking for readers especially since it is occurring on a rhetorical level.

There are some women in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* that do have names, but this doesn’t grant them immunity from the patriarchy at work within the text. The only women with names besides Siduri\(^5\) are the goddesses\(^6\). A reader may presume that goddesses would be privileged enough to resist gender inequality, but this is not the case for Ishtar who is severely disrespected by Gilgamesh and Enkidu, and she was also made out to be a villain\(^7\). Gilgamesh resists marriage from Ishtar because she has been with other men. Ishtar is represented as impure, or dirty because of her past relationships, but if held to the same

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\(^2\) *Gilgamesh*, 63.
\(^3\) *Gilgamesh*, 64.
\(^4\) *Gilgamesh*, 64.
\(^5\) *Gilgamesh*, 100.
\(^6\) *Gilgamesh*, 120-125.
\(^7\) *Gilgamesh*, 86-87.
standards Gilgamesh would be guilty of the same accusation. The double standard on women has been around for much longer than anticipated, but Ishtar suffers Enkidu’s disrespect as well. Throwing flesh from the bull he and Gilgamesh slayed, Enkidu publicly ridicules Ishtar also threatening physical violence against her\(^8\). As a goddess, Ishtar should be privileged enough, in contemporary reader’s perceptions, to contend with Gilgamesh and Enkidu but the epic represents her as weaker than the men because she is held to double standards as a woman.

Ishtar wasn’t the only woman in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* who was threatened with violence. Siduri, who was forced to aid Gilgamesh, was physically threatened by him\(^9\). He badgers her into helping him by telling her all of the brutal conquests he had undergone. The coercion was startling because it was Gilgamesh who was in need of Siduri’s knowledge about everlasting life. The shift in roles proves that the men were the more privileged sex. Even though Siduri was the one with the power of knowledge, Gilgamesh still threatened her with violence and coerced her into submission.

Another character that Gilgamesh mistreated was his own mother, Ninsun. She aids the representation of women as sexual objects by putting on a dress and jewels to make her appear more sexually attractive\(^10\). She represents the superficial beauty standard that plagues even contemporary society. Throughout the epic, Gilgamesh consults his mother on several occasions, but she admits that she isn’t the one in charge\(^11\). Shamash controls everything and Ninsun only pleases to him. She subverts herself even though she is a goddess and mother of Gilgamesh. She represents a powerless and dependent woman that has to ask a man for help.

The text of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* oppresses the female characters and supports a male-dominated gender bias. The men are the only ones with names, power, respect, strength, and heroism while the women, if not sexually objectified, are represented as lower beings. It is important for readers to understand the Mesopotamian context of the epic, because it serves as a reminder of how gender inequality used to be. Modern gender inequality still exists but it isn’t as blatant, ruthless, and oppressive as it once was. Since the women’s liberation movements, gender equality has been on the rise. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, in this sense, serves as a window through which to view the past for an understanding of how gender equality has evolved to improve civilization.

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**Bibliography**


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\(^8\) Gilgamesh, 88.
\(^9\) Gilgamesh, 101.
\(^10\) Gilgamesh, 74.
\(^11\) Gilgamesh, 74.
Acid Mine Drainage Effects and Possible Solutions

By Nichole Neely

One of the most devastating pollution problems in the Appalachian region is acid mine drainage (Keefer 278). Acid mine drainage can result in substantial loss of biological productivity, the degradation of land and water, and also damage to groundwater aquifers. Acid mine drainage results from an outflow of acidic water from coal mines or metal mines. And while acidic water flow can occur naturally at the earth’s surface from erosion in certain environments, large-scale earth disturbances created from mining, or even other large-scale construction, can enhance and increase the otherwise minimal acidic water flows (Lawhorn).

A local area watershed in Southeast Ohio suffering from acid mine drainage is the Leading Creek Watershed. The drainage area is 150.1 square miles and is tributary to the Ohio River (Bauers 8). The Leading Creek Watershed does not have the severe and widespread acid mine drainage impact that most of southern Ohio has. Two tributaries to Leading Creek, Paulins Run and Thomas Fork have had an impact on the abundance of fish and macro-invertebrate communities, and three sub-watersheds, Thomas Fork, Paulins Run, and Titus Run are also affected by mine runoff. Thomas Fork and Paulins Run have been chemically affected from acid mine drainage, and Titus Run has been impacted from mine sediments. The total cost to repair this watershed and the tributaries, which are marginally less impacted than others in surrounding areas, is between 1.8 million and 2.5 million dollars (6).

The high cost of repairing and reclaiming watersheds that have been negatively impacted by acid mine drainage comes from the complex damage acid mine drainage causes. Acid mine drainage qualifies as a complex environmental stressor that can damage aquatic ecosystems with high levels of acidity, elevated concentrations of dissolved metals, and/or the deposition of metal precipitants (Bauers 14). Several reactions beginning with the exposure of pyrite to water and oxygen starts the damage of acid mine drainage (Balliett 127). Inside coal mines, pyrite forms around coal seams or surrounding shale and sandstone. The oxidation of pyritic minerals results in the production of sulfuric acid and the pH lowers. This highly acidic, sulfate-rich drainage passes over the rock strata, coal overburden, or streambed. This then causes heavy metals like iron, manganese, and aluminum to be mobilized into the water flow (134).

Early in the 1950s, Lake Erie suffered from a phosphate phosphorus distribution. This resulted from acid mine drainage drifting current patterns from the discharge of the Maumee and the Detroit Rivers (Curl 66). Phosphorus, a scarce element in the earth’s crust, occurs less than 0.05 per cent by weight (67). And even though phosphorus is an important micro-element for the nutrition of aquatic plants, the amounts that were present became toxic. The phosphorus level was elevated from acid mine drainage in other tributaries that flowed into Lake Erie. Below in the figure, the dashed line indicates turbidity.
distribution and the full lines indicate phosphorus distribution. It also shows where the phosphorus travelled and the areas that it would affect.

Acid mine drainage not only affects local area watersheds, but Figure 2a shows that the small tributaries can easily transport the chemicals like phosphorus and pyrite into other lakes and streams, and soon the entire local drainage basin can be polluted with chemicals from the acidic water flow from uncared for coal and metal mines (Curl 71). The increase in coal usage also increases the production of acid mine drainage precipitants because the more coal being used means that more coal mines are created. Once a mine has been used and companies mining move on to other locations, an improper mine closing can cause acid mine drainage to occur more rapidly. And while acid mine drainage can be an expensive and time consuming problem, there are solutions available to the fix it.

