Clio's Psyche

Understanding the "Why" of Culture,
Current Events, History, and Society

Barack Obama in History Symposium
Seven Authors Debate

Special Issue:
The Psychology of Our Electronic World

Articles by Members of the
Digital Generation

The Family Life of Alice Miller

Meeting Report

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Obama in History Symposium

President Obama in History: The Political Intersects with the Personal

Ken Fuchsman—University of Connecticut

As President, Barack Obama has a tendency to both snatch defeat from the jaws of victory and to win when it looks like he might lose. In the fall of 2013, he stood his ground with Congress when the government was shut down, emerging triumphant, only to see his popularity fall when the rollout of the Obamacare website was a disaster. On the other hand, it had appeared as if his health care proposals were fatally bogged down in Congress, until he asserted leadership and the Affordable Care Act became law of the land. Three quarters through his terms of office, it is possible to make a tentative assessment of Obama's place in history. The record is quite contradictory. Major legislation passed during his first two years in office, yet he did not successfully confront the severity of the Great Recession or partisan divisions. This paper will show his record on the economy and dealing with the opposition in his first term.

First: Economic matters. The financial services firm, Lehman Brothers, collapsed on September 15, 2008. Exactly two weeks later, according to the *New York Times*, "the Standard & Poor's 500-stock index, plunged almost 9 percent, its third-biggest decline since World War II. The Dow Jones industrial average fell nearly 778 points, or 6.98 percent, to 10,365.45."[1] The Bush Administration, with Obama's active support, was then able to push the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP)—a program used to buy assets and equity—through Congress to rescue Wall Street.

Still, in 2008 the economy decreased by a whopping nine percent.[2] From October 2007 to March 2009, the stock market dropped by over 50 percent, there were 8.8 million jobs lost during the freefall, four million homes were foreclosed, and in 2012 one in three homeowners owed more to the bank than their home was worth.[3] Between 2007 and 2010, the average American family lost

nearly 40 percent of its wealth.[4] The unemployment rate was not below eight percent between February 2009 and August 2012. In August 2012 the labor force participation rate was 63.5 percent, the lowest in 31 years.[5] The fiscal year that began in October 2008 ended up producing a deficit of $1.413 trillion which was more than three times higher than the previous record set just the year before.[6]

The crisis on Wall Street altered the presidential election. Early in September an Associated Press poll showed John McCain was supported by 48 percent of those polled.[7] Barack Obama had 44 percent. By the end of September Obama was favored by 48 percent to 41 percent for McCain. In October, a Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll showed that 46 percent thought Obama would be better at handling the economy to McCain's 29 percent.[8] The financial meltdown turned the tide from McCain to Obama. In the election, the Democratic candidate received 52.9 percent of the votes cast to 45.6 percent for the Arizona Senator. The Democrats swept both houses of Congress with overwhelming majorities. Obama became President with a clear mandate from the voters.

Obama was facing the greatest economic crises since the Great Depression. What did he do? Stimulating the economy was the first priority of the incoming Obama team. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) with an eventual price tag of $831 billion was signed by President Obama on February 17, 2009. Quick action, but was it enough? Christina Romer, head of the Council of Economic Advisors, calculated the impact of this amount and thought it was too small to actually bring full recovery.[9] Before the bill passed, Harvard's Martin Feldstein was concerned that the proposal did not do enough for consumer spending or housing, and that some of its provisions would take too long to have an impact on the economy.[10] Nobel Prize winner Paul Krugman said that about a quarter of the $800 billion legislation would not soon assist in bringing recovery. He then added, "So you've got $600 billion to fill a $2.9 trillion hole."[11] Despite its limitations, the Recovery Act was instrumental in helping to stabilize the economy. The recession, which began in December 2007, officially ended in June 2009.[12] Yet there was not sufficient stimulus in the stimulus act. What the Bush and Obama Administrations

did was save Wall Street from further collapse, but they did not restore prosperity.

When Obama took office, two of the big three Detroit automakers were in dire shape. His administration intervened, forced the reorganization of GM and Chrysler, backed them financially, and eventually saw the powerful comeback of both companies. Early in his presidency and while still Senator, Obama had supported giving vast sums to aid large corporations. Did he do as much to help the less fortunate? Many Americans were losing their jobs. In February 2009, the unemployment rate jumped to 8.3 percent and it had been at 4.5 percent two years earlier.[13] An average of 700,000 jobs were lost in the first three months of 2009.[14] Public opinion polls consistently reported that dealing with the loss of jobs was the highest priority. Yet after the President signed the stimulus package, instead of formulating a jobs program, he made reforming health care his top priority. He did not propose a major jobs bill until September 2011. By that time, the Republicans controlled the House of Representatives, and his bill was dead on arrival. Meanwhile unemployment rose to nine percent of the workforce in April 2009 and did not fall below nine percent until October 2010.[15] It is clear that the President was slow to perceive the urgency of dealing with the consequences of the recession for millions who were losing their jobs.

A similar tale can be told about the Obama administration's response to the rash of foreclosures. The burst of the housing bubble and the Great Recession went hand in hand. It was mostly members of the middle class and those aspiring to move upward who were devastated by the mortgage crisis. Millions were losing their homes or seeing the value of their homes be less than their mortgages.

As the *New York Times* Binyamin Applebaum writes, "President Obama poured vast amounts of money into efforts to stabilize the financial system" and "rescue the auto industry," but "he tried to finesse the cleanup of the housing crash, rejecting... a broad bailout of homeowners facing foreclosure." His administration focused on helping so-called responsible homeowners, and as Applebaum notes, "offered aid to fewer than half of those facing foreclosure."[16]

While Obama promised to spend $50 billion to aid the crippled housing market, as of October 2011 only $2.4 billion had been spent and only 1.7 million people were assisted.[17] The slow pace of helping those in trouble continued although there were over 900,000 foreclosures in 2009 and more than a million in 2010. Applebaum writes, "some economists and political allies say the cautious response to the housing crisis was the administration's most significant mistake. The bailouts of banks and automakers are now widely regarded as crucial steps in arresting the recession, while the depressed housing market remains a millstone."[18] As Ezra Klein concludes, "the Obama administration's housing policies failed to fix the housing crisis, in part because they never really tried to fix the housing crisis."[19] Except for workers connected to the auto industry and those people who cannot afford good health care, Obama was less sensitive to the millions of Americans who were underemployed, unemployed, or who lost their homes than he was to the privileged. As he rose to the top, in practice, the onetime community organizer had developed more empathy for the struggles of the barons of Wall Street and Detroit than he did for common people who had lost their way.

In crucial ways, Obama was reluctant to face how important it was to deal with the economy. Even before the inauguration, Timothy Geithner told the President elect, "your signature accomplishment is going to be preventing a Great Depression." Obama responded, "That's not enough for me."[20] Both David Axelrod and Vice President Joe Biden implored the President to focus on the unemployment problem. Obama was not moved. A U.S. senator tangled with the President on priorities. Obama told him, "I campaigned on health care." The senator acknowledged that, then added, "in October, the month before the election, the bottom fell out. And you're standing in a hole trying to reach just as high, and it's just not possible." He acted as if he was unaware that it was the economy that led to his victory, not health care. Biden said to his boss that now circumstances were different and that the electorate will "give you a pass on this one." In response to his advocacy of health care as the next big task, Obama was told by Christina Romer, "I know that this isn't what you wanted to do when you came into office, but this is the hand you were dealt. Saving the

economy is enough of an accomplishment."[21] Obama stuck to his guns, ignored in crucial ways the extent of the catastrophe, and fought to reform the health care system while millions lost their jobs and their homes.

On one hand, Obama as President is not too dissimilar from the divided soul of some previous liberal Democratic presidents who strengthened the economic status quo as much as they aided the less fortunate. For Obama, bringing prosperity back, as he told Geithner, was not enough. He had other lofty, redemptive goals. President Obama has been more concerned with promoting rights than fully confronting economic inequities. There are indications that he is more comfortable with the aspiring, those who have an identity crisis and resolve it by being upwardly mobile and self-actualizing, than those who have fallen by the wayside. He may have preached equally assisting all suffering during the Great Recession, but his administration did not practice it.

He was also slow to adapt to partisan realities. Obama saw himself as someone who could bring conflicting factions together and promote cooperation and reconciliation. In his keynote address at the Democratic Convention in 2004, Obama said, "There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America—there is the United States of America." He added to this revived version of the melting pot that "there's not a liberal America and a conservative America—there is the United States of America." His faith was in transcending differences and joining together. He proclaimed that "out of this long political darkness a brighter day will come."[22] In his 2009 inaugural address, President Obama said, "we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas that for far too long have strangled our politics."[23] He believed that he could unite forces that had long been in opposition and that he could end the partisan and racial divisions that were the source of rancor and discontent in the body politic.

The very evening Obama was first inaugurated as President, about 15 Congressional Republicans and other conservative partisans met in a fancy Washington DC restaurant, the Caucus Room. They were there to discuss how to thwart Obama's efforts by being unanimous in their opposition to the President. As Congressman

Kevin McCarthy said, "We've got to challenge them on every single bill." One of those present was Eric Cantor, the House Minority Whip. Little more than a week later, he led his party to unanimously vote against Obama's stimulus package.[24] In October 2010, Senate Minority Leader and Republican Mitch McConnell stated, "The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president."[25] This may have been the first time McConnell uttered those words in public, but he and other Congressional Republicans had been acting that way since day one, as most every piece of major legislation Obama put forward was met with unanimous opposition from the members of the Grand Old Party. The motivation of the Congressional Republicans was clearly partisan. For instance, in the past many Republicans had supported the form Obamacare took, but when he proposed it, they opposed it.

As many have observed, Obama was notoriously slow to recognize the Republican strategy of opposition, and repeatedly extended an olive leaf, only to be rebuffed. Psychiatrist Justin Frank writes that Obama's pattern of "preemptive appeasement" was an indication that the President suffers from "obsessive bipartisan disorder."[26] Obama, Rachel Maddow would regularly say, is like Charlie Brown in the *Peanuts* cartoon strip. The Republicans are like Lucy. They hold out the football to kick, telling the Charlie-esque Obama that they will not pull the ball away. However Obama, like Charlie, keeps falling flat on his political face when the Lucy-like Republicans remove the ball at the last minute.[27]

An example of Obama's slowness to recognize partisan divisions concerns the rise of the Tea Party. The White House did not see the threat to their power this movement might become. The 2010 elections then witnessed the biggest reversal of political fortunes in the House of Representative since 1938. Obama had squandered his political majority in just two years. Polls showed 36 percent of the Tea Party were from the South, and three in ten of Tea Party followers mistakenly believed Obama was ineligible to be President as they were under the illusion he was born in Africa. Racism was still rearing its divisive head. Obama was slow to confront these "birthers," nor did he confront that for many Tea Party

followers, there was not one America, but a black and a white America.

All of us have our blind spots, yet even after that staggering defeat in the 2010 elections, Obama still did not recognize the Republican strategy. In the lame duck Congress, to avert some political problems, Obama made deals with the Republicans to continue the Bush tax cuts in return for some of Obama's pet proposals, but did not get other concessions from the Republicans while his party still had overwhelming majorities in both houses of Congress.

At a December 7, 2010 press conference, a young reporter inquired as to why raising the debt ceiling was not part of this deal, as Republicans would soon have a great deal of political leverage. Obama seemed puzzled, and asked the reporter what he meant. The reporter said the House Republicans might demand excessive budgetary cuts beyond what the President could support in return for raising the ceiling. Obama responded: "Look, here's my expectation—and I'll take John Boehner at his word—that nobody, Democrat or Republican, is willing to see the full faith and credit of the United States government collapse... once John Boehner is sworn in as Speaker, then he's going to have responsibilities to govern. You can't just stand on the sidelines and be a bomb thrower... ultimately we can arrive at a position that is keeping the government open."[28]

Well, we all know what happened. The opposition party with its control of the House made demands for cuts that Obama could not tolerate. The negotiations over raising the debt ceiling paralyzed the government in the summer of 2011 and led to an unsatisfactory resolution, followed by a lowering of the nation's credit rating and Obama plummeting in the polls. Finally, after being hammered over the head many times, Obama recognized that conciliation was a path to political defeat, and he changed his strategy. Bob Dylan had sung about not needing a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. For a long time as President, Obama did not perceive the hurricane being sent his way by unified Congressional Republicans. After that disastrous summer, Obama's audacious dream of proving that there is not a liberal and conservative country but that all Americans can work together came crashing down.

As the leader of the Democrats, unlike Franklin Roosevelt, Obama has not presented a vision that could rally the electorate around his party. By 2015 Republicans controlled both houses of Congress. In his efforts at reconciliation, too often he left the field open to Republicans. Partisan divides are as deep as ever. Obama's slowness to recognize and then counter the opposition shows that at times he has trouble adapting when circumstances do not meet his expectations. Similarly, he did not sufficiently adjust his priorities to the realities of the Great Recession, and he did not make helping those who were suffering most a top priority. How can we understand that as well as being an adaptable politician, President Obama has in crucial ways not seen the writing on the wall?

This entails examining Obama's limitations, which is just one side of the story. Obama as a person and President has had enormous successes and achievements. But by and large as I wrote in Clio's Psyche, Obama "is better suited for a time of reconciliation and prosperity than of political slash and burn, and deep economic divides." In seeking to remake himself and transcend divisions, he wants the American center to hold and does not fully recognize, as Yeats did, that the "blood-dimmed tide" has been unleashed and that "the worst" are "full of passionate intensity."[29] Obama remade himself from a biracial individual raised in a state with few African-Americans to a man with a black identity. This took some effort. His long-term post college girlfriend said of Obama, "he was so white. There was hardly a black bone in his body."[30] If, as Obama declared in 2004, there is neither a white nor black America, then there may not be a biracial America, and that would provide a remedy for the dilemmas of a man born to a black father and a white mother raised primarily by his white mother and her parents. Yeats said things fall apart and the center does not hold. Obama wanted there to be order, reliability, and stability instead of the childhood he had. His response to his own origins has sometimes led Obama to be reluctant to confront other central facts about himself, his parents, and the force of the irrational in political life. Obama's pattern of sometimes shying away from paying close attention to what is written on the wall is evident in how he portrayed his parents.

In his memoir, Obama says that his mother and her parents arrived in Hawaii in 1959. He mentions that his 18 year old mother and father met in a Russian class at the University of Hawaii; "they fell in love," and married in 1960. Obama says his father "left Hawaii back in 1963, when I was only two years old." He refers to a newspaper article about his father being accepted at Harvard. Obama also admits that "I've never quite had the courage to explore…" how and when the marriage occurred.[31] Obama gets many facts wrong in this account. His mother, born on November 29, 1942, moved to Hawaii in 1960, started college classes at the end of September 1960, and was pregnant at age 17 in early November 1960. His parents married in February 1961 and he was born six months later on August 4, 1961. His parents never resided together. His mother soon left Hawaii with her newborn son and was enrolled into college classes in Seattle in September 1961. Obama Sr. graduated college and left for the mainland in June 1962, not 1963.

Obama's mother created a family romance for her son, saying that what divided his parents was that Harvard did not offer enough money for the father to support his young family. Seeking to avoid knowledge of the primal scene, their son bought into his mother's fable. He did not research crucial facts when writing his memoir, and so misrepresented his own family history. While Obama has often been courageous in facing unpleasant truths, he also from time to time avoids facing what is clearly present before him. He longed for unity and romance between his mother and father, a nation without racial divides, and a political environment where cooperation prevailed. His own sense of identity was connected in large part to these redemptive wishes. He alternated between confronting and avoiding difficulties in his own background, in the nation's enduring divides, and its economic challenges.

Another puzzle is why Obama was more generous in helping financiers and automakers than the average victim of the Great Recession. This question too has many factors, but I will address just the psychological dimension. There were four influential adults in Barack Obama's childhood and young adulthood: his father, mother, and maternal grandparents. Obama's remembrances of these earlier years are not purely positive. As "a boy," he writes of having "the sense of abandonment."[32] David Mendell writes that

"Obama often told close friends that he grew up feeling 'like an orphan.'"[33] His biological father was not present in his son's life and messed up his own promising career. As an adult, Barack Obama Sr. became a political outcast in Kenya, an alcoholic who died while drunk at age 46 in a car crash. The disappointed son eventually declared that he "had to make up for all" his father's "mistakes."[34]

Barack Jr. also felt abandoned by his mother and unsettled by the way she conducted her life. Obama said his mother "was not a well-organized person…. Had it not been for my grandparents... providing some sort of safety net financially, being able to take me and my sister at certain spots... my mother would have had to make some different decisions." How she handled money, her son recalls, left Ann vulnerable and "always at the margins."[35] He hungered for a "stability... that my mom didn't do for us."[36] By the time he was an undergraduate student at Columbia, Obama told a friend he was separating himself from his mother.[37] His mother was not invited to his graduation from Harvard Law School.[38]

His maternal grandfather also had an uneven work history, drifting from job to job.[39] By 1971, his wife had a better job and made more money than he did. It was his tough minded maternal grandmother, Madelyn Dunham, who had been the adult figure in his childhood who Obama respected and could use as a career model. She rose from the ranks to become a bank vice president.

In his early adulthood when he was uncertain of his own place in the world, Obama had empathy for those less fortunate. Once he moved to the national political stage, his rhetoric championed those who overcame obstacles and made successes of their lives. It was then that his own resentments at the unreliable adults in his own childhood may have been more prominent and contributed to his reluctance to make helping the less fortunate victims of the recession a central part of his Presidency. We all have an underside to our emotions. Obama's came out when he may have unconsciously identified those suffering economically with the lack of dependability of his parents.

Obama's Presidency shows the interaction of the personal and the political, the ideological and the psychological, dramatic

historical changes, and the ability to adjust. He will be seen as someone who kept the nation from spiraling into a depression, yet whose own personality and priorities meant he could not quite confront the challenge he faced, and did not have within him the wherewithal to rally the country in a crisis as did Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression. Roosevelt's programs and rhetorical skills helped make the Democrats the majority party. Obama's limitations as a leader have contributed to the Republicans having their largest majority in Congress since 1928, a deepening of political partisanship, and a widening gap between the rich and the rest of the nation. It is unlikely that historians will rank Obama among the nation's greatest presidents.

Ken Fuchsman, EdD, *is Assistant Extension Professor at the University of Connecticut, where he has taught and served as an administrator for many years, and is on the Editorial Boards of* Clio's Psyche *and the* Journal of Psychohistory*. He has published a number of articles on President Obama's life and career, and also writes on trauma, the Oedipus complex, and the nature of being human. Ken can be reached at ken.fuchsman@uconn.edu.*

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Obama in History Responses

A Political Scientist's Doubts

C. Fred Alford—University of Maryland

A long time ago I published an essay on the psychological sources of Ronald Reagan's appeal (*Political Psychology*, 1988, v. 9: 571-589). It was a clever argument by a young professor arguing that Reagan's personality allowed him to soothe the narcissistic injuries suffered by the American public in recent years. Trouble is, I have no idea if what I said was right, wrong, or in between. Worse yet, after all these years I still have no idea how I might find out.

This experience, itself a narcissistic injury (albeit a minor one), colors my reading of Ken Fuchsman's paper, "President Obama in History: The Political Intersects with the Personal." I'm a political scientist, and I found his account of Obama's policies, especially the difference between promise and performance, accurate and compelling. I was impressed by his uncovering of discrepancies between what Obama claimed about his family life in print and what he said over the years. I was particularly fascinated by conclusions such as the following:

> It was then that his own resentments at the unreliable adults in his own childhood may have been more prominent and contributed to his reluctance to make helping the less fortunate victims of the recession a central part of his Presidency. We all have an underside to our emotions. Obama's came out when he may have unconsciously identified those suffering economically with the lack of dependability of his parents.

This could be true or it could be false. Certainly other factors came into play, such as the fact that the poor don't vote, at least not at a rate compared to the middle classes. President Obama is, after all, a politician who, for all his achievements, has proven singularly adept at getting himself elected and reelected.

More troubling, the same question came up when reading

Professor Fuchsman's paper as when thinking about my own paper on Reagan. Not only do I not know if Fuchsman's hypothesis is true, but I have no idea how one would go about figuring this out. To claim that Obama unconsciously identified the poor with his parents' lack of dependability, while psychologically plausible, is simply indemonstrable. Perhaps not in principle, but would be possible only in-depth interviews with the President, or possibly access to his diary, if such exists. Books intended as works of self-promotion, as revealing as they turned out to be, are not the same.

I'm a political psychologist and a political scientist. I'm absolutely convinced that personality plays a major role in the success or failure of a national leader. Statements along the lines of "Obama's life was one of reconciling conflicting views," and "This psychological pattern made it difficult for him to adapt to Republican recalcitrance," are the type of statements that can be supported by evidence, and are in fact supported by the evidence. Such statements assume a dynamic unconscious with political consequences, but do not attribute his motivation to specific experiences in Obama's childhood.

Someday, after he has sat down with his biographers, will there be enough evidence? Possibly; it's not in principle impossible, just unlikely. Ironic is that Obama was far more revealing in *Dreams from My Father* (1995) than most politicians ever are, perhaps more revealing than he knew. Here is where Fuchsman is on more solid ground, pointing out the discrepancy between the book and remarks to friends, for example. What this discrepancy means for political positions taken out of a complex mix of psychology, political expediency, and the political reality of limited presidential power, seems almost impossible to say.

Reaching these conclusions is unsettling, for they pertain not just to Fuchsman's essay, but the limits of political psychology done in this vein. I wish that the psychological insight and acumen of the thoughtful and enterprising academic were enough. I just don't think it is.

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Obama, Like Truman, Should Not Be Underrated

Herbert Barry—University of Pittsburgh

The very scholarly and informative article by Ken Fuchsman described with approval some major achievements by President Obama, which included preventing the economic recession of 2007-2009 from becoming as severe and prolonged as the Great Depression of 1929-1939 and initiating the Affordable Care Act (ACA), commonly called Obamacare. The article emphasizes his failures and misperceptions, concluding it "is unlikely that historians will rank Obama among the nation's greatest presidents." Very few presidents have achieved this rank. Obama might become one of them.

The principal limitation of Ken Fuchsman's evaluation is the exclusion of Obama's foreign policies. Near the end of his first year as President, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Many commentators regarded the award as premature. He was Commander in Chief of his nation's military forces during two wars. His subsequent efforts to deserve the award include ending the war in Iraq and scheduling an end of the war in Afghanistan.

Ken Fuchsman's criticisms of Obama include unrealistic efforts to achieve bipartisan cooperation, insufficient funds to stimulate the economy (especially employment), and emphasis on saving corporations—notably General Motors and Chrysler—instead of the victims of the drastic decrease in real estate prices. Politics has been described as the art of the possible. It is more possible to save corporations than individual people. Many of the victims of foreclosures had unwisely bought the real estate with insufficient financial resources and prospects.

Ken Fuchsman also blamed Obama for the Republican majority elected in the House of Representatives in 2010 and in the Senate in 2014. Beginning in 1946, voters have apparently preferred that Congress and the presidency be represented by opposing political parties. Another principal reason is that some Democrats, mostly poorer people who vote less consistently than most Republicans, do not vote in the elections when presidential nominees are not on the ballot. This was especially true in 2014 when the requirements selectively preventing voting (such as a photo identification) had been enacted in many states with a Republican Governor and a Republican majority in the legislature. Obama should not be blamed for the continuation of non-presidential year voting patterns from 1946.

The future of the remaining two years of Obama's presidency has parallels with Democratic President Truman's 1947-1949 years in the White House. The Republicans won control of the House of Representatives and Senate in 1946. The Republican nominee for president in 1948, Dewey, was generally expected to defeat Truman, but failed to do so. Whoever becomes the Democratic nominee for president in 2016 appears to have a better prospect of winning than Truman did in 1948 prior to the election. If the Democratic nominee is elected President next year, President Obama will probably deserve and receive some of the credit.

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Invitation to Present Work-in-Progress Seminar Papers

The Psychohistory Forum welcomes proposals to present seminar papers at our meetings in Manhattan. Send your abstracts and draft papers to Paul Elovitz (pelovitz@aol.com) so that they can be reviewed by a committee.

