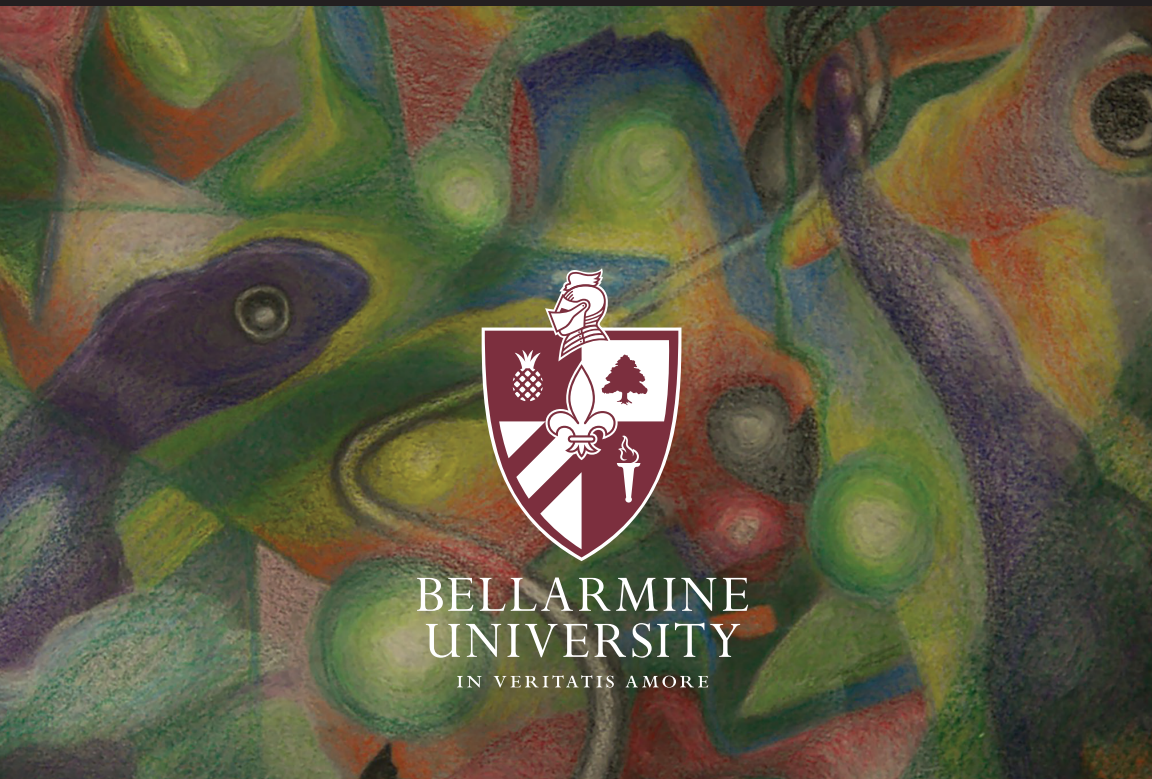




SCHOLARS IN WRITING:
A Journal of Undergraduate
Research in the Humanities



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In addition to compelling writing, you will notice the excellent artwork on the cover. The artwork is done by a student in Bellarmine's art program. Several pieces were submitted for review by a faculty panel of judges and chosen specifically for this publication.

Title: *Dreaming Without You*
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The Story of Scholars in Writing

Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty & Annette Harris Powell

The undergraduate educational experience at a liberal arts university should be driven by opportunities to make original intellectual or creative contributions to a wide variety of academic disciplines, including, but not limited to, a student's major. Writing remains one of the most valued skills of a liberal education university. The National Writing Project underscores "writing [as] essential to communication, learning, and citizenship. It is the currency of the new workplace and global economy. Writing is a bridge to the future." The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) foregrounds the importance of writing on its list of "high-impact educational practices" that challenge and engage students. Therefore, undergraduate research and writing are essential components for advancing student learning and developing a student's ability to think critically and respond creatively to classroom assignments as well as real world situations.

Studies of the effectiveness of undergraduate research show that publication is essential to inspiring creativity in student writing, reinforcing the learning process, and bringing the process of inquiry into full circle. Today, more than one-third of undergraduate institutions in the U.S. support the publication of a student journal of research and writing¹. *Scholars in Writing: A Journal of Undergraduate Research in the Humanities* is intended to foster student interest in the scholarly process of publication, to provide undergraduate students with the opportunity to disseminate their work to a broad audience, to invite students to work collaboratively with faculty mentors, and to inspire students to consider the impact that their writing can make on others.

Bellarmino's programs in writing, theology, and history endeavor to cultivate in students a love and passion for writing. Faculty encourage students to write out of the conviction that ideas convey much more than information. Words have the power to create worlds. Our goal is to offer students opportunities for writing and learning, critical inquiry and analysis, public debate, deliberation, and practice.

The journal is published biennially; this second issue is supported by the Department of Theology, the First-Year Writing Program, the Department of History, and the Office of Academic Affairs. Essays included in this issue won awards given by writing contests sponsored by the First-Year Writing Program, the Departments of Theology, and of History. Student essays are refereed and showcase excellence in interdisciplinary inquiry, original thought, and compelling prose.

¹ Wendy Katkin, "The Boyer Commission Report and Its Impact on Undergraduate Research." *New Directions in Learning* (March 1, 2003): 25.

2014-2015
ACADEMIC YEAR

First-Year Writing Prizes

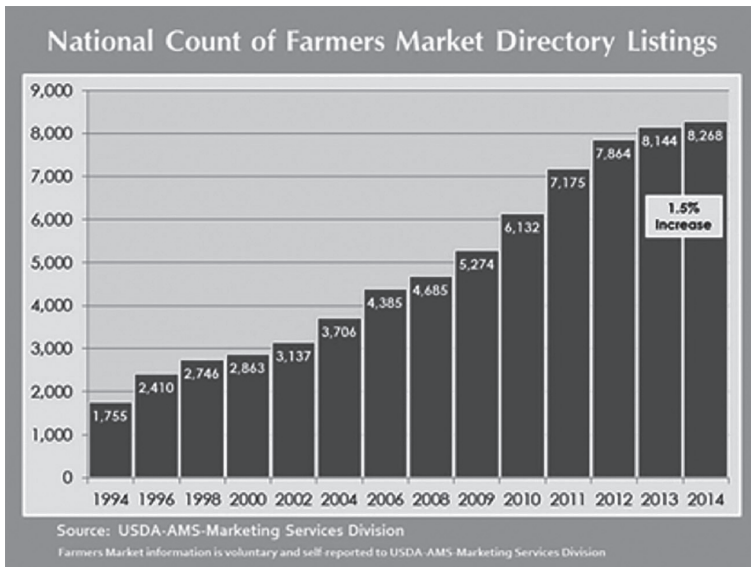
The M. Celeste Nichols Prize and the Bellarmine Learning Community Prize recognize exceptional first-year writing completed in *Expository Writing* or the *Freshman Seminar*. First-year writing faculty submit for consideration student essays written in either the fall or spring semesters. Essays are blind-reviewed by a faculty writing committee, and the most outstanding are selected.

Farmers Market Renaissance

Clare Hagan

Driving around neighborhood streets on a clear Saturday morning, it's not difficult to find small cities of tents set up among the trees with bluegrass music wandering out from their center and ripe vegetables among the shade. Farmers markets are generally defined as "recurrent markets at fixed locations where farm products are sold by farmers themselves" (Brown 658). In the past twenty years, the number and popularity of farmers markets has flourished. This expansion of farmers markets reflects the values and desires of society today, but before examining the causes of this rise in popularity, it is useful to understand the context in which it occurred.

When America was first being settled, most food was local by necessity. Goods were transported by boat or by wagon, and there were not many good techniques for preserving food. At this point, food was sold at "planned events" at "fixed locations" (Hamilton 2). With the aggregation of communities forming larger towns, the mid-1700s saw the consumer becoming the priority at these markets. With more people at a single location, there were more farmers drawn to sell at that spot and more competition was the result.



This represented “changing versions of old markets” (Hamilton 3). Then, in the 1800s, industrialization came thundering through like a locomotive. Improved transportation meant that local food was no longer the only available option. This trend away from raw, local foods continued into the twentieth century when processed foods, chain store, and factories began to take hold. By the Second World War, “the bond between farmer and consumer had been replaced by the desire for almighty Convenience” (Hamilton 3). Although cars did help, and one began to see farmers selling fresh foods out of the back of their trucks, by 1970, only 340 farmers markets remained (Brown 655). This represents a low point in the history of farmers markets. Then in the late 1970s, following the introduction of PL 94-463 in 1976 and the California and Maine Market Certification Regulations in 1977, farmers markets experienced a period of growth (Brown 657). The legislation in the 1970s reflects the desire for more fresh food in communities, brought on largely by political and social influences such as the green movement. Fairly steady growth continued from the 1970s.

According to the USDA, in 1994, there were 1,755 farmers markets. In 2014, there were 8,268. This represents a remarkable period of growth, but what is the cause, and what does this massive increase in the popularity of farmers markets say about our culture today? The renaissance that farmers markets have experienced within the past few years not only reflects a need for healthy, sustainable food in an unhealthy food climate; it also reflects a desire for human contact in our food culture as well as our society.

Waking Up to Reality

The rise of farmers markets coincides with a rise in awareness of the problems within the food industry. America’s history of self-criticism and lack of self-criticism within the second half of the twentieth century correlates closely with farmers market growth, and this correlation is no accident. The rise of farmers markets closely follows a rise in criticism because farmers markets offer a direct solution to many of the problems raised by some of the most vocal critics of America’s food culture.

The correlation between criticism and the popularity of farmers markets is clear. Before the 1970s, industrial food was held up as ideal. The mid-twentieth century was the age of supermarkets, frozen food, and convenience. This reflects a lack of self-criticism. We were known as “The Best-Fed People on Earth” (Levenstein 525). Between 1949 and 1959, scientists created over 400 new additives (Levenstein 524). With the focus on increased efficiency and convenience, the demand for raw, local food fell away. This is reflected in the dwindling of farmers markets which occurred before the 1970s. A rise in criticism accompanied the rise in the popularity of farmers markets during the 1970s. In 1977, the U.S. Senate endorsed Negative Nutrition, a program which warned against eating foods that contained large amounts of sugar and cholesterol (Levenstein 527). Negative Nutrition reflects the increasing trend toward self-criticism which occurred during the 1970s and coincided with the increased popularity of farmers markets. This awareness of unhealthy trends in America’s food culture has continued into today. In the first ten years of the new millennia—years which witnessed some of the most impressive expansion of farmers

markets—one began to see the rise of extremely popular works critiquing eating habits and agricultural methods in the United States. These works include *Fast Food Nation* in 2001, *Super-Size Me* in 2004, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* in 2006 and *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* in 2007. Even though *Super-Size Me* has been largely discredited (Blomkvist), its popularity, as well as the popularity of the other works, reflects the increased consciousness of problems within America's food culture which accompanied the rapid advancement of farmers markets in the first ten years of the new millennium.

This correlation is not mere happenstance. The types of things criticized in the works from the early 2000s were over-processing, a negative environmental impact, and the long distances traveled by the foods. This is when people began to hear that more than a quarter of the foods in the typical American supermarket contain corn (Pollan 19). Authors criticized the harmful effects of chemical fertilizers, and readers followed Barbara Kingsolver as her family ate local for a year, partially because "Each food item in a typical U.S. meal has traveled an average of 1,500 miles" (Kingsolver 5). Farmers markets offer a solution to these criticisms. In contrast to over-processed foods, farmers markets supply raw fruits and vegetables. In place of food grown using environmentally detrimental agricultural practices, farmers markets often offer organic food. In fact, the USDA reports that "7 percent of U.S. organic food sales occur through farmers markets, foodservice, and marketing channels other than retail stores." Farmers markets also represent a source for local food, a far cry from the 1,500 miles an item of food has likely traveled. This relationship between the criticisms of America's food systems and the types of food offered at farmers market shows that the correlation between the two is connected by more than mere chance. This is why farmers markets reflect a need for healthy, sustainable food in an unhealthy food climate. It is when people become aware of this need that they turn to search for solutions.

The Human Element

Farmers markets represent a desire for connection within our food culture as well as a desire for connection in our society. The need for connection within our food culture manifests itself in two ways: the desire for a face and the desire for a narrative. Although this need is reflected in the advertising methods of supermarket products, farmers markets satisfy these inclinations in a way supermarkets are unable to fulfill.

Supermarket foods are, by nature, faceless. If someone walked into a grocery store and picked up a Twinkie, he or she would be hard-pressed to tell you what was in it, much less where it came from. Our foods are removed from their sources, with beginnings difficult to track back down those 1,500 miles. This problem is so prominent that Michael Pollan even defines industrial food as "Any food whose provenance is so complex or obscure that it requires expert help to ascertain" (17). This is why supermarket food is unable to fulfill the hunger for the human element in our diet; unless one is an expert, he or she will be unable to uncover either a face or a narrative.

Even though industrial food is unable to satiate the desire for humanity, the desire is still present, and this is reflected in food advertising. When one looks around the shelves

of a grocery store, it's not difficult to find faces looking back, from Aunt Jemima and Chef Boyardee, to the Little Debbie girl, the Quaker Oats man, and the woman on the packaging for Sun Maid raisins. These depictions in no way reflect the reality of the food's production. The packaging provides the suggestion that a beautiful and smiling woman picks the grapes that Sun Maid dries into raisins rather than an impoverished agricultural worker. In the absence of narrative, companies produce one, whether it is presented as factual or an absolute fabrication. This is where one sees Keebler elves making food or a leprechaun running from kids trying to steal his Lucky Charms. But there are other, more serious narratives, such as that of Rosie the free-range chicken, which is just one example of a range of organic products which Pollan refers to as "storied foods" (135). This need for a narrative, which food marketers play upon and prey upon, is an extremely human need. Stories are how people come to understand the world. The art of storytelling is unknown to any animal but man. And when the desire for a story and the desire for a face is unsatisfied, food marketers attempt to placate their consumers in an ultimately superficial, false manner.

Farmers markets can fulfill the desire for a face and the desire for a narrative in a meaningful way. Because farmers markets are, by definition, a place where farmers sell their own foods, when people step up to a market booth, they see the very face that grew their food. Far from being separated by miles twisted down a labyrinthine food system, the farmer and the customer are face to face. As someone who has worked at a farmers market, I know the types of questions that people ask. In addition to informative questions such as "What type of onion is this?" or "How do you cook kale?" Many of the questions asked are of a different nature. People want to know "Where is your farm?" "How were these animals raised?" "What went into growing these flowers?" People want to know the narrative behind their food, and because the farmers are present at the market, the customer is placed with the person who is in the best position to describe the story behind every different food. Farmers markets can provide a face and narrative in a direct way which is not possible with industrial food.

The desire for connection is also present in our society at large, as technology increases isolation. With people spending more and more times on smart devices (Kleinman), people pass less time face-to-face and more time facing a screen. On a college campus, everywhere one looks, he or she will find people texting, people on Snapchat, people with their phones practically attached to their palm who hardly look at the people sitting right next to them. While social media can allow a person to create more connections, these connections are of an impersonal nature. This lack of meaningful connection creates in its wake a desire for community and meaningful relationships which a farmers market promotes in a way supermarkets cannot.

Farmers markets foster a sense of community. People do not go to a supermarket for the purpose of socializing. A grocery store is not a place where people would typically go to hang out with friends or go on a date. Farmers markets, on the other hand, are a place where people may socialize, sit and listen to music, or have a conversation. When I asked people why they attend a farmers market, their responses only confirmed this notion. One

man said he came “for the fellowship,” calling his time at the farmers market his “social hour.” Another woman, who has been attending markets since 1995, spoke of “Community spirit,” noting, “You can’t do this at Kroger, wander around outside and talk the way you do.” Her first response to why she goes to farmers markets, was not because she likes to eat, but rather “because I like to talk.” Farmers markets are often attended regularly by vendors and people from the nearby area. Because farmers markets are by definition “recurring markets” (Brown 658), they create a space where people can see each other repeatedly, and these interactions create familiar faces where strangers once stood. One vendor spoke of this saying, “You come to a farmers market and all of a sudden there’s all of these people that you see, maybe just this one day a week,” and after a while you begin to talk with these people and make friends with them. “It’s like a family.” she said. In a world which, paradoxically, by becoming more connected has become disconnected, this sense of family and community fulfills the human desire for meaningful relationships and connection.

Nostalgia Culture

Farmers markets reflect the rise of nostalgia born out of a dissatisfaction with the present. Retro trends, though they are not new, are extremely prevalent in society today, exemplified by the character of the hipster which is largely defined by vintage clothes and objects. This inclination of looking for solutions in the past was caused, in part, by the recent economic recession. As a result of this valuing of antiquated objects and practices, farmers markets, which draw on many practices based in nostalgia, have flourished in recent years.

The desire for vintage is a powerful force in our society today, exemplified by the “cultural character” of the hipster which is defined, in many ways, by the love of antiquated practices. Associated with thrift shops, records, old-fashioned fix speed bikes, old cameras, typewriters, and formerly unfashionable styles of facial hair, the hipster represents a turning toward the past. This is nothing new. People have been dressing in old styles for years, yet this is the first time that the phenomena has been named, which suggests that it is a more significant aspect of our culture now than it has been in the past. In addition, no other “cultural character” of the past—from the hippie to the punk to the grunge kid—was based so completely on borrowing from the past. This is an aspect new to the hipster. In the past, these “cultural characters” represented something new and original. Although the idea of borrowing from the styles of the past is no new trend, both the naming of the hipster and the fact that this is the first “cultural character” defined by nostalgia rather than rebellion and originality suggests that retro plays a more significant role in our society today than it has often played in the past.

The trend toward nostalgia is caused, at least in part, by economic downturn. A good way to understand this is to look at what happens when the opposite is the case. The fifties, which witnessed the success of the booming postwar economy, also saw the rise of futurism, which projected out all of the space-age innovations yet to come. This makes sense, for when the future appears to be bright, people will look on toward this expected

innovation. But when the economy appears to be regressing, people will turn to the past as something more positive: a source of safety. A search of Google Trends, which looks at how often a word is searched and serves to reflect how prevalent something is in the consciousness of society, reveals that hipster culture had its beginnings in the heart of the recession. While economic factors are not the only contributors to the rise of nostalgia culture, it does help to explain, in part, why farmers markets with their antiquated practices would not rise to popularity in a time such as the fifties when a confidence in innovation focused the American culture on its poly-chromed future rather than its retro past, but rather the recent past when the vintage rather than the futuristic has taken hold.

Farmers markets are places filled with nostalgia. Local food had its heyday in the beginnings of American culture, but it is not only the form and essential practices of farmers markets which are antiquated: other trappings of farmers market culture follow this as well, most prominently the music which often accompanies the markets. One does not hear techno or pop or rap music, but rather acoustic music or often bluegrass. This helps to contribute to the atmosphere of farmers markets which, like their essential practices, are based in the past and nostalgia. In this, farmers markets have been able to capitalize on the rise of nostalgia culture, helped along by America's turning toward the past.

The growth of farmers markets in the past twenty years is not only representative of a world turning to more responsible agricultural and dietary habits; it reflects the power of nostalgia and the desire for human connection in a world where the only farmers faces along the supermarket aisles are often the ones printed with ink on the boxes.