In Coshocton County, Ohio acid mine drainage caused a large volume of black amorphous sludge has accumulated in several of the county’s constructed wetlands. The sludge contained high concentrations of sulfur, iron, aluminum, and acidity and an anaerobic biofilm containing a large population of sulfur-reducing bacteria (Riefler 222). This type of biofilm can create problems for investigators conducting ecological studies and assessments. If these biofilms are sampled when contaminated, the EEAs might represent conditions associated with succession rather than the current conditions (Smucker 736). The system performed well and generated 26kg CaCO3/d of alkalinity and captured 5.0 kg/d of iron and 1.7 kg/d of aluminum. The researchers studying this event said that the alkalinity generated by limestone dissolution
and by sulfate reduction was determined (Rietler 222).

The use of anaerobic solid-substrate reactors for treating acid mine drainage has been studied widely by numerous researchers. In these systems, acid mine drainage is passed through biodegradable waste like manure or compost. Many abiotic and microbially catalyzed reactions probably occur in these systems, but it is also hypothesized that sulfate reduction, mediated by sulfate-reducing bacteria, is responsible for the pH neutralization and sulfate and toxic metals removal observed in these systems (Drury 1244). Sulfate removal was significant in both reactors before day 335 with greater removal in the reactor with whey addition. The actual SSR decreased from 250 to 40 mmol/d*m³ substrate in the reactor without whey addition (1247). The results of this are shown in the Figure 4.

Even though acid mine drainage is a large-scale problem, there are solutions available to reduce and eliminate the chemicals infiltrating and damaging local watersheds and large drainage basins. Using anaerobic bacteria has been proved to be effective in lab studies as well as in the field to treat chemicals like phosphorous, sulfate, and pyrite. They have also been able to reduce the presence of aluminum in the waterways. And while safer and more environmental friendly mining procedures would greatly reduce the occurrence of acid mine drainage, having solutions available to remove the invading chemicals from watersheds and drainage basins remains as a necessary systems to continue to study.
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“Porphyria’s Lover” is a Victorian poem written by Robert Browning. The poem was originally published in 1836 in the *Monthly Repository* under the title “Porphyria,” and then republished in 1842 in a book called *Dramatic Lyrics* alongside another of Browning’s poems, “Johannes Agricola in Meditation.” The 1842 publication titled the two poems together as “Madhouse Cells.” It wasn’t until 1863 that the poem was given the title that we now use, “Porphyria’s Lover” (Porphyria’s Lover). “Porphyria’s Lover” is widely accepted as being read through the eyes of a psychotic killer. Although this is definitely an accurate reading, the lover of Porphyria is not an unknown second human in the room. The text itself, with a little medical knowledge, will prove that the poem is actually about a woman suffering from a rare blood disease called porphyria and it is she, not a psychotic killer, who is the disease’s lover. An explanation of how this poem could possibly be read through the eyes of the disease itself will entail four main ideas: the original title changes are extremely significant; symptoms of porphyria are hidden within the lines of the poem; what the sufferer believes she is seeing are actually a hallucination caused by this rare and toxic disorder; and the reference to her still being alive can be proven within the text.

A part of any literature that should not be ignored is the title. At times, it is even necessary to look back at previous titles that were used in various publications for a given text. The fact that Browning’s poem was originally titled “Porphyria” leads to the thought that the poem does, in fact, center on the disease itself. To further that thought, the poem was then published under the title “Madhouse Cells,” which can have a dual meaning. Many read into this as an allusion to the “mad” killer who takes Porphyria’s life, when it should be read differently. The word “madhouse” alludes to the fact that porphyria causes paresis, or “mental changes [including] gradual deterioration of personality, impaired concentration and judgment, delusions, loss of memory, disorientation, and apathy or violent rages” (Encyclopedia Britanica). In Browning’s time, people suffering from these mental problems would be found in insane asylums, also known as madhouses. The word “cells” alludes to the fact that porphyria is a blood disorder, targeting red blood cells and, in some instances, skin cells. With this in mind, it seems that settling on the title “Porphyria’s Lover” leaves it just ambiguous enough to allow the reader certain indeterminacies.

Equally as important is the use of certain words within the poem. These choice words not only emphasize the blood disorder, but to also state that the main character is, in fact, still alive in the end. To illustrate this point one must read the poem stanza by stanza in order to grasp what is being conveyed.

“The rain set early in tonight,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break” (Browning 1252).
Using words like “rain,” “sullen,” “tore,” “worse,” and “break” set a somber mood as well as exemplify words one would use for depression. Mental breakdowns often lead to depression for the sufferer. Using terms like “set early in tonight,” “was soon awake,” and “did its worst to vex,” are used to explain that the hallucinations are occurring earlier than normal, which is vexing, and the woman is suffering from insomnia, since “insomnia is often an early symptom [of porphyria]” (Acute Intermittent Porphyria). It isn’t until line five that Browning introduces the heart, which is typically associated with blood. Along the same lines, “with a heart fit to break” should be read as the sufferer’s mind “breaking” from reality.

To keep with the same theme, lines 21-24 continue to keep the heart and blood within the context of the poem.

“Murmuring how she loved me – she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever”
(Browning 1252).

Using the words “murmur,” “weak,” “heart,” “struggling,” and “vainer” accentuates porphyria. Palpitations are a result of increased heart rate in porphyria sufferers, which would cause a murmur. Weakness is common, causing mental and physical struggles (Acute Intermittent Porphyria). The word “vainer” means futile, as in it is useless trying to cope with such a horrible problem. “Dissever” is also an important word because the woman is divided between reality and hallucinations.

As mentioned earlier, a side effect of porphyria is paresis. This is a significant fact to correctly interpret this poem. “When glided in Porphyria” (Browning 1252), the word glided is a huge clue as to what is really going on. From this point on in the poem, the woman is suffering from hallucinations. “She doesn't walk in, actually – she ‘glides’ in, like a ghost” (Porphyria's Lover). It is more than likely that this woman is seeing her actions from outside of her mind as they happen. Almost as if she was watching a movie of herself. To further this idea, the woman is all alone when

“And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair”
(Browning 1252).

No voice replied because she is all alone. Seeing as how she is suffering from hallucinations and watching her own actions as if she isn’t in control, she is speaking in first and third person. She is wrapping her own arms around herself; after all she did just come in from a rain storm and started a fire to warm up. She is laying her own cheek on her shoulder, maybe from being depressed, or trying to warm her face up. She could also simply enjoy the way her hair feels on her face.

As the poem progresses, her hallucinations intensify as

“...I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain”
(Browning 1252-53)

When hair is wet it gets stringy and clings easily to the skin. In her delusional state, the woman believes her hair is trying to choke her and it freaks her out. The reality is she
felt no pain, not because she was being strangled by a psychotic lover, but because her hair is simply so long that it is able to cling around her throat, thanks to her having just come inside from a rain storm.