A Good Start in Understanding Obama's Motivations

David R. Beisel—SUNY (RCC)

Ken Fuchsman's interesting take on Obama's presidency raises a good many questions, which is what a good symposium article is meant to accomplish. I agree that one dimension—perhaps the central theme—of Obama's character (and perhaps his presidency) is the paradox of his being able to, as Fuchsman puts it, "snatch defeat from the jaws of victory and to win when it looks like he might lose." The origins of these tendencies need to be identified by focusing on the formative psychological influences on his personality, which the last part of the essay attempts to do and accomplishes—given editorial limitations of space—only in part. Obama's particular "talent" may have a good and bad side to it, but it does seem a central characteristic of his presidency and personality. The question is: What is behind the compulsion to reenact this inefficient, paradoxical, and sometimes counterproductive way of operating in the world?

The early part of the essay focuses on economic matters, particularly the Great Recession of 2008. Here was a monumental crisis brought on by both the Clinton and Bush administrations' ignoring the warnings from Brooskley Born (see PBS's Frontline *The Warning*, 2009), by the irrational group fantasy of America's economic leaders—namely Greenspan, Rubin, Summers, prominent economists, and complicit members of Congress—who perpetuated the rational-markets myth, the criminally negligent abandonment of governmental regulatory oversight of Bush's presidency (all of which saddled Obama with a disastrous inheritance), and others. This all needs mentioning and detailed psychological analysis, though perhaps not in this symposium assessment of Obama's presidency to date.

Economics is not a force in itself but is driven by denied irrational and unconscious motives and impulses. Thus what also needs mentioning, or at least wondering about, is why the nation went along with the group fantasy of market rationality when, rationally speaking, such thinking as that promoted by the nation's

economic opinion-makers would eventually result in predictable financial disaster. Was it mere greed as the Dow went up and up? Or was it driven by the repetitive manic-depressive cycle that the U.S. and perhaps the world economy seem to regularly need, a modern potlatch designed to purge us of our "sins" of pleasure and prosperity as suggested by Lloyd deMause some 35 years ago, or is it a pattern driven by the periodic need for us to seek a fantasy "Heroic Savior," or both?

No doubt the economic crisis helped Obama get elected. There is of course more to it than that. One central role of the American media's portrayal of Obama in 2007-2008 was as the nation's Savior, which I wrote about in Clio's Psyche's March 2009 issue. In times of crisis, groups both large and small typically look toward a charismatic leader from outside to arrive from nowhere to "save" the group. In 2008, Obama was the "One."

Typically (and predictably) this can only last until the leader demonstrates the impossibility of resolving everyone's problems and his halo begins to fade—the typical decline of presidential popularity as chartered by poll takers and pundits. One question that needs answering is: Why was Obama willing to take on this group-fantasy role in the first place?

Additionally, the group called the U.S. made sure the process would accelerate by placing in Obama's path a group of non-compromising Tea Party Republicans devoted to sabotaging his policies. Why did we collectively create such a congressional impasse? Thus, it is not only Obama's failure to recognize that his typical administrative style as Mediator wasn't going to work. It was also that naïve misjudgment (his "blind spot") joined by a collective wish from the electorate to make sure he wouldn't succeed, or would succeed only in part.

In addition, part of Obama's decline in popularity was of his own devising as he played the role of accomplice by shifting the policy focus from saving the country's economy to taking on a difficult and hate-producing effort to create medical insurance for everyone. That may be an admirable goal for the U.S. in the long run, but was a tactical disaster in the short run, one that helped to tarnish Obama's rapidly fading halo. This change in focus was Obama's

personal decision, as made clear by Professor Fuchsman, decided on his own and against the advice of his advisors.

Was it arrogance, narcissism, idealism, his quest to be fondly remembered by posterity? Or was it self-defeating behavior, an arrogant narcissism tinged with idealism driven by a need to become again the Outsider destined to prove the racist critics right? It seems to me there's more here than meets the eye. What is needed is a full-scale study of Obama's long-term behavior from childhood that may help reveal deeper patterns, a full psychobiographical analysis based on documentary evidence that disentangles the combination of complicated motives at work in him, which goes beyond the scope of a symposium paper.

Professor Fuchsman makes a good start on that enterprise, highlighting what were clearly significant abandonment issues, father-relationship issues, maternal issues, and matters of identity and race, both within Obama and impacting him from the outside world. Google "Obama as Hitler" to be shocked at the extraordinary number of vile images produced over the years to gauge what millions of our fellow Americans are really feeling. How does he handle this vituperative onslaught? Where is the anger, where is the ego-strength that allows him to soldier on? Ken Fuchsman's paper, like all good symposium pieces, raises these questions in me and starts us on a long-term journey of discovery.

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Obama's Political and Institutional Constraints

Brian D'Agostino—Int. Psychohistorical Association

Ken Fuchsman's article presents two clear theses. First, that President Obama did not adequately meet the challenge of the Great Recession and second, that he was too accommodating to his

political adversaries. After making a well-documented case for this picture, the article concludes with possible psychobiographical explanations for Obama's behavior.

In my opinion, the limitations of this article apply to much psychohistorical writing. While it is hard enough to determine the unconscious motivations of behavior, the psychohistorian has the added burden of first establishing the pattern of behavior to be explained. If we are mistaken about the pattern, as I believe is the case with this article, then we end up explaining things that don't exist.

The first task in any undertaking of this sort is to identify a fair and meaningful standard against which presidential performance can be measured. All presidents operate under political and institutional constraints that must be assessed before we can analyze the actions and omissions of the individual holding the office. Was it politically possible for Obama to enact more robust policies for ameliorating the 2009 economic crisis? Fuchsman answers yes on the grounds that the Democrats held both houses of Congress in the first two years of Obama's presidency. I am less sure how to answer this question, but there are two other factors that must be considered.

First, a governing party needs more than both houses of Congress and the White House before it can enact legislation with a free hand. It also needs a supermajority of 60 votes in the Senate in order to override a filibuster. Given the implacable hostility of the Republicans from day one toward the Obama administration—which Fuchsman himself notes—the threat of filibusters was a major constraint on the President's legislative agenda. He was held back further by a substantial block of conservative Democrats elected in red states who, for all intents and purposes, vote like Republicans on legislation.

Second, policy-making is restricted by powerful special interests. Most notably, as a candidate Obama received more campaign money from Wall Street than John McCain did in 2008. It is hard to know how important a role this money played in the election outcome, but policy-makers cannot ignore important campaign donors when they govern. This is a sad commentary on the coun-

try's system of plutocracy, but it is virtually a law of American politics at the present time. It is not an accident that Obama chose Larry Summers, a neoliberal economist with ties to Wall Street, to head his economic team, rather than someone like Joseph Stiglitz or Paul Krugman, who would have fashioned more interventionist economic policies.

Given all these constraints, could Obama nevertheless have assembled a more progressive policy team and enacted more robust anti-recessionary legislation than he in fact did? Perhaps, especially given the popular opprobrium towards Wall Street that prevailed when Obama assumed office. That said, Fuchsman's comparison of Obama unfavorably with Franklin D. Roosevelt is not a fair one. In the 1930s, there was considerably less plutocracy in American politics, the unemployment rate was significantly higher, and there was a militant left that included a largely organized industrial working class, small but highly active socialist and communist parties, and popular politicians like Huey Long calling for the redistribution of wealth, all in the larger ideological context of an international communist movement led by the Soviet Union, an emerging superpower.

No such tidal wave of political pressure for systemic reform has existed in the United States in recent years. On the contrary, a president seeking such reform must contend with an ideological climate shaped by more than three decades of relentless Republican government bashing. Obama's militant opposition came from the Tea Party and from pundits like Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck, not from the left. Fuchsman's comparison of Obama with Roosevelt is both unfair and ahistorical.

The article's other thesis is that the President was blindsided by the implacable nature of his political opposition and failed to respond appropriately. This overlooks the fact that Obama ran in 2008 and 2012 on a post-partisan rhetoric and was elected on that basis. The thesis also assumes, problematically in light of the foregoing analysis, that Obama had the political luxury of making a confrontational partisan response to Republican intransigence while still being able to get his legislative agenda passed.

There are two reasons, I would argue, why Obama's best

strategy was in fact to seek bipartisan cooperation, which is precisely what he did. First, in so doing, he positioned himself on high moral ground as the champion of a post-partisan ethos that the electorate wanted, leaving his adversaries in the mud of partisan obstructionism. Opinion data suggests that this worked, since voters re-elected Obama in 2012 in part on the perception that the Republicans, not the President, were more responsible for the gridlock in Washington.

Second, a bipartisan strategy was the best hope for enlisting the cooperation of some Republican lawmakers, which would both enable him to pass legislation and divide the Republican Party. There was no way to know *a priori* how difficult this would be, but in any case it was successful enough that Obama was able to get the Affordable Care Act through Congress. This legislation was the largest and most significant expansion of the welfare state since Johnson's Great Society programs, an achievement that had eluded the Clinton administration. It is unlikely it could have been achieved had Obama adopted a strategy of partisan confrontation.

Given the picture I have sketched here, it is highly plausible that the limitations of President Obama's economic policies reflected political and institutional constraints beyond his control, and that his bipartisan governing strategy was neither as naïve nor as unsuccessful as Fuchsman's article indicates. Based on an inadequate analysis of politics and policy-making, this article makes unwarranted assumptions about Barack Obama's personality and constructs psychohistorical explanations for personal failures that most likely did not exist.

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Disappointed Expectations: A Presidential Psychobiographer's Reflections

Paul H. Elovitz—The Psychohistory Forum

For almost four decades I have proudly thought of myself as a presidential psychobiographer. However, disappointed expectations, Washington gridlock, and the negativism of American national politics have frustrated and worn me down. Fortunately, Ken Fuchsman's joining me in endeavors to write about Obama on the pages of Clio's Psyche and elsewhere helped to raise my domestic political psychology spirits. Having a colleague to discuss and debate the issues and publish with brought new energy to the project. Still, it remains frustrating to closely follow American politics because of the enormous gap between the rhetoric and the reality: the hopes engendered and the painful political realities.

The Founding Fathers of America not only swept slavery under the rug while writing our constitution, they created a system based on checks and balances—which has become gridlocked—as a way of protecting the fragile infant republic from one-man rule. Ultimately, their white landowners' republic grew into a white male democracy in 1829. At the cost of over 600,000 lives in 1861-1865, slavery was abolished and (in theory) freed men were given the vote. Of course, we know that most African-Americans were not effectively allowed to vote until Johnson gave his support to it in the 1960s. That is Lyndon Baines Johnson rather than Andrew Johnson—Lincoln's successor who had done his best to keep the former slaves economically and politically subservient to Southern whites. Change is slow, but in my lifetime racist laws, customs, and Saturday night lynchings have given way to the election of a biracial President, but not without ambivalence and resistance.

Barack Hussein Obama Jr. was elected President in 2008 amidst dangerous economic realities and totally unrealistic expectations. Much of the American media and public engaged in the fantasy that he had become President and would save the country from its woes even before his inauguration, two-and-a-half months after

the election (David Beisel, "Presidential Salvation Fantasies and the Election of Barack Obama," Clio's Psyche, vol. 15, no. 4, March 2009, 264-270). In Stockholm in late 2009 he was embarrassingly awarded a Nobel Peace Prize before he really had a chance to do much in his presidency. The expectations of most Americans and the world were totally unrealistic and, as is the case with group fantasies, they are ultimately shattered by reality. Disappointed expectations are an incredibly powerful force in politics, as they are elsewhere. Awaiting the collapse of the "Obama as savior" fantasy, and doing whatever they could to destroy his effectiveness, conservative Republicans and "birthers" were and are a significant minority who viewed the first African-American President as someone who would bring dystopia to the land.

While I have many frustrations with Obama's conduct in his presidency, I think it an error to lose sight of the reality that as an African American, he could only be chosen because he was, despite his progressive beliefs and rhetoric, a biracial compromiser, "with hardly a black bone in his body" according to a former long-term white girlfriend. To reiterate, it is impossible to sufficiently emphasize that his being a "safe black" was a necessary condition for his election. With 20/20 hindsight, like Fuchsman we can look back on the first two years of Obama's presidency when he had his greatest mandate and a Democratic House and Senate and complain that he wasn't more effective regarding climate change, the debt limit, economic stimulus, foreclosures, homeownership, and unemployment. However, it was well known that the Junior Senator from Illinois, a former community organizer, would not be trying to bang political heads together but would rather work to reconcile Americans of all colors and political persuasions.

Professor Fuchsman writes that our President squandered valuable opportunities. Yet just a few years ago he focused on Obama's remarkable accomplishments (though I also wish more could have been accomplished in the first quarter of his administration). Political reality dictated that you can only do so much at a time in the Washington system organized around gridlock.

Fuchsman's comparison of Obama, whose inclinations are more of an academic than a politician, to Franklin Roosevelt misses the essential facts—that by the time FDR assumed the presidency,

the nation had suffered through more than three years of depression and most people were ready for drastic solutions, which was clearly not the case when Obama became commander-in-chief. The current president is often compared negatively to LBJ. However, the LBJ comparison is unfair because Johnson was a product of Congress, which he had mastered. The Texan had a mandate to implement the program of the martyred Kennedy, which he skillfully implemented and expanded. Also, it should be noted that after his first three years in office, LBJ's program began to stall despite the solid majority he maintained in both houses of Congress.

To me it is a reflection of Fuchsman's disenchantment with the President that he claims "had developed more empathy for the struggles of the barons of Wall Street and Detroit than he did for the common people who had lost their way." Regrettably, he had to turn to the leaders of Wall Street in a crisis he was magically expected to start solving before he even moved into the White House (Beisel, "Presidential Salvation Fantasies"). Contrary to Fuchsman, Obama had not "acted as if he was unaware that it was the economy that led to his victory, not health care." He erroneously thought he could bring the universal health care that most presidents have been advocating since Teddy Roosevelt, as well as restoring the economy. His mother's struggle with health insurance prior to her death from cancer may have been a major psychological influence on this politically costly decision.

Professor Fuchsman should be lauded for working to relate Obama's childhood and personality to his political actions. However, when he criticizes him as a young man for buying into his mother's version of the "family romance," I am reminded of how long and difficult it is in psychoanalysis for individuals to get past the half-truths and fables they learned at the knees of their parents. (I am unaware of Obama having any psychoanalytic or other treatment.) To claim that "he did not research his facts when writing his memoir," misrepresenting "his own family history" as a way of "avoid[ing] knowledge of the primal scene" is unwarranted and a sign of putting Freudian theory over fact. I am equally unimpressed with his citing the presidential psychopathologizer Justin Frank's labeling Obama as a victim of "obsessive bipartisan disorder."

Fuchsman's picture of Obama having only one well organized role model, his maternal grandmother, misses the fact that he was loved intensely and treated as special by both his grandparents and mother, even when she did this through letters from another continent since he chose to stay in Hawaii with his grandparents rather than to continue living with her in Asia. His feeling like an orphan was based on an adolescent living arrangement of his choosing. As a young man, Obama dared to put aside his mother's mythic version of his African father by going to Kenya and came away determined to be a much more successful and cooperative person than his single-minded and failed namesake. In his political life, one of the consequences of this decision was that he did not try to force through his own agenda as the only right way, contributing to his bipartisanism with all its negative consequences.

I agree with Fuchsman's conclusion that "it is unlikely that historians will rank Obama among the nation's greatest presidents." Like JFK, another young, untried senator without administrative experience who gained the presidency and raised great expectations and opposition precisely because of who he was rather than what he had already accomplished, Obama should not bear full responsibility for his failures. Included in those who do bear responsibility are the majority of voters who do not cast their ballots in the primaries when there are many choices and then do not sufficiently value experience when they enter the voting booth in November.

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Obama's Tragic Flaw

David Lotto—Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

In my opinion, Ken Fuchsman's account of Obama's presidency focuses on the crucial aspects of his tragically failed presidency—variously described as his blind spot, pattern of preemptive appeasement, obsessive bipartisan disorder, or Rachel Maddow's image of him as the pathetically naïve Charlie Brown who keeps falling on his face when Lucy yet again pulls the football away.

Obama seems unable to understand how much he is hated and despised by many people in this country, chiefly the denizens of the predominantly Republican states and the Republican and Tea Party political leaders who reflect their sentiments.

The 2010 incident Fuchsman describes of Obama's puzzled response to the reporter's question about why he didn't anticipate the Republican strategy of refusing to raise the debt ceiling unless they got what they wanted, is an example of his difficulty in recognizing the degree of hostility that is directed toward him. His 2015 State of the Union speech shows that he still doesn't understand about Lucy and the football, when he reiterated his belief (first articulated in his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic convention), that there's not a black America and a white America and there's not a liberal America and a conservative America—there is just a United States of America.

Fuchsman acknowledges that racism has some role in connection to the rise of the Tea Party. However, I think he underestimates how potent racism is in fuelling the depth and strength of the opposition to Obama. I believe that the single-minded opposition of the Republicans, as epitomized by the congressional Republican leaders' vowing to do anything and everything they could to oppose any legislation that Obama supported on the evening of Obama's 2009 inauguration, has a significant racist component. When the Republicans were refusing to raise the debt limit and holding the government hostage to their demands, Barbara Lee, the African-American Congresswoman (and the lone legislator to vote against the resolution giving President Bush the authority to go to war after 9/11), pointed out that there had been a long history of Congress routinely voting debt ceiling increases no matter which party was in control of the legislative or executive branch. It was only when there was a black president that this well-established precedent was broken.

Racism and racist motivation are denied by the Republicans and Tea Partiers, but I believe that there are many people in this country who have a great deal of difficulty accepting that the supremely powerful position of commander-in-chief of the world's most powerful ever military force and the leader of the most important nation on the planet is a black man. Regarding understand-

ing the source of Obama's blind spots, I would argue that his own denial of racism is a crucial factor. Barack Obama's life, up to his election as president in 2008, has been a remarkable American success story. A biracial child growing up in a considerably less than ideal environment graduates from an Ivy League College and goes to Harvard Law School and becomes accepted as a member of the nation's power elite. He receives the prestigious honor of being named editor of the Harvard Law Review, becomes a rising star in Illinois politics, a United States Senator, and finally president.

His story is dramatic proof that, for him, racism has not been a barrier to success. His wish that this be true for everyone, that there isn't a black and a white America but only one America, is powerful and deeply held. It is a crucial aspect of his identity. He has a strong resistance to seeing the prevalence and power of racism in this country and that his personal success story is very much the exception to the rule.

I describe Obama's tenure as chief executive as a tragically failed presidency. In my view, the two accomplishments that Fuchsman and many others cite—that he rescued us from an economic depression and brought us the Affordable Care Act (ACA)—are both problematic. With regard to the economy, it is not at all clear that the financial bailout of the banks, Detroit, and American International Group (AIG), was necessary. There seems to be a consensus that what was most helpful was the stimulus package and had it been larger, including substantial aid to property owners unable to meet their mortgage payments, it would have been more helpful. The arguments given by Obama's mainstream economic advisers, such as Larry Summers and Timothy Geithner, that the stimulus should be limited because of their belief that too much stimulus would lead to runaway inflation, has turned out to be false.

The ACA is also quite flawed. Although there are benefits, such as eliminating pre-existing condition exemptions, expanding the number of people with insurance coverage, and subsidizing premiums, they are far outweighed by the fact that the ACA strengthens a multi-payer system with its enormous added administrative costs and protects the profits of the many companies operating in the medical marketplace. It perpetuates the excessively high cost of health care in this country as compared to any other health care sys-

tem in the developed world with no increase in health benefits.

What is tragic about Obama's presidency is that when he took office in 2009 with Democratic majorities in both the House and the Senate, a 53 to 46 percentage win over McCain, a huge electoral majority, and the country in an economic crisis, it did appear that there was a real opportunity for a transformative presidency. There were great expectations for an FDR style New Deal, a swing toward progressive policies, hope for real change. To say the least, this has not happened and won't happen over the next two years because of anti-Obama Republican majorities in the House and the Senate. It is appropriate to call the situation tragic.

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Obama Agonistes

Ken Fuchsman

In my article, I say that President Obama's response to the severe economic downturn was not sufficient. Not one of the commentators on my piece asserts that Obama's actions were adequate to restore prosperity. The impact of the recession lingers. The real median household income of Americans decreased by eight % between 2007 and 2013. The poverty rate in 2007 was 12.5%, with 37.3 million in poverty, in 2012 it was 15.9%, with 48.8 million poor (US Census). There were well over 14 million foreclosure filings in the seven years between 2007 and 2013 (realtytrac.com). The percent of our citizens owning their own homes dropped from 69% in 2004 to 63.9% in 2014 (Timaraos, *Wall Street Journal*, 1/29/2015*)*. Too many of us are still suffering in ways that could have been avoided if President Obama had made the economy job one. A reason Obama will not be ranked as a superior president is that he did not take enough action to bring about full recovery.

In addition, he has not been an effective party leader. In 2015, there are 188 Democrats in the House and 44 in the Senate. It is only before the Great Depression that there have been fewer

Democrats in Congress.

How do we make historical sense of these phenomenon? A way to place Obama's presidency in perspective is to compare it with Franklin Roosevelt's administration. Some of the commentators do not think the comparison is either historical or fair. However, the chief reason for examining these presidencies together is that both men took office after the economy collapsed. In Roosevelt's first inaugural, he vowed to fight the economic ills with all his might. Almost the whole of his address was devoted to the Depression. In his 2009 inaugural, Obama asserted that, "we are in the midst of crisis." While FDR focused on the economy, Obama listed six components of this current crisis, one of which was economic. He does say that the "economy calls for action, bold and swift." This included jobs, roads, bridges, electric grids, and digital lines. Then Obama mentioned other goals including science, health care, solar power, and improving education (2009, 4 and 7). His address was more diverse and less focused than Roosevelt's.

The same could be said for actions following the inauguration. In his first 100 days, FDR took decisive action on many facets of the economy. Not all of these actions were effective, but his leadership electrified the nation. Obama also acted quickly at the beginning; the stimulus act was passed in less than a month. Then the momentum relating to the Great Recession slowed. A bill to reform Wall Street was announced in June 2009, job legislation was proposed in 2011, the effort to stop foreclosures stalled, and many roads and bridges remain in disrepair. Employment, income, poverty, and home ownership are worse in 2015 than they were in 2007. Obama did not deliver the economic boldness and swiftness he promised.

Our current President is a politically divided soul, pulled in divergent directions. To this day, much of his rhetoric seems noble and yet more fit for an era of consensus and opportunity than an age when economic obstacles and political rancor dominate. Obama sometimes seems stuck in another political universe. In the President's 2015 State of the Union address, Obama refers back to his 2004 speech to the Democratic Convention. He says, "You know, just over a decade ago, I gave a speech in Boston where I said there wasn't a liberal America or a conservative America... Over the past

six years, the pundits have pointed out more than once that my presidency hasn't delivered on this vision… that there are too many people in this town who actually benefit from partisanship and gridlock... I know how tempting such cynicism may be. But I still think the cynics are wrong. I still believe that we are one people" (Whitehouse.gov). If this is so, how does Obama account for the fact that he was elected with a liberal Congress, and now we have Congress with the largest conservative majority since before Franklin Roosevelt became President? If we are one people, why does a conservative political party unite to oppose all the major legislation of a liberal President?

Franklin Roosevelt recognized intractable political divides. He worked to increase Congressional majorities. After the 1936 election, there were more than four Democratic Senators and three Democratic Representatives to every Congressional Republican. The contrast with Obama is striking. After Democratic Congressional sweeps in 2006 and 2008, in 2010 the Republicans gained control of the House and later the Senate. Obama, in trying to be a post-partisan President, has overseen the wreck of his party's Congressional fortunes.

Brian D'Agostino thinks Obama's bipartisan approach is necessary. I think Roosevelt's strategy of strengthening his party's power in Congress has proven more effective. Compromise will always be part of the poker game of politics, but a leader has a better hand when his party has large majorities. Obama has often been accused of giving away the store, and his party has paid the price for his limits as a partisan leader.