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Peru's Precarious Mining Industry

Michele Pfeifer

Peru is a rich country in many ways. They have a rich history full of both native and foreign influences, as well as a diverse landscape full of beaches, deserts, mountains, and rainforests. Unfortunately, Peru has not had a history of having a very rich and thriving economy. In the past several decades, though, the country's valuable resources, like the gold and silver that were first exploited by Spanish Conquistadors in the 1500s, have started to be mined and exported (Davenport para. 7). This spurred a boom in Peru's mining industry, helping keep afloat their crumbling economy. According to Richard German in an *Engineering and Mining Journal*, "Mining is vital to Peru's economy. Thanks both to high mineral prices and rising output, mineral exports were up by almost half in the year 2004, and accounted for 55% of total exports." The cost of this, however, is the health of several communities and the environment. The companies that excavate these precious minerals and metals emit several pollutants into the surrounding ecosystems and bodies of the locals. For example, "It is estimated that 30 to 40 (metric) tons of mercury are dumped into the environment annually ... generally without even using rudimentary technology to protect workers' health or capture waste or fumes" ("Illegal Mining" para. 4). The long term effects of this mining and exploitation will only get worse and probably spread if nothing is changed. Mining should not be eradicated in Peru, for economic reasons, but should be much better regulated and monitored or the health of the nation will suffer and cause serious long-lasting consequences.

Like many South American countries, Peru has struggled to reach and maintain a stable economy. Seeing as there is a \$90 billion infrastructure gap, deficient education and healthcare, and the fact that 7.5 million Peruvians live in absolute poverty, it is no wonder that the government would do just about anything to spur the economy (Rudaranchana para. 7). In a way, mining has become this country's saving grace. With the boom in the mining industry, Peru has become one of the global leaders in exporting precious minerals like gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc. In 2010, this caused the country's gross domestic product to grow by 8.8 percent and for its exports to exceed its imports, showing improvement and a promising future for Peru's economy ("Industry Profile" para. 14).

There are regulations in place, and even though there are visible signs of damage, many Peruvians, as well as the government, are against more regulations. In 2014 the government tried to force unlicensed miners to register their activities, but they were met with so many protests from a large amount of miners that essentially nothing was achieved in the end (Kozak para. 4). Also in 2014, President Humala presented several reforms that were meant to stabilize the economy, but they also cut back on environmental controls (Shortell para. 2). This is concerning, as it could potentially regress the country even further back than it was before. In the long run, at the rate miners are going at right now,

mineral reserves will be depleted in the upcoming years, in approximately 2033, leaving Peru with a devastated economy and environment (German 4). The environment is suffering now though, so something needs to be done to help this from becoming long term.

Illegal mining is doing irreversible damage to ecosystems because the regulations that Peru does have are hardly enforced. There are certain areas of land where mining is prohibited and miners are required to have licenses. The reason illegal mining is so profitable is because these miners do not follow safety protocols or environmental regulations, which endangers lives and ecosystems. According to Juan José Córdova, the leader of the energy sector at KPMG Peru, “it is estimated that between 18% and 22% of the \$10 billion Peru exports in gold comes from illegal mining” (“Illegal Mining” para. 15). This unregulated mining obviously needs to be dealt with carefully or Peru’s economy could end up just as bad or even worse than it was before the mining boom and many people could lose their jobs.

Several regions in Peru have been stripped and ravaged due to the lack of consideration of illegal miners. Liquid mercury especially has been damaging the environment. Liquid mercury is used by illegal miners to extract gold particles in a process known as amalgamation, but the lack of formality that they use makes the process dangerous (“Illegal Mining” para. 4). Mercury has made its way into the ecosystem and the food chain because of this process. Giant fifty-foot-deep pits are also dug up to extract the precious yellow metal. This negatively impacts the surrounding environment in many ways, but one specific way is that Peru is now facing a deforestation problem. Thousands of trees, some of which are over 1,200 years old and home to many species of birds, are cut and burned down to make way for thousands of these pits. Deforestation has increased six-fold in the past few years, and at least 64,000 acres of land have been leveled. A specific region known as Madre de Dios has been severely impacted by this. This region “is among the most biodiverse and, until recently, pristine environments in the world,” but these pits are popping up all over the place and destroying everything (Webster para. 4). Ironically, this region has also become a big spot for Peru’s prosperous ecotourism industry, but this could obviously change if this mining problem persists (Webster para. 9).

Even mining that is legal and regulated has become a problem in Peru. Mining companies are coming in and exploiting all of Peru’s resources. One of these companies is the Doe Run Mining Company, which is located high in the Andes near a smelting town. According to an article about a study done in this town, “dangerously high concentrations of lead have been found in blood samples from nearly all young children [in this town]” (Fraser para. 1). High levels of substances like cadmium, arsenic, mercury, and thallium were also found in the blood of not only the members of the smelting town, but also in people part of a control group located 80 kilometers away. Because of this, it is evident that the effect this company is having is spreading to surrounding villages and could go farther. The people who live there suffer from many health issues, including growth impairment and lower IQs because of their exposure to the toxic substances. Some residents want the plant shut down because of this, but the majority do not say anything, despite their apparent declining health, because they fear the impact it could have on their economy (Fraser para. 19). These towns should not have to live like this though. If the government more closely and efficiently regulated these companies, they would improve the health of their citizens without destroying the hub of their economy.

This is an important issue not just for Peruvians, but also for the rest of the world. The Amazon River basin, where this problem is very prevalent, is home to about “a quarter of the world’s terrestrial species [and] its trees are the engine of perhaps 15 percent of photosynthesis occurring on landmasses; and countless species, including plants and insects, have yet to be identified” (Webster para. 4). This means that this problem affects the air that everyone on the planet shares. The mercury being dumped from mining has also made its way into fish species that people, and not just Peruvians, consume. The biggest issue though, according to research director William Tankard, is “a lack of rehabilitation and unregulated use of beneficiation chemicals” (“Illegal Mining” para. 7). Nothing, especially not Peru’s current mining regulations, is stopping this problem from spreading and getting worse. For the sake of the whole world, Peru needs to find a way to successfully control and moderate its mining industry so that the whole country, not just its environment or economy, does not crash in the long term.

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Why Rules Are Made to be Broken

Tanner Banks

In society there are those who enforce the law, those who obey the law, and those who break the law. Some believe that the world is black and white, only two sides to the coin. Others see shades of grey with ambiguous judgments of morals juxtaposing the concrete letter of the law. Regardless of how the law is interpreted, from the people who uphold the law and those who oppose it, both have a set of rules with how they do business. They both have a code, their own laws, they have a protocol. But is protocol something that someone lives by, or is it merely obeyed to protect higher ups? Two major players from the first season of *The Wire* often find themselves at odds with the protocol involved in their careers: detective Jimmy McNulty and nephew to kingpin Avon Barksdale, D'Angelo Barksdale. Both have similarly antagonistic views of the protocol they live by, even though they find themselves on opposite sides of the law. In the ebb and flow of police vs. criminals, chaos reigns supreme. Nobody is ever safe, a witness can be killed before testifying, a rival gang could put a hit on you, a drug bust might go bad and you'll find yourself caught in the crossfire. As Avon Barksdale says: "...The thing is, you only got to fuck up once. Be a little slow, be a little late, just once..." In this context protocol is bred from chaos, it exists to combat chaos and protect the powerful. But because of the strict nature of protocol, it can create an antagonism towards some members. From this, protocol ultimately becomes something that is merely obeyed and often battled by those told to uphold it.

McNulty and D'Angelo may both be from Baltimore, but they're worlds apart in terms of where they're from. McNulty came from a middle-class family, son of a steel worker, before he became a police officer, the classic good guy, tough luck history. D'Angelo meanwhile, grew up in the family business of drugs, money laundering, and murder. Nephew to the top dog Avon Barksdale, D'Angelo quickly rose up the ranks to lieutenant in one of the top earning apartment towers, dealing heroin and cocaine for the gang.

Despite their different beginnings, both grew to hold a strong disdain for the powers that be and the rules set forth. McNulty, ever the narcissist believed that his abilities and intellect were far above his supposed "superiors" and believed that protocol only got in the way of actual police work getting done. Near the end of season one, McNulty eloquently states his disdain for protocol in a rage against lawyer/lover Rhonda Pearlman. In his tirade, he tells Rhonda "If only half you motherfuckers at the district attorney's office didn't want to be judges ... If half of you had the fucking balls to follow through, you know what would happen? A guy like that would be indicted, tried and convicted ... we could push a clean case or two through your courthouse." D'Angelo meanwhile, holds a disdain for protocol for a different reason. Constantly under his uncle's thumb and trying

to figure out if the game is something he wants to be a part of, D'Angelo finds himself quickly cast aside and seemingly forgotten by his uncle. Later on, with both he and Avon facing prison time, literally everyone and his mother implores D'Angelo to take the rap for Avon to protect the "family." D'Angelo finds himself a constant victim of the protocol of Avon's gang. Protect the king at all costs. D'Angelo's internal and external frustrations with the way things are run have him ultimately look to escape the drug trade and start over, willing to hand over Avon to the police in the process. Much research has been done on the effects of how police officers as well as gang members respond to and use written and unwritten protocol while on the job.

Most criminal organizations are highly structured with clear forms of leadership and rules and regulations for the gang. Often compared to a business or franchise system, gangs tend to take a very hands-on approach to their organization. As described in *Are we a family or a business? History and Disjuncture in the Urban American Street Gang* the structures of the gangs were meant as a form of control for maintaining order in the gangs. As such, the corporate nature of the gangs had a chain of command where all members "held offices and specific roles, and each constituent set was tied to the overall organization through trademark and fiduciary responsibilities" (Venkatesh 3). Highly regulated methods such as those used in the franchising system in gangs often cause a lack of "energy" in the gangs which can cause insubordination or splintering of the group, therefore, "negentropy" is necessary to maintain order. *A Systemic Analysis Of The Dynamics And Organization Of Urban Street Gangs* describes negentropy as "the introduction of new energy into a static system" (Ruble 8). In gangs, this is typically completed through violent means such as drive-by shootings, gangbangs, beat-downs, etc. Simply put, "the more members collaborate to pull off violent activities for the "good" of the gang, the stronger this [gang] becomes" (8). This is very similar to how violence works in *The Wire*; low-ranking and high-ranking gang members typically collaborate on assassinations of rivals, snitches, and other targets. Although this creates unity for most members, D'Angelo believes violence only creates problems. He thinks that without violence the process would be easier for everyone. When asking why everything has to be violent, D'Angelo says "You can't tell me this shit can't get done without people beatin' on each other, killing each other, doing each other like dogs." D'Angelo's less violent beliefs contrast with Avon and Stringer (Avon's right-hand-man) who set the code that when someone is out of line, they're to be killed. These killings in *The Wire* are typically done to protect Avon from any danger, both physical and legal, implying dozens upon dozens of lower ranking members being arrested, beaten, and killed to protect *one* person. This method of compliance is similar to how things are run with both McNulty's police department as well as today's police.

In *The Wire*'s police department there is corruption on every level. Whether it is extortion, police brutality, or "donations" to the cause, detectives, lieutenants, majors, and senators all have a hand in the cookie jar at some point. And everybody on the force knows this as well. However, there is also a protocol to cover for everyone commonly referred to as "The Blue Wall of Silence." This wall of silence can be found in *The Wire* and in society today. In a recent example of police brutality, suspect Walter Scott was shot in the back five times by the pursuing officer Michael Slager. Slager proceeded to plant

evidence on Scott and chose not to perform life saving measures as is *official* protocol. First responding officer Clarence Habersham is under scrutiny for his compliant nature towards Slager's actions, as well as assisting in the planting of evidence. While interviewed on Habersham's actions, civil rights activist and police lieutenant Charles Wilson was asked about the police code of silence. When asked Wilson stated "Do you speak out or do you remain silent? A lot of officers choose to be silent, unfortunately" (Fernandez 1). The Walter Scott incident isn't an isolated issue either, with the CATO institute showing over 4800 reported cases of police misconduct in 2010. Similar to the gang's method of protecting higher level members and violence, the police seem to also protect each other for the good of the police force. Much of this is done in *The Wire* as a method of protecting the unit as a whole and to get in favor with higher ups in the organization, similar to D'Angelo's situation and much to McNulty's disdain. While McNulty's insubordination and hatred of protocol is rather self-evident, D'Angelo's extends so far that protocol pushes him to a willingness to flip on the gang.

In what is easily the biggest breach of protocol for any gang member, D'Angelo is pushed towards snitching on his own gang after the aforementioned mistreatment towards D'Angelo. Snitching on another member is the biggest breach a member can make and carries a severe penalty. While in the police, breach of protocol could cost someone a promotion, their job, or their credibility, in gangs it is most commonly dealt with in one manner: death. In *Deregulating Guilt: The Information Culture of the Criminal System*, an anonymous informant was interviewed on the dangers of snitching, saying if "the others know you're the snitch, [you'd] get [your] head blown off" (Natapoff 39). This is the best example of just how little D'Angelo thinks of the protocol used by the gang. Because of how much D'Angelo is pushed down the ranks, stepped over and stepped on, he is willing to make the *biggest* breach possible just for a chance to escape the vicious cycle that he is trapped in. D'Angelo knows how dangerous being a snitch is; he's seen Avon call dozens of hits on anybody that even had the *potential* to be a snitch. In a very calculated move, D'Angelo decides that his own personal well-being is more important than that of some backstabbing, lying, "family run" gang that supposedly puts family above all else. If not for a lack of government protection, D'Angelo would have completed his turn from the gang and found himself a free man, ready to find a new life.

It's hard to beat the game you're playing when the rules are made to make it impossible to actually have a chance. Much like in real life, it's never fair in *The Wire*. While protocol might have the appearance of keeping a system of balance and rules for people, it's often merely a means to protect the powerful by keeping the lower ranks in line. Whether it's Major Rawls trying to get McNulty fired for digging too deep into a case, Avon calling a hit on a witness in a case against a member of his gang, or a police officer in South Carolina shooting a suspect and having one of his fellow officers plant evidence, protocol, both written and unwritten, protect the powerful at the expense of those below. However, this carries an inherent danger. Much like how McNulty is willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done to piss off his boss or D'Angelo giving information to the police, the strict nature of the enforcement of protocol breeds resentment. And when protocol threatens the individual, the individual may threaten the organization.

Touching base on last semester's final paper on my thoughts on government involvement in housing, the events of this class and *The Wire* have strengthened my beliefs ten-fold. One of the major themes of the entirety of the section and a major plot point in *The Wire* is the corrupt nature of the government. Whether it's transporting drugs and guns through South America to fund terrorists, illegal procedures taken to catch a suspect, blatant money laundering or anything else on the laundry list of examples, the government is shown to have little care for the needs of the people and instead choose to help the special interests of a select few. Often in exchange for thousands of dollars in donations to the government official's "private" funding account.

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A Minimum Wage Increase Will Benefit Women

Emily J. Clark

“When women succeed, America succeeds.” This statement was proclaimed by President Barack Obama at the State of the Union Address in January of 2014 to try to convince Congress to raise the minimum wage. His intentions, although good, have yet to take action. Women, who make up a majority of minimum wage workers, are hindered in their pay and are subjected to live in poverty because of the \$7.25 per hour wage. Of course minimum wage can be anybody’s issue, but when women still earn seventy-seven cents for every dollar a man makes paired with being the breadwinner for a family with one or more children, it is clear who suffers the most. Opponents of a minimum wage increase argue that a raise in the wage will cause a substantial job loss along with an increase in the cost of basic necessities. Supporters, on the other hand, argue that an increase in the minimum wage will help pull seventeen million women out of poverty, help close the gender wage gap, and eventually send America in the right direction toward economic growth. While both sides of the argument provide valid points on a minimum wage increase’s potential, the proponents’ argument proves to be more effective, providing hope and techniques that will help women prosper. A raise in the minimum wage will benefit women the most because it will help pull them out of poverty, give them the opportunity to support their families better, and help them reach a more comfortable life.

Opponents of an increase in the minimum wage argue that a raise will push women deeper into poverty as well as send the United States in the wrong direction toward economic advancement. One reason the opponents resist an increase in the minimum wage is because of the assumption that a raise will cut a significant amount of jobs. The Congressional Budget Office along with the Research Director for the Employment Policies Institute stated that a wage increase has a high probability of causing the loss of employment of many workers which then will cause “over a quarter of a million women to lose their job if this wage increase becomes reality” (MacPherson). For example, this assumption is justified through the belief that if an employer has a determined compensation budget it uses for its employees, the employer can no longer pay the same number of employees if the minimum wage is increased, thus causing layoffs (Halvorson). The question about this assumption, however, is not about why the minimum wage increase will cause a job loss, but instead, why it will affect women more than men. According to the United States Census Bureau’s data, the reason why a minimum wage increase will cause more women to lose their jobs is because women make up a larger percentage of minimum wage workers (MacPherson). Opponents believe that if women are the majority of minimum wage earners, they have a greater chance of being laid off, therefore not benefiting from a minimum wage increase.

Another reason as to why opponents of an increase argue that a wage hike will negatively affect women is because of competition and fewer hirings in the workplace (Halvorson). This assumption that competition will hurt women stems from the belief that those women who are seeking a second job will not be considered by the employer, thus pushing them out of the running. It is also believed that women who are seeking second minimum wage jobs are more than likely not qualified or skilled for that particular type of employment, and they will be overlooked because of the overqualified individuals seeking the newly increased minimum wage. Opponents believe that this will not only deprive women of a second job to earn more income, but will also deprive them of new opportunities for employment, experience, and knowledge—all of which could potentially help them in their future as employees (Halvorson). The latter of this assumption that a minimum wage increase will cause employers to hire less is also believed to hurt women. If employers are forced to pay those who earn minimum wage more, they will opt to not hire as many workers in order to save their money and earn a profit (Halvorson). Opponents believe that because women make up the majority of those who apply to minimum wage jobs and earn the \$7.25 per hour wage, employers will hire fewer women, thus negatively affecting them.

The last reason why opponents of a minimum wage increase argue that a raise will push women deeper into poverty is because of the assumption that the cost of living will increase along with the minimum wage (MacPherson). This argument stems from the belief that employers and organizations could potentially raise the prices of its products in order to earn enough money to pay its employees the increased minimum wage (Halvorson). This assumption is expected to hurt women because women make up the majority of breadwinners of single parent headed households who pay for necessities like groceries and fuel for transportation. Opponents believe that if the cost of living increases, women will be expected to pay more for basic necessities like food, transportation, and housing, which will then cause them and their families to be pushed deeper into poverty.

One proponent, Jim Hightower, a man who supports a minimum wage increase for the benefit of women, researched and discovered facts that disprove the detractor's view on a wage hike. The first assumption Hightower invalidates is that a minimum wage increase would cut an abundant amount of jobs. Hightower refutes this belief by stating that when the wage had previously been increased by Congress, it "caused little-to-zero negative impacts on job numbers, but very positive results for employee morale, productivity, and turnover" (Hightower). Another assumption that Hightower contradicted was that a minimum wage increase would negatively affect small businesses. However, Hightower found that when people are paid more for their work, they tend to spend their increase in pay in the local economy, which in turn, helps small businesses instead of hurt them (Hightower). Hightower's two counter-arguments prove how a minimum wage increase will help America's low wage workers, as well as the economy.