It should also be mentioned that another side effect of porphyria is muscle weakness and even coma (Acute Intermittent Porphyria). “Weakness is a failure of the muscle to develop an expected force [and] may affect all muscles or only a few” (muscle disease). Continuing with the fact that she wasn’t actually murdered, but is still alive, can be proven with a close reading of the text that follows.

“As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss” (Browning 1253).

The first line is especially important in that the bud does not kill the bee, but simply holds it. The woman is simply held down by the muscle weakness and hallucinations she is experiencing. There is the first and third person presence still because she is still in this hallucinatory state. Being able to open her eyes is a sign that her muscle weakness is not controlling her entire body, but she still has use of her head. The tress of her hair is loosening because it has been drying in the now warm room. The last line of this stanza is the most important. If her blood was no longer pumping through her veins from death, her cheeks would not be blushing. To further this thought, “Her head, which droops upon it still: The smiling rosy little head, So glad it has its utmost will” (Browning 1253) is stating that she is happy to at least have control of her head, which is resting on her own shoulder in order to rest. Again the use of the word “rosy” alludes to the fact that she is very much alive, she simply cannot move due to the muscle weakness caused by porphyria.

Finally we reach the end of the poem, which is widely read as the psychotic killer admiring his lovely corpse and God not caring about the events which just unfolded. Except when looking at the ending like this paper has looked at the rest of the poem, it is obvious how that simply isn’t so.

“She guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard. And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!” (Browning 1253).

The one wish she wanted heard was for her hallucination and pain to stop. It is very plausible that one who is suffering like this woman is would plead to God to make it all stop. The hallucination of her being murdered by her hair has stopped as she now rests since she cannot move her body. She still remains stuck with this horrid disorder in her mind and body and has not stirred because her muscles are still too weak to move. God does not say a word because he made it all stop, just not in the way she had hoped, hence the phrase “she guessed not how.”

Given all these points, "Porphyria's Lover" reads as almost an entirely different poem. The more popular interpretation leaves the reader with a sense of closure, albeit disturbing. Conversely, interpreting the poem as a woman suffering alone and stuck inside her own head leaves the reader with no closure. She will continue hallucinating and is stuck with this disorder until she dies a painful death. To some, this is an even more terrifying scenario than being murdered by a psychotic lover.
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Creating the Ultimate Villain: An Analysis of Motives

By Nichole M. Harris

Whenever a hero needs an evil plan to thwart or a caper to go awry, he can count on a villain to make the stakes adequate. Male, female, mastermind or avarice-driven killing machine, villains have been making books, movies, and television shows captivating for centuries. They give the hero a reason to fight, something to overthrow, and a force to reckon with. Regardless if the story is told through drawings on stone walls or as multimillion dollar productions on 50-inch TVs, a hero cannot be a hero without a force to test their abilities. Villains have left their mark on our culture; any American knows to fear a wicked witch or that an astounding mustache twirl means evil is about to ensue. But, where have our ideas of villainy come from? To what can we owe the infamous antagonists of modern film and books?

We can look to antagonists and villains from novels from the past. Wherever there is a force of good, there has been a force of evil struggling against it, and many heroes of today could not have been able to make their mark without their malicious counterparts. Antagonists from stories told a few hundred years ago helped shape their malevolent modern descendants. Tracing back the line of villains throughout literary history can bring new focus and insight to both the literary descendent and to the literary ancestor. In this essay, the focus will be on one literary ancestor, Victor Frankenstein, the unconventional villain from *Frankenstein*, and how his character has influenced the traits and motives of two of his modern literary descendants, the Red Skull (Johann Schmidt) and Voldemort (Tom Riddle).

Victor Frankenstein fulfills a specific villain type that he would later share with his literary descendants. Orrin Klapp’s essay on villain types separates villains as being highly visible and low/delayed visible. The subsets of these two main types are overlapping as a narrative continues (338). The three villains examined in this essay not only share lineage, but they also share villain types. One type categorized as highly visible, Oppressor or Bully, is shared amongst all three characters. Klapp defines the Oppressor or Bully as a strong cruel figure who abuses power over a weak victim (338). Victor abuses his power over the creature, which classifies him as villain, according to Klapp. The Red Skull and Voldemort also abuse their power over the German people and the Death Eaters, respectively.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor unintentionally receives a dangerous education from old, outdated books on natural philosophy. Even after he is told that the books are worthless and possibly taboo, he continues his dangerous self-education toward the forbidden knowledge contained within their pages, thinking that he is on the verge of a miraculous discovery. His self-education later generates an ambition for grandeur, which molded him into an antagonist archetype that laid the ground work for some of the most infamous villains in Western culture.

During Victor’s early life, he and his family go to a party where Victor uncovers the book by Cornelius Agrippa, the catalyst of his self-education. The book enthralls Victor’s thirteen-year-old mind, and when
he shares his enjoyment with his father, he is rebuked. His father says, "do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash." Victor explains that he did not listen, and instead continue to pursue this man’s work. When he returned home, Victor acquired all that he could on Agrippa, and went further into the subject and found Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus. Victor admits hiding these books from his father, fearing his reaction (Shelley 22). Victor knew that the books he was reading were not “correct” and that he needed to hide this from his father, the authority figure with the most influence on Victor. His quest for forbidden knowledge began with Agrippa but would continue on throughout Victor’s life.

Victor shares that his family was “not scientifical,” and he had not attended any lectures at the school. This means his education was being formed almost entirely by these three men and their quest for a dark power. His readings also begin to further dilute his mind, and give him illusions of grandeur. As shown below, Victor’s education from these three natural philosophers created a need to do great and unbelievable things. He says,

“I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death. Nor were these my only visions. The raising of ghosts or devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favorite authors, the fulfillment of which I most eagerly sought; and if my incantations were always unsuccessful, I attributed the failure rather to my own inexperience, and mistake” (Shelley 23).

Victor’s words display an incredibly important character flaw, which is the goals he created after his self-education through forbidden knowledge. His ambitions are forming, and clearly they aspire to very lofty heights considering many of these are not even possible with modern medicine. Curing the body of all disease, crafting an immortal being, and later when he gives life to a lifeless body are all attributes of a divine being or god, something that he seeks to become. He also possesses a desire to conjure ghosts or devils, things that are commonly portrayed as evil or dangerous. Possessing such grand goals would eventually lead Victor to his own destruction, but not before he becomes capable of fulfilling one of these insane ambitions.

Victor’s self-education of forbidden knowledge continues to lead him. At seventeen, Victor goes to Ingolstadt, a university where he begins a more formal education through M. Waldman and M. Krempe’s lectures. Both men seek to dissuade Victor’s ideas about Agrippa and company, but the things Victor learns in the formal educations only fan his flames, specifically when the lectures focus on the decomposition of the human body. This leads him to graveyards and other locations to study the dead more closely, something that he continues to hide from friends, family, and his professors because he knows the taboo his is breaking. However, the self-education of his past as well as the wealth of knowledge Victor seems to possess cannot allow him to stop before one of his goals, creating an ideal species, is fulfilled.