FDR was more decisive economically and more effective politically than Obama. Are there grounds to contest this assessment? Brian D'Agostino maintains my comparison is "unfair and ahistorical." To show this, he says America is more of a plutocracy now than in the 1930s, there was a strong leftist presence pressuring FDR, and Huey Long's Share The Wealth movement impacted Roosevelt. D'Agostino's account has some historical holes. It is widely known that the American concentration of wealth reached a peak in 1928 and has only recently approached that level again. Republican presidents of the 1920s served the interests of the wealthy. In 1932, the three radical political parties received three

percent of the popular vote, only half of what leftists had in 1912. By 1936, radical left parties had only 0.61per cent of the presidential vote. FDR took strong action before Huey Long became nationally prominent in 1934, and after Long's assassination in 1935. The nation was more plutocratic and less radical in the 1930s than Dr. D'Agostino claims. Historical forces alone did not push Roosevelt or inhibit Obama from being active on the economy.

Paul Elovitz says my comparison of FDR and Obama misses the point that given the longevity of the depression, the public was more ready for drastic solutions than when Obama took office. I believe that by 2009, helping citizens find jobs and keep their homes was not drastic, but orthodox liberalism. The main point is that Obama did not feel the urgency to more fully combat the recession. As David Beisel writes, "part of Obama's decline" was due to his "shifting the policy from saving the country's economy to taking on a… hate-producing effort to create medical insurance for everyone." Neither Elovitz nor D'Agostino focus sufficiently on Obama's own choice to move away from fighting the recession and toward health care reform. The President did so despite the advice of the Vice President, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chief of the Council of Economic Advisers, legislators, and public opinion polls. When Obama chose health care reform before a jobs bill, he crossed a Rubicon. Polls showed opposition to the Affordable Care Act energized the Tea Party. It is this movement that helped Republicans take control of the House in 2010, effectively ending Obama's chances to pass major legislation.

Another way to place Obama's record in context is to look at the history of Congress. Since the 1890s, political realignment in Congress has often followed economic downturns. After the recession of the 1890s, the Republicans generally controlled Congress until the Great Depression. With a few exceptions, the Democrats had majorities in Congress from the 1930s to 1980. After the 1970s economic slide, Republicans made inroads in Congress, frequently controlling the Senate and/or the House.

The Democrats took control of Congress in 2007. The 2008 recession resulted in even larger Democratic Congressional majorities. Democrats were poised to become the majority party again. Given the history of Congress and the economy, the opportunity

was there, but a Democratic president did not seize it. Obama's failure as a party leader is another reason he will not be among the Presidential greats.

Herb Barry thinks my criticism of Obama is overdrawn. He asserts that Americans tend to have presidents of one party and Congresses of another. This is not wholly accurate. In 64 of the 94 years since 1921, Congress and the president have been of the same party. Of the eight Democratic presidents since 1913, Barack Obama is only one of two who have seen the Republicans control at least one Congressional chamber for the majority of his Presidency. A significant reason for Obama's lack of success is that unlike many other Democratic presidents, his top priority was not prosperity.

How then do we explain what in Obama led him to miss so many opportunities, to have trouble adapting to changing circumstances? There are multiple factors to consider. I have singled out the psychological.

In examining Obama's life, I noticed that he had a similar difficulty in facing unpleasant facts in his own family as he did in relation to the economy and the Republican opposition. Paul Elovitz objects to my use of terms such as primal scene and family romance. Yet there is no attempt to refute the fact that trained attorney Barack Obama did not seek the best evidence about his family; instead relying on hearsay, he made many factual errors. Obama acknowledges he "lacked the courage to explore" the facts about his mother and father. Similarly, in still believing we are not conservatives and liberals even after being immersed in gridlock, Obama does not face how partisan our politics are. His party and the nation have suffered as a result of these blind spots.

Dr. Elovitz says that Barack Obama "was loved intensely and treated as special by both his grandparents and mother." While this is true, it is only part of the picture. If Obama was so loved, then how come he felt abandoned and like an orphan? Michelle Obama said, "Barack spent so much time by himself that it was like he was raised by wolves" (Dowd, *New York Times,* June 15, 2010). Elovitz says Obama's feeling like an orphan is based "on an adolescent living arrangement of his own choosing." As Obama's state-

ment does not specify a time period, how can Paul Elovitz assert Obama is referring to his adolescence? There are plenty of other periods in Obama's life and a number of actions by both his mother and father that could engender feeling abandoned and like an orphan.

My discussing these aspects of Obama's childhood is part of my search to explore psychological factors that explain why Obama aided the wealthy more than the less fortunate. I say Obama may have been resentful of some of those who raised him. Fred Alford rightly points out that there is no way of either proving or disproving this conjecture on my part. I brought my ideas forward knowing their limits, yet as a way of exploring possible undersides to Obama's psychology. There are non-psychological explanations for the Obama administration's inequitable treatment, yet the psychological dimension, with all its uncertainties, should be included in this discussion

I agree with David Beisel's concern that we need to understand why Americans bought into Obama's redemptive myths. There is also merit in David Lotto's contention that with Obama there was a real chance for a "transformative presidency… an FDR style New Deal... It is appropriate to call the situation tragic." Dr. Lotto includes in this assessment the flaws and merits within the Affordable Care Act.

Since the downturn began, many Americans have faced hardships that could have been alleviated. We need to remain cognizant of these human costs. In evaluating President Obama's legacy, we should not forget that he did not fulfill his pledge to be bold and swift in response to the economic crisis. ❑

Clio's Psyche **Call for Papers**

We welcome articles on a variety of subjects including the following:

- The impact of celebrity culture on child development and politics
- The psychology and impact of political extremism
- Dependency and independency in the family politics and society
- The idealization and denigration of presidents
- Studies in homegrown terrorism
- Euphemisms and forbidden words

The Psychology of Electronics Special Issue

How Electronics Empower and Frustrate Me

Paul H. Elovitz—Clio's Psyche

In the early 1980s, a patent lawyer friend convinced me that I needed to get a personal computer (PC). Despite a steep learning curve, I soon discovered that I could throw away the carbon copies, correction tape, and liquid paper and stop paying people to type my scholarly papers and reports. This also helped my relationship with my wife, who was frustrated when she tried to read my handwriting on long yellow legal pads to transpose my work onto a typewriter for me. My keyboard self-image went from a being a guy with ten thumbs to a competent person who could fool the world into thinking he was a good typist. Indeed, I no longer see myself as a klutz at the keyboard but as simply someone who works at using electricity to transmit ideas ultimately to paper, sparing the reader all my fragmentary thoughts, hesitations, misspellings, and primary processes. For years I looked at the end result with astonishment and appreciation as I was no longer a person dreading the keyboard, devoting incredible energy to fixing typos and retyping. My focus became how to best develop my thoughts.

Electronics had made me a much more efficient and prolific author. Before I started using a PC, I had published a doctoral dissertation and a few articles. Since then, my publications have swelled enormously by a ratio of 40 or 50 to one. Previously, I had been intimidated whenever I put a sheet of paper into my typewriter at the thought that I was going to have to come up with something that was of profound importance and looked presentable—with typos being an endless distraction. With the PC, I soon stopped caring about misspelling and awkward phraseology since what I was writing wasn't sacred text, but simply the raw material for a polished article after a long process of revisions and additional research. E-mail enabled me to efficiently and quickly get additional

eyes on my writing.

The fact that I was in psychoanalysis at the time helped me value my own thoughts and feelings more fully. I no longer felt the need to argue from authority and be confounded by the issue of which authorities I should be arguing from. Research became much easier as I discovered that with the Internet I could access sources on my own PC that previously I had to cross continents or oceans to find. When I became a journal editor, the Internet enabled me to correspond with a large number of colleagues on various continents and accomplish far more than I could have in the days of surface mail ("snail mail" as it is called by so many today). As a researcher, I can save an enormous amount of time and money since archival materials I once had to travel to are now available online. More and more I find myself going online to check a fact rather than going to my well-stocked historical, political psychological, psychoanalytical, and psychohistorical library. These days I store research materials electronically rather than in bulky file cabinets that I have no more space for in my home office. The personal computer empowered me as a scholar, for which I am quite grateful. As illustrated by my example, electronic breakthroughs are intertwined with the personal and, for that matter, societal changes.

Unfortunately, electronics is also among the greatest time wasters known to man. It's very easy to get lost reading articles or checking e-mails and two hours later wonder where the time went. While it is a great tool to stay in touch with people, some of my friends tell me that Facebook is such a ridiculous addiction—you're mostly just reading people's narcissistic comments, not gaining knowledge or any valuable communication with them. A young friend says that a "like" on Facebook is similar to a compliment, but lacks the true feeling and response that a real compliment would have. Personally, I avoid social media because my time is already overcommitted.

Regrettably, electronics have brought enormous difficulties and frustrations. My body—eyes, hands, legs (leg cramps), spine, etc.—has paid a price for the time I spend seated at keyboards in front of screens. Hackers are constantly attacking my system attempting to gain financial and personal information, forcing me to invest in expensive virus protection and file back-up systems.

Scammers assure me on a regular basis that by clicking on their link or responding to their e-mail that I will gain a large inheritance or find sex or the woman of my dreams (little do they know or care that I have found her, the old fashioned way—through face-to-face contact).

However, hackers and scammers are not the greatest problem wrought by the Internet. There is a shallowness to tweeting, texting, snapchatting (Snapchat disappears after a short period of time), and posting pictures on Instagram. Real closeness, like psychoanalysis, is about sharing in-depth with another person. It involves expressing ambiguities, ambivalences, innermost fears, and parts of ourselves we would like to compartmentalize in defense of our preferred self-image. The fragmentary nature of Internet communication usually involves the opposite of intimacy. There is a primary process quality to much of what is expressed electronically.

To use the language of analysis, ego and superego are inclined to be shunted aside in favor of the pure expression of id. The Internet impulse is to allow the pleasure principle to reign supreme. But what pleasure is there without security? The expression of our many impulses that is encouraged by these brief methods of communication does not provide security since one does not know with any certainty what's coming.

Electronic communication can be as superficial as the interactions with the people I pass quickly in the corridors of my college, the people who respond to my smile, "good morning," or "hi" with a "how you doing?" or "what is happening today?" This exchange has little meaning because they've gone by me before they could possibly hear a realistic answer beyond a politically correct statement of "fine" or "not much." This supports the shallow quality that is so prevalent in a society in which we quickly interact with an enormous number of people without having any meaningful contact. The benefits and promise of digital electronics are enormous, but they come at a high cost.

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, *enjoys stretching the psychohistorical paradigm by doing interdisciplinary editing, scholarship, and teaching and may be contacted at pelovitz@aol.com.* ❑

Stuck in a Computer Freeze

Allan Mohl—Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

There is something challenging
About a computer,
Particularly if you've
Had little training
In using it.

You get into your email
And it freezes.
Nothing moves. You call
Technical assistance and a voice
From India attempts to help
You and you have difficulty

Understanding what he or she is saying
And it's a nightmare.
Before you know it,
You end up spending
Money to get out of

This quicksand of frustration
And when your email is
No longer frozen, the
Individual from India becomes
A hero within ten minutes!

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Virtual Minds

Juhani Ihanus—University of Helsinki

In science-fiction, the rise of technological consciousness is often attached to the rise of an ego consciousness, which boosts it-

self as the controller of the universe, thus gaining god-like mastery. This tale of hubris ends with the destruction of the master (the "mad scientist"), after his beloved have been destroyed. In the field of psychoanalysis, Viktor Tausk in his posthumously published article "On the Origin of the 'Influencing Machine' in Schizophrenia" (originally published in German in 1919, the English translation was published in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* in 1933) proposed that "The Influencing Machine" delusion consists of the patient's claims that an evil person operates a machine that is able to produce bodily changes in the patient. The evil operator is the great manipulator *par excellence*, capable of inserting thoughts into the mind, or of sucking out thoughts and feelings. Different kinds of sensations, movements, acts, or verbal expressions are also seen as the products of the machine. When asked how such a machine was constructed, the patient could give only vague guesses such as, the pushing of buttons, the setting into motion of levers, and the turning of cranks.

The Influencing Machine delusion seems not to be restricted to schizophrenic states. It, like the mad scientist story, resonates in the minds of different people in different times and places, branching off into myths, literature, and art. It was not until after the Industrial Revolution, however, that the machine really became an influencer, an object for the displacement and projection of one's unacceptable thoughts, feelings, and actions. The desires of the machine called "I" are elusive, its "infantile attractors" having seductive and possessive powers.

Prior to the 18th century, normal science studied the nervous system with the help of the animal spirits hypothesis. This hypothesis, passed on from Galen of Pergamon, stated that the "Natural Spirit" is created in the liver after the eaten food arrives in the intestines. The heat of the heart converts the Natural Spirit to the "Vital Spirit." The proposed structure of the brain, called the *rete mirabile*, or "wonderful net," then further converts the Vital Spirit to the animal spirits that are purified, collected in the ventricles and finally transported through the "hollow nerves" of the body to produce sensation and movement.

Tausk already suggested that the mysterious Influencing Machine is derived from the child's curiosity and unclearness of

how one's body develops and functions. Children cherish a common belief that their caretaker can read and insert their thoughts and feelings, manipulate their body members, take things out of their body, anally invade them, threaten to mutilate or even maim, dismember, and mince them. These largely unconscious bodily memories can be at the basis of uncanny feelings when one meets with such experiences as inanimate mummies (both meanings of this word: mummy and Mom) suddenly and unexpectedly move, pacing slowly toward a frightened spectator.

The main aspect in the persecutory Influencing Machine fantasy is the state of being passive and helpless, at the mercy of stronger powers. This developmental stage is situated in the quasi-separation, in "between" where the urge to merge and to separate fluctuate, and anxiety and excitement vacillate in the push-pull dynamics. Even younger children nowadays get access to and are gradually immersed into the world of the computerized, digitalized, and virtualized extensions of the mind-brain-body. Their neuroplastic and dynamic minds are given continuous non-parental instructions about how to relate to different kinds of inscriptions and icons of the online play world technology. Not only physical and cognitive extensions and artifacts but also increasingly emotion-regulatory extensions embrace the computer-directed mobile beings.

The Machine Age was followed by electronic technology and the networked consciousness. The newer influencing machines have succeeded the mechanical ones. The current controllers are post-biological, artificially intelligent, genetically programmed, and hyper mediated. Virtual abductions, deaths, and resurrections form the post-human mind, net, and body scape. Operating people are handed over to wireless hot spots and "terminal identities" are connected to endless data banks.

Cyberspace is full of invaders and snatchers; the mindset of cartoons and videos abound with images of mind-sucking and raping. The *rete mirabile* is a matrix that holds its promises and nightmares in store for the computerized selves. The revitalized and transformed Influencing Machine fantasy belongs to those multiple and hybrid selves that are always online. They are linked to novel computational "evocative objects" (Sherry Turkle, "Whither Psy-

choanalysis in Computer Culture?" *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 21, 2004, 16-30) which are objects to think (and feel) with. Such artificial objects evoke emotions in the user without having "real" emotions. An evocative pet object can, for example, function as a remote-controlled guardian of the old people and help them smile in their loneliness.

Computer culture calculates the effects of affects, dependency, and other relational phenomena, producing intimate machines that demand the human users to attend to virtual psychology. Companion species (quasi-alive virtual pets, digital dolls smiling, and robot nurses taking care of the elderly) and affective computing devices (such as the human-like robots) are relational artifacts that give the appearance of aliveness. However, unlike humans, they do not disappoint or betray, and thus they open new vistas for perfect narcissistic relations with machines. Persecutory fantasies can be excluded in the "wonderful net" where everybody is marked by an errorless identifying code (chip). Psychopharmacological ingredients add to and accompany internet addictions and dissociations.

Spielraum (the Internet play space) is a ground for identity play. It may advance self-reflection: "What does my behavior in cyberspace tell me about what I want, who I am, what I may not be getting in the rest of my life?" (Turkle, 2004, 22). However, such reflections may also inflate and confuse identities. Virtual infonauts do not proceed so much through self-analysis as by navigation through cyberspace. They cherish sensation seeking rather than truth seeking. In the *Second Life* online world, people embody themselves through virtual characters, "avatars," which are image-tailored and represent the real-life self and live on online.

There may be a final loss of ambivalence when we get irreducibly and inextricably intertwined with and immersed in "programmed worlds and relationships with digital creatures and robotic pets," as Sherry Turkle has pointed out. In cyberspace, the regulations are clear, but "never have we so needed the ability to think [and rethink], so to speak, 'ambivalently,' to consider life in shades of gray, consider moral dilemmas… to hold many different and contradictory thoughts and feelings at the same time" (Turkle, 2004, 29-30).

For virtual travelers, cyberspace is the space of apparition where the virtual and the real co-emerge and co-evolve. Virtual reality, image technologies, and high speed cognitive and affective computing are no longer simply our tools; they now constitute the very environment within which our telehumanity is developing. Ethnographic studies on human online behavior produce "netnographic" research questions that are not so much concerned with data banks or telecommunication per se as with the interface between different data worlds, between resonating fields of intersecting and overlapping memories and larger virtual consciousness centers. What was earlier regarded as an artificial appendix is now becoming a huge virtual central nervous system.

Robert Romanyshyn has reminded us that "cyber-reality is that kind of consciousness which asks us not only to be aware that we are always dreaming, even while awake, dreaming as it were with eyes wide open, but also challenges us to take responsibility for what our dreams create" ("On Technology as Symptom & Dream: A Conversation with Dolores O. Brien," www.cgjungpage.org, 2000). In a cultural matrix, there are ambiguities and tensions (of separation and fusion, exclusion and inclusion) embedded in individual and cultural experiential contexts. Digital culture may recreate and re-orientate memories and desires in mindscapes that construct unanticipated temporal places. However, it may also regress to archaic mirroring of sameness where nothing shakes or stirs the scene. Then the "other" is again a "hellish" disorder that has to be annihilated by the rule of the normal.

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Group Process in Online Discussion Groups

Ralph E. Fishkin—Thomas Jefferson University

Participation in e-mail listserv discussion groups has become popular and absorbing, but at times it becomes a frustrating experience. Listservs have proliferated under the auspices of professional organizations and loose networks of professionals with common interests. While stimulating, educational, and democratizing, listserv discussion groups are notorious for the ease with which they can become vehicles for vitriolic conflict that could sharpen organizational schisms and create permanent enmity between participants. They may cause participants to choose sides based on various allegiances, to lurk without participating, to resign in rage or disappointment, or to expel, either directly or indirectly through mass action, participants with unpopular views or styles of participation that are unacceptable to the group, or that defy group rules created to contain conflict.

I have had experience with three listservs. Two of them have been limited to psychoanalysts and the third was a mixed group that included various professionals, including psychoanalysts, historians, and a few laymen. My experiences form the basis of this communication. Many fascinating aspects of listserv interactions, as well as a review of the expanding literature on this topic, could be explored but are beyond the scope of this brief report. I will limit my comments to the awareness (or its lack of) on the part of some of the group members that something has gone awry in the discussion process, and on the efforts that arise to fix the problem.

The Open Line and the Members Lists are two listservs. They are open to active members of the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA) and have become forces for democratization and the dissemination of essential knowledge about the history of the organization's political past. In 2001 The Open Line, at the instigation of Arnold Richards, became the vehicle for a "lively and spirited discussion… with many participants from the pro- and anti-certification camps weighing in. It appeared that although views differed on the validity, reliability, and relevance of the test, there

was widespread agreement that making certification a requirement for voting for educational bylaws or for running for office was neither rational nor adaptive for the APsaA." In 2001 and 2002, it became the locus for a series of "Civics Lessons," authored by Paul Mosher, acquainting the membership with the history and politics of the organization and reorganizations of the APsaA, as well as basic facts about the lack of compliance of aspects of its bylaws with provisions of the New York State Not-for-Profit Corporation Law (Paul Mosher and Arnold Richards, "The History of Membership and Certification in the Apsaa: Old Demons, New Debates," *Psychoanalytic Review*, 92: 865-894, 2005).

"Lively and spirited" puts a civilized face on the discussion. It was an intense renewal of an old war. Accusations of group and individual bullying, dishonesty, arrogance, and disparaging and insulting tone, were, essentially, valid. There were several consequences of the discussion. Mass resignation from the Open Line occurred so that it shrunk by about two-thirds. Some members even resigned from the Association in a "plague on both your houses" kind of despair. Another list, the Members List, was created with a two post per week limit to accommodate those who objected to the high volume of posts on the Open Line. The Members List maintains about twice the number of subscribers as the Open Line and hosts the same discussions, but at a reduced intensity. Most of the proponents of certification ceased posting but many remained on the list as silent lurkers, monitoring the conversations but not participating, so that the discussions often had the quality of a one-sided monologue.

Privately, and at meetings of the Board of Professional Standards (BOPS, a Committee of the Corporation) and its subcommittees, the lurkers demonized and distorted the messages of the opponents of certification, and labeling them, pejoratively, a political party. Periodic calls for civility have brought about increased respect for the tone of the discussions. A series of liberalizing bylaw amendments failed to gain the two-thirds necessary for passage, but did gain support from the majority of members. A major reorganization designed to concentrate control in a small cadre of career politicians was proposed by four officers, but was voted down by the members as a consequence of concerted opposition on

the Members and Open Line listservs. A set of bylaw amendments to bring non-controversial aspects of the bylaws into compliance with the state law was passed, but major conflicts about whether the BOPS or the Executive Council (the APsaA Board of Directors) has final responsibility for education and standards remain unresolved despite an unexpectedly successful lawsuit that enjoined the BOD from making policy for matters that the bylaws assign to BOPS as "duties."

The third online discussion group that I have had experience with is the Clio's Psyche Listserv. I witnessed and participated in a battle on the list that had been fought, without resolution, before I joined on February 21, 2014 and since. This battle on the Israeli/ Palestinian conflict was about whether or not negative public opinion of Israel was a product of worldwide anti-Semitism, and how any criticism of Israeli tactics and strategy was or was not the witting or unwitting product of that anti-Semitism. The problems with the discussion were the inability of proponents on either side to acknowledge the strong factors that motivated their opponents, the passions brought to and aroused by the discussion, the disparaging, intemperate, distorting, accusatory, and provocative tendencies of many of the participants, and the sheer volume of e-mails that crowded out other topics and made keeping up with the discussion almost impossible if one had anything else to do.

In short order, it became obvious to many of the participants that something seriously wrong had developed in the discussion process, but there seemed to be a reluctance to address it directly. This reluctance was understandable because when it was addressed, it quickly became subsumed into the polarizing defensive tendency of some to attack the writer who had called for reflection on the group process. Nevertheless, calls for lowering the temperature of the discussion increased, and soon others began to object to the intemperate and vicious bullying and scapegoating toward other participants. For example:

> we need to identify the constantly carping, denying, blaming subgroup, the subgroup that blames every difficulty on the Jews posting on Clio about Jewish history, Jewish issues, and Israel, those who indulge in Jew-baiting tactics,

> perhaps out of latent, perhaps out of overt anti-Semitism. What reenactment, what repetition compulsion, what regression, is that group caught up in? It seems they might want a *Judenfrei* Clio, or, because they are not total bigots, perhaps they will tolerate the good Jews who agree with them.

This was followed by a call for a set of guidelines that would address the various ongoing abuses. Soon a consensus developed that disparaging and bullying was occurring. A member who denied such action was confronted by direct evidence from e-mails she had posted showing there was substance to the accusation. This member "apologized," but clearly insincerely because shortly thereafter, in a defiant statement, she resigned.

Another member antagonized many others on the listserv by "spamming" the list with article after one-sided article from the Internet to support his position. This led to a proposal agreed to by consensus that participants would limit themselves to three postings per day, an agreement that the "spammer" could not hold to. It was even suggested that he post several links in one post, but he refused and ceased contributing, though he remained on the list as a lurker. Others, in sympathy with him, also threatened to resign but only one member followed through. These events ended the discussion of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict on the listserv. After a brief period of relative quiet, vigorous and interesting communication on the Listerv resumed, with a distinctly more civil and mutually respectful bent, and with a new readiness not to tolerate bullying and disparagement.