While the opponents of a minimum wage increase point to the negative effects an increase could have on women, proponents point to the positive effects that could help women prosper and thrive in the United States' economy. The most profound advantage of a wage increase is that \$10.10 per hour instead of \$7.25 could help pull seventeen million women out of poverty. Women make up two thirds of minimum wage earners in a variety

of professions, and when they represent the majority of single parent headed households, it is difficult to thrive off of such a minute income (Martin). The National Women's Law Center performed a study that found that \$7.25 per hour amounts to \$14,500 per year, \$3,000 below the poverty line for a single parent with two children (Shavin). This statistic shows the struggle women endure because they make up 80 percent of single parent headed households, and 40 percent of that amount are single mother headed households living below the federal poverty line (Shavin). This situation deprives women of their dignity, self-esteem, and the belief that anyone can achieve the American dream. A raise in the minimum wage could potentially pull seventeen million women out of poverty, and raising it to just \$9.80 per hour would bring the annual earnings of a minimum wage worker to \$19,600, which could very well help pull a family of three out of poverty (Covert).

Advocates of a minimum wage increase also argue that a raise will provide women with the ability to afford basic necessities for themselves and their families. Due to the cost of inflation in comparison with the cost of living and basic necessities, women tend to find themselves falling further behind as they are required to make ends meet with less money (Smith). The rate of inflation increases from year to year, but Congress has only increased the minimum wage three times in thirty years, making it more difficult for minimum wage earners to prosper in the United States economy (Halverson). When woman minimum wage earners are two thirds of the United States' breadwinners, their families suffer. These mothers aren't compensated enough to be able to afford basic necessities that are often taken for granted like groceries and school supplies. If the minimum wage is increased, however, more women will be earning more money to put toward basic necessities and the cost of living in the United States, thus benefiting the women and their position in the economy (Smith).

Another reason why the minimum wage should be increased is because it will help women become less dependent on government aid. Those who earn minimum wage have a greater probability of taking out loans or applying for food stamps because their earnings are not enough to support their families. If the minimum wage is increased, however, there will be less need for government assistance in women's lives. For instance, Sande Smith from the Women's Foundation of California found that "increasing California's minimum wage from \$8 dollars to \$13 dollars would reduce enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the food stamps program, by an estimated 740,000 to 891,000 people" (Smith). This would help restore women's self-esteem and would give them the opportunity to help their families live comfortable lives without government assistance. The United States' economy would also benefit by having more money to spend in other areas that desperately need the funding.

Advocates of a minimum wage increase also argue that a wage hike would help close the gender wage gap and potentially defeat income inequality between men and women (Martin). When women earn the minimum wage along with earning less than men, it makes it virtually impossible for them to live comfortably. Women only earn seventy-seven cents for every dollar men make, but if they were paid more or equally for their work, the possibility of women becoming equal to their male counterparts would grow and flourish (Martin).

There are numerous solutions on how to fix the problems associated with women who live in poverty because of minimum wage. The first solution is formulated through

the detractors' view and assumptions about a wage increase. Opponents believe the best way to help pull women out of poverty instead of increasing the minimum wage is to increase the earned income tax credit (MacPherson). The earned income tax credit is a federal program that provides benefits to low income workers by reducing the amount of taxes one owes or by giving refunds (EITC). Opponents support this solution because they approve of the idea of helping women by reducing their tax amount or giving refunds without potentially hurting America's economy. The drawback to this solution, however, is that the earned income tax credit will come in a check at the end of the year, leaving the woman minimum wage workers to struggle to make ends meet each month.

Proponents, on the other hand, support two different solutions that will benefit women and provide them with comfortable lives. The first solution proposed by advocates is to increase the minimum wage gradually so the United States economy is not stunned by such a sudden and dramatic increase. The only drawback to this solution, however, is that it is not immediate and will take time, over the course of a couple years, in order to notice a difference. The second and most profound solution proposed by the advocates of a wage raise is to increase the minimum wage to the same pace as inflation. The amount of the current minimum wage has fallen behind the amount of inflation, making it more and more difficult for minimum wage earners to fulfill their wants and needs. If the minimum wage had kept its pace with inflation, it would equal \$10.10 per hour. This ideal minimum wage would help a breadwinning mother bring in close to a \$21,000 annual income, thus helping her buy the things her family needs to survive (Madland & Miller).

In conclusion, both the opponents and proponents of a minimum wage increase provide valid points. The proponents however, provide better reasoning that states the true effectiveness of an increase in the lives of women who struggle to make ends meet for themselves and their families each month. The advocates provide ways to help these women along with providing hope and confidence that many women who live in poverty are searching for, while the opponents complain about what a wage increase would do to the economy instead of what it would do for the women. The proponents' argument provides effective implementations stating that a minimum wage increase would help the seventeen million women in poverty as well as give them the opportunity to support their families and live comfortable and worry-free lives.

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Theology Essay Contest

The Theology Department Essay Contest is sponsored annually by the Department of Theology and the Master of Arts in Spirituality program. Students submit outstanding papers written for any of the theology classes that they have taken while at Bellarmine. Papers are written for classes taken within either the fall or spring semesters and can be submitted to the chair of the theology department any time before the deadline for submissions is announced in the spring. All submissions are refereed by faculty members in the department. Winning essays are presented and discussed at the annual theology department colloquy which is ordinarily planned during Undergraduate Research and Study Week.

Discovering the True Self in Light of the 12 Steps

Rebecca Harpring

“The only true joy on earth is to escape from the prison of our own false self, and enter by love into union with the Life Who dwells and sings within the essence of every creature and in the core of our own souls” (Merton, *New Seeds* 25).

One of Thomas Merton’s most famous insights was his idea of the “true self” at the center of each human heart by which God knows and loves each individual. Deep within the core of humanity lies a hunger for God, but problems emerge when people try to satisfy this hunger with any object, idea, or image that is less than God (Merton, *New Seeds* 218). When humans begin to fill this deep longing for God with other things, the “false self,” or a person’s ego, begins to consume her true identity. It clings to images, ideas, or objects that mask one’s true identity (Merton, *Conjectures* 197). Only a deep inner crisis can pull one out of this illusion so that she can begin to discover who she really is. In this deep struggle God calls one back into relationship (Merton, *New Seeds* 35).

Merton, a Trappist monk who lived during the mid-twentieth century at the Abbey of Gethsemani in rural Kentucky, continues to be a highly influential spiritual writer for people from all walks of life. While he writes from a Catholic Christian perspective, his ideas can be interpreted from a broader spectrum. Applying Merton’s insights to the struggle an alcoholic faces with her addiction, one can begin to see the parallels between the Twelve Steps and discovering the true self. When one’s life becomes consumed by her addiction to alcohol, it buries her true self. She begins to live under the illusion that alcohol can solve her problems, or at least help her cope with them. In reality it destroys her relationship with others, God and herself. Rather than finding inner peace and freedom, she experiences anger and self-imprisonment to alcohol (*Alcoholics* 73). Only when she realizes her inner brokenness and is willing to surrender her life to God can she begin to recover her true self (Rohr 6). The Twelve Steps can serve as a practical model for discovering the true self because they share much of the same wisdom that Merton articulated in his writings. In this paper, I will first discuss Merton’s notions of the true self versus the false self, and then apply them to the Twelve Steps.

Merton does not explicitly define the true self because it is too deep for words alone, but he does convey how it is the being by which God knows each person. Everyone possesses a “point” or “spark” planted in his or her heart by God. Of this spark, Merton writes, “This little point of nothingness and of *absolute poverty* is the pure glory of God in us. It is so to speak His name written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependence,

as our sonship” (*Conjectures* 158). Because of this “point” within each human heart, there lies a hunger for God, a need for union with God. This absolute poverty compels one to search for God, who is the source of one’s *being* (Merton, *Conjectures* 221).

Daniel Horan further develops the true self in light of John Duns Scotus, a fourteenth century Franciscan theologian whose ideas greatly influenced Merton. Scotus describes the true self in terms of “*haecceitas* (literally translated as ‘this-ness’ in Latin).” Rather than knowing a person by “accidentals” or external qualities, God knows each individual by his or her essence (Horan 103). This essence is at the core of human existence. Within each person lies a sacred space that only God knows and can reveal, a space that cannot be touched by “sin, nor desire, nor self-knowledge” (Merton, *Conjectures* 158). According to Horan, when one begins to discover the true self, a person answers two questions: “Who am I?” and “Who is God?” (96). By becoming aware of the *haecceitas*, or “spark” within oneself, one is invited to an authentic relationship with her Creator (Horan 113).

In one’s longing, or search for deeper meaning, God invites each person to follow God’s will, not as an “arbitrary force bearing down upon” a person, but an “interior invitation of personal love” (Merton, *New Seeds* 15). God’s love is always freely given, but it is up to the individual to accept that love or not. Merton writes how animals and trees grow and live as God intended, but human beings have the freedom to follow God’s will or not (*New Seeds* 31). In other words, God never forces a person to act or live a certain way, but the love of God compels her to seek meaning to life. When one accepts God’s invitation to love, her life is transformed and she sees the world with new eyes. In discovering God, one discovers the true self, but this discovery also necessarily involves a dying to the false self (Merton, *New Seeds* 15).

Merton writes how the false self alienates one from God because it is self-serving. It misuses God’s gifts to satisfy one’s own egotistic desires. Merton writes, “It is when we refer all things to this outward and false ‘self’ that we alienate ourselves from reality and from God. It is then the false self that is our god, and we love everything for the sake of this self.” When people use objects, ideologies, and other people as a means to their own end, their relationship with those things and people becomes “corrupt and sinful” (*New Seeds* 21). When one becomes addicted to things such as alcohol, sex, food, or drugs, she uses them in a perverted way. The desire for more will drive one deeper and deeper into misery because there is no lasting joy in these things. Not only does the self-centered nature of the ego drive one into despair, but it also alienates her from others.

Living under this illusion, one sees herself as an autonomous individual, separate from other people and from God. In order to prove her individuality, she compares herself against others and separates herself from God by thinking she has complete freedom “to do exactly as [s]he pleases without rendering an account to anyone and without taking into consideration the moral and physical consequences of any of [her] acts” (Merton, *Conjectures* 114). Living under this false freedom, one separates herself from others because she becomes disoriented from her true self. Out of this division within, self-hatred, anger, and confusion arise. Not only does one project this anger onto others, but she covers it with addictions to external entities such as drugs, alcohol, fads, or compulsive busyness. Without even realizing it, she becomes a slave to them, thinking they will make her hap-

pier. When one lives under the illusion of the false self, relationships are broken and one sinks deeper and deeper into loneliness and despair (Merton, *Conjectures* 197).

Inevitably, one will confront an inner struggle when she is faced with the choice of life or death; that is, between living as the true self or the false self. One must die to the egotistic mentality that traps her in a cycle of addiction and emptiness. She must strip off her masks and learn to embrace her own “nothingness.” When people define themselves by their hobbies, lifestyles, careers, and other external qualities, it is easy to become consumed by them and lose touch with their true self. While these things are not inherently bad or immoral, they do not touch the depths of one’s true identity (Merton, *New Seeds* 22). When a crisis or inner struggle occurs, however, these external things fall away and one is left with nothing. Merton writes of this experience saying, “And when they are gone there will be nothing left of me but my own nakedness and emptiness and hollowness, to tell me that I am my own mistake” (*New Seeds* 35). In this vulnerability, one confronts loneliness and realizes her dependence on others for healing and wholeness.

The true self not only draws us back to God, but also back to others. As God’s children, people are meant to give and receive love (Merton, *New Seeds* 65). When Merton has his famous epiphany in Louisville, he realizes the profound interconnectedness of humanity; that people are not isolated beings, but made to be with one another. It was so profound because as a monk, he had seen himself as being separate or set apart from the rest of humanity, but his epiphany makes him realize how disillusioned he had become. He learns that even in his solitude he has a responsibility for other people and cannot be alien to them because they are also God’s children. He writes, “My solitude, however, is not my own, for I see now how much it belongs to them – and that I have a responsibility for it in their regard, not just in my own” (*Conjectures* 158). Through this experience, Merton comes to understand himself on a deeper level, and in understanding himself he comes to understand other people in the same way. He begins to see them as reflections of God’s love which is the same love alive in his own heart. The spiritual transformation that Merton describes from illusion to truth, from isolation to community, from enslavement to freedom parallels the “vital spiritual experience” that also results from the Twelve Steps.

Before delving into the actual steps, there are several important aspects of the spirituality of the Twelve Steps that I would like to highlight. Richard Rohr, who explores the spirituality of Alcoholics Anonymous, explains how alcohol can become a manifestation of the false self that controls a person’s actions, thoughts, and relationships (6). Under this illusory self, one falls prey to “dualistic thinking,” a judgmental style of thinking that attaches to certain ideals or stereotypes. Anything outside of those self-imposed norms is seen as separate or alien to oneself. In reality, dualistic thinking, or an “all or nothing” mentality leads to self-defeat because one realizes she cannot live up to her ideals. With dualistic thinking, a person feels in control, yet hollow on the inside. There exists a chasm between who one is and who one wants to be, but alcohol conceals this inner division (Rohr 53). Rohr explains the paradox of powerlessness by saying that in one’s utter state of defeat, God works with a person to regain strength and restore order to her life. He writes how “we must ‘undergo God’ . . . It is strangely a giving up of control to receive a gift and find a new kind of ‘control’” (54). When one faces the reality of her enslavement to alcohol or

some other substance, she can choose to continue living in isolation or surrender her life to the mercy of God (Rohr 27). The Twelve Steps provides a way to restore one back to wholeness. Throughout this process, one learns to reconnect with her body, mind, and spirit. In doing so, a person becomes more conscious of her dualistic thinking and learns to operate on a deeper, holistic level which leads to contemplative living (Rohr 11). Not only does one grow in relationship with God, but also with one's true self.

Bill W., the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, states that a "vital spiritual experience" is absolutely necessary for people to recover from alcoholism. After encountering such hopelessness and desperation from failed attempts to stop drinking on their own, they come to realize that God is the only One who can help them. Willpower is not strong enough to conquer their addiction; only a genuine surrender to God can truly save them (Alcoholics 25). For the majority of alcoholics, however, this experience is a very gradual process. Bill W. is intent on not using the word "awakening" to describe such an experience because it would imply that the inner transformation is instantaneous, but in reality it can take several months or even years (Alcoholics 567). In her study on the profound transformation that occurs through the Twelve Steps, Alyssa Forchimes writes, "Most people do not maintain change on their first try, but instead cycle through stages before reaching stable change. Relapse in this model is common as a normal part of the change process" (507). A person must be devoted to the Twelve Steps which can involve reworking them throughout one's lifetime.

Similarly, Merton suggests that discovering the true self is a lifelong journey that requires patience and humility. One must allow God to make the changes, for any attempt to fix oneself without God's help will fail. Merton writes how one must patiently trust God to work through her and be "willing to suffer great indignity and peril" as she gradually learns to resist the temptation to drink (*Conjectures* 225). Even though the Twelve Steps outline specific actions one must take to have a spiritual experience, they are not a "one and done" model, but rather a lifelong commitment to self-improvement and inner transformation. Likewise, Merton states an "authentic identity," or true meaning in life, "cannot be had merely by *willing* and by taking steps" to attain it. There are no concrete answers to discovering the true self; it is something that can only be discovered with patient trust in God (*Conjectures* 224).

In the beginning stages of recovery, many alcoholics struggle with the image of "God" or a "Higher Power," so Alcoholics Anonymous steers clear of defining "God" or prescribing any particular religion. For example, Step Three advises to surrender to God *as [she] understood Him*" (Alcoholics 59). *The Big Book* explicitly states, "When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God" (47). Alcoholics Anonymous also recognizes that many people have been jaded by institutional religion and ideologies that portray God in a harsh, judgmental, and inaccurate way (45). Through the Twelve Steps, however, one begins to form a right relationship with God by encountering God's radical mercy and love. Rohr adds that the need for forgiveness opens the door to receiving God's mercy. Without the need for healing, one would not have the opportunity to experience God's forgiveness (27). One must simply be open to the idea of a "Higher Power" and allow that Power to work in her life. Even though an individual's image of God may be

incomplete, it is still a place to start. Over time that image will evolve and one's relationship with God will grow, but it requires patience (Alcoholics 47).

Merton acknowledges his own struggles with faith by saying, "I do not take faith seriously as something I definitively possess, but I take seriously God Who gives me faith and renews that gift, by His mercy, at every moment, in spite of my unbelief" (*Conjectures* 333). The emphasis on one's relationship with God has deeper implications than merely "faith." A relationship is mutual, requiring both sides to work together, whereas faith seems more passive and one-sided, distancing God from oneself. By having a relationship, one relies on God to help sustain her in moments of difficulty or trial. Even after relapses, when one turns away from God, she can still turn back and ask for forgiveness. Merton describes life as a "series of choices between the fiction of our false self, whom we feed with the illusions of passions and selfish appetite, and our loving consent to the purely gratuitous mercy of God" (*New Seeds* 41). By entering fully into relationship with God, one learns to become vulnerable, allowing God to penetrate all aspects of her life. However, most often one learns to become vulnerable by "hitting bottom" (Forcehimes 511). As long as alcohol consumes one's life, she cannot live as the true self. Living under the influence of alcohol, one lives full of illusions. The Twelve Steps guide one to abandon drinking altogether and live under the influence of God.

The first step starts with acknowledging one's own weakness, the inability to quit her addiction by herself. One begins by recognizing that she is "powerless over alcohol" and that her life has become "unmanageable" because of it (Alcoholics 59). Many people end up broke, homeless, in the hospital, at odds with family and friends, jobless, or "pretty badly mangled" in some way before they can acknowledge the reality of their disease. They must accept their powerlessness, even to just one drink (Alcoholics 43). For example, Bill W. shares his personal experience saying, "No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity... Alcohol was my master" (8). The first vital step begins to unmask the false self, starting with an awareness that the false illusory self exists in the first place. Merton explains how one must "completely and honestly accept [herself], [her] own problems, [her] own defeats," before she can give herself to others (*Conjectures* 185). In other words, she must be humble enough to recognize her own "unworthiness" and need for help before criticizing others for the same problem (Merton, *Conjectures* 174).

The second and third steps naturally follow the first one. The second step requires the alcoholic "to believe that a Power greater than [oneself] could restore [her] to sanity," and the third step is choosing to surrender one's life and will over to the "care of God as [she] understood Him" (Alcoholics 59). Desperate for a way out, one must learn to ask for help from a "Higher Power" by opening up three spaces within oneself: head, heart, and body. Rohr writes that by reconnecting "all three parts of our humanity into a marvelous receiving station," people can heal themselves and their relationships with God (15). The more struggles and cares that one surrenders to God, the more room there will be in her heart to receive God's grace. The desire for surrender is expressed in a commonly recited prayer during the third step: "God I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will" (63). By dying to the self in one's desire for alcohol, a new foundation is formed, rooted

in God. Rohr indicates how in letting go of one's selfish will, one receives the mercy of God; this is not because God did not show mercy before, but because one opens herself up to that mercy. Gradually, one learns to trust God rather than her own willpower and deceptive ego (27).