Eventually and after numerous attempts, he discovers how to animate the flesh of these dead bodies that he has been collecting, which means he is in the process of achieving his overreaching ambitions. He says to Walton, “when I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it” (Shelley 33). While this may appear almost
as if Victor is questioning what the responsible manner of action is, he is astounded to finally hold the spark that will ignite the fire he’s been building his whole life. Further narration in the story supports this idea.

After he discovers the ability to animate flesh, Victor’s narration becomes quicker and more erratic. Mary Shelley intentionally placed the narration in this way to mimic the frenzy Victor was feeling after his discovery. The culmination of his desires is upon him, and he knows that he can finally attain an almost godlike status. He debates over a simple creature or a creature like himself, finally deciding upon something wholly different. To Walton he says,

"a new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of their child so completely as I should deserve their’s” (33).

The passage shows the depths Victor has followed his dangerous self-education to find forbidden knowledge. He will follow through with this overreaching ambition. And now that he has found it, he seeks a grand application on which to use it. The creation of a new species, the production of an ultimate race qualifies as an illusion of grandeur and also as the line between Victor’s motivations being sane and insane. But, this great deed he seeks to perform now that he has his forbidden knowledge is not only mastery over death but also to be as powerful as a god. And while he does create life from death, the results were not what he desired. The product of his ambitions, while critically important within the novel, does not matter in this examination of his motives. The motivations that drove Victor to seek out the knowledge required to create the creature were greed and the need to become exalted. Without these motivations, Victor could never have made his descent into villainy. The absence of these motivations would have made a different mark on modern literature because Victor’s motivations are what would pass down to his literary descendants.

Forbidden knowledge, a dangerous education, and an overreaching ambition are the most powerful facets when creating a truly deplorable villain that will compel readers and viewers. A popular villain from the twentieth century who still remains relevant today, Johann Schmidt, has central motivations identical to those of Victor Frankenstein, making Schmidt one of Victor’s literary descendants.

Johann Schmidt would eventually go on quite a few horrific killing sprees and commit unnumbered evil plots in the Tales of Suspense with his only stumbling block being Captain America. But before Johann adopted the Red Skull as his new name and persona, he was just an orphan boy in Germany before WWII. In Johann’s early life, his mother died during his birth, causing his father to attempt to kill Johann before taking his own life. Johann is taken to an orphanage, which he later runs from at age seven. From then on, he leads a life of petty crime and holds down various odd jobs. No one is available to offer him companionship or to guide his self-education (Lee 47). Johann leads a life on the street, learning an almost feral take on survival and living. Unlike Victor who had a father figure to act as an authoritative force, Johann did not. However, both boys do share a lack of this authoritative force. For Victor, he hides his books from his father and therefore removes that force from his education. Johann doesn’t have a figure present in his early life, creating this deficit,
and also leaving a crucial space inside his life.

During his teens, this space gets filled when he meets Adolf Hitler at a hotel during the Nazis’ rise to power. There, Hitler takes an interest in Johann, and Johann becomes the newest recruit. Johann’s lack of authoritative force prepared him for Hitler’s influence and his type of education because Hitler does not simply sweep the boy over to a commanding officer but instead seeks to train him personally. Johann’s education and goals are greatly influenced by Hitler. Hitler is also the one that gives Johann his unique uniform with a horrific mask and dubs him “The Red Skull” (Lee 50).

Since Hitler was the first person to take an interest in Johann, he become a crucially important figure for him and had a huge influence on his education. Unfortunately, Hitler’s education doesn’t leave much room for anything else besides a lust for power, greedy ambitions, and a desire for an ancient power. In the panel, Hitler’s aggressive and angry life views are apparent, and history has proven how deep his lust for power and control ran. Johann’s transformation from vagrant thief to international terrorist was totally facilitated by Hitler’s education. Just like Victor, Johann stumbled upon an unknowable viper nest. Neither Johann or Victor began their lives with the intentions to become villains. They both were transformed over time by their motivations. Both Johann and Victor pursue desires and needs created from their dangerous educations, which further isolates them and feeds their desires for great power.

In the movie, Captain America: The First Avenger, the audience is introduced to the Red Skull while he is seeking the Tesseract, a powerful cube from another planet that he plans to use as a power source for world domination. In the opening sequences of the film, a man caring for and protecting the Tesseract warns Schmidt of what could happen if he continued to seek out this forbidden knowledge and ultimate power. Schmidt’s motivations from Hitler’s self-education can only be fulfilled by seeking out the Tesseract and harnessing its power. In the comics when the Red Skull receives the Tesseract, he says that he finally has received the power that he has been seeking (Lee 54). It also shows the great desire he has to control and manipulated such a huge font of power.

Hitler’s influence on Schmidt and the education that he gave him were what would escalate the Red Skull’s desire for power beyond measure. The Red Skull sought out the Tesseract to please Hitler at the start, but the power was too great to share with his former mentor. Hitler’s dangerous education created the ideal circumstance for the Red Skull’s quest for forbidden knowledge in the Tesseract. Later, the Red Skull would form H.Y.D.R.A., his own personal militia that was separate from Hitler’s, further showing his desire to control the ultimate power alone. Like Victor Frankenstein, the Red Skull sought out the most dangerous and powerful element for himself, a desire that for both men was facilitated by their educations. The motivations driving the Red Skull are incredibly similar to Victor’s motivations.

Both men’s motivations were influenced and created from their education. Victor’s education through taboo books brought about his quest to create a new species, just like Johann Schmidt’s education from Hitler caused his quest to use the Tesseract to achieve ultimate power. Without their educations, both Victor and Johann would have likely never sought out their own forbidden knowledge. Victor would not have
been consumed by the thought of creating a species that would owe him their love and fealty, and Johann would have never sought to overthrow one of the most powerful and cruel tyrants in the world. Victor motivations set up the model that the Red Skull would eventually follow, making him not only an intriguing villain for modern readers, but also Victor’s literary descendant.

Another literary descendant of Victor Frankenstein is Tom Riddle, from the Harry Potter series. Tom Riddle’s parents were both deceased, leaving him an orphan (Chamber of Secrets 244). This creates an absence of an authoritative force in Tom’s life just like the lack of a positive authoritative force Victor and Johann have. Tom ends up in an orphanage for most of his young life, leaving this absence of the authoritative force to be filled through a passive woman overseeing the orphanage and Tom’s own demons. His wizard’s powers make him different from other children, and this means that he sees himself as separate and superior from them. When Dumbledore tells Tom that he’s a wizard and his special talents are really magic, Tom is overwhelmed with excitement and says, “I knew I was special. Always, I knew there was something” (271). Tom’s self-education created a distinct barrier between himself and other people. By saying that he knows he’s special, he’s acknowledging that he sees himself as above them. Tom’s self-education would also propel him forward into his quest for forbidden knowledge.