What kinds of guidelines were proposed on the listserv to deal with these excesses? In addition to the three post per day limit, discussions included the replacement of ad-hominem attacks by a practice of criticizing the idea, not the poster, and the self-screening of posts prior to sending them in order to reduce the expression of anger, contempt, combativeness, condescension, shaming, scolding, psychopathologizing, propagandizing, provoking of conflict between others, and needing to respond to every e-mail. We began to see examples of humor instead of anger used as a more gentle way of dealing with outrageous ideas. An idea that

was floated, but not adopted, by the group itself was the creation of a voluntary parallel list for the posting of e-mails about other topics of interest to individual members that went beyond the mission of the main list. What are the results? Recently, on December 1, 2014 a member spontaneously wrote the following to another member:

> I will say this, there has been [a] noticeable shift in the tenor and tone of the contributions to this forum of late… less tension, greater latitude for expression. You, along with others, have contributed to that. I'm pleased.

In such a very heterogeneous and random collection of individuals, could there be a better result? When calls for civility and mutual respect result in such general compliance with so few withdrawals, is there hope for the containment of human conflict?

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*[**Editor's Comment:** A de facto parallel group focused on anti-Semitism and Israel was established by a half dozen members and to the best of my knowledge continues to the present time.]*

Psychoanalysts and the Digital Age: Google vs. the Blank Slate

Joyce M. Rosenberg—Private Psychoanalytic Practice

I was startled recently when a patient who I'd worked with for about six months mentioned my work as a financial journalist. I asked how he knew about it. He replied that he'd Googled me and found my résumé detailing my dual professions. If patients see my profile on Twitter and LinkedIn, they can find out where I have worked, the positions I've held, what degrees I have (including a law degree), the music I like, and so forth. A Google search reveals news stories I've written and my papers published in this journal. So much for the blank slate, the withholding of personal information considered essential for decades in psychoanalytic practice and that many analysts still strive for. They hope and expect that the less patients know, the more they will fantasize about their analysts and create grist for the analytic mill.

Google searches are just one aspect of the digital and electronic age that is having an enormous impact on the way many analysts work. Cellphones, smartphones, and tablets make it easier to run a practice, allowing analysts to do things like return phone calls without being in the office. Some analysts hold sessions over Skype. However, technology also creates situations that might make analysts uneasy.

Not only are patients likely to have Googled us, many text or email when they have a question or need to change an appointment, forgoing phone calls that provide more contact between analyst and patient. It's not just the youngest, most tech-savvy patients who text. If analysts give out their cellphone numbers, it will be very natural for many patients to text their analysts much as they do anyone else. My patients almost universally use texts for appointment questions. Some also send photos or tell me something they've thought about between sessions. Texting might seem problematic to analysts used to listening for unconscious material. Texts don't offer the nuances of inflection or reveal anxiety or other emotions as a voicemail message does.

That may be one reason why texting is increasingly popular in our society. In *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011), Sherry Turkle describes those who prefer communicating by text as "people who take comfort in being in touch with a lot of people whom they also keep at bay" (15). Certainly, it's worth it for analysts to explore why patients like to text, but they should also understand that especially for younger people, it's as normal as picking up the phone has been for the rest of us. Interestingly, Turkle finds a similarity between analysis and texting:

> Classical analysis shielded the patient from the analyst's gaze in order to facilitate free association, the golden rule of saying whatever comes to mind. Likewise, at a screen, you feel protected and less burdened by expectations…A telephone call can seem fearsome because it reveals too much (187).

What if an analyst refuses to communicate by text? Might it prompt a prospective patient to turn away from an analyst who doesn't seem to be able to communicate with her on her level? Is texting something analysts should just accept as a part of our changing times?

The analyst who does communicate by text or email—perhaps even initiating the digital conversation—may have countertransference to examine. I find it's easier to reschedule a session via text rather than playing phone tag. That makes me wonder about texting and my tendency to be withdrawn at times; does a text enable me to be less engaged?

Other transference dynamics arise because of electronics. Many years ago, a patient answered a phone call during a session, and then erupted at me when I tried to explore why he needed to do that. I am aware that the rupture would have happened one way or another; it happened to be due to a cellphone. The patients who frequently text between sessions similarly present opportunities for exploration. Without texts, they would likely have called or left voicemail messages.

Electronics have been changing analytic practice for decades. When I began analysis in 1982, my analyst did not have an

answering machine. She'd answer the phone during sessions, keeping calls short. Sometimes the interruptions were upsetting and frustrating, and gave us plenty to explore. When she got an answering machine, my sessions became seamless, but an opportunity to understand some aspects of my transference was lost.

While analysts can decide how much they want digital devices to be part of their practice, they don't have control over what a patient can learn about them over the Internet. Even those who choose to not become users of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn can find that facets of their personal or professional lives are online. Anyone who publishes, makes presentations, or wins awards may show up in Google or Yahoo searches. It's possible for any person to be mentioned on an Internet website without their knowledge and be found in a search. What's known as cyberstalking is fascinating to many people who want to find out more about all kinds acquaintances, including their analysts.

I limit my availability on Facebook to people I have agreed to have as "friends." However, several years ago I got a message through Facebook from a former patient. She was a "friend" of the colleague who had initially referred her to me. She used Facebook to get back in touch with me to resume her treatment, arguably an upside of having social media connections. A downside: Facebook's ever-changing technology meant this patient could also see some of my activity on the site.

One can argue that the growing knowledge patients can have about their analysts is little different from many other situations analysts have long found themselves in. Those who practice in the towns where they live or out of their apartments in the city often involuntarily disclose information about themselves. Patients can figure out that they're having sessions in an analyst's home office and see details like the analyst's car and that the house needs new siding. They may run into one another at the store or their children's school.

While the knowledge a patient gets about an analyst from any source or circumstance is used in the psychoanalytic process, it can also interfere with the analytic process, as Doris Silverman has noted: "If the analyst withholds personal information, there is a re-

duced potential for the patient to feel burdened by a particular piece of information about the analyst's life. Thus, a patient might be more able to express aggression toward the analyst if he or she did not know that the analyst suffered from a heart condition" ("Psychoanalysis and Infant Research: Joseph D. Lichtenberg," *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 1, 1984, 257-267).

Analysts can also be uncomfortable. When the patient I discussed at the start of this paper mentioned my journalistic work, I became uneasy. Although I have practiced for 17 years, I fear patients will question how good a clinician I am because I practice part time. So far, very few patients have told me they're aware of my other career, and it doesn't appear to have negatively affected our working alliance. I have explored their transference; those who have an interest in writing or media feel a kinship with me.

Knowing something about me may also be somewhat gratifying for patients who have complained about the unevenness of our relationship. I know so much more about them than they do about me. Googling me can, in their minds, put us on a more equal footing.

Perhaps the greatest concern behind objections to self-disclosure of all sorts of information by an analyst is that it will limit the ability of patients to explore their fantasies. However, some knowledge in the mind of a curious, open person is likely to only lead to further exploration, and that has been the case throughout the history of psychoanalysis, long before the digital era. The fact I wore a wedding ring for years inspired questions such as, did I have children?

Psychiatrist and analyst Arnold Goldberg takes in stride the fact that patients discover facts about their analysts, commenting that "The patient may learn any number of things about the analyst outside the office and may infer all kinds of personal information from what the analyst says and does. All of this material, in terms of its meaning to the patient, becomes part of the analytic investigation" ("American Pragmatism and American Psychoanalysis," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly,* 71, 2002, 235-250). Still, for some patients, knowledge about their analysts can feel like an unwelcome transgression of boundaries. They have the power to limit how much

electronics affect their analysis. Analysts don't always have a choice.

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A Threat from Virtual Reality

Paul Salstrom—St. Mary-of-the-Woods College

A virtual reality is an artificial context that uses data-organizing computer technology to let people interact with a program or let them interact with each other. An early definition called virtual reality "a computer-mediated, multisensory experience, one designed to trick our senses and convince us that we are 'in another world'" (Glenn F. Cartwright, "Virtual or Real? The Mind in Cyberspace," *The Futurist*, March-April 1994, 22). Virtual reality can create illusionary experiences of touch, taste, and smell to augment what we experience through our senses of hearing and sight. Besides use in entertainment, virtual reality has been adapted for use in occupational training, including military training. "Virtual," of course, implies that this perception of "reality" isn't actually objective.

However, not all actual reality is 100% objective. Reality often has subjective components. Psychologically, much of what is real for us has roots in our primal relationships, particularly in our relationships with our parents or surrogate parents. The poet Ranier Maria Rilke (1875-1926) in his novel *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910) had his child protagonist, Malte, try to plumb the significance of primal relationships by separating "inside" from "outside." After hearing adults attribute their inner feelings to outside events, Malte begins to think adults must be able to pull outside things inside themselves. Yet his own experience seems to go

the opposite direction: "The more I looked outside, the more I stirred up what was [already] inside me" (Ranier Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, 1982, 199). So the child Malte thinks he is more "inside" than grownups, and he thinks of growing up as becoming "outside." Rilke/Malte writes "I believed that I would be able to tell when life turned around, as it were, and came only from outside, as it had until then come from inside" (Rilke, 198-99).

While still very young, Malte is sent to a school for young noblemen and is treated there as though already an adult. There he starts realizing he can't actually separate inside from outside. Malte comments that, "If I insisted on believing that my childhood was past, then at that same moment the whole future vanished too." At that time, he says, "my eyes also opened to the infinite reality of my childhood. I knew that it wouldn't cease" (Rilke, 200). He then understands that the outside will never replace the inside but will simply be added to it.

However, it's not that simple, for he also learns the outside can come inside and the inside can go outside. The outside can come inside through role-playing, who your parents and other elders expect you to be, or, as Malte says, "You come, you find a life ready-made, you just have to slip it on" (Rilke, 9). Thus, for the outside to come inside you merely had to control your feelings. According to Malte, "There were Things that were sad, once and for all, and there were pleasant Things, and a great number of incidental ones. If a joy was arranged for you, it was in fact a joy, and you had to behave accordingly. All this was basically very simple, and once you got the knack of it, it took care of itself" (Rilke, 100-101).

However if the outside comes *too far* inside, that could be scary. Once, while he is still a small boy, Malte gets himself trapped in a make-believe costume. A large corner bedroom of his Danish family's manor house holds a row of old wardrobes full of formal clothes that date back to the 1700s. He dons many of these clothes until, in the final wardrobe, he finds "all kinds of random paraphernalia for masquerades, whose fantastic possibilities made my head spin" (Rilke, 104).

Perhaps Malte's experience that day can help us forecast some future uses of virtual reality. The wardrobe holds many masks. Putting on a mask and dressing almost at random, Malte traipses to a mirror and begins acting the character who he sees—until he capsizes a small table cluttered with breakable objects, including a perfume vial. While trying to wipe the perfume from the rug, he also attempts to wiggle out of the costume but finds himself trapped in it. He rushes downstairs for help but the adults assume he's acting a part and they only laugh. When he passes out on the floor they still assume it's all pretend.

So Malte begins to ration and screen what he takes in from outside. Meanwhile, he also learns that what's inside can go outside. Once, at age four or five, he goes crawling away from his parents to look for the main part of a house long familiar to him which his family is revisiting. However, that main part of the house had recently burned down and what remains is only the wing in which the host family now lives. Still, Malte—and then also his mother—cannot conceive of being inside merely a *part* of their friends' house. Crawling in quest of the main part, Malte is noticed and restrained by the hostess. However, as he and his mother then sit and struggle to subtract the rest of the house from their thoughts, the missing rest of the house begins to haunt the other guests as well. Malte feels that something is leaving him and he realizes that the grownups are taking it in. "It was terrifying," he writes, "to know that [something which grownups couldn't see] was stronger than all of them.… It seemed to me as if what they were looking for might suddenly break out of me like a rash" (Rilke, 144) and what he especially fears is himself being identified as the source of it. Not until he clings to his mother, does the lost part of the house fully vanish, for both of them.

When we start becoming independent persons, our parents or surrogate-parents are our prime reality. Our interaction with them creates our awareness of being separate. Still, regardless of how separate we may grow, our sense of being real never escapes its connection with that specific, personal primal relationship. The more *stress* we experience, the more we seem to crave a primal relationship that is *present* and *active*.

No doubt virtual reality can itself become a source of

stress—either through addiction to it or through forced "therapy" (such as in prisons). But I suspect its greatest future abuse will come by using it to *escape* stress by using it to offer millions of people a stress-relieving relationship between themselves and a "great person" on whom they will come to feel they depend.

To my knowledge, no personality cult has yet offered its followers a "virtual" way to interact with its leader. Yet back in history, when an earlier new technology—radio—brought the voice of Hitler in 1929 to millions of Germans—that was when (and how) Hitler achieved a mass following. The radio in its infancy fostered a sense of personal relationship between Hitler and millions of Germans who loved his voice so much they craved to see and hear him in person. Similarly in Italy, on Italian state radio, Mussolini's voice became the dominant sound. Not much later in the United States, Depression-era stresses helped to coalesce radio-cults around Franklin Roosevelt and his detractor Rev. Charles Coughlin. Later, in the 1990s, when television became widespread in former Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević used it to create a Serb nationalist cult that popularized "ethnic cleansing."

With time, people begin to ration and screen how much they allow a radio voice or a television image to come "inside" them. As we grow familiar with various media, we learn to ration and screen what we take in from them. On the other hand, peoples' reasons to ration and screen will surely erode if the 21st century heightens their stress and thereby heightens their craving for primal relationship. It's not that virtual reality will necessarily cheapen most people's lives even though economic decline and environmental woe in the *real* world *do* seem likely to cheapen people's lives by reducing their desirable possibilities. Meanwhile, such decline and woe seem likely to heighten people's stress.

Adherents of personality cults crave access to their leader. Experiences of personal "contact" with the head of the cult through the use of virtual reality could begin without any formal commitments between followers and leaders, or between either of those parties and whoever controls the technology. Yet that stage might last only until virtual reality grows engrained in our culture (like cell phones have grown engrained), or until many people come to think their lives would be cheapened without virtual reality. This

may sound like a slow process, but haven't cell phones "enriched" people's lives quite quickly? Wasn't it rather few years before the voices of Hitler and Mussolini came to dominate German and Italian radio and engrain themselves in those two cultures?

Like those personality cults were strengthened by radio when it was new, future personality cults could be strengthened by offering interaction with their "great person" through virtual reality. However, there might be a difference: whereas earlier personality cults justified their existence by changing outer reality—by changing facts like Hitler and Mussolini loved to do—nowadays facts are harder to change. Economic and environmental constraints are increasing the difficulty of making outer changes of a positive hue. If new personality cults focus less on changing outer reality than on escaping from thinking about it, the role of a present and active primal relationship in people's lives would surely be heightened. In short, only virtual realities that offer a primal relationship seem likely to meet millions of people's coming psychological craving for an inner escape from outer stress. The moral price-tag of that relationship might turn out to be high.

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Autoeroticism, the Internet, and Relationships

Hanna Turken—Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

Functionally, electronics have brought us a long way forward. On the one hand, we can now access information instantly and be connected to almost anywhere with the touch of a button. In the field of psychotherapy, with the aid of Skype we can teach, practice, and supervise without in-person contact. On the other hand, sites and devices such as Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, eBay, Amazon, Instant Messenger (IM), smartphones, iPods, etc. are contributing to more pervasive pathological obsessive compulsive dis-

orders—addictions that alienate the user from important interpersonal relationships in the "real" space of home and work. All Internet addictions are damaging to couple/family relationships, but the most regressive seems to be the need of sexual arousal as a soothing mechanism and as a defense against depression, as well as a regulator of mood. Where the need for erotization—sexualization—of unmanageable feelings becomes a defense against the other, there are interpersonal consequences. This online addiction I have found to be most insidious and destructive for intimate relationships. Three examples illustrate this point.

L, a 47 year old married man with two children, is an intelligent and accomplished scientist. He loves his wife and his latency-aged children. Yet he feels empty, depressed, and dissatisfied. He readily admits his hypersexuality and his affinity for pornography since adolescence. Sex with his wife is insufficient since the advent of the Internet. Lately he has taken to photographing women's body parts with his cell phone. He keeps his computer under his bed, so that when the urge to look and have sexual release arises, it is accessible. When his wife and children are around, he gets irritated.

Y, a 33 year old woman, had what she describes as a most devastating experience. After a disagreement with her husband she left her apartment to go to the supermarket, but in her upset state she realized when getting to her car that she had forgotten her keys. When she returned to her apartment she found her husband watching virtual pornography on the computer: "Can I stay with a man who has hurt me so deeply?"

R, a 37 year old woman, has been married for seven years and has a four year old daughter. She had become obsessed with finding evidence of her husband's adultery. She considered her marriage a passionate one until a year ago when it became sexless. "What other reason could there be but that her husband was having an affair with another woman? Why does he spend so much time on his Blackberry locked up in the bathroom?" What she discovered was that he was engaged in sexual activity on the Internet. This led to her having a depressive episode and intense frigidity.

Autoeroticism is the earliest inducer in the development of

obsessive-compulsive defenses. The obsessive-compulsive neurosis comes about when autoeroticism no longer functions as a soothing mechanism and develops into an obsession, a substitute for pleasure with others. Masturbation during latency is deferred and will return with puberty, at which time the availability of others in the external world induces and leads to the search for expressing it with others in reality.

Mature love can be seen as erotic desire, tenderness, a prominence of love over aggression, empathy for the other, and commitment to the other and the relationship. A mature relationship involves accepting the reality that satisfaction by others is not automatic. We must bear the depression caused by this realization. Satisfaction is a mutual action; we must accept that we also need to give something in order to get something. Sexual activity on the Internet is a way to ward off feelings of self-depletion and self-fragmentation as an attempt to maintain self-cohesiveness and self-esteem. The aim of the sexual activity, in the case of the online user's sexuality, is for both immediate gratification and as a compensation for the suffering they perceive they have endured.

Computer technology facilitating sexuality at the push of a button at home, at work, or anywhere, fixates on the avoidance and interferes with conflict resolutions within intimate and all other important relationships.

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The Technological Impact on New Mothers

Helen Cairns—Freelance Writer

The face of motherhood has changed dramatically since the mid-20th century, when the introduction of "the pill" allowed women to control when and whether they had children. This reproductive and sexual freedom gave women the opportunity to pursue a

career outside the home, changing the frontier of motherhood forever. Technology brought about other major changes that have shaped how mothers bring up their children, making technology part of everyday life for today's families.

Technology in Childbirth*: The Trouble with Continuous Heart Monitoring*

In 1900, nearly all births took place in the home with minimal or no medical intervention, and women would be assisted by midwives. However, by 1969 the home birth rate had dropped to and stayed at or under 1%. This was until 2004, when it began to increase slightly. With the change in birth setting came the medicalization of childbirth.

Now, 94% of women giving birth in a U.S. hospital will have electronic fetal heart monitoring, requiring them to lie on a bed with straps around their abdomen. Use of continuous electronic monitoring impedes freedom of movement, increasing labor pain. Most hospital births are by epidural anesthetic and the woman's inability to move around adequately may be a reason so much epidural anesthetic are required. As the implementation of technology in the maternity unit has increased, the demands of that technology have taken over so that nurses spend more time operating electronic monitoring systems and less time paying attention to the woman's physical comfort or emotional well-being. Grand-multiparous women who have given birth to at least five children over a number of years are able to see these changes most dramatically and some believe that technology makes childbirth less personal.

24/7 Digital Motherhood and Logging In Instead of Homing In

Mothers of the 21st century don't have to wait to tell people they have given birth or send their husband to the payphone and give family the good news. They can send a message from their iPhone if they want to while being stitched up on the operating table. Photos of the newborn can be emailed instantly across the world to be received in seconds.

The homing in period is also very different for the modern mom. In previous generations, the new mother would rest for a week or two to recover from birth, get to know her new baby, and

establish breastfeeding while her own mother or other female relative would bring meals and do shopping and cleaning. New smartphones mean that today's mother can order the shopping herself online, click for a pizza, check her e-mails, or have a video/telephone call to see her friends. One second-time mother described how access to social media in the post-natal period made her feel less trapped by the almost constant demands of a newborn and that breastfeeding didn't feel like being "held hostage" as it had the first time.

Digital apps may encourage breastfeeding mothers to continue to feed their infants, although no one has studied the impact of cell phones on neonatal health or mother and baby bonding. Can the rooming-in period really be the same if the mother is on Facebook or Twitter while holding the baby?

The Birth of the Work-at-Home Mother

In previous decades, the argument raged over whether mothers should stay at home to raise their children or go to work, with one camp arguing that pre-schoolers needed a mother's presence and the other camp arguing that children should learn by example and see their mothers achieve professionally. Now, the modern mother tries to have it all. A mother's modem has brought with it the opportunity for her to profit right from her living room. Staying at home no longer means she can't make money. More and more entrepreneurs are setting up their own businesses selling children's clothes or diapers, renting water birth pools, even uploading home videos or writing paid "mommy blogs" online. Electronics and social media have opened up a new world of career opportunities for mothers who want the best of both worlds and don't want to pay for childcare. This is a popular choice for mothers of children with behavioral disorders if they have struggled at school and the mother who wishes to combine homeschooling with work.

Electronic Healthcare

Another transformation that today's mother will see is the digitalization of her child's healthcare from paper to computer. Health authorities in different countries may provide an electronic health record that the mother can access at the click of a button and even leave comments on—allowing for a fairer doctor-patient relationship. Teleconsultations are also being rolled out so

that new moms can talk to their child's pediatrician on Skype instead of sitting in a waiting room full of sick people and risking the transmission of diseases.

For the times when they still have to see the doctor, there may be a touch screen computer outside his/her office for them to register that they have arrived, instead of standing in line and telling the receptionist. Some love the convenience; others feel as if they have stepped into a parallel universe when they enter the waiting room to find four other mothers all texting on their cell phones. In this new age of parenting, moms can spend more time speaking virtually than speaking to each other, making it really important to strike a healthy balance between incorporating technology into parenthood and being a truly attentive parent.

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My Digital Generation of Students

Paul H. Elovitz—Ramapo College of New Jersey

The Internet, in all its social networking, tweeting, texting, and other manifestations, is directly impacting our lives. This is especially true for the lives of the digital generation who I now teach and observe as a professor and grandfather. There is considerable literature pointing out the ways in which people are changing, from social settings right down to their neurobiology.

Online screens bring the world to the fingertips of the digital generation. On their smartphones, tablets, and laptops they are able to access information from everywhere around the world (provided of course that it is electronically available). Whereas earlier generations of students had to rely on the professor for information, today it is quicker for them to just "Google it." Traditionally, thoughtful professors would say "I think this is the answer, but let me check my personal library." Today, many of the same professors are likely to just Google it as well on a site they consider to be accurate. Students find that they need the factual knowledge of professors less than they ever have in the past. However, they come to college because it is expected of them and they want the

credentials that come with a degree and they are not ready to relinquish the familial and societal welfare system that college provides. Fortunately, some are interested in finding themselves role models for how to lead a successful life and are quite open to the knowledge and wisdom that professors bring.

The sense of empowerment the young have from electronics is reflected in the report of an experienced student teacher who described a high school classroom in which all the students were provided with laptops and encouraged to use them. The laptops were only prohibited when professors lectured. During lectures the students were incredibly bored despite the skill of the veteran teacher. The students, in the words of this observer, "Do not want to be talked at in the classroom. They are bored!" Rather, "They want to speak, discuss, and debate." Those who met in small groups in which they were actively engaged "clearly knew the subject better. More than that, these students enjoyed knowing it."

There are unforeseen consequences of providing electronic accessibility to my students, which are not as transparent as they were in the past. In important respects, adolescents of all ages certainly need their teachers less and are extremely aware of the disconnect between being told to use the new technology to the fullest and then being told to put it away in class while the teacher lectures or leads a discussion based on the assigned book. This accessibility is much of the reason why the younger generation has the world at its fingertips and is so optimistic about the world even in a world with poor employment prospects.