Forcehimes outlines the first three steps in what she calls the "*De Profundis Sequence*." First, an alcoholic experiences "hitting bottom" (511). "Hitting bottom" can be characterized as an experience of "total deflation," where one realizes her isolation and need for recovery (Forcehimes 510). When one is exposed to her "most raw and unmanageable form, humility creates a fertile ground for the spiritual awakening." In "hitting bottom," she faces the choice between life and death; she can either surrender her addiction to God and be transformed by God's grace, or continue living in total misery, or as Merton put it, "the hell of [her] own untruth" (Forcehimes 512; *Conjectures* 183). For example, one woman describes how her drinking problem brought her to the point of life or death: "Sometimes I would lie on the bathroom floor, deathly sick, praying I would die, and praying... 'God don't pay any attention to me. You know I'll do it tomorrow, the very same thing.'" She feared she would die from alcohol if she continued to live in such a morbid state (*Alcoholics* 292). Without "hitting bottom," many alcoholics would never realize the gravity of their problem. It is essential to live through that feeling of powerlessness in order to continue recovery (Forcehimes 512).

The second part of Forcehimes' "*De Profundis Sequence*" demands sincere contrition. She writes how many people at first choose recovery out of fear of remaining in the cycle of addiction. If one is to truly commit to recovery, however, she must sincerely desire it in her heart. This includes admitting her powerlessness and being open to taking the necessary steps to recover on a spiritual, mental, and physical level. Forcehimes differentiates between contrition and shame by saying that contrition "implies the desire and intent to find a new way," whereas shame remains static in isolation and remorse (513). It involves "a humble cry of repentance," a deep desire for inner peace that can only come from a Higher Power. The sequence ends by surrendering everything to God. Surrender, which can be a very painful process, forces one to unmask the "false self," leaving one exposed, stripped of everything she believed to be true about herself, confronting weakness and letting God take control.

In light of Merton's insights, the spiritual transformation that Forcehimes describes can also lead to the discovery of the true self. By "hitting bottom" the false self is exposed, and one learns of her own helplessness (*New Seeds* 182). This spiritual poverty also enables a person to fully receive the free gift of love that cannot be found in anything less than God because God is not an object or thing that can be fully captured (*New Seeds* 183). God continually invites one to true love that cannot be forced, but must be freely chosen. By accepting this invitation to love, one gains "infinite freedom which can be met only by perfect union with God, not only as an external norm, but *as the source of [one's] own love*" (Merton 331). In other words, by turning control over to God, as Step Three suggests, one allows love to flow freely and transform her life and relationships. The shift from the false self to the true self parallels what Forcehimes describes as moving from "isolation to oneness." She describes this shift as a "modification to the deepest level of the self"

(514). The inner peace one gains cannot be shaken because of the security of God's love. This peace will help one endure all aspects of life (Forcehimes 516). When the alcoholic undergoes a deep transformation, she discovers a certain newness to life, a new identity and way of being, yet this identity had always existed within herself before because God had planted it there from the start (Merton, *New Seeds* 33).

While the first three steps focus on restoring one's relationship with God, the next several focus on reconciliation with others. Step Four requires one to make a "searching and fearless moral inventory" of oneself (Alcoholics 59). Rohr writes that one's "moral inventory" requires humility and self-compassion. Rather than having a spiteful vengeance toward herself, she must reflect honestly on past wrongs, only illuminating the truth (Rohr 32). Merton adds that self-inflicted punishment for past wrongs is not true repentance because it will only make one feel more vengeance toward oneself. By dwelling too much upon one's sinfulness, one will lose sight of God's love and forgiveness. Merton writes, "To serve the God of Love one must be free, one must face the terrible responsibility of the decision to love *in spite of all unworthiness* whether in oneself or in one's neighbor" (*New Seeds* 74). In other words, there must be some degree of self-love to accept God's forgiveness. Without self-love, one will never be able to show compassion toward others.

Walter Conn expands on this notion of self-love by distinguishing it from selfishness. Self-love means loving oneself as a "subject," as a child of God, whereas selfishness implies loving oneself as an "object." Viewing the self as an object means using one's body, gifts and talents, and relationship with others to fulfill egocentric desires. It places the false self at the center of one's life, causing one to use herself and others as objects to appease the ego (330). Oftentimes selfishness is confused with self-love, but in reality self-love, or the love of self as a subject, brings one back into relationship with God and others. Because love only exists through relationship, love of self necessarily flows into love for others. Authentic self-love affirms the intrinsic value of oneself that is also seen in others (Conn 331). Merton elaborates on this same point by saying, "To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self...Love is my name" (*New Seeds* 60). By taking a moral inventory of oneself as Step Four suggests, one learns to view herself as a subject in need of love, a need that can only be fulfilled through relationships with others.

Step Five builds on the Fourth Step by having one confess the "exact nature of [her] wrongs" to God and one other person. When she admits her shortcomings to another person, she finds herself subject to love and forgiveness by God and others. Rohr states that God transforms sin into a means of forgiveness. Acknowledging her sin allows her to accept God's forgiveness and grace to be inwardly transformed (41). Also, by admitting it to another person who understands the struggle of addiction, it defeats any egoism or fear that alienates an alcoholic from others. Step Five is a way for alcoholics to learn "humility, fearlessness, and honesty" (73). They "withhold nothing" from the other person and willingly admit every wrong. Through this pain of bringing up past wrongs, one becomes able to let go of them and be forgiven.

Humility is a key theme throughout the Twelve Steps because it teaches one to be honest with herself. It is not enough to stop at Step Four by taking a "moral inventory." She must

also discuss it with others through Step Five and seek forgiveness. Through Steps Six and Seven, which are being “entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character,” and “humbly asking Him to remove these shortcomings,” she learns of God’s infinite mercy (Alcoholics 59). Merton writes that humility empties one of self-pity and despair as it fills oneself with joy that comes from God (*New Seeds* 181). While one is stripped down to her own “nothingness” and “insufficiency,” she is simultaneously filled with joy by becoming mystically united to God (*New Seeds* 182). In other words, by dying to pride and the illusion of self-sufficiency, humility helps one realize her dependence on God and the need for other people. In Merton’s Fourth and Walnut experience, he expresses the joy that results from realizing his need for other people: “This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud... ‘Thank God, thank God that I *am* like other men, that I am only a man among others’” (157). Only through humility can one experience this joy and liberation to live as the true self.

After one works through her own faults and asks God to remove any “defects in character,” she is prepared to continue on to Steps Eight and Nine which include making amends with others who have harmed her or whom she has harmed (Alcoholics 59). Step Eight prepares the person to make amends by having the alcoholic create a list of people with whom she needs to reconcile differences. After creating a list, she should examine why these relationships were broken and what underlying factors (i.e. money, alcohol, pride, fear, or sex) caused the problem (Alcoholics 64). One must learn to let go of resentment toward those who have hurt her and be willing to ask forgiveness from those she has hurt. Even when the other person is unwilling to forgive her, if she is truly sorry and made a sincere effort to fix the relationship, then she can trust in God’s forgiveness and let go of any anger toward that person (Alcoholics 67).

Merton and *The Big Book* both recognize how resentment is one of the most difficult things to overcome. *The Big Book* states, “Resentment is the ‘number one’ offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else” (64). Many alcoholics blamed others for their problems and saw themselves as victims of alcohol. The Twelve Steps require rejecting the role of passive victim and instead taking responsibility for her actions (Alcoholics 66). Like Alcoholics Anonymous, Merton also acknowledges how resentment is a very *human* sentiment, but nonetheless it still comes from the false self as a “last-ditch stand of freedom in the midst of confusion” (*New Seeds* 108). The confusion, Merton continues, comes when one does not know what she truly desires. Rather than acknowledging this anguish from inner confusion, it is easier to project it onto others. Only by cooperating with God’s grace can one truly be free from jealousy and anger toward other people (*New Seeds* 110). Making amends with others is a central component toward a vital spiritual experience, but it remains of the most challenging parts of the Twelve Steps (Alcoholics 59).

Rohr emphasizes that while these experiences with others can be deeply painful, they are a “direct encounter with God’s love” (40). The painful process of forgiveness is the key to freedom because it allows each person to love one another without grudges or selfish motives (Rohr 48). Creating a list makes one more conscious of how her actions affect other people. Even if she did not intend any harm, she must recognize all people whom she has mistreated. While a face to face encounter is often the best way to make amends,

Rohr says that if this is not possible, a handwritten letter, a phone call, or gift will suffice as long as one is clear about her intentions of asking forgiveness and willingness to rebuild her relationship with that person (74).

Steps Eight and Nine could be compared to “resetting of a Body of broken bones,” as Merton describes in *New Seeds of Contemplation* (72). The “Body” is Christ’s body “massacred in His members” (71). Merton writes how essential it is to reconcile with others so that people can be better united as the body of Christ. Admitting one’s wrongs caused by alcoholism brings pain and memories hard to bear, but it is a necessary part of unmasking the false self. Through this process, one discovers the deeper meaning of God’s mercy, liberating one from self-righteousness (78). Rohr says that as one restores her relationships with others, it also restores her union with God. It allows her to give up resentment because it becomes unnecessary to carry (Rohr 66). With Step Ten, the alcoholic learns to offer her shortcomings to God and allow God to carry her through temptations and trials with alcohol and other concerns in life. It helps one sustain her relationships with others by requiring that she continue taking a “personal inventory” and asking forgiveness from others when necessary (*Alcoholics* 59). Rohr speaks of Step Ten as being conscious on the “soul level” (86). Rather than being clouded by the biased, self-serving criticism of the ego, one learns to see her actions through the eyes of God. Consciousness, or being present to each moment literally means not being under the influence of alcohol. It implies living a contemplative life, free from dualistic thinking, and learning from one’s mistakes rather than dwelling on them (Rohr 91).

In the same way, discovering the true self also means living a contemplative life. Merton recognizes that it takes time and effort, but most of all a “creative consent” to God’s will to reach this level of awareness. She must learn to be obedient, but not passive (*Conjectures* 184). He elaborates on this point in *New Seeds of Contemplation* by saying that people must act as co-creators with God to both discover and develop the true self (32). Because one’s identity is “hidden in God,” one must actively seek it “with Him and in Him.” When one sincerely desires it, God reveals the true self as a gift. By entering into this deeper reality, God enables one to understand and share in God’s love more fully (*New Seeds* 33). This new awareness in Step Ten naturally leads to the Eleventh Step.

After relationships are restored, one can move to the final two steps that help her maintain sobriety. Step Eleven suggests using “prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out” (59). Prayer and meditation can be likened to fertile ground that helps one grow in her relationship with God. *The Big Book* suggests taking time each morning “to ask God to direct [one’s] thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.” Likewise, at the end of the day, one should recall if there were moments when she was selfish or fearful, asking herself if she hurt or lied to anyone. Then she should reflect on moments where she was thinking of others, treating them with love and compassion. This reflection each night will help a person be more aware of her actions and maintain “conscious contact” with God throughout the day (86).

As one learns to keep “conscious contact” with God, she experiences a shift within herself. Rohr describes it as a shift from an “egocentric perspective to a soul-centric per-

spective” (94). When one prays, she changes her “thinking cap,” to allow God to permeate her being. Not only does she participate on a spiritual level when she meditates, but she also quiets her mind and relaxes her body (97). She must be intentional about withdrawing to her “inner room” for a set time each day to carry out Step Eleven. It is this time with God each day that strengthens the alcoholic through recovery and gives meaning to each day (Rohr 98).

Merton speaks of withdrawing into oneself while simultaneously closing off the “outer self.” While the outer self or false self is defined by possessions, accomplishments, and “self-constructed” images, the inner self encompasses the entirety of one’s being, both body and soul. By connecting on a holistic level, one is drawn back to her origin in God (*New Seeds* 280). Spending time in this liminal space each day helps one discern the will of God with a pure heart. Merton describes the experience of contemplation as being “transported from one degree to another,” to where “nothing seems to be left but a pure freedom indistinguishable from infinite Freedom, love identified with Love” (*New Seeds* 283). Such an experience is beyond words and beyond human comprehension. Once one attains this level of intimacy with God, it changes her whole perspective on life itself. This union is what Bill W. meant by the “vital spiritual experience.” Alcoholics either suddenly or gradually undergo a “vast change in feeling and outlook” after realizing “they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify... [as] a Power greater than themselves” (*Alcoholics* 567-68). After they have experienced this shift in consciousness, one is ready to move on to the final step of sharing this experience with other alcoholics.

The Twelve Steps is an active spirituality that engages other people, not a passive one that can easily become stagnant (Rohr 108). The Twelfth Step states, “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs” (*Alcoholics* 60). *The Big Book* requires one to reach out to people in the community who are struggling with alcoholism by sharing her story with other alcoholics and encouraging them to surrender themselves to a Higher Power. One cannot force another to choose recovery, but she can meet the other in his suffering, reminding herself that she was once in that very same state (95). Sharing one’s own experience can plant a seed of hope within the hearts of others that God will continue to nourish.

The Twelfth Step necessitates community and fellowship among its members. Without the encouragement and support of other people, the program would never work. People would not be held accountable for their actions. Even if they recovered from their drinking problem, they would never recover on a spiritual level. Forcehimes distinguishes between mere abstinence and sobriety. Abstinence means merely abstaining from alcohol by willpower, but not the thoughts and feelings that often accompany it, such as self-pity and resentment. Sobriety, however, implies both refraining from alcohol as well as the self-centered attitude that often goes with it; it is the result of a spiritual transformation (511). True recovery means a true commitment to one’s “home group” where one can lean on the support of others. For example, one person tells their story in *The Big Book*, saying, “Through it all I have not had to take a drink, nor have I ever been alone... When I’m in doubt, I have faith that things will turn out as they should. When I’m afraid, I reach for the hand of another alcoholic to steady me” (317-18).

The Twelve Steps program changes a person's outlook on life from one of resentment to one of generosity and gratitude (Forcehimes 515). It gives life to the Fellowship and makes recovery possible for others. After such a transformation occurs, the alcoholic is better equipped to not only maintain sobriety, but live a balanced and more meaningful life (Forcehimes 516).

Merton experienced the same transformation in his own life and in his monastic community. Just as monks trust the abbot to lead them toward truth and holiness, the recovering alcoholics trust their "peer mentors" to help them. They must learn obedience and self-discipline, however, if they are ever going to succeed in recovering. Merton writes, "A spirit that is drawn to God in contemplation will soon learn the value of obedience: the hardships and anguish he has to suffer every day from the burden of his own selfishness, his clumsiness, incompetence and pride will give him a hunger to be led and advised and directed by somebody else" (*New Seeds* 194). By entrusting oneself to the care of another, it teaches one respect and the other responsibility. As the relationship grows each person realizes one's dependence on the other. Even as a monk who lived in solitude, Merton saw a deep mystical connection to other human beings. In his epiphany, he proclaims that he has a responsibility to live in solitude, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of others. He writes, "It is because I am one with them that I owe it to them to be alone, and when I am alone they are not "they" but my own self. There are no strangers!" (*Conjectures* 158).

After experiencing such a profound spiritual transformation, one can no longer see others as alien but realizes that each person has a common humanity, a certain dignity that cannot be diminished by alcohol, poor life choices, or addiction. The alcoholic sees how cooperation with a Higher Power turned her life around. As a result, she also discovers her true self and a common humanity that she shares with other people. This discovery, this profound transformation, alone will bring inner peace. As long as one is firmly rooted in God's love, that peace will not be taken away. No matter the trials and struggles she will inevitably have to face, her relationship with God will be her source of strength. The "seeds" that God planted in her heart from the beginning can only be nourished by the true self (Merton, *Conjectures* 33). As she continues to flourish, her life will be a sign of God's love for the whole human race.

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2015-2016
ACADEMIC YEAR

Comparing Class Relations in *Ragged Dick* and *Nickel and Dime*

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Many Americans would like to believe that the idea of social class is no longer relevant in today's modern society. It is easy to assume that relations between people are not affected by their different levels of wealth and influence. However, taking a closer look through written works about people in the working class and those living in poverty reveals that class, although not formally established, does play a role in defining the way in which people interact. Authors Horatio Alger and Barbara Ehrenreich in particular capture the nature of relationships between people of different social classes in their writing, although they do so in very different ways, and they come to opposing conclusions. While Alger depicts the relationship between the wealthy and the poor as generally positive in his novel *Ragged Dick*, Ehrenreich characterizes an antagonistic relationship between managers or the rich and the workers they employ in her novel *Nickel and Dime*.

Horatio Alger's novel *Ragged Dick*, originally published in 1867, follows a fourteen-year-old boy who works as a boot black in New York City. He earns enough money to feed himself and occasionally help his fellow boot blacks, even though he splurges on cigarettes and going to the theater. *Ragged Dick* doesn't wish for anything more for his life until he meets and spends the day with Frank Whitney, a boy from an upper class family, and his uncle, who gives Dick some new clothes and a few dollars to start his savings. Dick decides he will think of his future and better himself. He saves his money instead of spending it, he hires a tutor to "introduce [him] into the flower-beds of literature and science" (Alger 105), and eventually he gets a job under the wealthy Mr. Rockwell.

Overall, Alger represents the relationship between the upper class and the working class in a positive way. Most of the good things that happen to Dick come as a result of his ambitious, honest, and helpful nature. However, the rich and powerful people he meets throughout the novel, including Mr. Greyson, help him on his journey to make something of his life. When Dick proves his honesty to Mr. Greyson, a wealthy businessman, by returning the money he owed him, Mr. Greyson invites Dick to his Sunday school class to learn about the Bible and be able to "grow up 'spectable'" (Alger 101). Later on, Mr. Greyson gives Dick's friend Fosdick a recommendation for a job so that he can begin to earn money and better himself as well.

Alger also uses the characters of Mr. Whitney and Mr. Rockwell to demonstrate the positive interaction between rich and working class. Mr. Whitney, another wealthy businessman, puts Dick on the right path to becoming successful and respectable. After

Dick offers to show his nephew Frank around the city, Mr. Whitney gives him a new suit to replace his old, dirty one.

Then, before Mr. Whitney and his nephew leave, he offers Dick five dollars and this advice: “You know in this free country poverty in early life is no bar to a man’s advancement” (Alger 77). This is what inspires and allows Dick to turn his life around. Toward the end of the novel, Dick finds an opportunity to further this goal when he saves a boy from drowning. The boy turns out to be the son of another wealthy businessman, Mr. Rockwell, who offers Dick a job working for him at ten dollars an hour—more than Dick has ever made before.

Mr. Rockwell, Mr. Whitney, and Mr. Greyson all serve as Alger’s models for how members of the wealthy upper class should treat people of the working class. All three men show respect toward Dick, and they help him in return for his being helpful and honest. Dick also respects them, and he is grateful to them for guidance and assistance they have given him, even when he thinks he doesn’t deserve it. Alger uses the interactions between Dick and these three characters to show how people of different social classes can have positive relationships.

In *Nickel and Dime*, on the other hand, Barbara Ehrenreich paints a different picture of relations between classes. In her novel, Ehrenreich, a journalist, writes about her experience working minimum wage jobs in Florida, Maine, and Minnesota. In each place she travels to, she finds a low-paying job and lives just as she would if she were truly part of the working class, trying to afford cheap housing, budgeting her meager income, and sometimes juggling multiple jobs. She tries working at restaurants as a waitress, at a hotel as a housekeeper, as a maid for a cleaning service, at a nursing home, and at a Walmart. Ehrenreich faces challenges in each of the cities she lives in and at each of the jobs she holds. In general, she finds that securing affordable housing is often impossible and living on minimum wage without benefits is not easy at all.