While attending Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Tom learns about Horcruxes, a taboo black magic that lets a wizard place a piece of their soul into an object. This fracturing makes the wizard immortal because part of them still lives on outside their body, so even if their body is destroyed, the person can still live on. To create a Horcrux, the wizard must first “tear their soul,” meaning that they must kill a person (Half Blood Prince 497). The conventions of creating a Horcrux made them taboo, not only to create them, but even talking about them. This cannot assuage Tom Riddle. He refuses to let this matter elude him and continues to seek out how to create one, even after a professor pleads with him to let the matter drop (498). A Horcrux within the Harry Potter world is perhaps one of the most taboo ideas inside forbidden knowledge.

Tom’s forbidden knowledge is the Horcrux and it stems from his motivations gained through his self-education. At the very core, the Horcrux would allow Tom to become exalted and godlike. His other ambitions, including seeking to control the entire wizarding world, would be facilitated through his powers gained from forbidden knowledge. In essence, Tom intends to use his forbidden knowledge to accomplish his overreaching ambitions. Tom’s motivations behind his actions are the same that led Victor to create the creature and Johann’s search for the Tesseract. Victor’s influence as a literary ancestor helped shape Tom Riddle into the kind of villain that he is, making him one of the truly vicious and terrifying characters in the books.

Victor, Johann, and Tom all went on from their dangerous educations, whether it was a self-education like Victor and Tom or a mis-education like Johann’s, to make infamous deeds and choices. Victor’s discovery of outdated, dangerous scientific material magnified his yearning for his personal forbidden knowledge, reanimation and bestowing life, and granted him an access point for his need to possess exalted abilities. For Johann, the absence of an authoritative force made him susceptible to
Hitler’s dangerous education. The Tesseract, Johann’s forbidden knowledge, would grant him godly powers and combine with his overreaching ambitions to overthrow Hitler and control the world himself. Tom’s lack of force, like Victor and Johann, left him a self-education of arrogance and greed, which made seeking out his forbidden knowledge, the Horcrux, incredibly easier and logical to him. He too sought after powers reserved for gods alone. His combination of education and forbidden knowledge left him primed for no other life than an infamous villain, just like Victor and Johann.

Victor’s actions throughout Frankenstein compel readers to turn pages, make them angry, and also make them question their own motives and choices—the true goal for any proper villain. But, more importantly, Victor’s basic personality and character structure gives future writers a fantastic model to follow. Victor Frankenstein serves as an archetype of a villain, but even more important, an interesting and compelling villain. His influence upon future antagonists helped create many of our most feared “bad guys”. Without Victor as a literary ancestor, the Red Skull and Voldemort would have incredibly different traits, personalities, and motivations. What is more important though, by identifying Victor as a literary descendant, we can establish new models for evaluating and analyzing antagonists in subsequent works of literature. Victor’s literary ancestors can also assist readers in defining and evaluating Victor. The duality of a literary lineage should never be over looked. Just as the past can help readers understand the present, the present can help modern readers gain better insight to literature of the past.
Traumatic Memory, The Creature, and Mary Shelley
By Alexander Harless

*Frankenstein* empirically stands as a very diverse reading where application of critical literary theory is concerned. An interesting approach to the text that involves analysis of the birth and death connection forms from trauma theory. Trauma in *Frankenstein* solidifies through the style of narration. However, since the narrative is largely told through three retrospective points of view the main focus settles within the examination of traumatic memory specifically that of the creature. The transcendence of the Mary Shelley’s traumatic memory into the narrative constructs a parallel which this examination helps to illuminate.

Trauma, like any psychoanalytic lens, offers a wide range of possible approaches to literature. The author of *Graphic Women*, Hillary Chute, provides extensive applications of traumatic memory to graphic narratives. Her focus may be aimed toward the format of sequential art, but her underlying ideas are not restricted to that form alone. Application of Chute’s “traumatic memory” ideas over the creature’s and Mary Shelly’s birth cultivates a revealing examination of a psychological connection between character and author.

The materialization of the creature’s traumatic memory surfaces at the start of his narrative. “It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original æra of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct.” (Shelley 70). Beyond the several levels of unreliable narrators, the creature himself admits to the faultiness of his own memory. His narrative starts sometime after his creation. A deliberate gap between Victor giving the creature life and the creature’s recounting narration alludes to the trauma of creation which he underwent. Beginning his narrative in the woods outside of Ingolstadt instead of at the moment of the “spark of being” (Shelley 35), the creature may have forgotten the trauma of his creation but not completely. As Hillary Chute points out, “[...] the seeming paradox of traumatic memory, in which people “forget” trauma, but do not “forget” it enough (while these memories may no longer be verbal, they yet drive behavior).” (Chute 114) the creature’s traumatic memories are hidden but influential. The traumatic memory of the creature’s genesis isn’t lost in the beginning chapters of his narrative as much as it is not directly remembered. The creature was born to a withered and obsessed Victor, and once alive was rejected because of his hideousness (Shelley 35-36). Coming into existence, for the creature, was an atrocious incident of traumatization. Although his narrative reveals no record of this rejection and abandonment, the “forgotten” trauma still resides within him and offers explanations for his later conflicting actions.

The influence of the repressed traumatic memory begins to expel itself from the creature while he reads Victor’s notes about the creation. “Everything is related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin; the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it is set into view [...]” (Shelley 91). When the creature begins to unravel the traumatic memory imposing on his morality, he starts to assemble what Lenore Terr deems “spatial
sense” through reading Victor’s papers. She explains that “[...] repressed memory can be retrieved by visual cues, and how place, more than anything else, remains attached to highly emotional episodic memory” (Terr 53,73). Until the creature could recount the “space” in which his creation occurred, the traumatic memories would continue to elude him. The creature starts to remember fragments of the moment he was given life. “I sickened as I read. ‘Hateful day when I received life!’ I exclaimed in agony. ‘Cursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?’” (Shelley 91). Spatial recognition triggered the creature’s engagement on a path towards violence.

The traumatic experience of his creation was overwhelming and facilitated the psychological environment in which William was murdered. The initially meant no harm to William but yearned for acceptance. When William invoked the spatial recognition of the creation scene shouting, “monster! ugly wretch!” (Shelley 100) the repressed memories violently ravaged the creature. Unable to cope with the traumatic memory the creature attempted to stop the recollection. “I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment he lay dead at my feet.” (Shelley 100). The creature’s intentions were not violent until the traumatic memory was triggered. In an attempt to simply repress the spatial recognition, the creature killed William. The connection of death and birth illuminates when William dies. The creature reflects on the experience of creating death. “I exclaimed, ‘I, too, can create desolation; my enemy is not impregnable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him.’” (Shelley 100). As Victor gave life to the creature, the creature gave death to William. And the theme of birth as death was solidified.