The Luddite impulse is very powerful when it comes to new technologies. It is something I have to fight, especially as I grow older. I find myself writing down directions for electronic devices since unlike my students, who are quick to learn and adjust to new technologies, my resistance takes the form of being slower to accept them or at least needing students to explain them to me. The students are much more curious about and open to these new technologies, making learning much faster. They want to keep up with their friends, who are using the latest thing. While there is some of the same resistance among my students to the changing technologies, it is much less developed than that of people over 50. Students hate how the latest version of the iPhone is the same thing as

their old phone (except it's bigger) but many feel the pressure of updating their phone since it is a status symbol, much of it focusing on the essential ingredient in their life, their smartphone (iPhone, Android, etc.). However, they want more and more applications (apps) and their phone will only hold a limited number. In addition, the batteries on these phones seem designed to wear down faster over time so you have to charge them more and more, incentivizing you to replace the phone.

Just checking my phone I discovered I have 34 applications, only a few of which I ever use because they came with the phone and one of which represents a failed attempt to make the phone useful through a particular program. In talking to a student, I discovered that she has 61 apps on her smartphone and that she is inclined to use most of them. Aside from the telephone for texting and calls, her most active applications are social media apps like Twitter (on which users post public messages of 140 letters or less) and Tumblr (a website for liking and sharing pictures and articles), games, and music—which is in addition to the music she listens to on her iPod. Is it any wonder that Howard Gardiner has written a book titled *The App Generation: How Today's Youth Navigate Identity, Intimacy, and Imagination in a Digital World* (2013)?

A talented student who maintains a perfect grade point average in her major amuses herself on her iPhone by playing a game that was available seemingly without cost to her. However, as is the case with most things that are "free," there is cost that goes beyond her time since to play the game more effectively and with greater interest, she needs to buy "in-game money" with U.S. currency. Some gamers (players of immersive online games through their computers or gaming consoles) are in danger of being dropped by the college because they become obsessed and play through the night instead of doing their schoolwork. There is no question that gaming is addictive to a large number of people; however, this is just part of the larger addictive quality of online screens.

I've long noticed students' focus is fixated more on screens rather than the professor. Some researchers put exactly what was happening in the classroom on a screen and determined through a one-way mirror that students preferred looking at what they saw on the screen to observing the real-life people doing the exact same

thing. I once reviewed a book, *Film and the Dream Screen* (1984), in which Robert Eberwein made the case for our fixation on screens being a vestige of the satiated infant's fixation on a flattened version of the mother's breast as s/he falls off to sleep, projecting dreams onto this nurturing backdrop. While I see no proof for this supposition, I have no doubt but that to the younger generation, screens are also safer than reality, in part because they are more controllable and not real. Real people are more immediate and less controllable and predictable than screens. We emotionally connect with real people more than virtual presences, which may be a negative or positive experience for us. For a generation that is less comfortable with emotional involvement, screens are less threatening.

Whatever the origins of our fascination with them, screens certainly are addictive. We pay far too much attention to them when, to me, humans are so much more interesting. However, we can control screens far better than we can control other humans, although far from perfectly. Perhaps in recognition of this, when the AOL search engine fails to find something it is now sending the message, "Sorry we muffed this one. Please try again in a few minutes."

For most humans, multi-tasking represents doing several things at once, but not as well as doing only one task. Still, in our electronic era the temptation is often overwhelming. I'm not just thinking in terms of when a young driver can't resist calling or texting at the wheel and ends up being the cause of death. To a degree I never experienced prior to the last few years, students commonly ask professors to repeat a question since clearly their minds are elsewhere, often on an electronic device.

A middle class student interrupted a conference I was having by opening my office without knocking, even though she had been previously told to knock. While I am not sure just how common this is, I was advised by the student in conference with me that since kids text all the time, they no longer know about the niceties of knocking on doors before opening them. I wonder if this extends to opening the front doors of other people's houses and what else is being lost as our technology changes. Similarly, nowadays it is common for a boy to text a girl to come out to his waiting car, instead of walking up to the front door and meeting her parents. In a

well-researched and at times humorous book, Jean Twenge argues for increased narcissism, moodiness, restlessness, sadness, and feelings of entitlement, isolation, and being overwhelmed among youth (*Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before*, 2014 [2007], 77).

In the early 1980s, I had a patient in psychoanalysis who was obsessed with the idea of going back to college and doing it perfectly the second time around. It wasn't that she had done badly in college, just that she wanted to do it perfectly. Today, the Internet allows people to indulge such fantasies and absorb much of their time with them. On *Second Life*, people create avatars that act out different impulses they have and sometimes create what they see as "perfect lives." This reminds me of Nietzsche's aphorism to the effect that the only thing worse than not getting what you want is getting what you do want. It is my conviction that in *Second Life* where avatars are created to act out a person's preferred or disclaimed self, users' personality issues will reemerge to trouble them just as they did in their actual life. The Internet can be an identity playground. "Virtual Lives" are no panacea for our real world and real lives, although like traditional day and night dreaming they can be used by a thoughtful person to better understand what they would like out of life and potentially implement their findings. However that is real work, which most people are not ready for. The seductive Internet is seldom about any real change. The daydream of instant gratification is very much what avatars like those in *Second Life* and so much of the Internet is about. After all, change is hard. It is so much easier to change one's job location and even life partner rather than oneself!

The high anxiety level for contemporary youth is related to not only their having more choices but also that the burden of control has shifted in so many ways for the digital generation versus the young people of 1950, from their parents, teachers, bosses, neighbors, and society generally to the only partly formed youngsters themselves. Although their brains will not be fully developed until about age 25, in fact the digital generation is given all sorts of choices at very tender ages, which can titillate and terrorize them alternately. Their role models are increasingly coming from the

most varied and often irresponsible sources on the Internet, as well as in our celebrity culture that they connect to on television and through their smartphones.

In teaching freshmen, the pleasures of working with young, mostly optimistic people at an early stage of their lives is mitigated by a growing interpersonal ineptitude. One of my students just wowed me with his technical excellence by presenting an eye-catching, ever-changing PowerPoint presentation. In sharp contrast was his utter ineptitude as a slouching presenter with hands in his pockets while he was reading from the screen in a monotone without eye contact with his audience. As I reflect on his presentation, "The Destruction of Sociability by Social Networking," whatever his competence online may be, in person giving a presentation he appeared to be like a beached whale desperately trying to get back into the online ocean. His thesis' best supporting evidence was himself! The incidence of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder) has increased markedly in this digital generation who have such trouble concentrating in classroom settings. However, should they be playing on Xbox or another online game, many with this label find the ability to concentrate, far in excess of my own powers of concentration, without medication.

A child with lots of energy and eager to go to recess may now be diagnosed and medicated—not necessarily because of a severe disorder but because the school and parents want an easier to control child. Schools are cutting recess time and increasing classroom time at younger ages. Does the ADHD child really have a problem, or is it the strict educational schedule of sitting for hours at a time that is imposed on a six or eight year old? Kids are still kids, but our societal demands on them have changed.

A minority of my students question the human value of the technologies they utilize. One wrote in his technology journal that "it is easy to say 'I'm sorry' in a text. But when you apologize to someone in person, it is much more sincere…. It involves a face, body, and voice…. When a person is behind the screen, they are a totally different person." In contrast to how most of my students embrace technology, a very thoughtful freshman who is so "into" technology that he built his own computer, responded to something I said in class about our dependence on electronics by experiment-

ing with doing without some of his normal electronics. He turned his smartphone completely off to see how he would react. In fact, for the first few days he felt completely lost, but then he felt relieved since the phone had been "overbearing" on him lately. He discovered that he interacted "more openly" with friends and strangers and focused on tasks more readily. He decided that his being riveted on his cellphone as he texts while walking stunted human interaction. The only downside to his experiment was that his parents became "incredibly worried" when they couldn't text or call him. He decided that he had become a "technology addict" and that he needed to limit its use to communication and "not a distracting, anti-social device."

I have far more questions than answers about the exciting new technologies and software that spring up like mushrooms. The concern for the impact on human relations expressed by the last two students cited increase my hope for the future. They are part of the new generation that needs to formulate and answer their own questions regarding technology to hold onto what humanity has previously created and make a better world.

***Paul H. Elovitz** is editor of this journal.* ❑

Digital Generation Articles

An Electronic Generation

Paul H. Elovitz—Ramapo College of New Jersey

Curiosity regarding how electronics is changing the thinking and life experience of young people in recent years led me to offer several freshmen courses including "How Electronics Connect, Empower, and Influence Us." I encouraged the incoming college students to write articles on the impact of the digital devices they used so often and readily. Their electronic world sometimes left me feeling that I was learning a new vocabulary. For example, Marissa Cooney's "Social Media Allowed Me to Express Different Aspects of My Personality" left me searching to understand exactly what is meant by Instagram, Myspace, Snapchat, Timehop, Tumblr, Twitter, tweets, retweeting, Yik Yak, and YouTube. These soft-

ware technologies and the language involved both intrigued and frustrated me.

Yet my students grasp this knowledge faster than the history, interdisciplinary studies, and psychohistory that I teach them, probably because of it being crucial to their relationship to their peer group. Social media and other sites also free them to express various aspects of their personalities that aren't as readily welcome in class. I was concerned when the submission on humor did not measure up to our standard, but the subject showed up in a variety of other articles. Pictorial humor, which cannot so readily be shown in most classrooms, is quite easy to express online, even if it is racist and otherwise politically incorrect since it can be sent on Snapchat, which self-destructs in ten seconds. On Yik Yak, off-color and racist jokes are posted anonymously and will stay a longer time. My guess is that if you read this in a few years there will be new sites and technologies achieving the same purpose and that some of the currently hot sites referred to above may have fallen off the radar.

Texting is a staple of the younger generation and typically even their parents. It keeps people connected without revealing very much. Mothers are reassured as their children text them after school or when in college, but do they really know what their kids are doing? One of the consequences of a generation raised on cell phones and texting is that they have difficulty making eye contact and talking to just a few people. This brings to mind what our Psychohistory Forum colleague Irene Javors reports in terms of levels of intimacy: Person-to-person, face-to-face contact represents the highest level of intimacy, which so many in the younger generation are uncomfortable with. Telephone calling is a lesser level of intimacy and texting is the least intimate means of communicating, since the words and emoticons are so limited in scope, leaving the recipient guessing what the person on the other end is feeling. Essential to good communication is seeing the ways in which the words, emotions, and non-verbal mannerisms of the speaker connect (or fail to). Skyping offers much of this but texting offers little of this information. Certainly, it can be a useful tool but a most limited instrument of human communication.

The younger generation, despite more limited economic op-

portunities than their parents experienced, are quite optimistic. This is partly because they have the whole world at their fingertips through their smartphones and laptops. This optimism is expressed in the articles by John Shandra, Jr. in "Gaming Gave Me a Life" and Nicole D'Andria in "Comic Maven: Forming My Online Identity." Shandra, as an undersized, overweight middle schooler who felt ostracized, came into his own by playing games online, enabling him to form friendships which survived to meeting others in person. He came to see himself as a worthwhile individual, and I know him to be a very serious and conscientious student. Nicole D'Andria's online life enabled her to express more of herself than her shy, quiet demeanor in the "real world" would have allowed. Her confidence is boosted by the fact of approximately 15,000 hits (views) of her website in the last month, she has upward of 3,000 followers on Twitter, and a couple hundred followers on Tumblr. She is an excellent student who is doing everything possible to pursue her passion for comics and turn it into a career. Even if she does not make a living from it, she will have the advantage of having achieved greater literary competence in the process and having the confidence gained, which she might not have achieved without this online technology.

The Internet is encouraging spectator sports in a manner that few if any had anticipated. Tens of millions of people are involved in fantasy sports, which enable them to identify with their favorite sports teams and make management decisions so that they feel like active participants rather than just passive fans. Alec Weissman's "The Ever-Growing Influence of Fantasy Sports," spells this out, stressing the importance of the sense of emotional connection and empowerment.

Not all of our digital generation student papers are as positive as the aforementioned. In Jessica Bloom's "I Feel Lost without My Smartphone," she had a virtual "meltdown" because of her dependence on her cellphone, which malfunctioned in the first month of her college career. She had trained her parents so well that they had a replacement sent to her within 24 hours. Although she spoke about lessening her electronic dependence, as the semester progressed it became clear to me that her dependence on digital electronics had not lessened.

A few students have serious reservations about the electronic social networks and even the applications (apps) they utilize. Jennifer Howard, "The Ever Tightening Net Constricting Emotions and Sociability," is resolute in her distrust of electronic technology, which she sees as a barrier to human communication. Consequently, the articles cited in this introduction end on an uncharacteristic note of pessimism among our digital generation. These talented young people are using the new electronic tools available to them in dealing with the issues that all of us have faced as we have entered adulthood.

Paul H. Elovitz' *e-mail may be found on page 399.* ❑

Social Media Allow Me to Express Different Aspects of My Personality

Marissa Cooney—Ramapo College of New Jersey

Myspace, Facebook, Twitter: All different types of social media that have evolved over time and connect people from all over the world to each other. People can now poke (get someone's attention in an annoying manner), message, and share pictures to someone on the opposite side of the Earth in the blink of the eye. What makes them all different? How is Instagram different than Snapchat? They are both outlets for posting pictures to show friends, yet they show people's distinct personalities. Looking through my profiles I see several sides of myself. I see my funny side, my self-seeking side, and my weird side. Although I really only have one personality, through social media I am able to portray several sides of myself in separate ways.

Every Twitter account is different. Some people use it to express their feelings; some are dedicated to sports or music; and others have a mixture of everything. Overall, I use my Twitter to express my funny side. I follow several accounts that only post comical and humorous tweets (public messages made of 140 characters or less). Rarely do I ever post anything on Twitter that has to do with my feelings and emotions. I mostly retweet posts that make me laugh: Pictures of cute dogs, college jokes, videos of peo-

ple falling on ice, etc. Anything that makes me chuckle, I choose to retweet (repost a message onto my Twitter account so others can see it), because I hope to make my followers and friends laugh when they also see it on their feed (a compilation of all the posts you follow on Twitter in one convenient place).

Although I do not post often on Instagram and Facebook, I find that it is my attention-seeking side. Facebook is a social media website that lets people add "friends" and share posts (texts, pictures, videos, websites, etc.) with them. Instagram, on the other hand, is an app (application) for smartphones that is strictly for sharing photos and ten-second videos with followers. For both Facebook and Instagram, I find myself, as well as others, fishing for "likes." "Which filter to use?" "What time is the best time to post?" "Will this photo get me a lot of likes?" These are constant thoughts that go through Instagram and Facebook users' heads. Like Twitter, I do try to make my posts comical by adding funny captions to the photos I put up. Even though I still have accounts on both sources of social media, I think that they may bring more negative than positive responses.

Snapchat is an app that lets a user send pictures or videos of up to ten seconds to friends. Unlike Instagram, these pictures are only visible to the recipient for a maximum of ten seconds, and are then automatically removed from their device. These pictures are very different depending on whom I am sending them to. When I send a photo to a friend I may have a smile and throw a peace sign in there, too. I generally try to make myself look normal. Now, when it comes to sending a picture to my best friend, it may be very ugly. I make myself have a double chin, I have my tongue sticking out, my eyes are half open; I try to make myself look unattractive to make my friend, as well as myself, laugh. Recently, Snapchat has created a new way to share pictures and videos with friends: Snap-Story. Instead of having to click every friend's name on my list to show them a picture, I am now able to click a button and display any picture or video to everyone on my friends list for 24 hours. Now I am able to show my friends everywhere the fun and exciting events that are going on in my life, such as spending time with my new friends at college, and show my struggles, like staying up late to finish papers. I personally believe that Snapchat (adding text to a

picture video which disappears in 10 seconds) is the best form of social media to see someone's personality.

My Timehop is what unites all of these sides together. Timehop is an app that connects to my Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and iPhone pictures to display what I did on the exact day I am using the app a year or years ago. For example, on February 16, 2015, it will show me what I posted on February 16, 2014, February 16, 2013, etc. I constantly see the embarrassing posts my friend and I made on Facebook in seventh grade. Looking back, we question how we had friends in middle school. I also see the YouTube links I used to post and I see the change in my music taste over the years. From alternative, to hip-hop, to pop, and on to indie. I get to see some of my happiest moments—making it to the semi-finals of counties for soccer, getting my driver's license, and visiting my great aunt in Rome. On the other hand, I also see some of my worst moments—breaking up with my ex-boyfriend, my dog Mack's death, and losing a few of my best friends. Timehop is able to bring back emotions and feelings that I had forgotten. Whether they are good or bad memories, I am able to see my growth through social media over time and how I have developed and matured as a young adult.

As a whole, the Internet and social media have been able to describe me. Each individual source shows different sides of my personality. Twitter gives my followers my funny side; Instagram and Facebook show my self-seeking side; Snapchat makes all of my friends see what I am doing and how I am feeling through pictures; and Timehop has been able to connect all of these together and show me how much I have changed over time. Social media have been and still are more than just ways to connect with my friends. They have given me a way to express myself through many different forms.

Marissa Cooney *is an undergraduate at Ramapo College of New Jersey who took Professor Elovitz' course, How Electronics Connect, Empower, and Influence Us. She can be reached at mcooney@ramapo.edu.* ❑

Comic Maven: Forming My Online Identity

Nicole D'Andria—Ramapo College of New Jersey

Creating an online identity is something teenagers do every day when they sit down at their computers and log onto various media websites, writing updates about their lives and blogging about their interests for the world to see. This electronic identity can help teenagers express themselves, including through the creation of fantasy selves. In my case, I am extremely passionate about writing and comic books, and the Internet allowed me to bring these two passions together and enhance my skills and knowledge of them.

The role of comic books in our society has grown considerably, but there are still many people who think they are for small children, when in reality most comic books are read by men and women of all ages. Comic characters satisfy emotional needs and have a growing economic importance in our society, especially on the big screen where hit movies grossing vast sums around the world are based on their characters and plots. *The Avengers* (2012) movie grossed $623,357,910. It is the third highest grossing film, coming in after *Avatar* and *Titanic*. There are popular television shows millions of people tune in to each week such as *The Walking Dead* (2010-Present), which would not exist without the comics that inspired them. Art Spiegelman won acclaim and awards for his *Maus* graphic novel (a more elaborated form of the comic book) based on his father's experiences in Auschwitz. Classic films such as *The Odyssey*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and *Hamlet* have been adapted into graphic novels, prompting people who normally wouldn't read these works to give them a try in this format. Comics are an art form in our society, despite their denigration by many as mere childish entertainment.

I first became interested in comic books five years ago on my 15th birthday when I went to a festival featuring comics and science-fiction memorabilia. After combing through the comics and finding more abandoned ones at home, I grew to love the medium. The only other time I had felt so passionate about something was in second grade when I had trouble reading until I took special classes for a couple of years. These resulted in my excelling at and love

for reading and writing, inspiring me to become a writer.

Thanks to the Internet, I was able to combine my love of writing and comic books into something of merit. It all started less than a year after I began collecting, the day I went online and posted two reviews on Comic Vine, a website for comic book fans to share their opinions about comic books. Soon after posting my articles, I was approached by another member of this community who was looking for non-paid reviewers for his Player Affinity website and he recruited me.

The website posted news stories, features, reviews, on various media including movies, video games, television, and, of course, comics. I would go on to contribute to a couple of these sections, but my main contributions were to the comic book section. Writing for this online publication taught me how to meet deadlines, since it required me to write two articles a week. There were hundreds of viewers who cared about what I had to say and I even found myself quoted on the back of a couple of comics.

The Internet allowed me to inform people about important issues tackled by comic books, such as *Signs and Voices*, which is about deaf comic book superheroes and teaches sign language to readers; *Face Value Comics*, which features the first autistic protagonist in comics; *Branded*, a webcomic that is about sexual assault and the way a victim copes; and many more comic books, each with serious messages that break boundaries and are considered literature despite being comic books. I am able to share this literature with thousands of people, a feat a teenager like myself would never have been able to do if not for my access to the Internet.

My reach got even farther when I discovered I could promote my articles in many ways online. I decided to join Twitter, a social media website where users post 140-letter-long messages. You can create your own unique username, and I decided to call myself Comic Maven. Twitter users are "followed" by other people, meaning whenever they post something it goes to all of their followers, who can choose to favorite it and/or retweet (share) it with others. I got into many dialogues with fellow comic book readers and creators about the medium and posted links to my online articles, which increased how many people they reached.

Currently, I have over 3,000 people following my contributions on Twitter. Social media has increased the number of people my work can spread to and has given me an audience for any work I hope to publish in the future.

To further my presence online, I created my own website, comicmaven.com. This was an easy process thanks to Weebly, a website creator which allows the user to pick from a selection of colorful templates (or create their own) and insert their own text and images. This website led to more detailed interactions with comic book creators than Twitter did when I added a contact form to my site which allowed people to email me. I often get messages from comic book creators telling me about their work and offering digital versions of their comics for me to review. This allows me to share the work of independent creators and increase their audience so their books can be more successful commercially. I have had so many offers for digital comics that I have been backed up with comic books to review for months.

Before using the Internet to write about comic books, I did not have friends who were interested in comics, so I had no one to talk about them with. Now, electronics have allowed me to connect with a like-minded community. Normally, I am a very shy, introverted person and I am not able to express my opinions as freely and openly in the "real world" as I can online. My opinions have also been further developed by the Internet because writing them out has made me explore what I think and feel in greater depth. Writing about comic books on the Internet is what interested me in communication arts. It is my conviction that if I had not started writing reviews for a website online, I would not be an A student at Ramapo College.

At the urging of a professor I am beginning to think in greater depth about the psychological meaning and patterns of my favorite medium. To start with, the names of many of these characters are highly evocative, such as Abomination, Annihilus, Apocalypse, Batman, Black Panther, Black Widow, Captain America, Captain Atom, Captain Marvel, Carnage, Darkseid, Deadpool, Deathstroke, Doctor Doom, Galactus, Iron Man, Joker, Martian Manhunter, Mastermind, Mr. Fantastic, Mr. Sinister, Ms. Marvel, Nightcrawler, Omni-Man, Phantom Stranger, Superman, Venom,

Vindicator, Violator, Wasp, Wolverine, and Wonder Woman. Note the negative identities embodied in many of the names of these characters.

Common themes include abandonment, acceptance, empowerment, a fallen hero who is restored, humanization of evil/ fearsome characters, parentified children, role reversals, saviors, and temporary weakness. While most characters are male, I have a special interest in female characters. Some of their themes are dead/missing/inept parents, sexual objectification, and victimization. Comics are a reflection of our culture: thus the role of woman has increased substantially, though it could still use improvement. I wrote a series of opinion pieces entitled "Women in Comics: Do the Super Ladies Need Saving?" about this subject. Each feature focuses on the various aspects of the portrayal of comic book women including fashion, the idealization of their bodies, and the abusive situations (such as rape and murder) females in comics are often subjected to.

There are lots of opportunities for these important topics to be discussed by fans because these features are online and shared via social media. People shared their opinions about the issue, adding to my and others' knowledge about the topic. By writing features like this, I hope to inform fans about the problems in their medium and encourage them to contribute their own thoughts and feelings about the issues, possibly leading to a more diverse and relatable portrayal of women (and others) in comic books.

I have written for the website Player Affinity (now Entertainment Fuse) for four years now and I am now head of its comic book department, meaning I supervise the rest of the writers in the comic book section. I also write for another comic book website, Comic Frontline. Writing for these sites has made me think more critically about the medium I love and has influenced my future career choice. Without the Internet, I would not have met so many creative, intelligent people or aspire to become a comic book and research writer. My experience is something I proudly put on my résumé and I believe has helped educate people that comic books are not just for kids, but can also be important works of literature.

Nicole D'Andria *is an undergraduate student in the School of Contemporary Arts at Ramapo College of New Jersey. She has written over 500 articles online for two websites and is an aspiring comic book writer, editor, and novelist. She is also an editorial assistant for* Clio's Psyche. *Nicole may be reached on her personal website comicmaven.com or at ndandria@ramapo.edu.* ❑

Gaming Gave Me a Life

John Shandra, Jr.—Ramapo College of New Jersey

Since I can remember, my mother has always told me to be myself because that is the person other people would love. However, in middle school (grades six-eight, alternately called junior high school) the last thing other students and I ever wanted to be was ourselves. Puberty hit many of us like a tractor-trailer. Some lucky popular students were tall, skinny, and always wore the best clothes from Aeropostale. Unfortunately, for some kids this tractor-trailer took its time driving down the puberty parkway, causing them to be "unpopular" in terms of junior high school standards. In order to keep these poor souls' thoughts from their exclusion from the hip social circles, many of them played sports, participated in clubs, and exercised. Unlike most other children, I played computer games.