Although her main purpose for writing the novel was to learn and share how difficult it is for people of the working class to get by in general, throughout the novel she touches on the nature of relationships between workers and their employers, as well as between the workers and the people who hire them; these are usually members of the middle and upper classes. Most of her anecdotes put class relations in an unflattering light. Many of her interactions with managers show that they have a serious lack of respect for their employees. For example, while Ehrenreich is working as a waitress, the manager of the restaurant announces that the workers’ belongings can be searched at any time, and that they will be subjected to random drug tests. When she begins working as a maid, her boss blames the absence of an employee, who has an injured foot, “on the cheap, ill-fitting shoes that, he implies, she perversely chooses to wear” (Ehrenreich 89), assuming that it is some fault of the employee’s rather than a legitimate medical problem. These instances make it clear that often, managers and supervisors don’t trust their workers even if they have no reason not to trust them.

Ehrenreich experiences this same distrust and lack of respect when interacting with people of higher social classes. While working as a maid, Ehrenreich notices that some house owners watch the workers as they clean to make sure they clean every little spot,

as if the workers would not do this anyway. One of her co-workers says that “owners have been known to leave tape recorders going while [they] work” (Ehrenreich 93), and there are rumors of owners setting up video cameras to catch any maids who steal from their houses. This unjustified distrust leads to some tension between the workers and the people who hire them. Ehrenreich is also treated poorly when she wears her maid uniform. A waitress ignores her requests for a drink, and at the supermarket, she “couldn’t take the stares, which are easily translatable into: What are you doing here?” (100).

Ehrenreich suggests in her evaluation that “the indignities imposed on so many low-wage workers are part of what keeps wages low. If you’re made to feel unworthy enough, you may come to think that what you’re paid is what you are actually worth” (211). The often antagonistic relationship between people in the working class and people in the upper and middle classes can have long-term negative impacts on the workers’ views of themselves and their place in society.

Horatio Alger’s and Barbara Ehrenreich’s representations of relationships and communication between lower and higher social classes differ completely. Alger shows positive interactions between Ragged Dick, a poor boot black in the working class, and the three wealthy businessmen he meets who go out of their way to help him succeed. This may have something to do with the time period in which the novel was written. In Horatio Alger’s time, many people believed that hard work and perseverance would get a person anywhere. Alger thought these traits, as well as kindness and good will, were important for each person to have. His values show clearly in his novel and contribute to the depiction of friendly relations between social classes. Barbara Ehrenreich’s novel depicts a distinctly different relationship. Through her own personal experiences and those of the people she meets in the working class, she shows that people of different classes can sometimes be hostile toward one another. Managers’ lack of trust and respect toward their employees often leads to resentment, and people of higher social classes look down on the workers that only make minimum wage. It seems that social class is actually relevant today, and it may have more of an effect on social relations than many people would like to admit.

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The Undiagnosed Issues of the Breast Cancer Movement

Paya Yazdanpanah

It's early October. As the department stores around America are unpacking their shipments of pink merchandise, many different charities are organizing upcoming fundraisers for the breast cancer movement. It is a month of awareness and charity for people who are suffering from a very malignant disease. It is a time where people should provide solidarity for those who have breast cancer. On the surface, these pink-colored products and organizations geared toward breast cancer are effective tools in spreading awareness for the disease. The movement itself, however, falls flat and suffers from occult issues that are very detrimental to its cause. These programs are simply doing more harm than good in regard to awareness and aid for these patients. Even though the public of today has been more open about women's health compared to the beginning of the postmodern era because of the Breast Cancer Movement, an issue known as "victim blaming" has not fully gone away. Despite the fact that the Modernist Era has been scorched in the midst of progress, victim blaming is still seen smoldering in its ashes. Victim blaming, with the aid of commercialization and pink-washing, has proliferated to epic proportions.

To explain victim blaming, one must explain what this term means and how it evolved over time in breast cancer and medical history. Victim blaming is when a person is held partially or entirely responsible for any harm that befell upon them. It intends to deflect criticism from those in higher authority and inflict shame on those who could never be held accountable for the consequences. Victim blaming has been very prolific in the Modernist Era. The Modernist Era was a period of time that lasted from the 16th century to the 1950s. Before further medical advancements, many doctors believed in pseudoscientific theories that would put most of the responsibility on the patient's shoulders, as to avoid criticism. Doctors of this era were inclined to believe that a person's illness was the result of their constitution, or emotional state. One specific theory was called the Constitutional Theory of Breast Cancer. Doctors theorized that cancer was caused by emotions and reactions such as anxiety, fear, sympathy, excess activity, and excitability. If a patient was sick, the illness was caused by the patient. This was known as victim blaming. But as the Modernist Era came to a close, a new era known as the Postmodern Era was born. Despite the societal and medical advancements brought forth by this new era, the issue of victim blaming still loomed through the "Do Not Delay" message that originated in the early 20th century.

The central message of the "Do Not Delay" campaign proclaimed "that cancer surgery was effective if individuals would only not delay" (Aronowitz, 2007, p. 144). The organizers of this campaign "made delay and individual responsibility the central element of

their message” (Aronowitz, 2007, p. 144). Essentially, doctors guaranteed that patients would be cured if they “did not delay.” As a result, educational programs and campaigns would blame the patients for not checking with doctors earlier if their cancer was not cured. This put much of the responsibilities on the patients even though most of it should have been placed on the doctors. Not all cancers are the same or can be treated the same, but the “Do Not Delay” campaign still encouraged the message. This movement also gave patients a false sense of hope. Because cancers are so different, patients won’t always be cured even if they receive early checkups. People have different kinds of experiences and stories and it is ill-advised to use one person’s success story as a template for others.

Breast cancer research is a very expensive task. It needs large sums of money to pay off labor and to pay for new developments in technology. But in many cases, patients and researchers won’t even see a single penny from the breast cancer awareness movement. This is the result of corporate greed and the manipulation of the people’s good will to help others in need. These companies go to great lengths to gain more wealth from the people. They try to appeal to the “ethos” of human nature. Not only do these awareness campaigns blame the patients, they also blame healthy people who don’t donate to their “cause.” By using advertisement campaigns that incite sadness and other emotions, companies can hold potential donors responsible for finding the “cure.” How many days does it take for our 25 cents to make a difference? By appealing to ethos and pathos, companies using emotional ad campaigns can get away with their misuse of donations. Many corporations also capitalize on the theme of pink (the symbol for breast cancer awareness). As a result, these companies mass produce items that are pink in color. They claim that a percentage of the proceeds go to breast cancer research, but after paying for salaries, advertisements, and solicitors, it is very unlikely that the donations will ever make it to breast cancer victims. Companies will trick consumers into believing they are donating to a good cause by manipulating their emotions.

As stated before, breast cancer organizations hold fundraisers and ask for donations, but only a small amount of the money donated to breast cancer charities will actually go to breast cancer research. Many high-profile charities rake in millions of dollars each year, but most of the funds are given to solicitors. A very prominent organization known as the Breast Cancer Relief Foundation claims it runs an honest charity, but only 2 percent of donations raised were given directly to hospitals or to women in need of breast cancer screenings (America’s Worst Charities, 2014). The Breast Cancer Relief Foundation is not the only organization that withholds a large percentage of the donations from the patients. Other charities such as Cancer Fund of America and United Breast Cancer Foundation use most of the donations to pay for advertising campaigns and other overhead fees rather than directly giving said donations to patients (America’s Worst Charities, 2014). Many people who are the head of these “nonprofit” organizations make “\$400,000 to \$500,000 salaries” (Breyer, 2012). It is clear that the correct priorities are not set in regard to the donations. Instead of using the majority of these funds to further breast cancer research, many “charities” allocate these donations for advertisements in order to turn a profit. These corporations use victim blaming as an effective tool to rake in more money from donors. The corporations can do this subtly through sexualized advertisements, which will be discussed.

To discuss this topic further, one must understand the history of the pink craze regarding breast cancer awareness. The original ribbon was a peach ribbon created by Charlotte Haley in 1991 (Westervelt, 2011). Oddly enough, the ribbon was created to bring awareness to the fact that major foundations were exploiting those with breast cancer to make huge sums of money. According to Charlotte Haley, “The National Cancer Institute annual budget is \$1.8 billion, but only 5 percent goes for cancer prevention” (Westervelt, 2011). By wearing that ribbon, Haley wanted to wake legislators and America up to these fraudulent business decisions. Sometime later, the editor-in-chief of *Self Magazine*, Alexandra Penny, wanted Haley to be her partner in her own ribbon campaign. Haley refused because the magazine would commercialize her message to the world. Penny then decided to choose a different color, which was pink. The first company to fully use the pink ribbon was Komen, but since the color pink cannot be trademarked, nothing stopped other companies from using pink however they wished (Westervelt, 2011). As a result, companies who have no affiliation with breast cancer awareness can make money just by hiding behind a pink veil. By now, the Breast Cancer Awareness movement “was transformed into a power selling tool” (Klawiter, 2008, p. 135).

The month of October is a time to bring awareness to breast cancer. As October looms, one can observe the influx of pink products into department stores around the country. These products can be anything from pink ribbons, pink water bottles, and even pink KFC buckets. These companies exploit the masses’ concern about breast cancer to turn a profit. Because of their deceitful campaign, these companies make copious amounts of money while generating good publicity. By manipulating the people’s genuine desire to help, the companies do not have to be clear about where their money goes (Stop the Distraction, n.d). This abhorrent practice will alienate certain people from donating anymore after finding the true destination of their hard-earned money. This hurts charities that actually give the majority of donations to those in need because the masses will no longer have that sense of trust they used to have with bigger charities.

Marketers will even try to sell a “story” along with the products. According to Karuna Jaggar, executive director of Breast Cancer Action, companies try “to sell a story; a story that manipulates people’s emotions to make them feel they must urgently donate” (Hilmantel, 2015). Companies do this by using campaigns that focus heavily on individual breast cancer patient anecdotes instead of scientific facts. Not only does this hurt the people who donate money to the cause, it could also physically hurt those with the disease. Experts say that this often results in fear mongering that creates a misunderstanding about the disease (Hilmantel, 2015). Studies show that only 10 percent of women actually know their breast cancer risk (Hilmantel, 2015). This harms breast cancer patients because they agree to have surgeries they don’t need. According to Hilmantel (2015), the rate of surgery increases 15 percent a year even though the medical evidence shows there is little benefit that can come from having a double mastectomy for the majority of women. Experts believe that many of these pink ribbon campaigns are instilling fear in many women around the country. These campaigns make it harder for women to trust actual medical evidence because the issue has been blown out of proportion by countless ad campaigns. Many breast cancer organizations try to use fear to create a sense of urgency for donations.

The consequence of this practice is that the patients they claim to be helping are suffering even more due to the hysteria created by the campaign. One major example of how corporations use fear and victim blaming to increase their bottom line is the Angelina Jolie preventative double mastectomy ad campaign. Since she got her mastectomy, many women around the world became more inclined to take part in the same surgery, even if they did not need it. According to Mike Adams, an investigative journalist and science lab director, women who carry on with unnecessary operations “are victims of outrageous cancer industry propaganda and fear mongering” (Adams, 2013).

This fear mongering makes women think they are responsible for whatever may befall them. As a result, more and more women will readily approve of surgeries despite the harmful consequences that may follow. What ails many women lies in psychology, rather than physiology. Women who are perfectly healthy may end up at a worse position because of anxiety that clouds their judgement. And these frightening advertisements will only escalate this issue.

Even the awareness movement so many companies are profiting from has been dismissed by numerous breast cancer patients as useless and ineffective. Many breast cancer patients will unfortunately come to the conclusion that the awareness movement as a whole does not provide as much support the movement claims in gives. In July of 2012, Kate Petrides (who works in human resources for a nonprofit organization) became diagnosed with breast cancer. In regard to the breast cancer awareness movement, Petrides said, “I didn’t find it especially supportive; It draws a lot of awareness to a particularly sensitive time in your life—and the emphasis isn’t quite where I’d like it to be” (Hilmantel, 2015). Her opinion is shared by many patients in that they believe the movement does not delve deeper into their plight. They also believe the awareness movement is no longer effective. These foundations boast about how their efforts spread awareness every year, but many patients believe people should have enough awareness about the disease by now. Now these patients want these foundations to do something about the disease instead of talk about it in every advertising and fundraising campaign.

Many women also feel alienated from the breast cancer movement because their campaigns often sexualize and degrade them. They feel this way because many advertising campaigns objectify and sexualize women’s breasts and bodies. Campaign slogans such as, “save the boobies,” “save the ta-tas,” and “save second base” insult and trivialize those with breast cancer (Stop the Distraction, n.d). Slogans like these are very rampant among different ad campaigns. As a result, many patients do not believe these organizations are providing support and solidarity because they keep demeaning them based on their physical appearance. These sexualized and “cute” campaigns hide the bitter reality women with breast cancer have to face. This excessive sexualization merely delegitimizes and trivializes the awareness movement as a whole.

These sexualized ad campaigns shame the patients for not being like the models in said advertisements. In the 1990s, Playboy™ released an advertisement that showed a woman breast feeding a newborn child, and the ad read, “You’ve probably been a breast man since day one ... It’s not just breasts we’re saving, it’s lives” (Faith, 1995, p. 6). Using breasts to push an ad campaign that supports an already objectifying industry is very shaming for the patients.

Playboy™ claimed that the advertisement was used to garner men's attention, but according to senior editor Gloria Jacobs, "fighting cancer is not about keeping women perfect and sexualizing breasts" (Faith, 1995, p. 6). This sexualization coincides with the increased encouragement of reconstruction surgery and prosthesis. Ads and societal standards victim shame numerous women for not being the bastion of beauty, and therefore push these treatments in order to fit the standard. Another disturbing ad campaign was given to us in the form of pin-ups. This campaign was specifically called Pink Ribbon Pin-Ups, and it wanted to create calendars featuring women who had breast cancer and a brief description regarding their ordeal (Regehr, 2012, p. 753). But why should women display themselves just to feel empowered? To overcome breast cancer, one must trivialize their plight by objectifying their bodies? Pink Ribbon Pin-Ups and Playboy™ posters only use breast cancer as a ruse to line their pockets. These ads make women feel worthless about their appearance. Breasts are not merely secondary sex characteristics. A woman's worth does not come from her breasts. The underlying dilemma with these advertisements is that they appear to favor saving a woman's physical appearance over saving the woman.

Not only do these breast cancer movements harm women psychologically, their campaigns also inflict physical pain as well. Studies have shown that products geared towards the breast cancer awareness movement show traces of harmful chemicals that are believed to actually increase the odds of getting breast cancer. The term "pink-washing" was created by Breast Cancer Action in reference to companies that "put a pink ribbon on a product with known or suspected links to cancer" (Westervelt, 2011). Not only do these products spread awareness, they spread carcinogens as well. To further explain pink-washing, one must explain why pink products are the issue.

Many cancers are caused by are carcinogens, which are substances or radiation that causes cancer. These carcinogens disrupt and damage a cell's genome, or genetic makeup. As a result, the cells lost their ability to stop replicating incessantly. This leads to the formation of tumors. As it turns out, many of the products (such as makeup and other cosmetics) geared towards breast cancer contains such carcinogens. According to the Think Before You Pink campaign, they have "found at least one product every year since to be the poster child of pink-washing" (Westervelt, 2011). This statistic demonstrates that finding carcinogens in these "Think Pink" products isn't exactly an uncommon occurrence. Even large corporations are guilty of selling and distributing toxic products to the masses.

In 2007, car companies such as Ford, BMW, and Mercedes hosted campaigns to sell cars to raise money for breast cancer. Unfortunately, the cars themselves produce pollutants in the air that are linked to breast cancer (Westervelt, 2011). Another company such as KFC also hosted an ad campaign that harmed consumers. KFC announced their "pink-bucket" campaign to support the awareness movement. Because of this new marketing scheme, many people decided to buy this pink bucket. But research has shown that high-fat diets and obesity have been linked to higher cancer risks (What the Cluck?! n.d). The result is very ironic because the same movement that degrades women for their appearances sell unhealthy products that will lead to certain physical appearances that go against what society thinks is "attractive." This creates an endless cycle of victim shaming.

These problems are also very serious when it comes to the cosmetics industry. This proves to be very harmful for women in particular because cosmetics are heavily marketed toward them. The cosmetic companies then start to create products intended to spread awareness of breast cancer. As it turns out, items such as lipstick and perfume contain unnamed ingredients that are linked to cancer development (Chemicals in Cosmetics, n.d). It is hypocritical for companies to advocate breast cancer awareness and solidarity while profiting off products that harm the same people they are claiming to help. Countless cosmetic companies victim shame those with breast cancer by always emphasizing the idea that being “feminine” is equal to if not more important than one’s health. The last thing women need after battling a life threatening cancer is for wealthy companies to tell them they are not feminine or “woman” enough without their product.

The Breast Cancer Awareness movement has become commercialized. The promise of money became a very powerful catalyst for the birth of rampant corruption throughout the breast cancer awareness efforts. It is time for regular consumers to vote with their wallets. If there is no more desire for “pink products” and other breast cancer endorsed merchandise, corporations will be less inclined to manufacture them. And if there is no more desire to change one’s image to fit society’s standards, then ad campaigns geared toward sexualization will eventually dissipate. These steps would reduce the likelihood for a charity to sell themselves out to big corporations; therefore, more money can be given to those in need. In addition to seeing lack of donations, some patients may become uncomfortable with their own bodies as a result of degrading ad campaigns. Others may feel even more ill as a result of purchasing toxic merchandise. The mission for spreading awareness has already been accomplished. The country and the world are already fully aware of the issue of breast cancer. What does need awareness, however, is the corruption that has been brewing within the movement ever since its conception. As of now, the movement is just going through the same old and tired motions. It always spreads monumental awareness, but cannot provide any significant charity work to match. The time has come for the breast cancer movement to actually live up to its name and move forward.

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The Mis-Education of Black Girls

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Many black families entrust their children to the public school system hoping that the education they receive will lead them toward a more prosperous life. However, studies have indicated that the public education of black students has proven ineffective. “The achievement gap between white students and black students has barely narrowed over the last 50 years, despite nearly a half century of supposed progress in race relations and an increased emphasis on closing such academic discrepancies between groups of students” (Camera). Numerous studies concluded that the persistence of the achievement gap relates to poorly addressed educational inequalities that enable white students to receive higher quality education than students of color. Further, but limited research, has noted that black boys are the lowest performing group (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin, and Rahman). In response, national initiatives like the White House’s *My Brother’s Keeper* (MBK) work to address persistent opportunity and academic gaps and school-to-prison pipeline that affects young black boys. However, these initiatives do not include black girls and the unique experience of inequality they face in the educational system. Like their male counterparts, black girls perform worse than the national average for their gender on almost every measure of academic achievement (Westervelt). The discrimination experienced caused by the intersection of racial gender stereotypes, and the unequal distribution of school resources resulting from historical disenfranchisement inhibits the academic success of young black girls.

Stereotypes of African American girls and women date back to slavery—such as the view that African American women are “angry” or “aggressive,” and “promiscuous” or “hyper-sexualized” (Smith-Evans et al.). These stereotypes shape educators and administrators’ views of young black girls in harmful ways. Often unacknowledged and therefore undetected, implicit bias in the classroom results in “lower academic expectations for African American girls, significant discipline disparities and a higher rate of referrals to the juvenile justice system” (9).