It is in this theme that the parallel of traumatic memory between the creature and Mary Shelley reaches visibility. The author's own trauma transcends into the narrative. “Not only did her mother die in bearing Mary herself—dramatic enough in itself to emblazon on her consciousness a continuing emotional association of birth and death—but a number of other deaths rudely intruded on Mary’s early life before she came to write Frankenstein” (Hunter xv). Mary Shelley most likely experienced her mother’s death much like Walton experienced the creature’s story as it was told through someone else. Although she had no first person recollection of her mother dying, she probably experienced fragmentation of the traumatic event as others, her father mainly, explained it to her. As Chute explains “[...] placing themselves in a space, authors may forcefully convey the shifting layers of memory and create a peculiar entry point for representing experience.” (Chute 114), Mary Shelley may have created “space” within the confines of the creature’s narrative in order to expel some of the traumatic memory she had repressed. The “shifting layers of memory” that Chute discusses are executed by Mary Shelley in the layering of narratives. As one narrator passes on another’s narrative, the memories slightly change creating the unreliable nature. Much like the creature, Mary Shelley’s birth caused death and “desolation” of her creator.

Although there are several approaches to demystifying the link between birth and death within Frankenstein, the examination of traumatic memory helps to discover the more psychological side of the parallel delving in to the relationship between author and character, both of whom experience the
link between birth and death. The creature evokes inner trauma that Mary Shelley may have struggled with. Although her memories were private, *Frankenstein* offers a great example of how an author’s psychological joining with a character can express even his or her most repressed traumatic memories.

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Spirituality as a Coping Mechanism for Mental Illness

By Virginia Cole

Spirituality is typically related to religious ideologies, and often one’s religious beliefs are intertwined with one’s spiritual beliefs. However, spirituality and religion are actually two separate constructs, with spirituality coming from within an individual and religion being the means for the individual to express their spirituality (Hodge, 2003). For the purpose of this paper, spirituality will include an individual’s personal relationship with a higher being, as well as the effect of the individual’s utilization of socially constructed religious institutions. As is the case with many theories, there are both positive and negative effects of an individual’s spirituality on their mental health. These effects will first be discussed in general, and later specific to each disorder that is presented. Discussion will include positive and negative factors, the necessity of an instrument that measures an individual’s internal spirituality separate from any religious connotations, suggestions to the clinician on how best to incorporate the patients’ spirituality into their assessments, the effect of the individual’s spirituality in the case of specific disorders (e.g., severe depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia), and an example of a spiritual theoretical framework for treatment.

There are many positive factors involved in utilizing one’s spirituality as a coping mechanism. The religious aspect gives the individual access to a support system, which includes a sense of fellowship and belonging. The organized rituals that are at the center of many religions lend a sense of security and continuity to those who feel a lack of control in other aspects of their lives. The spiritual relationship between the individual and the higher being may contribute to their ability to derive meaning for life events, offer them hope in the face of adversity, and provide them with a feeling of nonjudgmental acceptance. Many individuals have a perception of a benevolent higher being that loves them regardless of their flaws, forgives them for their sins, and has control over life’s circumstances (i.e., knowing the outcome of events). This higher being has the individual’s best interests in mind, and provides purpose to the events that take place, good or bad, in their lives.

Research suggests that an individual’s particular style of relating with their higher being may predict how useful their spirituality is as a coping mechanism. (Yangarber-Hicks, 2004) Pargament and colleagues (1990) (as cited by Yangarber-Hicks, 2004) identified three major religious coping styles: self-directing, deferring, and collaborative. A fourth style was added by Pargament and colleagues (1990) which they termed plead. The collaborative approach involves joint responsibility for problem solving by God and the individual, the self-directing style places all of the responsibility for problem solving on the individual to the exclusion of reliance on the higher being, the deferring style places all of the responsibility on the higher being, and the plead style basically involves a tenant for wishful thinking. (Yangarber-Hicks, 2004) Research indicates that those who utilized a collaborative approach have a far better outcome in terms of their mental health than did those who employed the
other styles. (Yangarber-Hicks, 2004) Therefore, assessing an individuals’ spiritual relationship with a higher being is not all that is involved in the effectiveness of spirituality as a coping mechanism; one needs to assess the type of relationship that the individual has with his/her higher being.

These different approaches that the individual may have to his/her spirituality or relationship with a higher being are where one may find some negative effects. For those who experience spiritual struggles when dealing with adversity, their relationship with a higher being may cause them extreme distress and prove detrimental to their mental health. Life stressors, such as loss of income, loss of a loved one, loss of one’s health, natural calamities, among others, may cause an individual to question his/her relationship with his/her higher being, and may be the catalyst for spiritual struggles to ensue. These spiritual struggles are the result of, “…conflict, question, and doubt regarding matters of faith, God, and religious relationships,” (McConnell, Pargament, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2006, p. 1470) and can be separated into three categories: interpersonal, intrapersonal and divine. Interpersonal struggles would involve spiritual conflict between the individual and others, intrapersonal struggles would involve the individual’s inner spiritual conflict, and divine struggles would involve conflict between the individual and his/her higher being (McConnell, Pargament, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2006). These spiritual struggles may result in an increase in stress and anxiety, or even depression, which may create an additional risk for mental illness.

Another component to the negative effects may be seen in the relationship between the individual and their religious ideologies. Some denominations of the Christian faith follow very strict guidelines in regards to lifestyle choices, such as sexual orientation, marital status, and procreation. These guidelines are often considered to be prominent features of an individual’s acceptance into the religious community, as well as admittance into the afterlife, which is his/her ultimate goal. Individuals who belong to such denominations are faced with the conflict of choosing between their faith and their own sense of individuality. This conflict may be the source of much stress and confusion, which may ultimately be the cause of their mental anguish. An instrument for assessment should include spiritual struggles, due to the research findings that show that, “…interventions targeting spiritual struggles may help reduce and prevent psychological distress and psychopathology in individuals facing stressful experiences.” (McConnell, Pargament, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2006, p. 1480)