The worst years of my life were in junior high school. Currently I am only 20, but never in my life have I been more ridiculed and judged than in middle school. Being relatively short, overweight, and dyslexic I did not really fit in any type of social groups at my school. Granted, even though I was not the best looking kid, I assumed I would be accepted by some group. Regrettably, I was not.

Nobody, including my friends from elementary school, wanted anything to do with me. No hanging out after school or eating with anybody during lunch. I went to school, sat in class, did my work, and went home, only to repeat the process for 180 days. Depression, overeating, and anger built within my body. Why did nobody like me? What was wrong with me? Day after day more questions like these circulated through my head. At my lowest

point in junior high school, I felt that I had nobody beside me. (To kids of this age, the love of parents does not count!) Regardless of everything my parents did, a feeling of emptiness consumed me. Nothing mattered and it was the only time in my life that I felt like a true loser. Little did I know that one Christmas and one video game would change my life for years to come.

On December 25, 2006 I opened a neatly wrapped box. As an overjoyed child on Christmas I tore the wrapping paper on the gift to get to the presents from Santa. It was pure bliss when I found my first multiplayer capable computer game, *Star Wars: Battlefront II* (2005). That same day I ran into my basement, installed the game, and played for hours. Fast-forward a few weeks after I had beaten the game a few times, I decided to play my first online multiplayer match against other people around the globe. Before I was able to enter into my first online match, the game had asked me for a nickname. I was not about to use my real name so it was the first time I used bigman118, a name I would go by for years online when I played *Star Wars Battlefront 2*. Bigman118 depicted me as large, with a virtual mask on. Soon after I clicked the enter key on the keyboard, I was tossed into a dramatic fight against the "Empire scum." Among the outsiders (as I was in those years), the Rebels who fought evil were the best. Minutes quickly turned to hours, until I noticed in the upper left hand corner of the game yellow text running down my screen. People were talking with one another while they were playing the game. Hesitantly, because of my horrendous experiences in school with other kids, I gained the courage to type and therefore "talk" to them while gaming. As a result, a conversation ensued between a player named Darky and myself about casual things like *Star Wars: Battlefront II* and even how our day was going.

After the match had ended he instructed me to install Xfire, an online gaming communication service to keep in contact with him and his friends that he introduced me to. This was a first for me, because I was able to have a conversation with people other than my parents. Darky and his friends had no idea who I was, what I looked like, or what my background was, but they all accepted me for who I was. Not once was I judged or ridiculed for being myself. The only thing that mattered to them was playing the game

with me and being able to keep in contact with me. Even though I could not meet them in person, I was still able to type to them either in *Star Wars: Battlefront II* or on Xfire. This was so new to me and I became filled with happiness and joy. I can even vividly remember running home from the bus stop to jump onto my computer to talk to my friends; I finally had my first set of friends online. After so many years, this void in my being was beginning to be filled.

As the years went on and I got older, I played innumerable games. Some titles included *Call of Duty*, *Runescape*, and *League of Legends*. I spent an enormous amount of time on the computer video gaming, anywhere from eight to ten hours a day, playing and communicating with friends from all over the world. I had friends in Germany, Denmark, Australia, and in all locations around the United States. People that genuinely cared about me; people I could call friends, people that liked me for me. At the same time, I was irritating my parents by spending so much time on the computer, "wasting my life away on the machine," as they would say. They could never know that I was using the computer to communicate with friends in order to escape the "real" world, where I had no friends. It happened to be just another day on *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* (2009) that I met a pair of kids in a capture the flag match, named Slip and Kfcchicken. These two kids would become my greatest friends online and happened to live in New Jersey like myself. Both Slip and Kfcchicken gave me the type of friendship I wished I could always have in real life.

One day when I was 17, I was able to meet them in real life. It was at this time that I began to worry if the bliss of my online friends would come to an end. Those questions in middle school began to swirl around my head once again, causing me to revert into a fearful child once again. No matter the case, I built up enough courage to make the 35-minute trek down to their house. Just as I arrived to their house I saw Slip sitting on his porch, dumbfounded that I even showed up to meet him. Being welcomed in with a warm handshake from both Slip and Kfcchicken we all hung out and had a good time; something I never expected to happen. Even in person, these people that I met online and gamed with every single day still liked me for the person they knew I was. I was not shunned like I was in middle school. We were all friends,

sitting around talking about anything that came to mind. I soon became an emotional mess, crying inside my own mind at the fact that I had friends that actually cared for me. Even though my online social group was so near and dear to my heart, I had my first social group outside of my Internet gaming life. To this day they still know me as Vap0r (my current online alias while gaming) and are still my best friends that I would do anything for. In addition, this was the first of many gatherings to happen. I felt so alive from the feeling of having true friends.

When my mother told me to always be myself because that is the person people would love, it turned out she was never wrong; I just had never found the right people to call my friends. Most importantly, it was the first time I felt like I had a life worth living, with people around who loved me for me.

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The Ever-Growing Influence of Fantasy Sports

Alec Weissman—Ramapo College of New Jersey

With every passing year, the number of Americans participating in the playing of fantasy sports increases dramatically. From fantasy football, basketball, soccer, and every sport in between, some 33.5 million people around the nation (finance.yahoo.com, 2012) are taking the reins of their personal fantasy sports teams with the hopes of being victorious over their adversaries. These players encompass a wide variety of individuals from many walks of life, but it is through their mutual participation in fantasy games that all of these participants are able to experience an assortment of emotions that they may both relish and detest.

Before diving into the emotions that accompany the planning of fantasy sports, it is important to understand what these games actually are. Fantasy sports are games in which an individual will pick a set number of professional athletes from a specific

sport and will subsequently put together a lineup consisting of a set number of them. The players are able to earn points by performing well in specific games (for example, scoring a touchdown in football) of their respective sports. The player who scores will earn points for the fantasy team that he is on, as well as his professional team. It is the fantasy team whose players accumulate the most points that wins.

As an avid player of fantasy football, I can certainly attest to the wide spectrum of emotions felt by active players. Even before the fantasy game itself has begun, the player commonly feels strong and a rather contradictory combination of both nervousness and confidence. The nervousness, which even those who have the most success playing fantasy sports experience, stems from the common lack of certainty regarding the quality of the players on one's team, as well as the overall doubt regarding whether or not the team is capable of winning the game that is yet to be played. This nervousness can be intense, and is often capable of convincing those participating in fantasy games to second-guess their decisions and respective lineups of players; however, the aforementioned confidence typically helps to settle the nerves and internal strife that is being felt. Like any athlete or player of a sport in reality will tell you, it is important to feel a strong sense of confidence when preparing for and actually playing in a game, and the same is true for those in fantasy sports. One wants to think that one's team is capable of winning, and whether or not this capability is a reality becomes irrelevant, as the individual making his or her team's decisions usually feels they will come out on top.

While the fantasy game itself is taking place and upon its completion, the players of fantasy sports commonly experience a range of emotions that vary from sadness and dejection to a near euphoria. What makes fantasy sports unpredictable in terms of feelings is the fact that this emotional experience is entirely reliant on how well or poorly the player's team is playing in any given game, for while the team is playing well and winning the player will almost always feel happy with its performance. On the other hand, if the team is not performing at a high level and is losing its game, the fantasy player will feel a dejection that is typically hard to overcome. One understood when entering the game that there

was the potential for a loss to occur, but the reality of this defeat and the emotions that accompany it can never truly be prepared for.

What is interesting about fantasy sports is not only the various emotions which accompany one's participation in playing them, but also the way in which they are all so highly connectable to the playing of demanding sports in reality. I am a volleyball player and have been an athlete for most of my life. Prior to playing in my first fantasy football league around the age of 16, I always considered the playing of fantasy games to be a waste of time, also an activity designed for those of older generations who were no longer physically capable of playing sports in reality. However, not only are fantasy sports capable of being played by those of all ages, but there are also a multitude of similarities between volleyball and fantasy sports that may go unnoticed or unrecognized. One of these similarities is that both require a detailed strategy and plan of attack. Players cannot go into a match in either game without having an idea as to what they are going to do in the hope of winning. If I were to simply walk into a volleyball match without having a strategy, I would certainly lose, and the same can be said for fantasy sports. Another interesting connection between volleyball and fantasy sports is the way in which both require the usage of teamwork. While fantasy sports may be played by one player per team, it is the entirety of the team's players who must come together and play well in order to give their fantasy team and its "manager" a chance to win. In regards to volleyball, it takes all six players on the court playing as a collective unit and demonstrating teamwork in order to give their own team a chance to be victorious. If there is a lack of teamwork in volleyball or fantasy sports, there is a high likelihood of defeat.

In also looking at the impact of fantasy sports from an individual's psychological perspective, it is important to note the empowerment that a player of fantasy sports experiences in comparison to those making decisions in the managing and playing of amateur and professional sports in reality. In making these choices, both fantasy players and real life athletes and managers are making decisions that they deem to be best for their respective teams. A decision that is made is calculated and considered from a variety of perspectives, and there is a strong belief that the decisions made are

going to give the respective managers and players a chance to be successful and victorious. However, it is all too common that those playing fantasy sports fail to remember that the games which they are playing, and the subsequent decisions that are made, hold far less significance than those made by professionals in the sports world. The player definitely has a sense of empowerment on behalf of fantasy players that can have positive influences and effects on the players. However, if the player is not careful, the attraction of the sport can become overpowering. Negative impacts can include neglecting jobs, personal relationships, and schoolwork.

This sense of empowerment that comes with participation in fantasy sports is also integral in that it gives kids and college students a method that can be used in coping with issues that are encountered while growing up. Fantasy sports allow for those younger individuals who may feel inferior in comparison to their peers, especially in settings such as a school hallway or gymnasium, to gain a sense of power and importance that may be lacking. Students who may not be capable of making decisions for themselves, or who feel as though they are powerless in their everyday lives, can use fantasy sports to express a sense of power and influence. Through fantasy sports, students can come to understand that even though they may feel powerless and without importance in their normal, everyday lives, they truly do have both a purpose and sense of importance.

It is clear that the number of American citizens participating in the playing of fantasy sports is ever increasing. It is therefore important to learn about the psychological impact of these games.

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We Wish to Thank Our Diligent, Hard-working and Prompt Editors, Anonymous Referees, and Talented Authors

The Ever Tightening Net Constricting Emotions and Sociability

Jennifer Howard—Ramapo College of New Jersey

A commercial plays on the television in front of you: a young boy uses his iPad to improve his public speaking skills, and then to research how to ask a girl out. What goes through your mind when seeing this? Is it a thought of how helpful the Internet is, or do you wonder why the boy is turning to something as cold as technology for something as intimate as love? The Internet has succeeded in permeating our lives, but is this the success we intended? Emotions are dulled from the insulation of technology, while people are developing less of a "self" than a "one," and one of many at that. Relationships do not require the closeness that they used to, causing people to retreat more into their Internet worlds as real life interactions are never as engaging or mesmerizing. We have trained ourselves to seek stimulation overload, making only experiencing one thing or person at a time nearly unbearable for some.

Technology's grip has dulled our expression of emotion and possibly even our experience of it. So many interactions with our friends and families do not require us to express the emotion we convey to them. We condense our emotions to two or three symbol "emoticons," as we claim to be happy :), laughing xD, sad :'(, or mad x(. Yet when you see people walking and texting, are their faces not usually blank? How do we know we even feel these emotions? Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011) says communication has evolved from, "I have a feeling, I want to make a call," to, "I want to have a feeling, I need to send a text." We are chasing something we do not know how to experience anymore. It is possible even that we are experiencing these emotions, but like an addict who builds up a higher and higher tolerance, we find ourselves unable to register a feeling unless it is extremely intense. What provides more intense engagement than the ever-present Internet? If we do not return to contacting each other directly, the Internet will change from a mere social crutch to an absolute necessity for hu-

mans to connect to one another. The young boy, instead of searching how to ask a girl out, may instead look up the girl's many social networking sites. Instead of figuring out how to speak to her, he can utilize the networks' options for flirting that takes no effort of social thought on his part. He can simply "poke" her on Facebook, thus sending her a notification to get her attention. She may even "poke" back. What a large step for their relationship.

As technology enters more and more aspects of our lives, the concept of the individual is slowly dying out. More people than ever claim to be individual; after all, when have they ever before been able to express all that is unique about themselves on social websites, for all to see? However, the self we portray is not the one we are, we only share what will get us liked, pitied, favored, and eventually we become these traits, nothing more. To paraphrase a favorite author of mine, Patrick Rothfuss reveals something true and dangerous, "We all become what we pretend to be" (*The Name of the Wind*, 2013). Every online identity blends into one, and as people of all varying ages begin to frequent the same web pages, we begin to become the same. People no longer even need to change as they grow older. They can stay in their same isolated corner of the Internet. We are, as Turkle says, "alone together." The Internet is the most populated plane of our existence, but the only one on which you will not meet a single soul.

This dulling of emotions and loss of sense of identity has estranged us from each other. We find it difficult to meet anyone, and nearly impossible to meet anyone interesting. The qualities we have had trained into us, repel us when we see them in other people. Every conversation is a variation of something generic and predictable, so we are no longer excited or interested by each other. We require technological intervention even to fall in love, because the spark that might have used to light that flame is stomped out before it is born. Accidental eye contact that might lead, in Turkle's words, to a "moment of more," is effectively avoided by directing human attention constantly to technological devices. People now get their fix of "more" from technology's cold embrace. What we do online is like "a living death!" How can it be considered a life? If it has roots in the real world then it can be considered a piece of life, but the roots living in the real world are gradu-

ally dying, the nourishment of the social gone from that world. In order to survive, we retreat up to the branches we have spread in the Internet, but once our roots our gone, we will have nothing to anchor us and we will fall.

Perspective is very important to keep in this modern time. We must be careful not to switch completely over to the technological medium. Everything requires balance. The Internet has succeeded in helping humans, since it has given us new ways to keep in contact, access information, and broaden our horizons. However, many people view these benefits and do not see that they should be used as supplements. They begin to believe that the Internet is much better than reality and thus that we should do everything via it. Yet there is the old phrase "too much of a good thing is bad" and the Internet proves this to be true. The real point of success for technology and the Internet will be when it finds its place of balance in our world, where it is not dominant in relation to real life but supplemental or, at most, coexistent.

Currently, technology is putting us through a vicious cycle that makes other humans dissatisfied with us and we dissatisfied with other people. We come to value an ideal that is above anything a human can achieve. We expect perfection and instant gratification, but these are impossible in the real world. When I was younger, I said something on a social networking site, not directed to anyone, that I am just now realizing the meaning of: "I didn't know cameras could capture personality too, you look exceptionally two dimensional on it." This phenomena has become more and more common on the Internet. Personalities are beginning to fit into a mold as we condense ourselves down to the "essentials" in this new plane of existence.

Jennifer Howard *wrote this in November of 2013 as a freshman at Ramapo College of New Jersey studying biology and working toward a Bachelor's of Science. Jennifer can be reached at jhoward2@ramapo.edu.* ❑

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I Feel Lost without My Smartphone

Jessica Bloom—Ramapo College of New Jersey

We often underestimate the value and impact our habits and daily routines have on our lives, especially when it comes to technology. Smartphones provide us with a sense of predictability and even security. We count on them to fulfill functions that previously were done with a multitude of devices or manually. We adapt to changing times through the incorporation of new technologies that are more efficient while letting go of older methods that are typically more time consuming, such as replacing a typewriter with a laptop computer. When a habit forms, the synaptic pathways in the brain become accustomed to that behavior, and you do not have to give it much thought. Breaking a habit is much harder than creating one because the brain is used to acting a certain way and a behavior can have a spontaneous recovery from a small trigger. It is as if the brain is ingrained for that specific behavior. I realized how dependent I became on checking my iPhone that I felt lost when I was unable to use it. It was not working properly one night and then by the next morning it did not work at all. I was forced to function without my cell phone for over 24 hours, which had to be the longest 24 hours of my life!

My day was thrown off from the moment I woke without use of my phone. I typically start my day with a morning run to wake me up before going to class. I did not have access to the running music playlist stored on my phone. Running on the treadmill felt boring without my music to keep me motivated and focused. As I looked around the fitness center, I noticed that all of the other people were listening to their own mobile devices. I had to listen to the sound of my breathing and my feet hitting the track on the treadmill. Then, after my workout, I realized that I was unable to check my e-mail and Facebook until I could return to my computer. This task, which could have readily been completed while I was on the go, now had to be done on my laptop when I was able to get back to my room. This meant that my morning routine would be interrupted by having to do all of my usual tasks on my laptop in my dorm room, which would have only taken seconds to do on my phone no matter where I was. I felt rushed because of the need to

actually sit at my computer to complete little tasks. Even checking the weather so I could figure out what to wear required me to sit down and log onto my laptop.

When I got to class, I wanted to show a classmate a picture of something we had discussed in the last class but I was unable to do so without my phone. It was frustrating that something as simple as sharing a picture was now an impossible task. Then, at the end of class, I noticed everyone took out their phones. Many were discussing what they thought about the new Apple operating system, iOS7, which had just come out. I had to ask to see my friend's phone just so I could see what it looked like. I felt lost, so I frantically tried to reset my phone yet again to no avail, all the while knowing it was still broken. I had never consciously considered how often I checked my Facebook page, Instagram, and e-mail.

My anxiety grew worse at lunch. I would normally have checked my e-mail messages to see if any professors had sent anything, as well as my social media pages. As I looked around, everyone seemed to be on their phones. They had access to everything in real time, and I had to wait until I got back to my dorm to sign on to my laptop. Was I missing an important announcement or message? What up-to-date information was I missing? My anxiety continued to grow, but there was nothing I could do about it.

Night time was also very strange. I would have normally called my parents to talk about my day, but instead I had to send them impersonal instant messages on Facebook. The conversation which would have normally taken a few minutes took much longer because we had to type messages back and forth instead of discussing them verbally. The tones of my parents' voices were also lost, and I had to read certain messages a few times to make sure I was getting what they were trying to say. My best friend from home also had difficulty getting in touch with me because he could not text me. In addition, I had difficulty contacting my cell phone carrier to get help fixing the issue because I did not have a landline to call from. My parents were thankfully able to get a replacement phone overnighted for me, but it was a definite hassle. The carrier was reluctant to send a new smartphone without talking to me directly and walking me through their troubleshooting steps first. I went to bed thinking about all of the things I needed my phone for

the next day, which made me want it even more. I kept trying to figure out why my phone would not turn on. I was not able to fall asleep right away so on my laptop I searched for reasons why an iPhone would not turn on. I checked for water damage and the only thing that seemed to be left was a battery malfunction that could not be fixed. This made me worry about whether or not my contacts, data, photos, and applications were saved.

Now that I have the replacement, I look back on this "detox" and am ashamed at how much I worked myself up over a smartphone. Instead of being thankful that my family and I are healthy and happy, I worried about all of the pictures I was going to lose, how I would not be able to use the "Map My Run" application to track my outdoor runs, and not being able to listen to my music. It is embarrassing. I look back on my early childhood before I had a phone and wonder how I was able to live without it. It seems like more and more aspects of our daily lives are being put online and onto our mobile devices.

The smartphone has become a bad habit. Technology is like a drug, the more we have it, the more we crave it. The withdrawal is as bad as a drug because we depend on our devices for so many things. When I first got a cell phone, it was a basic camera phone that I could only make calls on. Then texting became the new thing, and I got a phone with a QWERTY keyboard. Now, smartphones with high speed Internet have replaced cellular phones that were designed to have wireless access. Smartphones are really portable computers with a phone application that enables people to be in contact 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They provide instant access to information and immediate gratification for getting things done. Then, when they falter, we realize that we no longer have the ability to wait. We need to realize and accept that technology is not perfect or infallible, and we must be able to adapt when we hit a bump in the road. We are also stubborn and set in our routines of usage: I could have easily taken another picture to show my classmate, or tracked my run on my Garmin watch, or listened to music on the old iPod I use as an alarm clock, but I wanted things to be the way I was used to. Changing my routine caused a lot of stress.

Losing access to my smart phone provided me with a valua-

ble learning experience. Although my phone is a great tool to assist me in my daily tasks, it is not an appendage, and I can actually live without it. I am going to make more of an effort to rely less on my phone and make more of my connections with people face to face.

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Narcissism, Experience, and Compliance in American Higher Education

Matthew H. Bowker—Medaille College

In this essay, I consider a constellation of contradictory trends in American higher education. On one hand, concerns about student narcissism abound. Today's college students, sometimes known as "millennials," or, as Jean Twenge calls them, members of "Generation Me," are frequently described as uniquely "narcissistic" (Twenge, *Generation Me*, 2007; Twenge and Campbell, *The Narcissism Epidemic*, 2010). Unfortunately, for Twenge and others, "narcissism" has lost its analytic precision and is now wrongly equated with excessive self-love and self-centeredness. On the other hand, educators have come to embrace the ideal of student-centeredness in education, by offering students four-year graduation guarantees, personalized academic, financial, and psychological support teams, and numerous opportunities for identity-based engagement activities. The goals of such efforts include student retention, the forging of identifications between the student and the learning institution, and demonstrations to the student that his or her academic performance and success are top priorities.

At the same time, experience-based pedagogies have been widely embraced as tools for liberating students from morbid educational practices: stale lectures, dry topics, dusty books. Supposedly, by attending to their own "experiences" and by connecting experiences inside and outside the classroom to situations in "the

real world," students' "personal experiences" will connect more immediately with their "learning experiences," which, in turn, will coincide more completely with "work experiences" in the marketplace and the community. Yet, while experience-based approaches are designed to invigorate academic study while enhancing students' "intrinsic motivation" to learn (Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 1985), these efforts stand in uncomfortable relation to an unmistakable shift toward emphasizing the *instrumentality* of academic work. That is, just as students' achievements of pre-determined course objectives are now regularly assessed, it is not the creative "experience" of learning but the instrumental (means-end) relationships between coursework, grades, degrees, careers, and salaries that are advertised and underscored in many campus cultures.

To add to these contradictions, informal diagnoses of today's students as lacking toughness or "grit" have become increasingly fashionable (see Duckworth et al., "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 2007, 1087-1101). The "grit" argument has been taken to imply that students, over-indulged by helicopter parents and a permissive culture, require training in self-control to better endure the painful experiences of work needed to accomplish long-term goals. This discourse of grit seems to dovetail with growing concerns about disruptive and undisciplined student behavior, the creation and enforcement of strict codes of conduct, and educational institutions' responses to bullying and victimization. Succeeding in work, accomplishing goals, and behaving morally are all imagined to be products of grit, self-control, and sacrifice.

There is a way to understand this complex constellation of discourses, but only if we are willing to consider the likelihood that they express not an epidemic of self-love among students, but a genuinely narcissistic dilemma faced by educators. If students truly possessed an abundance of self-esteem, they would not struggle to access their intrinsic motivation. Indeed, if intrinsic motivation describes the willingness to work in pursuit of the self's authentic needs, desires, and purposes, then intrinsic motivation depends upon the self's ability to value its own aims and, therefore, to value itself. As Heinz Kohut noted, an inability to pursue genuine work

is not the result of excessive self-love but the opposite: "Many of the most severe and chronic work disturbances… [are] due to the fact that the self is poorly cathected with narcissistic libido…" (*The Analysis of the Self*, 1971, 120). A student with an abundance of genuine self-love would be more likely, not less likely, to be intrinsically motivated, while a student who lacks intrinsic motivation, who has difficulty investing in his own aims and linking them with his work, may suffer from self-hatred or experiences of emptiness. Indeed, the genuinely self-loving student may rebel against work that does not speak to her authentic aims, while the narcissistic student may be highly (extrinsically) motivated to win approval by procuring grades, praise, advancement, visibility, status, and the like.