The intersection of racial and gender stereotypes has a substantial impact on discipline rates for black girls because it heavily relies on the discretion of teachers and administrators. Smith-Evans et al. note that the traditional expectation for females to be “modest” and “passive” and the stereotypical images of black girls being loud, confrontational, assertive, and provocative lead to the discipline disparities that exist for similar conduct between black and white girls. Therefore, when a black girl is accused of disobedience or disruptive behavior, it is a possible condemnation of that student for not adhering to stereotypical feminine behavior. Additionally, the negative perceptions, informed by negative stereotypes, lead educators to believe that black girls need more social correc-

tion to correct their behavior—regardless of severity—and therefore they receive more disciplinary referrals for the smallest infractions. “African American girls are at greater risk than other girls of receiving citations for dress code violations and for talking back to teachers, as well as for much less severe behaviors such as gum chewing, defiance, and failure to comply with prior discipline” (10). With this treatment, black girls are left with two options in the classroom: to be quiet and passive about their education, following gender expectations, or defy that expectation at the risk of being disciplined and conforming to the stereotyped expectation of them. The discipline disparity, caused by racial and gender stereotypes has created a climate where black girls are more likely than any other group of girls to be suspended or expelled.

Although black boys are reported to receive more punishment than any other group, the disparity in punishment between black and white girls is larger than the one between black and white boys. Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended than white girls are, whereas black boys are only three times more likely than white boys. The data shows that race plays more of a significant factor in discipline for females than it does for males (Crenshaw et al.). As stated earlier, this is due to the biased belief that black girls need more social correction when they deviate from the expected “ladylike” behavior. This is important because girls who are subject to suspension face a significantly greater likelihood of dropping out of school (Crenshaw et al.). The discipline disparity between black and white girls climbs higher in discipline rates in particular states. In New York City, black girls were ten times more likely to be suspended than white girls. In the 2011-2012 year, 90 percent of all the girls subjected to expulsion were black. No white girls were expelled (Crenshaw et al.). So what is the cost of black girls being disproportionately subject to suspensions and expulsions? Janel George comments, “[L]ost instruction time, classroom time, disengagement from the school environment, feelings of alienation and... increased referrals to the juvenile justice system for minor offenses” (Gates). Therefore, black girls, merely because they are black and female, face a harder time acquiring a quality education because their behavior is overly and wrongly scrutinized, subjecting them to unwarranted discipline. However, understanding the reasons behind the disparities, it would be more accurate to call this the criminalization of black girl behavior.

There exist multiple examples where young black girls face unfair punishment for their actions. In 2007, a 6-year-old girl was arrested in a Florida classroom for having a tantrum. Later that year, a 16-year-old girl was detained in a California school for dropping cake on the floor and failing to pick it up to a school officer’s satisfaction. A black 12-year-old girl was suspended and charged with vandalism for writing the word “hi” on a school locker. While she was suspended and accused of vandalism, a white girl involved in the incident received a far less harsh punishment (Crenshaw et al.). However, the greatest example of the criminalization of black girl behavior is the story, Keira Wilmot.

At 16 at Bartow High School in central Florida, police arrested and charged her with possession of a weapon on campus and discharging a destructive device. Her actual crime? She conducted an experiment mixing toilet bowl cleaner and aluminum foil inside a plastic bottle. The mixture caused the lid of the bottle to pop off and smoke. No one was injured, and no property was damaged, but she was suspended from school for ten days and forced

to attend an alternative school. Keira, before the incident, was an honor student, well liked, and had no disciplinary issues. Although police, after public outcry, dropped felony charges, the arrests remain on her record. Her story highlights the danger of stereotypes and how overly punitive discipline practices can push black girls out of school system and into the criminal justice system (Smith-Evans et al.).

“Black girls are 16 percent of girls in schools, but 42 percent of girls receiving corporal punishment, 42 percent of girls expelled with or without educational services, 45 percent of girls with at least one out-of-school suspension, 31 percent of girls referred to law enforcement, and 34 percent of girls arrested on campus” (Anderson). This compilation of statistics shows that, overwhelmingly, schools seem to target and funnel black girls out of school, depriving them of receiving an education to better themselves, without much consideration. Zero tolerance policies have been cited as one the main culprits. Kimberlee Williams Crenshaw states that “zero tolerance policies tend to funnel vulnerable students out of schools and into prisons” (Gates). Zero tolerance policies administer the same punishment for all actions, no exceptions. Often in the case of black girls, suspension or expulsion do not fit the violation if there was one at all. Depending on the subjectivity of the administration, an arrest will be made, and the student will be charged. These policies with the influence of gender and racial stereotypes have allowed black girls to become a growing population within the juvenile justice system where even there they face harsher sentences than any other group (Crenshaw et al.). Once in the juvenile judicial system, too, police, prosecutors, judges, and probation officers harbor stereotypes that can play a role in their decision-making. The intersection of race, gender, and class create a “distorted image” of girls of color, making adults in the juvenile justice system more likely to see girls of color, particularly African American girls, rather than as young girls affected by social problems. Some African American girls who are sanctioned for discipline infractions are in fact responding to harassment or trauma. Studies show that girls most involved in the delinquency system tend to be girls who have experienced physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. Understanding the impact of exposure to and experiences of harassment, violence, and trauma is central to understanding African American girls’ educational experiences and outcomes. (Smith-Evans et al.).

Black girls also suffer a lack of access to quality education. The black girls tend to attend under-sourced schools. The answer, in part, to why this is case lies in the experience black people have had in the United States. Black people currently suffer under contemporary manifestations of inequality derived from slavery and Jim Crow. A disproportionate amount of blacks are economically disadvantaged. Representing only 14 percent of the population, 26 percent of black adults and 39 percent of black children live in poverty (Black Demographics; KFF; Smith-Evans et al.). The economic disparity also manifests itself in resources that black children attend. Although there is no current data that tracks resource disparities by gender, the inequality experienced by black students includes black girls as well. Despite the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision prohibiting the segregation of schools, black students still disproportionately, attend schools without access to quality resources, credentialed teachers and rigorous course offerings, and extracurricular activities—all resources that are needed to improve outcomes and enhance academic

performances (Smith-Evans et al.). According to Smith-Evans et al. in *Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls*, these low-quality schools are described to be “high minority (racially isolated)” and “high poverty” that form as the result of concentrated poverty.

Because they lack adequate funding, these schools are unable to recruit and retain qualified and experienced teachers. “Nearly 7 percent of the country’s African-American students—over half a million students—attend schools where 20 percent or more of their teachers have not yet met state certification or licensure requirements” (Smith-Evans et al.). As a result, black children are also more likely than white children to have teachers who do not meet state licensure and certification requirements. This fact is important because, according to Smith-Evans et al., teacher quality heavily influences student achievement more than race, class, prior academic record, or the school a student attends, especially for black students (13). Black students disproportionately attend schools where they do not have equal access to high-quality teachers with the necessary credentials and experience to prepare them for college and attain high wage jobs. Black student academic achievement takes another critical plunge when teachers within these high minority and high poverty schools do not have access to materials and rigorous course offerings that ensure proper preparation in important subjects.

Rigorous courses, like Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), enable students to be college and career ready. STEM courses are important because they not only introduce students to possible career choices in the growing, dynamic fields of math, science, and technology but also begin to help the student develop the concentration and dedication needed to be successful in college and beyond. However, black students, including black girls, start out not having these opportunities, especially when it comes to STEM courses.

of the high schools in the U.S. with the highest percentage of black and Latino students, one-quarter do not offer Algebra II and one-third do not offer Chemistry. In addition, only 57 percent of African-American high school students have access to the full range of math and science offerings (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Calculus, Biology, Chemistry, Physics) in their schools; while significantly more—71 percent—of white high school students attend schools where the full range of math and science courses are offered (Smith-Evans et al., 14).

Not having these courses places them at a disadvantage because it makes it harder to enter into college and university. In the event the black student is accepted into college, it will be difficult to adjust to the academic rigor of post-secondary education because they were not exposed to the same level before college. Black girls are uniquely impacted by the lack of rigorous course offerings because not only do they not have access to these opportunities but also—due to the combination of gender stereotypes—are steered away from taking science or related STEM courses by their educators (Gates). Instead, they are directed to classes that promote dialogue and are shut out from an opportunity to participate in a growing and prosperous field of study and face limited collegiate and professional prospects in the future (Smith-Evans et al.). Students who take STEM-related courses are more likely to major in STEM-related fields than students who do not (14).

Overall, black girls face a double disadvantage due to racial and gender stereotypes in the educational system because they face discrimination by educators in regard to

discipline and lack access to high-quality teachers, class materials, and rigorous course offerings. Studies have suggested multiple ways that schools and policymakers could address the disparities. In schools, they recommend training of school faculty and staff to implement restorative justice that teaches cultural, social, and emotional relevance in the classroom and addresses “deviant” behavior more positively. They also, recommend requiring accurate annual public reporting of school discipline data broken down by race, sex, and disability to allow for cross-sectional analysis. For equal access, studies suggest that they should ensure that school funding is distributed equitably; specifically, to ensure that predominantly African American schools have equitable access to rigorous curricula and are taught by qualified and experienced instructors. Furthermore, schools should support a fair implementation of academic standards so that all students are exposed to important foundational learning courses and challenged to develop critical thinking, reading, and math skills.

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The History, Expression, and Future of Christianity in Igboland

Kasia Krauss

The dominant, European view of Christianity, while not incorrect, is incredibly limiting. The privileged, white, middle-class interpretation of the Gospel stories shows only one facet of the human experience. What about the poor, African-American populations understanding of the New Testament? How might Latina women view the lessons of Jesus Christ differently? These are valid questions which need to be addressed in order to gain a fuller understanding of the Christian faith. If Christ truly embodied the fullness of humanity, then He is present in every single human being, not just those fortunate enough to have been born to white, financially stable parents in a first world country. In an attempt to gain some perspective and understand Christianity through a different lens, this paper will focus on the Igbo people of Nigeria. Through understanding their culture and past, we can make sense of the current expression of the faith, which will enrich the global view of Christianity.

In an attempt to understand the Igbo tradition in a mere fifteen pages, this paper is divided into three sections. The first section will focus on who the Igbo are, what some of their cultural practices are, and what type of faith tradition they had before they adopted Christianity. From here, we will explore colonization and missionary activity in Igboland and discuss how these methods affected the expression of faith. Finally, this paper will discuss the Christian view on local faith expressions in light of Vatican II and what the world could gain from a greater understanding and interest in the faith of the Igbo people.

The Igbo People

In order to focus on the way in which the Igbo assimilated the Christianity brought by European missionaries, the Igbo people, their culture, prior religious beliefs, and system of government should be explored. It is through understanding the indigenous Igbo that we can understand their acceptance of Christianity and the contribution their interpretation of the Christian tradition can have on the Church as a whole. In this section, the Igbo culture will be explored briefly to provide a basis of understanding for the remainder of the essay.

The Igbo are one of the largest tribal groups in Nigeria and they call the Southeastern portion of the country home (Ebuziem, 25). This group of people is largely agricultural, providing for themselves based on what is available and what they are able to grow. A crop of particular importance to the Igbo is the yam, though they also grow the cocoyam and cassava as well as keep livestock and fish to sustain themselves (Ebuziem, 26, 34). Despite the amount of time dedicated to providing food for their families, the Igbo have

a great deal of professions including woodworking, archery, childcare, pottery, and so forth (Ebuziem, 26). Individuals in certain professions alter their physical appearances to make it clear as to what they do in the community or the category to which they belong.

The main way in which Igbo display their categories to each other is through scarification—a process of cutting designs or patterns into one's skin as a means to mark them in some way (Ebuziem, 35). These scars are used to identify slaves, the prestigious, married individuals, and to point out the Igbu Ichi, a group of people whose focus is on the well-being of the other Igbo (Ebuziem, 35). Traditionally, women also used their hair to display the social category to which they belonged. Hair could be used to signify mourning, marriage, or a particular profession, though today hairstyles do not hold these same meanings and are purely based on an individual's woman preferences (Ebuziem, 36). Many of these traditional forms of social class identification are no longer performed in modern Igbo society.

Men and women in Igbo society not only differ in the way in which they traditionally identified themselves, but in their roles in government as well. The Igbo practice a type of democracy known as Republicanism in which leaders are chosen based on how well they can relay facts and riddles, their personal sincerity, and charisma (Ukeje, 45). In order to make sure that the Igbo society remains ordered, a majority must agree on decisions made by the Umunna Executive Council and Umunna Council, two governing bodies of the Igbo governmental system (Ebuziem, 136-137). While these governmental tasks are performed mostly by the men in the society, a similar group of women ratifies the decisions made by the council of men before they become legitimate (Nwaogugu, 118-199).

Igbo women are also largely responsible for taking care of moral decisions and leading developmental projects (Ebuziem, 138). This system of government and the importance of both men and women within the Igbo society keeps everything running smoothly and ensures against major disagreements from within.

The way in which the Igbo view the world is different from the dichotomy we see in Western societies (Ikenga-Matuh, 50). Rather than looking at the universe as something that is either purely supernatural or natural, the Igbo believe that these two areas are able to coexist (Madubuko, 7). The religious beliefs are structured around a Supreme Being they call *Chukwu*, present not only beyond them, but with them (Ebuziem, 125). The God of Igbo tradition is not only ever-present, but also a provider of all that is good, including health, life, food, and children (Okuma, 65-70). In order to worship *Chukwu*, the Igbo had altars in their homes they used to pray to and perform sacrifices for this Being (Okuma, 70). This God is present in every aspect of their lives, and it is likely that this belief in a monotheistic, ever-present Being that made it relatively easy for many of the Igbo to accept Christianity.

Another concept very dear to the heart of the Igbo people which could be easily translated into Christianity is the concept of *Umunna*, or the kinship among both direct relatives and non-blood, closely knit groups of individuals (Ebuziem, 125-126). This notion of family and kinship among the Igbo is not restricted to only living members of the tribe, but the deceased as well (Ebuziem, 131). The implication of this belief is that the dead are never truly gone from the lives of the living, but rather that the living are always intermingling with their

dead ancestors (Ebuziem, 131). It is clear to see that the Igbo people place a great deal of value on their families, both directly related and otherwise in the village, while also having a deep respect for their ancestors and those who went before them, in this way, mirroring some of the Christian beliefs in treating one another like brothers and sisters in Christ. These beliefs in *Umunna* and a powerful but ever good and loving Supreme Being contributed to the relative ease with which the Igbo accepted Christianity.

Christianity and Colonialism

Despite the relative success of Christianity in Igboland, Christian missions were not without their difficulties and problems. The many similarities which already existed between the Igbo religious beliefs and the Christian faith tradition made it relatively easy for the Igbo to accept this new faith, but the method the missionaries used to introduce Christianity in the wake of the colonization of Africa could have been better. This section will focus on the positive and negative aspects of missionary activity in Igboland, as well as the Igbo response to Christianity.

Missionary activity among the Igbo occurred in three time periods starting in 1857 and ending in 1964 (Udeani, 99). The first of these periods is defined as the time from 1857 to 1914 when the British were in favor of the spread of Christianity, as it allowed them greater political control over the area (Udeani, 99). At the same time, the Igbo were interested in this new religion, particularly in the educational benefits provided by the missionaries (Udeani, 99, 103-108). The next period took place from the years 1914 to 1939 and is differentiated from the first by the rivalry between various missionary groups for African members (Udeani, 99). During the time period of 1939 to 1964, the Igbo appeared to have accepted Christianity more fully and a large number of Igbo churches emerged (Udeani 99). It took a long time to reach a point in the history of Christian missionaries in Igboland where the indigenous people were making the religion their own, and this was likely due, in no small part, to the lack of understanding of the local culture into which the European missionaries entered.

The way in which most European missionaries gained access to the Igbo communities was through the promise of education. The governmental system the Igbo had in place allowed the majority to decide whether or not they wanted to welcome these foreigners, and the prospect of a Western education for themselves and their children typically caused them to vote in favor of the missionaries (Udeani, 101). Due to the value of education placed on the Igbo by the missionaries, the Igbo today are very well educated; they are the Nigerian group with the highest literacy rate (Ebuziem, 26). Though the missionary education was very well received, it was certainly lacking in many aspects. The main focus of many of the schools was to produce religious clergy and educated wives (Udeani, 105). To achieve this, the heart of education was on developing an individual spiritually, leading to teaching focused on religion and careful molding of the behavior of the children (Udeani, 105). Still, even with its shortcomings, education was and still is incredibly valuable to the Igbo people, and this high value provided the missionaries with a way into the tribe.

Although the missionaries could use the newly established school systems to spread the message of Christianity to the youth of the community, it was not as effective for the

elderly. Lack of exposure to this new religion was not the only reason the elders of the community showed little interest in this faith; the Igbo concept of *Umunna*, or kinship, especially on the paternal side, also deterred the older Igbo from Christianity (Ebuziem, 125, 129). This concept of family ties goes beyond living members, including the deceased ancestors (Mbefo, 67-68). By becoming a Christian, older Igbo worried that they would go to heaven and never be able to see their families again, and for that reason they would rather reject the eternal delight of heaven to be with their families (Mbefo, 67-68). Lack of understanding on the part of the missionaries, who did not attempt to become culturally competent in the Igbo way of life, led to difficulties such as this in the conversion process.

Not only were the missionaries uninterested in the Igbo culture, but they accepted the European stereotypes of the indigenous African populations. The European view during the colonization of Africa was that Europe was Christian and represented everything Christianity should be (Udeani, 81). Since nothing in Africa was synonymous with the European way of life, the people were seen as uncivilized heathens and no effort was put into understanding their backward way of life. Another reason for this view of the local people by the missionary groups was that this was the view the colonialists had in the area, and if the missionaries were to be successful, they needed the support, or at least tolerance, of the colonial power in the area (Udeani, 87). For example, in Igboland, the missionaries were French Roman Catholics but the British, whose national religion is Anglican, were attempting to colonize the area (Udeani, 108). In order for both groups to be successful in their endeavors, they needed to cooperate. Unfortunately, however, this cooperation did not always leave room for a good understanding of the indigenous people.

Even with these negative views of the local African people, some missionary efforts were successful, including those which occurred in the Igbo territory. In large, this was likely due to the many similarities which already existed between their indigenous faith and Christianity. Some of these similarities include the previously discussed belief in and altars dedicated to *Chukwu*, a Supreme Being and source of goodness in the Igbo faith tradition (Okuma, 70). The aforementioned value placed in *Umunna*, or kinship, can be extended beyond merely blood relatives and to all members of a particular faith group, forming a sort of church community (Iroegbu, 89). These parallels between the indigenous Igbo faith and Christianity made it relatively easy for the locals to see how their *Chukwu* could be the same God of the Christians, but this does not mean they preferred Christianity to their own religion.

Many of the Igbo found Christianity, especially Catholicism, to be very limiting as compared to their aboriginal tradition. On the whole, the Igbo saw the Christian tradition as nothing more than rules they needed to obey in order to gain the riches of heaven (Okuma, 16). The Igbo are a very religious and expressive group who felt a void practicing a religion which was limited to only a few hours on a Sunday (Okuma, 16). The European hymns and rhythms did not allow them to express their passion and faith in a way that worked for them, causing them to feel out of place and uncomfortable in the churches of the missionaries (Okuma, 16). The Catholic faith was very limiting to these Igbo people, who were used to a much more expressive form of religion.

In an attempt to express themselves and their love for their God in a way that feels more comfortable to them, many Igbo began to look beyond the typical Catholic church.