The research mentioned above indicates that spirituality may play a part in helping individuals cope with life stressors, but the focus of this paper is to demonstrate the efficacy of spirituality for patients suffering from mental illness. There have been numerous studies performed which suggest the viability of spirituality as a coping mechanism for those suffering from various types of mental illness, in regards to cessation or easing of symptoms, adherence to treatment, and overall adjustment and ability to function in society. Severe depression is one such illness. Individuals who suffer from severe depression describe their illness as creating a sense of disconnection from their higher being and of experiencing a deep yearning for a sense of meaning. (Sorajjakool, Aja, Chilson, & Johnny Ramirez-Johnson, 2008) Fifteen individuals who had been diagnosed with depression were interviewed by researchers in order to determine the role of spirituality in their lives. The results demonstrated that
the participants desired to regain their relationship with a higher being that they had lost due to their depressive symptoms. All fifteen stated that spirituality remained one of their coping methods, enabling them to withstand the desire to commit suicide, giving them hope, comfort, and sustenance during the dark and cold periods of their lives (Sorajjakool, Aja, Chilsol, & Johnny Ramirez-Johnson, 2008). Another benefit of spirituality for this population was the ability to find meaning from their depression. For example, “...individuals with depression have an intense desire to make sense of their experience with depression.” (Sorajjakool, Aja, Chilson, & Johnny Ramirez-Johnson, 2008, p. 527) If these patients are able to come to terms with their illness and to assign meaning to it, then they are more likely to seek treatment and to have a higher degree of compliance to their treatment (Sorajjakool, Aja, Chilson, & Johnny Ramirez-Johnson, 2008).

Schizophrenic patients are another population to whom research has demonstrated a high prevalence of spirituality and religiosity:

When other sources of support are lacking, spiritual support makes explanations possible when no other explanations seem convincing, brings a sense of control through the sacred when life seems out of control, and provides new objects of significance when old ones are no longer compelling. These factors may contribute to the high prevalence of religious coping in schizophrenia, a disorder associated with impairment in multiple domains of functioning that often remains chronic and disabling. (Mohr, Brandt, Borras, & Christiane Gillieron, 2006, p. 1958)

According to Mohr and colleagues, (2006), out of 115 patients diagnosed with schizophrenia, 71% stated that they used religion as a positive way of coping. Further, they cited many of the same benefits as the patients suffering from severe depression: hope, comfort, meaning of life, among others. While schizophrenic patients have a different set of symptoms than the depressive patients, such as delusions and hallucinations, the majority of these subjects stated their spirituality helped them to cope with their condition.

In contrast to the benefits described above, negative aspects of spirituality are reported by 14% of participants, many of which originated with their religious ideologies. As mentioned previously, there are those for whom religion has different meanings and for whom faith in a higher being involves belief that their higher being will take care of their problems without any effort on their part. This was the issue for the individuals in this study who did not find spirituality to be helpful. This information would be helpful for the clinician in order promote understanding of their patients.

With regards to patients suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and spiritual beliefs, studies involving military personnel who have been involved in combat situations have reported experiencing a loss of meaning and being burdened with a sense of guilt, was associated with weakening of their religious faith (Fontana & Rosenheck, 2004). This inner turmoil may have a significant effect on the ability of these patients to recover. Resolving these inner conflicts may contribute to the patients’ recovery. Clinicians should have access to these individuals’ spiritual conflicts, and therefore, the integration of spirituality in the assessment process is highly recommended.

Spirituality may play a central role in the coping styles of patients who suffer from bipolar disorder. Mitchell and Romans (2003), report that 94% of individuals who
had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder affirmed that they had some sort of religious or spiritual beliefs and that they utilized those beliefs to help them cope with their illness. An interesting aspect of this study was the participants’ experiencing of conflict between the advice of their spiritual advisors and their health professionals, which caused a lack of compliance (Mitchell & Romans, 2003). The problem apparently arises in the form of differing illness paradigms between the health care professionals and spiritual advisors. The respondents in this study were an indigenous people who have a holistic approach to health, which involves the body, mind and soul, while the health care professional’s approach is of a reductionist biomedical nature (Mitchell & Romans, 2003). The authors suggest a need for mental health care professionals to address their patients’ spiritual beliefs in order to have a better understanding of what may motivate them to adhere to treatment.

The preceding studies demonstrate support for the efficacy of utilizing the individual’s spirituality as a coping mechanism in the case of mental illness, which in turn suggests the need for an instrument to assess the individual’s spirituality. Assessment of spirituality has typically been performed with the use of a number of instruments throughout the years, but these instruments are more accurately described as measures of religiosity, with many of the questions pertaining to such factors as church attendance. The need for an instrument that will be a more accurate measure of an individual’s spirituality has come to the attention of researchers and several have been developed, but there are at least two limitations of these instruments: one is that they mention “God” and the other is that they are not based upon previous research. (Hodge, 2003) These are important criticisms as not all individuals come from the Judeo-Christian population and therefore, do not perceive of a higher being termed “God” nor do they belong to a particular religious organization. Secondly, the failure to build upon previous research demonstrates a lack of concern for the scientific method. Hodge (2003) has developed a six-item instrument based upon Allport and Ross’ (1967) measure of intrinsic religious orientation, which he suggests is a viable option due to the fact that it has been used in many settings and has good validity. The fact that Hodges’ (2003) instrument is based upon a measure of intrinsic religion is interesting, since it represents the internal aspect of a relationship with a higher being, which has been termed previously in this paper as spirituality.

Hodge (2003) specifies a six-item scale, The Intrinsic Spirituality Scale, which utilizes the phrase completion method with the Likert response keys. He states that, “…this new measure of intrinsic spirituality taps the degree to which spirituality is salient in an individual’s life as a motivating influence.” (Hodge, 2003, p. 55) This instrument demonstrated good validity due to the high degree of correlation between it and the established Allport and Ross’ (1967) measure. This would be an accurate measure of the individuals’ spirituality and as such a good assessment tool for the clinician to incorporate into their practice, dependent upon the manner of mental illness one’s patients present with.

The need for a viable instrument to assess the patients’ spirituality is only one part of the equation; one has to factor in the clinicians’ approach to spirituality. A clinician needs to remain unbiased and nonjudgmental during the therapeutic process and therefore, must have an awareness of their own feelings regarding spirituality and religion. A therapist with a specific religious orientation or with specific ideologies may ascribe their beliefs onto the patient without having any conscious knowledge of doing so (Pargament, 1997).
According to Pargament (1997), there are several orientations that a clinician may have, four of which are: religious rejectionism, religious exclusivism, religious constructivism, and religious pluralism. The rejectionist is one who shows a complete disdain for religion as seen in the examples of such historical pioneers in psychology as Freud and Albert Ellis. Pargament (1997) discusses several flaws with this orientation: it dismisses an entire population of patients, it does not take into account recent research, and it is unethical according to recent ethical professional guidelines as set forth by the “Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic, and Culturally Diverse Populations.” (APA as cited by Pargament, 1997) The exclusivist takes the opposing view of the rejectionist, in that they suggest that religion is at the heart of all problems. This orientation shares several flaws with rejectionism: it limits the clinician’s population of patients, except that it lies in the direction of those patients who do not hold similar beliefs; it poses ethical concerns in terms of imposing one’s religious ideologies on one’s patients: it disregards current research which demonstrates that there a multitude of forms of spirituality (Pargament, 1997).