When educators strive to combat what they misconstrue as students' "narcissism" by combining techniques of identity-based motivation with strict course policies, with lessons in "grit" and self control, and with experience-based and community-based learning projects, we ask students for even more than compliance with external standards and aims. We ask that students collude more completely in adopting course objectives, degree requirements, and the community's needs and expectations as their own. By developing disciplinary and motivational techniques that are not merely intellectual but engage students' emotional, physical, and even primitive psychic registers, we disrupt students' capacity to discover and creatively realize their separate and authentic aims. We suggest, instead, that intrinsic motivation should signify their ability to embrace the work required to reach socially-determined ends, whether those aims belong to educators, local communities, employers, or the broader society.

Assuming that most educators do not consciously intend to disrupt their students' capacities to act creatively as subjects of experience, we must ask why this dynamic has taken root and why its nature has remained hidden. To do so, it is helpful to imagine the way that current trends in education, particularly programs that emphasize "experience," represent efforts to correct what is thought to be a greedy and destructive subjectivity of the student. The case for experience-based education tells us that, left to their own devices, students will remain imprisoned by immature and self-serving fan-

tasies and desires, whereas "experience," like "grit," can break their insularity and connect them to others, to service, to the community, to social and moral values, and to the real world. Indeed, a careful reading of John Dewey, the ever-popular philosopher, pedagogue, and experience-advocate, reveals that his aim in educative experience was to fuse the student to the objects of experience, compelling the student to seek mastery of these objects and mastery of him or herself "experiencing means living; and… life goes on by means of controlling the environment" (Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," *Creative Intelligence*, 1917, 9).

However, like Plato's metaphor in *The Republic* of a "large and powerful animal" that trains its master to serve its desires, or like Marx's example of the worker whose body is effectively mastered by his machine, Dewey's illusions of mastery really ask the self to control itself and adapt itself to objects of experience and to the social and pragmatic ends to which they may be put. For Dewey, the fact that "all human experience is ultimately social" implies that "the ideal aim of education is creation of power of self-control" (*Experience and Education*, 1938, 38, 64). Put another way, to fail to profit from educative experiences, for Dewey, is not merely to miss out on an opportunity to learn but to lose control and to neglect or impede the attainment of useful social goals.

By associating a form of social withdrawal with a kind of greedy destructiveness, today's student has been met with attributions once reserved for pejorative descriptions of the ivory tower. Like today's student, ivory towers are thought to be places where separateness, relative freedom from social dependence, and untethered fantasy and creativity permit scholars to neglect the real world and to develop abstruse or monstrous theories bearing little relation to the needs of the community. A subject thus separated from the community is not merely dismissed but is feared to be depriving and dangerous (see Bowker, "A View from Political Theory: Desire, Subjectivity, and Pseudo-Solitude," eds. Coplan and Bowker, *The Handbook of Solitude*, 2013). That which has been attacked in the ivory tower is now attacked in the student: separateness, freedom from dependence, and the capacity to act creatively upon fantasy. Of course, the fervent desire among educators in recent decades to tear down the ivory tower may be thought to express both

hatred and envy for the self-centeredness it represents (see also Bowker, "Defending the Ivory Tower: Toward Critical Community Engagement," *Thought and Action: The NEA Higher Education Journal* 28, 2012, 107-118).

If academic work risks ephemerality, self-referentiality, and valuelessness unless it connects with the aims of the community or the real world (I think here about the layers of meaning in the pejorative phrase: "intellectual masturbation"), then educators find themselves in a relationship with a narcissistic object, depending upon "the community" to remedy our staleness, emptiness, and deadness, but only to the extent that our work satisfies not our aims but the needs of others who are the holders of value. Our work with students makes students easy to exploit in this dilemma. We might, for instance, earn feelings of worth if we recruit students to serve community organizations, social causes, or political and philosophical ideologies that seem relevant to the real world. Using students as proxies in the increasingly narcissistic relationship between the community and the educational institution may be rationalized if we believe that students' own aims and desires are immature, empty, and vain. By facilitating identifications between students' identities, our institutions, community organizations, and values we endorse, and by insisting upon "experiences" that forge and fortify these connections, educators subject students to an instrumental exchange that affords educators feelings of value even as it attacks the separate, subjective, and creative capacities of students.

If Georges Bataille, with echoes of Dewey, was correct that "experience attains in the end the fusion of object and subject… It can let the agitation of intelligence break up on that account: repeated failures don't serve it any less than the final docility which one can expect" (*Inner Experience*, 1988, 9), then the immediacy with which educators strive to reach and connect with students on emotional, sociocultural, technological, and even physical registers suggests an effort to make the fusion of students' interests with our interests more complete and therefore more difficult to decipher or resist. Far from indicating a lack of intrinsic motivation, students' resistance to this effort might be taken to imply the presence of self-esteem and a rejection of the sophisticated motivational *cum* disci-

plinary technologies designed to manufacture motivation, institutional-identification, and community-engagement. Of course, unlike "good" students who collude with educators in internalizing the institution's or the community's goals, students who refuse to serve such needs are now condemned as narcissists, justifying further efforts to generate experiences that ultimately thwart the student's ability to differentiate her needs from ours and others. Most dangerous about this dynamic is the likelihood that students' authentic and subjective needs will become secondary to the pursuit of a fantasized fusion between the educator, the student, and the community, even so far as to dismiss as irrelevant the unique educational desires and capacities of the student and to make of the student an instrument in satisfying the educator's perceived need for his work (and his students) to serve the community.

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Martin Miller's Account of Alice Miller's Childhood and Parenting

Marc-André Cotton—Int. Psychohistorical Association

The publication in 2013 of an account of her life by Alice Miller's son sheds a remarkable light on the biography of this renowned psychotherapist advocate for children. However, it doesn't entirely do justice to her universal legacy. Regrettably, it is not yet available in English. In German it may be found at *Martin Miller, Das wahre "Drama des begabten Kindes" Die Tragödie Alice Millers* (*Kreuz-Verlag*, 175 pages, $17.93).

Martin Miller's book explores "the tragedy" of Alice Miller's youth as much as the psychic wounds of its author. As a therapist, the world-known advocate of children has chastised psychoanalysts for their denial of parental abuse. Her elder son aims at

revealing her own weaknesses as a mother, all the while acknowledging the impact of war traumas on their painful relationship. Not bereft of anger and bitterness, but in hindsight of a substantive therapy work, this publication offers a moving perspective on the intergenerational transmission of trauma—a theme Alice Miller herself provided with in-depth analysis.

The Wall of Silence in the Miller Household

A personal tragedy Martin Miller reveals was not being able to build an emotional relationship with his parents—a suffering he now explains by their silencing any biographical narrative about themselves, notably that of the war period. He denounces their "reversing the parent-child relationship," typical of Holocaust survivors, when adults draw on their children's emotional support and contribute to "the transmission of a repressed trauma of persecution" (Martin Miller, Le vrai "drame de l'enfant doué." La tragédie d'Alice Miller, Presses universitaires de France, 2014). After his mother died in April 2010, Martin began to unravel the shroud of mystery and reconnected with family members in the United States. While he would not call into question the value of her tireless support for the rights of children, he nevertheless gives the impression that for her as well as them, mental dissociation was a means to keep the past at bay.

Alice Miller was born Alicija Englard on December 23, 1923 in an Orthodox Jewish household living in Piotrków-Trybunalski (Poland). Until her marriage to Andrzej Miller, a Catholic student she met after the war at the University of Łódź, she called herself Rostovska. Martin discovered late that she adopted this surname in 1940 after fleeing the ghetto of Piotrków to hide in the "Aryan" sector of Nazi-occupied Warsaw. "I always had to tell myself that I could no longer be Jewish, but Polish," she revealed to her son. "To survive, I had to change my name and take a Polish identity." Alice managed to save a few family members by providing them with forged passports, but they would keep the terror of betrayal and deportation inside ever after. Having built "a wall of silence" around this traumatic memory, she experienced her child's natural curiosity as a form of psychological harassment.

The author shows how he was trapped in his mother's emotional upheaval. A permanent consequence of war traumas is that it

spoiled their early mother-son relationship and confined young Martin in the unconscious role of persecutor. Some of Alice Miller's acquaintances experienced similar reactions from her, such as psychoanalyst Jeffrey Masson who didn't understand why he suddenly "joined the long list of people who had abused her" (Masson's comment on Daphne Merkin, *Private Drama.* "Alice Miller was an authority on childhood trauma, but she stayed mum about her own," *Tablet*, 5/4/2010, http://tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/32682/high-drama). Incidentally, as Miller herself writes, isn't this what adults usually do to children when they spontaneously question their defense mechanism? The son's testimony thus confirms the relevance of his mother's theory.

Religious Stranglehold

The pages dedicated to Alicija's infancy are also revealing: The reader will find evidence of hidden family abuse she later replicated with her son. Martin gathered information from his American relatives, reporting uncritically that Alicija "had a decent childhood, [because] she always got what she wanted" (Irenka Taurek, quoted by Martin Miller). He is confused about his mother's choice to separate from their Jewish roots, but barely understands why she did so and will not call into question the religious stranglehold she rebelled against from an early age.

Indeed, we discover that Alicija's grandfather, Avraham Dov Englard, was a Hassidic rabbi and that his second son Meylech—also "very fond of religion"—did not oppose his father's will to marry him to a "cold and unresponsive" spouse. The first born of this unloving couple, Alicija would personify the rebellion against the rules that were fiercely imposed by her parents. Considering that Rabbi Dov Englard was head of a *yeshiva* (religious school) board in Piotrków (Shimshon Maimon, "The Radomsk Chassidic House," in Ben Giladi, *A Tale of One City, Piotrków Tribunalski (Poland)*, Shengold Publishers, 1991, http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Piotrkow/pit098.html), she must have proved quite rebellious to register in the Polish school system—unlike her younger sister who was forced to attend a Jewish school.

Meylech's younger sister Ana and her husband Bunio provided young Alicija with the "helping witness[es]," the crucial role she showed in her later works. The young couple had a more liber-

al approach to Judaism and assimilated into Polish society—a less constricting world that seemed to fascinate the young girl. Whenever her parents told her off, Alicija found refuge at Ala and Bunio's place. Exposed to her mother's chastisement and afflicted by her father's helplessness, she retreated so that other people judged her as arrogant and distrustful. However, Martin Miller reckons that such despair developed into "a subjective judgment" wrongly hostile to Judaism and fails to admit that Alicija's responsiveness to authoritarianism was not her own—but a natural expression of every child's vital force—that is what makes her works fully universal.

Maternal Reenactments

The second part of the book shows how Alice Rostovska's unresolved past traumas resurface when she moves to Switzerland, in 1946, to pursue studies in philosophy with her future husband. Fleeing a devastated country, the genocide survivor is stunned by the surrounding opulence and will never escape a feeling of strangeness. Her marriage with Andrzej Miller proves to be dangerously destructive, as the young partners have no choice but to restage their untold sufferings. Martin writes, "The Millers' home was under permanent dispute and heavy atmosphere."

For her part, Alice Miller acknowledged that she projected onto her jealous husband the same sensation of being continuously monitored that engulfed her during war-time in Warsaw, as a blackmailer threatened to reveal her Jewish identity to the Nazi occupiers. One might add that this painful relationship was reminiscent of her parents' who agreed to found a loveless home so as not to depart from tradition. Just as she once did at Ala and Bunio's home, the young therapist will find a new family within the ring of the psychoanalytical seminar of Zürich—until her independent spirit sharply opposed disciples of the Freudian orthodoxy, which ended up rejecting her as a dissident.

"What a strange and painful sense of *déjà-vu* for my mother!" Martin Miller comments, suggesting a parallel of psychoanalytic orthodoxy with the corset of religiosity that overshadowed her childhood. Psychoanalysis was no longer a refuge where she could experience her *true self*—an expression she discovered while reading Winnicott—but a new ideological fortress from which she resolved to escape. Other precursors such as John Bowlby, who

stressed a child's vital need for maternal bonding, would convince her that mental illness stems from traumatic events endured in childhood and not from internal sexual conflicts, as Freud asserted.

Unworthy Parents

However, such a radical revision comes late in Alice Miller's life, at least for Martin, who was almost 30 years old when she writes *The Drama of the Gifted Child* (1979). It did not prevent her from restaging patterns of behavior she suffered mostly during childhood—particularly that of a "cold and unresponsive" mother whom she swore never to be like. In this regard, reading Bowlby would prove a painful wake-up call, Martin recollects, reporting details of numerous abandonments and betrayals. To the needs of a newborn that seemed to dictate her conduct—a sensation the young mother abhorred—Alice responded with a cruel detachment.

Born in 1950, baby Martin was placed in the care of a nurse, then spent six months with Ala, Bunio, and their daughter Irenka. "My parents remained strangers to me," Martin confides. When his sister came along six years later—a child born with Down syndrome—he suffered from enuresis and stayed for two years in a children's home without contact with his family. At home in the following years, domestic employees and nurses would serve as substitute caregivers—a staff his mother often changed to obviate any closeness with the children. One can imagine the influence of such emotional dereliction on young Martin's psycho-affective development and the author is modest about it, insisting on his difficulties at school.

In addition to such neglect, Martin was exposed to his father's violence. An unpredictable man, Andrzej Miller smacked him for no reason. He imposed control on the boy's intimacy by washing with him every morning—with no opposition on the part of the mother. "Were you afraid to protect me from my father when he set up such an ordeal? What did you think when he laughed at me every day at lunch and cut me off?" Martin asked Alice Miller in a resentful letter written in 1994. At that time, he re-experienced maternal betrayal as she unwittingly exerted supervision of his psychotherapeutic treatment with a controversial analyst—a dispute ultimately settled in court. The sense of harassment he was engulfed with at the time would put a definitive end to their

relationship.

The Importance of Her Works Remains Intact

Martin Miller's testimony sometimes borders on settling old scores with his mother and will probably rekindle Alice Miller's critics. If one can understand that her son should show little empathy for such an oblivious caretaker, it is regrettable that the author—who in turn became a psychotherapist—could not genuinely share young Alicija's emotional distress in her own family environment. On the contrary, Martin tends to idealize the cultural heritage his mother came to repudiate, as if he himself was looking for a substitute home. From this point of view, his insistence to link maternal neglect with war traumas alone suggests a form of mental dissociation.

It is equally difficult for Martin to question his father's responsibility in the family problematics and that of his male descendants. A few pages of the book denounce paternal brutality, but he doesn't believe that the analytical concept of "identification with the aggressor" applies to him as he strongly defends himself against accusation of resembling his father. He speaks emphatically of his ancestor Avraham Dov Englard, but seems to ignore the psychic consequence of the religious rules he enforced on his children. His second son Meylech, Alice Miller's father, "wouldn't or couldn't impose himself. While suffering from parental dominion, he remained silent and submitted to his fate." He died in the Piotrków ghetto, Martin Miller says, because "he did not renounce his Jewish identity, even to save his life," unlike his daughter. One may wonder if the author is well aware that his own existence stems from his mother's "treason," which was an expression of her desire for life.

Ultimately, Martin Miller recognizes that "the importance of [Alice Miller's] works remains intact," but only her first three books. The later ones could be considered important as long as her therapeutic counseling over the Internet is considered "speculative." This reluctance is comprehensible if one keeps in mind that Alice's first years as a writer were also Martin's happiest. He was barely 30 and witnessed a radical change: "My mother talked to me about her ideas and I discovered another person: passionate, open, approachable, relaxed." Freed from a loveless mar-

riage, she gained confidence against Freudian orthodoxy and shared this project with her son—something she never had done before, creating a sudden closeness that would soon revive the terrible loss of a receptive, loving mother.

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Emptiness in an Age of Plenty and Why We "Can't Get No Satisfaction"

Tom Ferraro—Psychoanalyst in Private Practice

Successful music, like film or art, often taps into underlying cultural tensions. Psychoanalytic art criticism suggests that a song will become popular because it reflects an ongoing cultural developmental crisis. Popular songs channel unconscious desires and fears in mass audience and by pleasing listeners the songwriter expresses the cultural mythology of the era.

The Rolling Stones anthem "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" released in 1965 is considered by many to be the second most popular and influential song of the 20th century (Rolling Stones Magazine, 2004). The question is why? Certainly the reason for its vast popularity was not solely due to the repetitive and somewhat sinister guitar riff by Keith Richards which opens the song. One reason "Satisfaction" rose to the top of cultural consciousness is because the Mick Jagger lyrics tapped directly into an emerging social experience that needed immediate and repeated expression. The song acted as a cultural safety valve that let out enormous steam.

> When I'm drivin' in my car
> And a man comes on the radio
> He's telling me more and more
> About some useless information
> Supposed to fire my imagination

I can't get no, oh no no no
(From song "Satisfaction" by The Rolling Stones [1965])

The song is about both the emerging hedonism of the early 60s and a growing awareness that hedonism in any form leaves one disappointed. Jagger was no uneducated fool. He attended the prestigious London School of Economics and was undoubtedly exposed to marketing theory. He was able to not only latch onto and capitalize on the growing power of the sexual revolution but more importantly he articulated the growing problem with a consumeristic society where we are incessantly bombarded with publicity and advertising images which effectively tell us what we do not have and what we need in order to achieve some "satisfaction."

Jagger was not the first artist to address to the issue of cultural emptiness, despair, and consumerism. The three time Pulitzer Prize winner Edward Albee wrote the play *The American Dream* (1961) which opens with a chilling dialogue between Mommy and Daddy about how dissatisfied Mommy is with the purchase of her new beige colored hat. I suggest that underlying dynamic sensed by both Albee and Jagger was a growing sense of hollowness in the culture.

In 1973 John Berger wrote the "Way We See" and described his concern about the effect that the flood of publicity images were beginning to have on viewers. He felt that constantly being told what one does not have breeds hunger and despair. This anthem of emptiness, hunger, despair, and lack of satisfaction were the themes expressed by both Jagger and Albee and contribute to why the song "Satisfaction" could be seen as the anthem of the 20th Century.

The book end song to the album "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," a song that is often ranked as the most influential song of the 20th Century, is "Like a Rolling Stone" by Bob Dylan. It achieved its status because it channeled the cultural crisis that we had entered. Dylan verbalized the celebrity side of the publicity image game. On one side we the people desperately hunger for satisfaction, esteem, and happiness; on the other side are the beautiful celebrities and famous artists like Dylan who are the unwitting recipients of all this glory, adulation, and envy. Dylan has described the

receiving of applause and adulation as a revolting and nauseating experience, commenting that "Here are all these people continuously praising me and for what? I'm basically just a guy singing some songs. You know they can kill you with kindness."

Now it's 2015 and we are a population mesmerized by publicity images and covetous of the goods we see advertised each hour of the day. Marketing companies are so sophisticated that they make the guys in the television series *Mad Men* (2007-) look like children. Companies now regularly hire "cool hunters," young hipsters who are paid to observe the coolest trends as they unfold and then report back to the company which then manufactures, labels, and sells it all back to us. Everyone is sold to and everyone buys in. It is not too much to say that we have all become hypnotized zombies hungry for some kind, any kind, and every kind of satisfaction.

On the other side of the wall are the glamourous ones we see in ads, films, or television. But lest you let your envy get the best of you, my guess is they are no better off. Look at the long line of dead celebrities in a wide range of fields. In literature we have David Foster Wallace, Truman Capote, Flannery O'Connor, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Jack Kerouac. In music we have Michael Jackson, Jimmy Hendrix, Brian Jones, and Kurt Cobain. In film we have Marilyn Monroe, Phillip Seymour Hoffman, and Heath Ledger. All overdosed on fame, love, and envy.

The primary cultural crisis in early 21st century America is aptly revealed in its two most popular songs. As the electronic revolution bumbles into the future we are along for the ride. In "The Illusion of the End," Jean Baudrillard, a theorist of postmodernism, told us that all these beautiful images, songs, goods, and services are actually too much to bear. They are coming at us too fast to handle. They have us by the throat. They are irresistible. That's the way it is. It is an impossible state. All this perfection at our hands, our feet, and in our mouths. All this emptiness and dissatisfaction at the very same time. It seems as if "I can't get no satisfaction, I can't get no satisfaction. Cause I try and I try and I try and I try, I can't get no, I can't get no."

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The Psychoanalytic Significance of Zombies

Tom Ferraro—Psychoanalyst in Private Practice

One of the more unsettling scenes in the action film *World War Z* (2013) took place in the holy city of Jerusalem. There is an 80 foot concrete wall protecting a small section of the ancient city and those within this area are still untouched by a zombie plague which has infected the world. Outside the wall, thousands of zombies are observed aimlessly wandering about. Within the safe zone is Gerry Lane (played by Brad Pitt) who is a U.N. investigator assigned to find possible clues to the reason for the zombie outbreak. As Gerry talks to the Israeli Director of Mossad, the camera pans down to the plaza below them which shows a lively song and dance celebration by those who are still healthy and safe. The sound of the jubilation rouses the zombies outside the walls who then become enraged and begin to throw themselves against the wall, creating a mountain of bodies that allow them to scale the wall and quickly overrun Jerusalem. This disturbing scene of violence and unstoppable cannibalism has hidden beneath it themes of primitive oral rage, hunger, and envy within those who are now half dead.

American film and television have become obsessed with apocalyptic zombie films. *World War Z*, which grossed $540 million worldwide, is the latest in a long series of zombie films which include blockbusters like *I Am Legend* (2007) starring Will Smith and *28 Days Later* (2003) directed by Oscar winning filmmaker Danny Boyle. There is also now a popular American television series called *The Walking Dead* (2010-) which is based off of a popular comic book series of the same name. There have been 373 zombie films made since 1960. In 1983, when Michael Jackson portrayed one of the walking dead in his video "Thriller" it became the most popular music video of all time. There is a large amount of unconscious symbolism projected into these over determined zom-

bie images.

Harvard Medical School psychiatrist Steven Schlozman describes zombies in *Zombie Autopsies* (2011) as displaying primitive neurological function with difficulty controlling the base emotions of hunger and rage. This book, which is now being turned into a major film, misses the point entirely. The character traits of zombies which include somnolence, rage, and oral greed are better discussed for what they really are, psychological projections of modern America's unconscious emotional state.

These films express the disowned and repressed state of middle class America in 2014. The middle class sense of despair, inability to "get ahead," and profound disgust and disappointment in the consumeristic rat race is killing them. Living in a post capitalist society has produced an overly competitive America with no real communal life to counter-balance this. The result is a simmering, yet denied, sense of rage and despair. The great appeal of the zombie genre is that it gives voice to this despair and deadness.

Psychoanalytic Film Theory

Glen O. Gabbard edited *Psychoanalysis and Film* (2001) which provides seven psychoanalytic approaches to film analysis. One theory is based upon *Ray* (1985) who says that films tap into underlying cultural mythology. Hollywood producers unwittingly served as cultural anthropologists. Their films, especially those that were successful at the box office, tapped into the commonly held unconscious wishes and fears in the mass audience. In pleasing the audience, filmmakers also articulate the cultural mythology of the era, specifically Levi-Strauss's idea in *The Raw and the Crooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (1975) that myths are transformations of fundamental conflicts or contradictions that in reality cannot be resolved (Gabbard, 2001, 7).

Some psychoanalytic film theorists, including Slavoj Zizek, suggest that films portray universal developmental crises. Zombies are pre-oedipal in nature, showing no interest in sex and are instead are filled with more developmentally primitive oral hunger and hatred. Other psychoanalytic film critics have developed theories around the idea of film as a collective dream screen which uses standard dream processes including condensation, displacement,

and symbolization. I suggest that zombies symbolize the death of the modern human spirit, our feelings of intense greed and murderous envy. Other popular big budget films have reinforced these emotions. Phrases like "greed is good" in the film *Wall Street* (1987) and "show me the money" from the film *Jerry Maguire* (1996) are now cultural catch phrases.

The greed and inhumanity of zombies are also apt symbols of profiteering and the sociopathic nature of the corporation. Joel Bakan feels that the greedy sociopathy of the corporation is slowly destroying America and the American Dream (*The Corporation*, 2005). Zombies may be the perfect metaphor for the rat race in extremis, a terrifying visual image of a mad consumer-driven culture whose hunger is never satisfied. Dream images are typically brief, meager, and laconic but film images are worked on through secondary process thinking by the filmmaker and allowed to express the deeply felt terror that lies within.