Independent, Pentecostal churches emerged and were very successful during these times as they provided an area where the Igbo could be themselves and express themselves more enthusiastically than they could in the more traditional mission church (Okuma, 73). Even so, Igboland is still viewed as the center of the Catholic faith in not only Nigeria, but all of Africa (Ebuziem, 10). Although, in the end, the more traditional Christian faith seemed to be the most successful in Igboland, the fact that so many of the natives converted to Independent churches is evidence that more needs to be done to ensure the success of the major Christian churches in Nigeria among the Igbo population.

The Future of Christianity Within and Beyond the Igbo

As the previous section indicated, Christian missions in Igboland were not without their shortcomings. Now, in the light of Vatican II, the Church can do more to ensure the Igbo expression of Catholicism is able to contribute to Catholicism as a whole in the same capacity to which Catholicism as a whole contributes to that local expression. In the past, missionaries made many mistakes in not understanding the culture and tradition of the people to which they were ministering, and while it is too late to remedy those mistakes, it is not too late to validate the Catholic expressions which emerged as a result of this missionary approach in Africa. This section will focus on models and methods which can be used to increase the mutual respect and understanding of the Igbo interpretation of Christianity.

It took a long time for the Catholic Church to recognize the error of its way in treating local faith traditions as being insignificant in the eyes of the greater Church. With Vatican II in the 1960s came a greater respect for local expressions of the Catholic faith. This shift in thinking led to a change from strictly clerical leadership of the Church to a greater focus on the subject or individual in a particular area being affected by a particular theology (Ebuziem, 178). A result of this change in viewpoint is a movement toward inculturation, contextual theology, and learning to find Christ already present in every human being (Udeani, 163). Vatican II was instrumental in bringing about the sorely needed change in how the Church views indigenous religions and expressions of Catholicism and Christianity.

With this new understanding of Christianity, a conscious effort can be made to increase the success of Christian theology in Igboland. In order for the Igbo to have strong foundation for their interpretation of Christianity, there need to be Igbo theologians (Okuma, 76). Theologians would be able to take part in a mutually critical dialogue with religious of other backgrounds in order to draw attention to what is important in their own faith as well as see how it fits into the larger Church as a whole (Okuma, 76). Through hearing and conversing with Igbo theologians, their interpretation of Christianity can be better understood and has the ability to contribute to the global understanding of Christianity.

Not only should the Igbo people be included in the larger theology of Christianity, it is also important to include certain aspects of their culture to allow for greater assimilation of the faith into their own societies. As previously stated, the concept of *Umunna*, is very important to the Igbo way of life, but it is also a concept that can easily be integrated into the Christian faith tradition. Inculturation of the Gospel would allow the Igbo people to

seamlessly link together their own traditional values with the new Christian faith, creating a stronger faith to which Igbo would be more likely to convert (*Redemptoris Missio*, 52). It is easy to forget that Christianity is only about 125 years old in Igboland while the culture and customs of the tribe have been there for a significantly longer period (Ebuziem, 181). In assimilating their culture into their faith, the Igbo people can develop a stronger connection to Christianity.

The Igbo would not be the only ones gaining from inculturation and better assimilation of Christianity into their culture—the whole Christian community would benefit. The Church as a whole should not only enrich the local expression of faith, but the local expression should enrich the overall Church's understanding of Christianity. Traditional Igbo values like *Umunna* could go beyond simply helping the Igbo to make Christianity their own, by uniting the entire Church in a type of kinship. Discussion between and among Igbo theologians and theologians of other cultural backgrounds would promote growth and healthy conversation among members of the Church, leading to a deeper understanding of Christianity as a whole.

In order to allow for a healthy expression and understanding of this local form of Christianity, several models and methods have been described by a wide range of scholars. Cajetan E. Ebuziem details what he calls the “seven-approach model of collaborative leadership or ministry within the *Umunna* Church Community (UCC)” (Ebuziem, 189). This model outlines several levels through which the Igbo *Umunna* Church can progress in order to grow even stronger and engage the Igbo at a higher level.

The first level outlined by Ebuziem is the Aim level, which focuses on creating an inclusive community (Ebuziem, 189). For the Igbo, this means creating an *Umunna* church environment in which no one is excluded and to which everyone can contribute (Ebuziem, 191). One way parishioners can be united is through the sharing of the Eucharist in Mass each Sunday (Ebuziem, 189). In sharing this symbol of their faith and gathering together at least once each week, the local Church can build a stronger community of believers.

The next level is known as the Motto level (Ebuziem, 191). This level continues with the focus of community, but extends it to the whole of humanity, not just the local parish (Ebuziem, 191). The motto suggested by Ebuziem to categorize this level, therefore, is “unity is strength” (Ebuziem, 191). He claims that we are all human beings on this planet and not a single one of us exists in isolation (Ebuziem, 191). In reaching this goal, the Church would reach a new level of kinship and brotherhood among parishioners, hopefully increasing the mutual respect and love among Christians.

In order to reach the third level, the focus needs to be on the government of the church (Ebuziem, 192). The power and control of the Igbo churches needs to be spread out among the people and decentralized from diocesan control to allow each and every member of the parish to have a voice (Ebuziem, 192). The way in which Ebuziem suggests reaching this spread of power is through the use of a consensus government style of church leadership, much like the one the Igbo use in their communities outside the church (Ebuziem, 192). The use of this style of church government would ensure that everyone contributes to the decisions and workings of the church community. This ensures that power and control of the parish goes to the people attending the church, not the missionaries who established it.

Once the Igbo church is run by its own people, the next logical step is for it to become entirely self-reliant, and this is the fourth level, according to Ebuziem (Ebuziem, 193). At this point, the church should be able to sustain itself and contribute to the understanding of Christianity as a whole through the Igbo expression of faith while simultaneously having the Church contribute and educate the local expression (Ebuziem, 193). This is the point at which a mutually critical dialogue between the Igbo church and the Christian community as a whole can occur, and each of them are able to benefit from the existence of each other, enriching and deepening their understanding of the faith.

Level five is a call for salvation of both body and spirit for all people (Ebuziem, 193). By this point, the concept of *Umunna* will have spread throughout the faith community as a result of the mutually critical dialogue achieved in the previous level. This means that all Christians will understand this concept of kinship and love among each other, and will work to ensure that no one is left behind (Ebuziem, 194). In an *Umunna* community, everyone will receive what they need and what they are owed. Individuals will be freed from the chains that bind them, including racism, lack of material needs, and evil (Ebuziem, 194). When everyone is working together for the greater good of each individual, fewer people will be lacking in their needs on Earth.

The penultimate stage of this process is the goal of achieving harmony and progress both within the Church and throughout the planet (Ebuziem, 194-195). Although this may seem to be a far-fetched and idealistic goal, Ebuziem argues that it is possible if the consensus government discussed in the fourth level is utilized (Ebuziem, 195). The Igbo mentality denies wealth and gluttony by desiring the spread of resources and the elevation of all people in their society (Ebuziem, 195). Since this is already the way the local Igbo want to operate, a consensus government would give them the voice they need to ensure that such policies are upheld within the church, leading to harmony among each other and the planet.

Finally, Ebuziem concludes with a stage of communion (Ebuziem, 195). This is the stage in which people would give of themselves for the good of others in everything that they do (Ebuziem, 195). Thomas Norris is quoted in saying "In a spirituality of communion, one goes towards heaven not only with others but also through and in others" (Norris, 13). This is precisely what Ebuziem wants to see in this stage. Christians should see it as their duty and their goal to embody the Gospel and be the face of God for others to see (Ebuziem, 195-197). Embodying the Christian faith in this manner would ensure that all Christian people are constantly striving to be the best versions of themselves and never wavering in their efforts to be in the presence of God, and to help those less fortunate than themselves, which should be the ultimate goal of Christianity. Humanity as a whole will become joined in a looser form of *Umunna*, leading to sincere respect, love, and care for all of humanity and all of God's creations on Earth.

The plan presented by Cajetan Ebuziem is not a foolproof model to develop theology in Igbo Africa, but it is a start. Simply by reading models like this and thinking about local expressions of faith, it should become clear how much the Christian population can gain from an indigenous group's understanding of the Bible. No matter how idealistic this model may seem, the point is that it shows how an understanding of Igbo expression of Christianity in terms of *Umunna* can be something the world learns from, Christian or

not. This model does an excellent job of displaying how seemingly small steps and minor changes in the wording of the stages can lead to a new understanding of a centuries old faith.

Conclusion

The Igbo are one of the largest tribes in Nigeria, and currently, among the largest Christian populations in the continent. This paper provided a brief description of their lifestyle and culture, followed by the introduction of Christianity to the Igbo by European missionaries. Despite the sometimes questionable manner used by the missionaries to spread the Gospel, the Igbo did accept the religion and made it their own. The final section of this paper focused on just a few of the ways the Igbo assimilated Christianity into their indigenous cultural and religious beliefs. Through doing this, a novel expression of the Christian faith emerged. Since, from the beginning, Christianity has been nothing but a translated religion, each translation should be respected and understood. The model presented in this paper is one developed by Cajetan Ebuziem, and it shows how the understanding of the Igbo Christian faith can enrich not only their own expression, but Christianity as a whole.

Through reading about, studying, and understanding the Igbo way of life and their approach to Christianity, our own opinions should be challenged. Across the world, Christians and Non-Christians alike are accustomed to seeing a very European form of Christianity—from the music, to the atmosphere, to the artwork and imagery. While this interpretation is not wrong in and of itself, it is limiting in our understanding of the Christian faith. In order to understand the Word of God more fully, the expression of Christianity in every country and every culture must be treated as important and valid. It is only through a larger portrait of Christianity that the messages of Christ can be understood—or, at least as understood as our limited human minds can comprehend.

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Who am I?

Ellie DeVries

I am Elizabeth Catherine DeVries. As simple as that sounds, it's actually a dense, layered, and very complex statement. Out of grace I was begot into this world, and out of grace I will return home. Born on June 26, 1995, I was a shock to my inexperienced parents. Originally, I was predicted to be born September 29, but after my mother was in labor for four days, I was born a "miracle baby." Weighing just two pounds and six ounces, I lived in an incubator for the first ten weeks of my life.

After living in the hospital for a month, my dad's best friend and brother was finally able to visit me. I am told that when he reached out to put his hand in my incubator, my tiny hand grabbed his finger, grasping on to it and not letting go. That day, my parents asked my uncle Jimbo to be my godfather. Little did they know, they didn't only ask him to be my godfather, but my guardian angel as well. A week before my baptism, my uncle Jimbo, at age thirty, tragically drowned in the Atlantic Ocean while scuba diving. Some may say that my being born premature was a coincidence. But I don't believe in coincidences. If I hadn't been born when I was, I would have never met my uncle Jimbo. My grandparents have told me that I saved them, but I didn't save them ... God did.

Six years later, I was enrolled in St. John's School in my hometown. Although I have always been considered petite because of my prematurity, all other aspects of my life were deemed normal ... until first grade. After multiple doctor appointments, I was diagnosed with a one in a million skin disease, morphea scleroderma. Because this skin disease is so rare, causes and treatments are unknown. However, I received treatments for six years until my morphea became dormant.

Morphea scleroderma is a tightening and discoloration of the skin. Morphea covers a section of my feet, legs, stomach, right arm and shoulder, and the side of my face. Growing up, being bombarded with questions and funny looks was tough. Many tears were shed because I obviously looked different, and answering people when they asked "Why do you look like that?" was difficult because, I, myself didn't even know. As a young girl, I was very discouraged with my appearance. One particular day, I found myself really struggling with my morphea and just could not wrap my head around why I had to be the person to have it. That day, my mom handed me a coral and light blue box. She told me, "I was going to wait until you were older to give you this, but I think it's about time you open it." I did as she said and found myself caressing a lightly tinted blue glass dolphin. Although my uncle Jimbo didn't make it to my baptism, his present did. To this day, that blue dolphin is one of my most precious items and I hold it close to my heart.

Looking back, the moment I unwrapped Jimbo's present was a moment that led to a domino of events. I began to question and learn more about my godfather and found that

he was an extraordinary man who approached life as his adventure. I admire many qualities in Jimbo, how dynamic, funny, independent, charming, and outgoing he was are just a few. He became an inspiration to me.

At the time, I desperately wanted to fit in and did everything I could to be in the “in crowd.” When I finally got into the “it” group, I found I stood out more than ever. I wasn’t treated with respect and love, as I was often “seen through” and was the girl often picked on. My personality never matched theirs and I always felt uncomfortable. It wasn’t until freshman year that I finally moved out of that group for good. Although I was often put down and lacked self-esteem, I would never trade that experience. I learned so much about treating *everyone* with dignity and the power of listening to others—especially the marginalized. I made it my mission to talk to and become friends with as many people in my school as possible. I didn’t care what they looked like or who they were. Because of that, I was elected on to my high school’s Student Government Association among other clubs. In my senior year, I served as the Student Body President. In high school, I played four sports, was very involved, and very focused academically. At the end of each school year, I would reflect on the year and always realized how much I learned about myself, my personality, and how much I’ve grown.

My senior year was unbelievable. I was stunned to hear I was a recipient of a scholarship voted upon by my teachers, won best all around, and most of all won Ms. Meade County High School. I was the girl that looked different! The girl who wasn’t in the popular crowd! I greatly appreciated all the acknowledgments I was awarded, but I realize that it wasn’t my doing, it was God’s. My parents have always instilled the bible quote, Luke 12:48 in my life. “To whom much is given, much is expected.”

Luke 12:48 became my mantra. God has blessed me with an abundance of gifts. I have been raised in an upper middle class, hardworking, strong, humble, stable, and loving family. God has always been at the DeVries’ core. My mom often says, “Let others come to know Christ because they know you.” The second Vatican council reminds me of my family’s perspective on religion. We believe that we should live as co-creators with God, not necessarily preach to others about God, but show our faith through actions. Although preaching is important, I feel more comfortable living a humble agape life rather than presenting it to the world.

My parents raised me with an authoritative parenting style, supported me, pushed me, and allowed me to individuate. They have always accepted me for who I am, but have never let me stoop below my character. This past semester in my sociology class, I learned about family roles, values, and how they operate. After taking sociology and applying it to my life, I came to the conclusion that I was born into the best family situation possible. My parents have allowed me to become who I am; they’ve exposed me to the world, and have caused me to have an open and understanding perspective. Even though I am a cradle Catholic, I feel as if my parents never “shoved Catholicism down my throat.” Although I have been influenced by my parents, my morals and values have been chosen on my own, as they should be.

After reflecting back on my life, my talents, and my abilities, I found the most fervent quality God has bestowed upon me is my personality. My life has been filled with trials

and tribulations, but whose hasn't? Without my crosses, I wouldn't be the person I am today and the person I will be. I want to be a jack of all trades. I desire to have a healthy mind, body, and spirit.

God placed me in an absolutely incredible family. I have had wonderful friends and influences in my life, such as Jimbo. Although I do have morphea and I did struggle to fit in, I have grown up not letting those things define me. I believe that's the key factor in my personality, realizing that I choose what I want to be defined by. For me, beauty is what makes me, me. I find being a dynamic person, active, spiritual, and being true to myself is beautiful. Even though my appearance is unlike most, I refuse to think I'm a genetic mutation or that my morphea takes away from my appearance. Instead, I have an easygoing personality and honestly don't necessarily care that I have morphea. It's no longer an issue to me; I accept it. I am made in the image and likeness of God, so I am beautiful. I believe in myself, who I am, and who I want to be. I hold my morals and values close to my heart, but I am open and friendly to others who differ from me. I believe in myself because God believes in me, and He's counting on me to do so. That's beautiful. That's what defines me.

My ultimate question is, what is my purpose? As easy as it is to ask, finding the answer is much more complicated and takes a great deal of discerning. Growing up, people always said, "Listen to that little voice inside your heart and you will know what to do." To this day, I try my best to continue to listen. Many of my morals, values, and defining factors originate from myself as an innocent little girl. Personally, I believe we are most in tune to our true self when we're younger because we're abutting our roots, God. God plans us to be a certain flower, but as we grow we face thorns that might trick us into believing we're something else. Our purpose is to bloom, but to do that, we have to figure out what talents and abilities we have been given and put them to use. We must experience and accept our thorns in order to grow, but we also need to rely on our blessings, family, friends, and love from God, as our stable stem. The moment we bloom is a pure moment of glory. At that moment, we've reached our potential and our confusion, thorns, and blessings connect. We see the beauty of who we are, but more importantly, we see the grace and love of God's intimate design.

St. Catherine of Siena said, "Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." Looking toward the future, my profession is unknown. I have faith that if I continue to stay true to who I am, live to reach my potential and be open, God will provide for me. He has a perfect plan for me, and I believe in His plan. I am Elizabeth Catherine DeVries.

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Dr. Margaret H. Mahoney Prize in Historical Research

The History Department created The Dr. Margaret H. Mahoney Prize in Historical Research to honor the Professor Emerita, who was the first female faculty member at Bellarmine, and who taught here for 53 years. The award is given to the author of the best research paper in History 324: Practical Historical Research.

Alone in the Mountains: How Marion Post Wolcott of the Farm Security Administration's Photography Project Captured the Appalachian Depression

Gretchen Cox

Introduction

In 1929, the economy in the United States took a turn for the worse, one that has not been repeated since, which hurled the entire country into an economic depression for the next ten years. The Great Depression, as it has infamously come to be known, saw families that had once been middle to upper class suddenly on the streets, homeless and starving, and hit those who were already poor harder than ever. People lost their homes and their entire life's savings. The Depression reached around the world and affected the entire nation, with every region of the country being impacted differently by widespread poverty and high levels of unemployment, which hit early 25% of the U.S. workforce.¹

While the effects of the Great Depression in every region of the United States are worth studying, this paper will focus on the Appalachian region of the United States, specifically eastern Kentucky and West Virginia. The Depression devastated that area as badly as anywhere in the United States. This can be seen through the eyes of Marion Post Wolcott, a photographer commissioned by the Farm Security Administration to travel around the eastern United States and capture the individual and regional effects of the Depression.² Post Wolcott's photographs and letters, as well as her personal journey as a woman traveling alone through the mountains in the late 1930s, provide an insight into the deep poverty that plagued the Appalachian regions of the country, and how the Depression was vastly different there than it was in urban areas, or in the Dust Bowl of the Great Plains. The letters and photographs included in the Roy Stryker collection at the University of Louisville allow for a personal, in-depth look into the Depression in Appalachia that goes far beyond the cursory accounts found in most histories of the era. This

1 Among the many books on the subject, the best general history is Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009, originally 1984). A concise history of the region is John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

2 Mary Murphy, "Romancing the West: Photographs by Marion Post Wolcott." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 25:1 (2004): 165-171. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3347264>.

paper will examine how photographs of Appalachia in the throes of the Depression can tell a story about the experiences of the people there. Further, it will demonstrate that Post Wolcott's contribution to history is much greater than has previously been recognized.

The Appalachian Depression

While the Great Depression greatly affected every region in the United States, the Appalachian regions of the country were already riddled with poverty before 1929, making it even more difficult for the people there. In eastern Kentucky and West Virginia, where the major sources of income for many were mining and agriculture, the drop in prices for those two commodities pushed people, who were already struggling, over the edge.