The last two orientations that Pargament (1997) presents at first seem to be very similar in regards to how they approach the individual’s beliefs: they both attempt to see the individuals’ perspective and work from within that framework, but the constructivist does not believe in the existence of a higher being, while the pluralist does. The constructivist acknowledges that religion or spirituality are constructs of the patient, has respect for those constructs, and attempts to help the individual find solutions that are consistent with their constructs (Pargament, 1997). This orientation allows for the acceptance of many diverse populations and is ethically sound, but Pargament (1997) suggests that there may be problems of authenticity with this approach, due to the manipulation of the patient’s beliefs without the foundation of any personal beliefs on the part of the clinician. This would not be an issue for the pluralist who has their own core beliefs. The pluralist appreciates the individual’s perspective and tries to work with them through their framework, but also holds their own beliefs. Pargament (1997) states “The pluralist facilitates the search for significance not through religious indifference on the one hand or religious zealotry on the other, but through a sharing of orientations” (p.371).

The efficacy of tapping into the individual’s spirituality and the need for an instrument to perform a spiritual assessment has been discussed, as well as some of the issues that may arise after determining the individual’s spiritual orientation and the part that it may play in their style of coping. If one decides to incorporate spirituality into the therapy sessions, the question arises of how one might proceed. Therefore, there is a need for a theoretical framework that will address spirituality as an intervention arises. A recent study has proposed just such a framework, and has implemented it on patients suffering from generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).

GAD is a chronic disorder that affects many individuals. The popular method of treatment is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which has been shown to have very good results, but a current study has demonstrated that a spirituality based intervention (SBI) may be just as effective. (Koszyck, Raab, Aldosary, & Bradwejn, 2010) This study involved treating patients with a diagnosis of GAD using both SBI and CBT. The SBI focuses on spiritual well-being and growth, integrates core philosophies such as emotional and spiritual wisdom, spiritual awakening, positive emotions, ethical living, generosity, and service. (Koszyck, Raab,
Aldosary, & Bradwejn, 2010) The authors based their multifaith approach on seven religions (i.e., Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Taoism) which allows clinicians to treat patients from varying religious and spiritual backgrounds (Koszyck, Raab, Aldosary, & Bradwejn, 2010). The results for the SBI showed significant reductions in symptoms, allowing for the introduction of SBI as an intervention for GAD. This information may be important for the clinician since, “many patients are requesting spiritually integrated care from mental health professionals.” (Koszyck, Raab, Aldosary, & Bradwejn, 2010)

In addition, a variation of SBI has been successfully used to treat patients with eating disorders (Smith, Hardman, Richards, and Fischer, 2003). The study involved assessing intrinsic religious devoutness and intrinsic religious affiliation. In addition, researchers examined improvements in spiritual well-being, by assessing prior to and upon completion of a treatment program. Specifically, the program consisted of patients participating in a biweekly, twelve-step group during which the patients were:

“...encouraged to explore their own spiritual beliefs and to draw upon their faith to assist in their recovery. It is felt that as patients align their behavior with their spiritual beliefs, they will benefit from improved confidence, self-respect, and peace of mind.” (Smith, Hardman, Richards, & Fischer, 2003)

The results of this study demonstrated a significant correlation between increased spiritual well-being and improvements in eating disorder symptoms. Further, there was also a significant correlation between increased spiritual well-being and improvement in psychological health, including body image (Smith, Hardman, Richards, & Fischer, 2003).

The positive and negative effects of spirituality as a coping mechanism have been discussed as well as studies demonstrating the efficacy of using spirituality as a coping mechanism with several mental disorders. Therefore, if one is willing to entertain the idea that spirituality may be beneficial for patients suffering from mental disorders, then there is support for the need of an assessment instrument to evaluate spirituality. Such an instrument has been suggested, as well as concerns for clinicians who desire to incorporate spirituality into the therapeutic session, including suggestions for a spiritual theoretical framework in which to base one’s approach.

It is also suggested that there is a need for more empirical research to determine the efficacy for the use of spiritual interventions with those who suffer from mental illness. If the findings of said research were to demonstrate support for spiritual interventions, then perhaps SBI may become an accepted paradigm for therapists, and be integrated into their practice.

There is a need for graduate programs to include awareness of spiritual orientations as part of their curriculum in the training of clinicians. There is much support from research and clinicians’ own experience for the implementation of spirituality in the field of psychotherapy, to the point of demonstrating the desirability of educating future clinicians in this area. According to Crook-Lyon and colleagues (2012), out of 340 psychologists surveyed, 65% stated that spiritual and religious issues should be included in graduate programs. The participants described themselves as psychologists, counselors, therapists and professors who work in the field of psychotherapy (Crook-Lyon, O'Grady, Smith, Jensen, Golightly, & Potkar, 2012). Although there was a consensus regarding
the necessity of inclusion of spirituality and religion as part of the graduate curriculum, there was disagreement as to where these subjects may be added (Crook-Lyon, O'Grady, Smith, Jensen, Golightly, & Potkar, 2012). The authors suggested including spirituality and religion in multiculturalism coursework, due to the APA (2003) definition of multiculturalism: “multiculturalism, in an absolute sense, recognizes the broad scope of race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, class status, education, religious/spiritual orientation [italics added], and other cultural dimensions” (Crook-Lyon, O'Grady, Smith, Jensen, Golightly, & Potkar, 2012, p. 170). The results of Crook-Lyon and colleagues research demonstrated that 68% of clinicians agreed that multiculturalism would be an appropriate area of graduate studies to cover religion and spirituality, while others stated that including these subjects would cause other aspects of multiculturalism to receive less consideration (Crook-Lyon, O'Grady, Smith, Jensen, Golightly, & Potkar, 2012). Crook-Lyon and colleagues make a valid point which refers back to the discussion on SBI, and the necessity for clinicians to have a better understanding of those patients who entertain a holistic approach to illness: “....such a focus on client religion and spirituality in professional training would broaden clinicians’ holistic understanding of those with whom they work” (Crook-Lyon, O'Grady, Smith, Jensen, Golightly, & Potkar, 2012, p. 180)

Although an individual’s spirituality may be strongly associated with their religious orientation, there is strong support for the clinician to approach the individual from a spiritual standpoint, rather than a religious standpoint. This would allow for the inclusion of all forms of spiritual orientations, which would permit the clinician to treat a wide variety of patients from multiple backgrounds. The utilization of an instrument for assessment that is not biased toward any particular orientation, the demonstration of a pluralistic orientation which allows them to meet the individual at their personal spiritual level while maintaining their own spiritual identity, and a theoretical framework which encompasses a broad range of spiritual orientations is considered to be the best approach for the clinician.
References


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