A report by the West Virginia State Board of Children's Guardians reported that more mothers deserted their children in 1930 than any other year that had been recorded.³ This was not because these mothers did not love or care for their children, but because they truly had no way to feed them, and they could not watch them starve to death. The board offered several other disturbing accounts of what people had to do in the face of extreme, Depression-induced poverty. There were accounts of such things as a farmer cremating his baby because he could not afford a funeral, a mother who drowned her own children instead of watching them starve, and children being abandoned to fend for themselves after their parents were arrested for stealing or died from starvation.⁴ The effects went far beyond the pocketbooks of the people living in the mountains. Without access to the soup kitchens and shelters found in urban areas, starvation was a harsh reality for many of these families. However, second in line to hunger was, undoubtedly, the psychological effect of losing a business or a life's savings. One man, Milton Levine, who owned a men's clothing store in Huntington, West Virginia, lost his business and was never able to get it back, even after the Depression; "Whatever I lost, I lost myself, and maybe I should have got up, but I didn't."⁵ Levine's quote illustrates that even once things were "better," they never really got back to normal for many people.

As an area remotely isolated from the rest of the nation, recovery in Appalachia was slower and more difficult than it was anywhere else. Unlike in cities, there were no factories to provide jobs, nor government highways to build, nor massive construction projects to work on, which were the kind of economic activities funded by New Deal programs. The people in these regions were largely on their own when it came to providing for their families. The New Deal simply did not reach these areas in the way that it could reach large cities. Without access to government relief programs, conditions were much worse for the mountain people, who could not find work and a source of income to feed themselves and their children.

Additionally, the situation was even worse for women. While the need for two incomes forced many women to seek employment, the number of New Deal jobs available to women was limited. Although New Deal Agencies such as the Federal Emergency Re-

³ Jerry Bruce Thomas, *An Appalachian New Deal: West Virginia in the Great Depression* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2010): 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

lief Agency, Civil Works Administration, Works Progress Administration, and National Youth Administration attempted to provide work for women, many of the jobs that were made available were not physically suitable for women.⁶ The Roosevelt administration was aware of this problem, and some New Deal agencies were successful in providing some work for women. For example, the Federal Emergency Relief Agency, and later the Works Progress Administration, provided a nursing program that employed 194 nurses for a wide array of services.⁷ The problem with this was that while traditional gender ideology identified nursing as being more suited to women than mining or construction, it is also more suited to those who are educated. The education levels in Appalachia were much lower than the national average for everyone, especially women. There were simply too many women looking for work who would not have sufficient education for a job as a nurse, leaving them to either accept unemployment, or compete for jobs usually filled by men. The low level of education and the gender restrictions worsened the employment situation in Appalachia, and exacerbated the desperate situation the Depression inflicted on the people of the region.

The New Deal created agencies to provide relief and jobs to those affected by the Depression. This was a critical task, and its success—or at least, the impression of success it created—was one of the reasons that President Roosevelt was so popular. However, it was also important to document this tragic event. The Farm Security Administration (FSA), originally created to provide farm loans and relief to farm families affected by the Depression, addressed the need for a visual record of the Great Depression. The FSA spearheaded a photo project that commissioned photographers to travel the country, in order to document its citizens' struggle through photographs.

The FSA Photo Project and Marion Post Wolcott

In 1935, the Farm Security Administration's Historical Section appointed Roy Stryker as its head. A Columbia University graduate, Stryker was charged with directing the photo project, which started out as an attempt to document the FSA's activities but evolved into much more. Stryker assigned talented photographers to "document the effects of the Great Depression on people in the hardest hit areas of the country."⁸ This project, while accused by some of being an attempt at propaganda, accomplished two tasks: it employed photographers who otherwise would not have been able to find work, and it documented not only the successes, but more importantly the failures of government programs to help those affected the most by the Depression. An article by Michael Carlebach does a particularly good job of describing the complexity of the project; "The images describe hope as well as despair, plenty as well as scarcity, well-being as well as suffering. There are indeed views of ruined lands, and of rural Americans desperately in need, but especially in the last years of the project, there is evidence of progress and of

⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁸ Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. "The Photographers: Roy Stryker." Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Accessed March 3, 2016. <http://www.clpgh.org/exhibit/photog14.html>.

the essential strength and vigor of the nation.”⁹ The photos captured far more than the successes or failures of the administration. The pictures taken by Stryker’s photographers provide a priceless view of the Depression in different areas of the country that is second only to actually being there.

While Marion Post Wolcott is a relatively unknown FSA photographer, two others are famous today: Dorothea Lange and Margaret Bourke-White. Lange’s photograph entitled “Migrant Mother” has become the image most associated with the Great Depression. Taken in Nopomo, California in 1936, it captures the devastation that the Dust Bowl brought to the western United States. Lange, while a talented photographer who contributed greatly to the FSA project, only worked part-time for the FSA and did not contribute even close to the 9,000 photographs that Marion Post Wolcott is known to have taken.¹⁰ Yet, this single photograph has become iconic in representing the Great Depression, making Lange the most famous Depression-era photographer. Bourke-White photographed the Great Ohio River Flood of 1937, which saw 70 percent of Louisville submerged and caused 175,000 residents to flee the city.¹¹ Bourke-White’s best known photograph, entitled “Kentucky Flood, 1937,” shows a line of African Americans waiting outside a soup kitchen in Louisville, wearing somber, stoic expressions on their faces, beneath a billboard of a white family driving in a car, which declares, “World’s Highest Standard of Living—There’s No Way Like the American Way.” This widely reproduced image rivals “Depression Mother” in its familiarity. Bourke-White and Lange successfully documented the Dust Bowl and the Great Flood, the worst natural disasters of the Great Depression.

However, just as important as these renowned photographers is Marion Post Wolcott, whose lesser-known photographs successfully documented regions of the country that were devastated in a different, less dramatic, but equally devastating way. Instead of high winds or high water, isolation and poverty, factors present long before 1929, became the subjects of Wolcott’s camera. Unlike Bourke-White and Lange, Post Wolcott is not famous for her FSA photography, yet her work in chronicling the desperation of mountain people is as compelling as that of her better-known counterparts. Born in New Jersey on 7 June 1910, Marion Post (she would add Wolcott to her name after marrying in 1941) studied early childhood education and taught in a small mill town in Massachusetts, observing extreme class differences and privilege that caused her to “become disillusioned with the ‘American System.’” This disillusionment and frustration with class struggles likely fueled her later desire to capture the true struggles of Depression-era poverty. She later attended the University of Vienna to study child psychology, and, at great risk to herself, spent time helping school children made homeless by Nazi bombings. This commitment to homeless children demonstrates that Post Wolcott was the kind of person who cared

9 Michael L. Carlebach, “Documentary and Propaganda: The Photographs of the Farm Security Administration,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 8 (1998): 6.

10 Beverly W. Brennan, “Marion Post Wolcott (1910-1990): A Biographical Essay,” Library of Congress: Prints and Photographs Division, last modified 2012, accessed March 3, 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/womphotoj/wolcottessay.html>.

11 Christopher Haven, “The Great Ohio, Mississippi River Valley Flood of 1937,” *U.S. Coast Guard History Program* (4 June 2011): 2.

deeply for others, and wanted to help everyone, traits that fueled her commitment to her FSA job. She continued to do this until she had to return to the United States when the university closed due to Nazi activity and tension in the region. Post Wolcott became a teacher and freelance photographer, but struggled financially, often relying on going on dates to make sure she was getting at least one meal per day. *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* hired her to take photographs, but she was met with sexist discrimination there, and was not allowed to photograph truly important news; instead her assignments were to cover what was considered a more appropriate “woman’s beat.” Post Wolcott’s break came in 1938 when, to her delight, Roy Stryker interviewed and hired her almost immediately after he saw her portfolio. She spent the next four years traveling throughout the United States to document the true faces of the Depression.¹²

While scholars now study the photographs in the FSA archives as a documentary record, they were originally intended as propaganda by the government, which was a touchy subject with Roy Stryker. He was sensitive about his work, and bridled at those who easily dismissed it as propaganda. The photographs produced under his direction were documentary, he argued: accurate, truthful, unmanipulated slices of real life.¹³ The photographs were, in fact, propaganda; their intent, originally at least, was to convince the American people, as well as Congress, of the need for reform to aid the agricultural sector in recovering from the “deplorable” conditions created by the Depression.¹⁴ However, while they may have originated from partisan politics, intended by the government to drum up support for expansion of New Deal programs, the photographs evolved into an invaluable visual record of one of the worst times in United States history. Dorothea Lange summed up this evolution; “I always thought what people called ‘art’ was a by-product... a ‘plus-something that happens when your work is done, if it’s done well enough.”¹⁵ Post Wolcott certainly did her job “well enough,” as she transformed her photographs from propaganda to a collective documentary statement that offers insight into the plight of the Appalachian people during the Great Depression.

As a woman traveling alone, to capture such images, Post Wolcott had to be cautious, but could also use her looks and friendliness to get to know the people she was photographing. She carried with her a letter from the FSA administrator, affirming that “the bearer of this letter, Miss Marion Post, whose photograph [seen here] and notarized signature appear below, is an official photographer for the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Security Administration, and is on official...”¹⁶

12 Brennan, “Walcott: Biographical.”

13 Carlebach, “Documentary and Propaganda,” 6.

14 Carlebach, “Documentary and Propaganda,” 8.

15 *Ibid.*, 8.

16 FSA Administrator C.M. Baldwin letter of introduction for Marion Post, with salutation “To Whom It May Concern,” 3 August 1940, Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The FSA paid Post Wolcott a per diem for food and lodging expenses, but expected her to fix her own camera and car. Her duties included that she write to Stryker regularly to keep him updated on her progress.¹⁷ Her letters to Stryker provide details about the struggles she faced, as well as about the lives of the people in the regions she visited and photographed.

Post Wolcott's Photographs: A Visual Record

The FSA Photography Project was the first time the government systematically used photography for partisan purposes; it needed to convince Congress of the need for reform, and the photographs were intended to show the bad conditions in the agricultural regions of the country.¹⁸ Many photographs in the Post Wolcott collection would have accomplished that purpose. For example, the following photograph, taken in Breathitt County, Kentucky in 1940, shows poverty-ridden school children walking home from school barefoot on dirt roads.



Roy Striker Collection, University of Louisville Archives & Special Collections

¹⁷ Brennan, "Walcott: Biographical."

¹⁸ Carlebach, "Documentary and Propaganda," 9.

If the government wanted reform, showing people a photo like this of children living in primitive conditions could certainly accomplish the goal of playing on the emotions of the members of Congress. However, this photo is also a historical account of what day to day life was truly like for families and children in Appalachia. For that reason, the photos were much more than propaganda, even if that was the original purpose.

Perhaps the most important thing about Post Wolcott's photos is that they are not at all staged. She did not go into people's homes and take family portraits of people sitting on a couch. Instead, Post Wolcott went into the woods, walked on dirt roads, across creeks, and climbed mountainsides to capture, accurately, the plight of the families who were suffering the most. She sent letters to Stryker sporadically, which she explained to her boss was because she often was in areas without telephones or even a post office.¹⁹ This correspondence reveals not only her commitment to her job, often traveling to very remote areas to accomplish her task, but also the severe isolation that plagued the Appalachian regions and made the suffering much worse. Post Wolcott's photographs can be seen as both depicting the Depression and its affects on the Appalachian people, as well as demonstrating how Post Wolcott forged her place as a female professional photographer at a time when few women pursued any type of professional career. Additionally, Wolcott created a body of work not only as a photographer, but also a visual historian.

While Post Wolcott took photographs in a number of locations in the eastern United States, her pictures from the Appalachian regions of Kentucky are her most powerful. They captured the extreme poverty and suffering, as well as the strong will to endure, of the people in their compositions. In one 1940 photograph, Post Wolcott recorded a woman and her child returning from the store in Breathitt County, Kentucky. The woman and her child are both barefoot. Similar to the first photo of the children walking home from school, the fact that the subjects are barefoot reveals a poverty not often seen in urban areas. That they are barefoot reveals both the lack of access to simple necessities, as well as the treacherous journeys that caused shoes to wear out quickly. Additionally, the woman and her child have to walk through the woods to get to the store, which is evidence of the isolated conditions of Appalachia. Government programs to build highways and roads did not reach eastern Kentucky, making a trip to the grocery store a long and difficult journey. It is also notable that the woman is carrying very few items, and the child is not carrying anything at all. It can be inferred that the woman does not live alone with her child, as families were typically large and homes shared with extended family. The amount of food (or lack thereof) that she is carrying could be a further indication of suffering, as there is simply not enough to feed a large number of people. Finally, this photo reinforces the fact that Post Wolcott was willing to go off the beaten path to capture her photos, a confirmation of her commitment to the project and work ethic.

Another photo, taken by Post Wolcott in Barbourville, Kentucky in 1940, shows three generations of the Garland family standing outside of the home that all of them shared. This

¹⁹ Marion Post to Roy Stryker, 5 September 1940, Roy L. Stryker Collection, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY.

photograph speaks to how many people often lived in a single home, attesting yet again to the poverty that plagued Appalachia. Three generations of a family sharing a small house is something that would be almost unheard of in urban areas, but in Appalachia, it was a common occurrence. There are 23 faces visible in the picture, in front of a structure that is not capable of effectively or comfortably housing 23 people, and yet, it did. It is notable that only two people in the photo are smiling; the rest, even the children, have sullen expressions. This may not speak to poverty, but it most certainly speaks to the hard life that this family lived. The fact that Post Wolcott was able to capture this photo also reveals that she was able to create a relationship with the people she was photographing. In a region where people viewed the government and strangers alike with distrust, they received Post Wolcott hospitably, although she was a flatlander working for the government. Perhaps she made them feel important by inviting them to be a part of her project.

A photograph from 1940 shows a woman on the porch of her log cabin in the mountains of Jackson, Kentucky. The home's exterior of warped wood, with two wings that seem to barely hold together, shows both the limited resources and the "do it yourself" attitude of the Appalachian people. In the mid-1900s, log homes were all but gone in most of the United States, replaced by wood clapboard and brick. However, Post Wolcott's photos show that they were very much still a way of life in the Appalachian regions. The fence around the home is also falling down, revealing either a lack of resources or a lack of time to rebuild it, or both.

Post Wolcott took many of her Appalachian photographs from a vantage point she had to reach by climbing a steep hillside, to get the shot. In one photo she climbed to capture not only a woman and her home, but also the entire area surrounding it. That she was a woman made no difference in her ability to do her job and do it well; Post Wolcott was not only talented, but strong, independent, and very capable of capturing one of the most diverse and impoverished regions of the United States.

Post Wolcott framed a coal camp built into the side of a mountain in a photograph of Hazard, Kentucky in September 1940. Coal mining was not only a major industry in eastern Kentucky and West Virginia during the Depression, but it was often one of the only options for men and even young boys to make money for their families. The mines were dangerous, but the photo illustrates the fact that the living conditions at the coal camps were also poor. The small log cabins indicate that the living conditions for the miners were cramped as tightly as tenements in the city. That Post Wolcott traveled to the coal camp to take the photo is again revealing about her as a person. As a single woman, traveling alone to a coal camp would have been somewhat dangerous, but Post Wolcott was committed to capturing as many aspects of Appalachian life as possible.

If life was difficult for adults, it was certainly just as difficult for children. The children in eastern Kentucky and West Virginia were often abandoned by their parents due to fear of starvation. Additionally, very few children were afforded an education, either because of a lack of schools or because their parents needed them to help work to support the family. Those who were sent to school were taught in small schools, often only one room, with very limited resources. Post Wolcott captured these children at a school in Breathitt County, Kentucky in September 1940.



Roy Striker Collection, University of Louisville Archives & Special Collections

The students are sharing desks, which indicates that Breathitt County did not have sufficient resources to provide children with the most basic school supplies. Additionally, the children are barefoot, and presumably walked to school that way, which is indicative of the poverty of their individual families. Finally, the fact that the children are of different ages could be a sign that their education was of low quality, as educating children who are all at different levels in the same room is not conducive to each child's learning. Post Wolcott had to forge relationships with people in each town that she visited in order to be allowed into certain places to take photographs. She indicated in one of her letters to Roy Stryker that she, a former teacher, had befriended the school superintendent in Jackson, Kentucky.²⁰ Post Wolcott's ability to make friends and connections in many places contributed to her success in capturing such a diverse set of photographs. It also contributed to her ability to travel safely, as she was able to find people who could provide her with, or direct her to, safe places to sleep and eat.

Marion Post Wolcott was a fiercely independent and resourceful woman, as evidenced not only by her history of traveling Europe alone, but also through her willingness to travel the United States alone, and take photographs of people without knowing how she would be received in each new place that she went. Of all her photos, very few are of Post Wolcott

²⁰ Marion Post to Roy Stryker, 5 September 1940, Roy L. Stryker Collection, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY.

herself. The one that is most striking, and most indicative of her rugged independence, shows her and a man changing the tire on her car, with Post Wolcott laying on the ground under the car near the South Fork of the Kentucky River in 1940.

This scene suggests her fierce rejection of the expectation of women in the Depression era United States. While Post Wolcott has the assistance of a man, she is the one lying on the ground under the car changing the tire, in a dress, no less! When Roy Stryker hired Post Wolcott, he expressed some concern about sending a woman to travel completely alone, leaving her to deal with these types of situations alone.²¹ However, Stryker had nothing to worry about; Wolcott was resourceful and adept at finding people to help her, should she need it. She was also knowledgeable about the mechanics of her car and camera; in one letter to Stryker, she mentions the need to have her car checked after driving on rough roads, and that she is waiting for new flashbulbs for her camera.²² Marion Post Wolcott was indeed a pioneer for independent, working women.

Conclusion

The Great Depression is so named for a reason; it reached across the United States and devastated the American way of life. However, it is often said that the Depression came early and stayed late in Appalachia. A region already plagued by poverty, Appalachia was further devastated by the crash of the economy and the destruction of the agricultural industry. While President Roosevelt and the federal government made an honest effort to extend relief to these areas, the mountains were so isolated and deeply impoverished that often, social programs did not help the way they could in urban areas. The Appalachian region was not suited for major road construction projects and dam building. Women, who often needed work desperately in order to feed their families, could not find it because most of the limited jobs created by New Deal agencies were aimed towards men. The region was plagued with starvation, illness, and grim stories of parents abandoning their children rather than watching them starve.

In the throes of the Depression, Roy Stryker headed a branch of the Farm Security Administration that commissioned photographers to travel the country and capture the effects of the Depression on different regions. A project that may have started out for the purposes of propaganda, ended up providing a detailed historical record of the experiences of the people in the areas hardest-hit by the Depression. Marion Post Wolcott was sent into the Appalachian region, and was able to capture how drastically different the Depression experience was for the people of Appalachia. She did not shy away from doing whatever she had to and traveling wherever necessary to get pictures that successfully revealed the struggles of families in eastern Kentucky. Post Wolcott is an overlooked gem of the FSA's photo project. Her photographs preserve the faces and the struggles of the people of Appalachia during the Great Depression.

21 Brennan, "Walcott: Biographical."

22 Marion Post Wolcott to Roy Stryker, September 9, 1940, Roy Stryker Collection, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY.

To view a sampling of Marion Post Wolcott's Appalachian photos, search Google Images using "Marion Post Wolcott Appalachia" as your search phrase.

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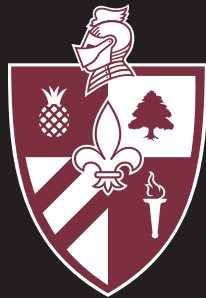
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