The emotional states of zombies as greedy, hungry, angry, and dead describe the character of the pathological narcissist. Klein, Kernberg, and Kohut are leading psychoanalytic theorists who have treated and theorized about the rise of narcissistic disorders. These patients have an insatiable hunger for admiration, are prone to feelings of envy and hatred, tend to swallow interpretations rather than discuss them, and will often complain of feeling empty, depressed, or even dead.

In 1973 John Berger wrote *Ways of Seeing* where he predicted that the over exposure to multiple publicity images would inevitably create an extreme sense of envy, self-despair, and the death of the self as the culture became trained to see what they did not have and enter a state of self-loathing while they made exhausting and futile efforts to purchase "these images of happiness."

In the *Culture of Narcissism* (1979), Christopher Lasch predicted that primitive oral rage would befall America. He felt that the aggressive self-destructive part of the superego was no longer being modified through experience with real ego ideals. The media's slow dismantling of all forms of authority precluded our chance to identify with mature authority figures which could soften early fantasies of parents as devouring monsters. According to

Lasch, "If that experience is lacking – as it so often is in a society that radically devalued all forms of authority – the sadistic superego can be expected to develop at the expense of the ego ideal, the destructive superego at the expense of the severe but solicitous inner voice we call conscience" (12).

Michael Vlahos, professor in the Strategy and Policy Department at the U.S. Naval College and author of *Counterterrorism, American Exceptionalism, and Retributive Justice* (2013), feels that zombie films have become popular because we need to collectively orient ourselves toward a new future civilization. These films express a coming apocalyptic crisis and also point to ways in which the culture must change in order to survive.

Conclusions

All these psychoanalysts and social theorists seem to suggest that culture in its present condition no longer provides a good enough holding environment which has resulted in a large-scale regression to more borderline and primitive states of psychological functioning. Zombies have appeal to the audience because they express this denied state of hopelessness and rage. Our current lifestyle is dominated by overwork, shopping, and television.

The two most successful zombie films, *World War Z* and *I Am Legend*, end in similar ways. The few lone survivors are now living in small community settings, pleasant looking towns in New England or Canada where there is a small Main Street with groups of families bonded together, evidently living a slower and simpler life style. The ascetic and communal life is offered up by the filmmaker as the antidote to the plague that has beset us.

Films express cultural myths, cultural crises, and attempt to provide solutions. Apocalyptic zombie films signal a warning to postmodern culture. They tell us that things cannot go on like this. There is too much alienation, greed, deadness, hunger, aggression, shallowness, competition, and envy. These films all attempt to break through our denial of our current state and also provide a direction toward asceticism, simplicity, restfulness, and community. However this message is so threatening to the economic system that thus far the war is being won by the corporation and the people are losing. ❑

Reflections on the Uncanny Valley: Artificial Humanoids and Us

Irene Javors—Yeshiva University

For many years, I have been interested in the relationship of people to dolls, puppets, automata, and robots. My first contact with "serious" doll collectors happened in Dallas, Texas in 2003 at an "Extreme Doll Makeover" convention. At that time I was writing an article on collecting and was sent to report on this event. At this meeting, designer dolls are brought in for makeovers which include hair, eyelashes, and eye color replacements as well as shape of the head alterations. "Specialists" perform these cosmetic operations on the dolls while their collectors/caretakers look on with great anticipation for the new model.

Doll makers, collectors, and "specialists" excitedly roam about the room looking for the next doll to model, buy, or fix. The conversation takes on a surreal quality as participants discuss possible improvements that can be done to a particular doll. At times, I feel like I am in the office of a plastic surgeon who is discussing the specifics of the next face-lift.

The surrealistic quality of this experience is best described as "uncanny." Freud, in his 1919 essay *The Uncanny*, delved into the meaning of the word uncanny and explained that it is related to the feeling that the familiar has become strange and frightening. For me, the dolls took on an uncanny quality as a result of their being treated as though they were humans who could be altered and perfected with the flick of a paintbrush or the replacement of a head.

I discovered that my revulsion around "extreme doll makeovers" falls under the concept of the "uncanny valley." In 1970 Masahiro Mori, then a robotics professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, wrote an essay wherein he discussed people's reactions to robots that appeared and behaved almost human. He suggested that an individual's response to a humanlike robot would go from connection to total revulsion if the robot attempted to look like but failed to have a lifelike appearance. He termed this change

of perception the "uncanny valley."

Mori's idea has influenced just how far technology can go in the making of artificial intelligence systems, from video games offering virtual landscapes and identities to the current trends in robotics. In the 2013 movie *Her*, the protagonist falls in love with a computer operating system because "she" has greater relational skills than the humans he interacts with. A lead article in the November 2014 issue of *Popular Science* asks "Will Your Next Best Friend Be a Robot?"

Long before current concerns about robots, Isaac Asimov, in his 1942 short story *Runaround*, writes his concerns about robots by elucidating "The Three Laws of Robotics." Essentially these "laws" are designed to keep robots under the control of humans and prevent our computerized doppelgangers from taking over.

Our fears about artificial systems reached an apex in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001*: *A Space Odyssey* (1968) wherein the spaceship's computer, Hal, has a permanent psychotic episode and self-destructs the ship and single crewmember, hurling all into limitless time and space. A more benign robot depiction occurs in the character Data on the television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-1994). Data is a designer robot whose deep-seated desire is to become human—to have the ability to feel, to connect, and to love. Often he is presented as far more feeling than the human characters.

Our approach/avoidance to the artificial human is reflective of our attempt to define what it means to be human. Over the long haul of history, our struggle with this question has informed our fascination with the artificial human. Like Mister Geppetto we create various versions of Pinocchio that mirror the concerns of a given cultural era. In Nick Bilton's essay *Helper Robots Are Steered, Tentatively, to Care for Aging* (*New York Times*, May 20, 2013), we read that "artificial assistants" will offer a solution to the oncoming explosion of baby boomers who will need help as they grow older. These caregiver robots will be necessary because there will not be enough people around to care for the aged baby boomers.

Sobering, yet rooted in an authentic cultural concern: Will robots be the only ones with time and 'humanity' to care for elders?

How far does this go? Will it be better to have a robot friend than no friends at all?

As a society we are now living in the "uncanny valley" and as we proceed further into the 21st century we will encounter many uncanny valleys that will become "canny." As Shakespeare wrote in *The Tempest*, "O brave new world that has such people in't!"

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A Little Morning Music under Stalin

Howard Stein—Oklahoma University Medical Center

Shostakovich over breakfast
Is not such a good idea –
Not good for the appetite,
Not to mention swallowing
And digestion. Shostakovich
Can be upsetting with his
Infectious tunes followed
By screeching dissonance
And loud hammering,
Eventually ending in crashing bombast
Or exhausted resignation.
His music is an astringent
For the soul, takes you
To places of sorrow and despair
Deeper than Dante's final circle.
Not good at breakfast,
Or any meal, for that matter.
Come to think of it,
There is no good time
For this Russian. His is the land of
Loud knocks on the door
At three in the morning,
And disappearance to the vanishing point.

Listen to Shostakovich only
When you have the stomach
For a world you could not make up.

Howard Stein, PhD, *wrote this poem in honor of Peter Petschauer. He may be contacted at hfstein46@gmail.com.* ❑

*[**Editor's Comment:** In the context of an article on zombies and another on the uncanny, a poem referring to the real life horrors of Stalin's terror may very well fit in.]*

Book Review

A Psychohistorian's Multilayered Interdisciplinary Memoir

David Beisel—SUNY (RCC)

Review of Peter Petschauer, In the Face of Evil: The Sustenance of Tradition (CreateSpace, 2014), ISBN-13: 978-1499190106, 281 pages, $25.

Peter Petschauer's impeccable scholarship is again on display in his new book, *In the Face of Evil: The Sustenance of Tradition*. This is a multilayered interdisciplinary work weaving together many strands of scholarship and personal memories that produce a fascinating portrait of a time and place; a memoir rooted in several historical contexts.

This deeply felt personal story is one prompted by memories jogged up by a chance encounter with some monogrammed napkins. On Valentine's Day back in 2010, Petschauer tells us, "Joni my wife, asked me to set the table for a small dinner party we were having that evening. I took a stack of linen napkins, heirlooms from both our families, from the armoire that belonged to my mother…As I laid them on the table, the monograms, hand stitched by women in our families over the past hundred years, evoked memories that transported me back over my lifetime…" (1). What follows from this sudden epiphany is a personal and historical journey into the European past covering two-thirds of the 20th century,

while bringing us into the first decade of the 21st century—a life-review with deep historical meaning.

Readers already familiar with parts of Professor Petschauer's past know his father was an *SS* officer during the Second World War, a subject he courageously tackled in an earlier study, *Der Vater und die SS* (Brixen/Bressanone 2007). The current book turns on the impact of significant women in his life, those he refers to as his "four mothers."

In 1944, with World War II continuing to rage in Europe, Professor Petschauer's father and birth mother brought him and his younger brother to a farmstead in the Dolomite Mountains of Northern Italy. The *Egarter* farm was well known to them as they had summered there for several years. For safety's sake, Peter and his younger brother were removed by his parents from the war zone in Germany and placed in the care of Aloisia Petreider Clara, the farm's owner, or *Egarterin*.

Prior to World War I, this German-speaking region had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but postwar territorial changes made it part of Italy. Against this backdrop, ethnography meets microhistory. We are treated by the author to a detailed day-by-day tour through the life of the region and what it was like to live, eat, sleep and work on the farm. As a good psychohistorian, he gives space to issues of childrearing. The study's autobiographical dimensions are among its best features. Readers may marvel, as I did, at Professor Petschauer's prodigious memories prompted often by physical things—he makes good use of those monogrammed linen napkins several times—and of memories reinforced and corroborated by numerous historical sources, objects, oral history interviews, and by regular return visits to the sites of his earlier life. The text is lavishly illustrated by black and white photos that bring flesh and blood to the people described in the text and concretize the reality of the places he discusses.

Anyone who knows Professor Petschauer's scholarship is aware of how scrupulous he is with regard to the historical and cultural context of words. This study is no exception. The narrative regularly pauses for the insertion of unique words, provides a phrase or two on what they mean in historical and ethnographic

context, and shows how many untranslatable meanings mold individual and group perceptions. It provides elaborate psycholinguistics of historical meaning, another strength of the book.

While warfare came only marginally to the region, tragedy nevertheless touched the household as the author's early life was marked by abandonment and loss: "As my father expected, the war ended soon enough, but not before [the *Egarterin*'s] son Albert died in Yugoslavia in early June 1945, she herself succumbed months later on 15 December, and my brother followed her at the end of 1946" (14-15). Enter Peter's second mother, Agnes, Aloisia's oldest daughter who took over the farm and assumed the role of surrogate mother. Petschauer does not linger over the melodrama of these three tragedies but simply recounts them, finding strength where others may have found cause for obsessive mourning and self-pity.

Petschauer's interest in and ability to empathically understand women's history was demonstrated in an earlier study, *The Education of Women in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (1989). Later chapters of the current book recount the sometimes troubled relationship between Peter and his birth mother, Hildegard Dalmer, and the pleasures of his relationship with his father's second wife, Emmi (Mickey) Anders, all in historical context.

Professor Petschauer acknowledges that his use of objects as stimulus for his own remembering and as an entry point into the past owes a debt to Vamik Volkan's notion of "linking objects." Whereas Volkan regards keepsakes as playing a role for some people in perpetual mourning, Petschauer goes beyond the implicitly pathological: "I do not consider myself a perennial mourner; yet the sense of loss that accompanies each of the linked objects discussed in this book is real." The lives of his four mothers "would not have become linked except through me, but their experiences are the universal connection to and of all women" (267).

Perhaps the most controversial part of what Petschauer calls his "scholarly memoir" is his assertion, implicit in the study's subtitle *The Sustenance of Tradition*, that the focus of his four mothers' rituals of their daily lives and duties as women and mothers helped shield them from the lure of Nazism. It is a provocative idea that

has merit but I do not believe it is fully realized in this study.

Nevertheless, *In the Face of Evil* breaks new ground in many ways. The self as a research instrument has a long history in psychoanalysis. It has in recent decades become part of the work of several psychohistorians at various times, Peter Loewenberg, Charles Strozier, Marilyn Charles, Paul Elovitz, Robert Jay Lifton, and myself. Professor Petschauer's subjective rendering of his own past, while integrating various sources in the process as he moves from the personal to the micro to the macro and back again, offers a successful model of the possibilities of this approach.

Readers of this journal know that Peter Petschauer has in recent years turned to the writing of psychohistorical poetry. Two poems are present within *The Face of Evil*. The study begins with the moving, "Father and Mother." It ends with, "Three Mothers, Plus One." The first sets the stage for the narrative to come; the other sums up the tragic consequences of the Second World War, wondering if the trauma is forever. It asks: "When will it end, dear Lord? When will it end?" It concludes, "It did," words that offer hope for a resolution of conflict, personal and universal, as Peter Petschauer seems to have achieved by an exploration of his own life and the four women who helped shape it.

David Beisel's *bio can be found on page 381.*❑

Meeting Report

Visionaries for Peace

Paul H. Elovitz—The Psychohistory Forum

Colleagues come to the Forum to present their papers with different expectations. The late Rudolph Binion of Brandeis would deliver a beautifully crafted piece of research which left little room for our group to do more than express appreciation for the new knowledge presented and offer some thoughts should he plan to return to the subject at some future date. In a similar vein, when Lawrence J. Friedman presented from his volume that was then in press, *The Lives of Erich Fromm: Love's Prophet* (Columbia Uni-

versity, 2013), there was fascinating material but not a lot of room for the membership of the Forum to make significant contributions. In contrast, Friedman's November 1, 2014 presentation "Visionaries for Peace: The One World Movement" represented an ideal opportunity for colleagues to do our best work by being most helpful. The presenter, a distinguished psychobiographer of Erikson, Fromm, and the Menningers, was confident enough to share his preliminary outline and be extraordinarily open to what we had to offer in our Psychohistory Forum Work-in-Progress seminar.

The Harvard professor diligently took notes as we asked our questions regarding the detailed abstract of each chapter that he had sent out for our review. Some of the questions raised included the role of narcissism, empathy, and aggression of the "One Worlders"; the idea of world unity; how the Visionaries responded to Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign and the Korean War; the level of emotional literacy of the Visionaries; the role of fear and guilt after the bombing of Hiroshima among the group that the presenter is studying; what the role of communists was in this movement; does Jimmy Carter really belong in the group; how can you have a peaceful, cooperative world with a genocidal, paranoid leader like Stalin, or for that matter, the ISIS fundamentalists cutting off the heads of Christians, journalists, humanitarian workers, and Muslims who do not accept their caliphate; and ultimately, what happened to the movement?

In 1945 many scientists realized the A-bomb would endanger the entire world. Einstein and other scientists published their concerns the same year in the volume *One World or None*. A magic moment for these visionaries of a single cooperative world was the two days in 1948 when the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights formulated by a committee chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, and signed the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide crafted by Rafael Lemkin who had coined the term "genocide" in 1943 and lost 31 relatives in the Holocaust. The rights movement was supported by a prime minister of Italy and the sister of the Indian prime minister. Many in the Third World equated the One World Movement with decolonization. While the bombing of Hiroshima was certainly the catalyst for the formation of this One World group, the growing

awareness of the Holocaust was also of significant concern.

The ease of communication among many in or close to the movement resulted in their talking to each other despite numerous policy differences. Friedman stressed the relatedness to the One World advocates of the group he calls the "realists" who inclined to have far more of the reins of power. Thus the banker James Warburg (1896-1969) lived next door to his good friend and tennis partner Dean Acheson (1893-1971) with whom he shared many ideas. Acheson, as Secretary of State, would refer to leaving a memo expressing Warburg's views on President Eisenhower's desk.

Earlier researchers publishing on the Cold War incline not to pay much attention to this One World Movement. Friedman has focused on the 50 out of 100 people who accepted the invitation to come to the New Hampshire conference held 66 days after Hiroshima. This participant asks about the characteristics of the other 50 who did not attend. With six or seven of the original groups still alive, Friedman has been actively interviewing them, as well as visiting archives which are spread throughout the country. At times he spoke of important individuals not included in his list such as the Supreme Court justice William O. Douglas, Walter Cronkite, and Eric Sevareid who clearly made statements indicating a strong affinity to this One World approach. JFK could declare that "we are all One World now" but such a rhetorical flourish does not put him in this category. Our presenter kept sharing wonderful tidbits of knowledge such as the prominent newscaster Walter Cronkite urging his colleague Eric Sevareid to declare himself a One Worlder while not being willing to do it himself.

Other scholars of the One World Movement thought it died in the Cold War but Freidman argues that such was not the case. Most of the people involved were too prominent to be attacked by McCarthy and the other Cold Warriors. When Ralph Bunche, United Nations High Commissioner in charge of Refugees, was called before a hostile congressional committee, his friend Eleanor Roosevelt went with him and declared that her late husband FDR would not have liked this at all. She then proceeded to walk out of the meeting with Bunche. Freidman sees his colleague Robert Jay Lifton as a One Worlder, but one who still doesn't know it.

The role of music and food in moving people toward a One World viewpoint was brought out very clearly by a colleague who lives in Queens, New York, a borough of many nationalities where the word is "we don't like each other but we like each other's food."

Our meeting room at New York University with a spectacular view of Washington Square Park was much more crowded in 2013, when the same author presented. Last November 1st the attendance was halved but by conversing around the large table we could get into the subject in greater depth, something that the presenter greatly appreciated. In terms of multiple identities, the participants involved included six clinicians, five psychoanalysts, five historians, and one psychiatrist and social worker. As usual Jacques Szaluta served as our moderator. There was some reference to the oldest continuous psychohistorical group which had met the previous week, Robert Lifton's Wellfleet group, in which two of our members on Saturday had participated. Our presenter and the participants were quite pleased with our meeting and look forward to the publication of Larry Friedman's book.

Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, *is the Founder/Convener of the Psychohistory Forum and may be contacted at pelovitz@aol.com.* ❑

Letter to the Editor

Steven Pinker is Wrong About 20th Century Violence

Dear Editor,

Stephen Pinker's book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (2011), was often cited in the December 2014 issue of Clio's Psyche devoted to the question "Are we more or less civilized?" The book's major conclusion states "The decline of violence may be the most significant and least appreciated development in the history of our species" (692). The 20th century was not the worst! Because of doubts about the worth of this entertaining encyclopedia of the history of violence, I ask to join the debate.

Chapter 10 of Pinker's book summarizes five factors during

the last two millennia, which the author maintains made the world less violent: 1. Dominant states ("Leviathans," often democracies) established a monopoly on force capable of protecting their citizens; 2. Benign economic relations between them neutralized destructive hostility between nations; 3. An increase in the influence of women restrained the damage produced by male hostility; 4. Increased empathy and education guided leaders of such countries; and 5. Enlightened reason characterized many world leaders. However, Pinker's most important claim regarding a diminution in violence remains unproven.

The predominant evidence the author uses to support his claim that human violence has declined over the last two millennia relies upon the conclusions of Mathew White in his works such as *The Great Big Book of Horrible Things* (2011) and *Atrocities: The 100 Deadliest Episodes in Human History* (2013). White's publications from 2004 to 2011 investigated all of the world's mass murders. Page 195 of Pinker's book features a chart adapted from White (2010) tabulating the 21 worst atrocities from the 3rd through the 20th century. Here the 20th century, with 142 million deaths, ranks only fourth in lethality below the 8th century (429 million), the 13th century (278 million), and the combined 15th-19th century period (about 250 million). How did Pinker recalculate White's statistics to demote the 20th century out of the position of civilization's most lethal century? Contrary to White, who ranked the 20th century with a hundred million fatalities as the most murderous, the author transformed that data through adjustments using incidence-prevalence deaths per population numbers. This statistical legerdemain assigns 429 million victims to the 8th centuryAn Lushan Rebellion in China, generating a virtual population figure far more than the population of the world in that era.

Yet R.M. Grant (1977) asserted that population counts during antiquity were a "rhetorical exercise," and P. Chuyin (1990) maintained that "ancient history remains wholly refractory to quantitative evaluations." Meaningful comparisons between centuries of the past millennia are doomed by two factors. First is the increased capacity to kill produced by the technological advances ranging from stone axes to atomic weapons. Then there are tremendous changes over time in healing capability from neglect and

abandonment of the dying to the use of hospitals, rapid triage, and secondary infection control.

How could Pinker, a celebrity Harvard academic psychologist, discount the unique violent horror of the Holocaust, two World Wars, Hiroshima, Abu Ghraib, and the Rwandan Genocide? A clue to the answer is suggested by several omissions in his book's 30 page reference section. Absent are Sigmund Freud (briefly quoted at the beginning of a chapter), Edward Gibbon (who wrote about the fall of the Roman Empire), and "meta-historian" Arnold Toynbee (an authority on European civilization). Pinker's comment that "The human brain is a swollen and warped version of the brains of other mammals" (485) implies a privileging of biology, experimental psychology, and empirical science verging on "Scientism." Wieseltier (*New Republic*, 2013) conceptualizes this as an overemphasis on hard science in understanding the world while neglecting the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Such a perspective implies disrespect for depth psychology, historical complexity, and an ideology like religion. To fully comprehend mass violence we need both "depth psychology" of individuals and a psychology of group behavior.

I doubt that a century's number of violent adult deaths provides an adequate measurement for human violence consistent with several contributors to the Clio's Psyche's debate about civilization's civility. Here, Fuchsman nominated violence toward nonhuman animals. Denham chose "structural violence" as an important measure, a selection that is most relevant to future fatal risks of climate change. The decline of infanticide in world history is another valuable indicator of violence. I propose we add the historical impact of the major religions to Pinker's above five developmental factors. To understand the triumph of Christianity over the military might of Roman armies, the ancient Jews' ban of filicide, or the astonishingly rapid conversion of pagans and barbarians to the Christian faith (Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 1996), we require tools and methods outside the realm of science. Freud may have been correct in diagnosing religion as a comforting illusion but we can't argue that its power might have inspired Confucius, Jesus, Constantine, and Gandhi to take up arms against violence.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Barglow

Peter Barglow, PhD, *is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Medicine at the University of California Medical School at Davis. He is writing a book about emotional trauma and between 2010 and 2014 published articles relevant to this topic in the American Journal of Psychiatry,* Clio's Psyche*, the Skeptical Inquirer and the American Journal of Psychotherapy. In 1976, he co-authored a paper with Margret Schaefer for a special topic issue about female psychology in the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association (24[5] 303-350). He may be reached at Peter@barglow.com.* ❑

BULLETIN BOARD

CONFERENCES: The **Psychohistory Forum's** next **Work-In-Progress Seminar** is on **April 11, 2015** when **Ken Fuchsman** and **Susan Gregory** will present on the psychology of music and the psychobiography of a musician. Announcements and papers are sent out electronically to Psychohistory Forum members. Additional proposals are welcome and will be vetted by a committee once a presentation paper is submitted. We want to thank **Michael Clifford** for his January presentations, as well as **Jacques Szaluta** for serving as moderator. Upcoming conferences include the Division 39 (Psychoanalysis) meetings of the American Psychological Association (APA) will be held in San Francisco on April 23-26, 2015; the International Psychohistorical Association's (IPA) conference will be on June 3-5, 2015 at New York University; the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations is forthcoming on June 10-13, 2015 in Rio de Janeiro; and the International Society for Political Psychology's (ISPP) conference will be on July 3-6, 2015 in San Diego. Note that the Psychohistory Forum is sponsoring sessions at the IPA conference. **CONGRATULATIONS:** To William Meyers whose *Social Science Methods for Clinical Inquiry: The Unconscious on the World Scene* is due out in June 2015 from Palgrave Publishers and to Arnold Richards for his presentation on transference and countertransference a the Metropolitan Center for Mental Health on December 6, 2014. **OUR**

THANKS: To our members and subscribers for the support that makes Clio's Psyche possible. To Benefactors Herbert Barry, David Beisel, Tom Ferraro, Peter Loewenberg, David Lotto, and Mary Peace Sullivan; Patrons Fred Alford, Bill Argus, Ken Fuchsman, Alice Maher, Jamshid Marvasti, Peter Petschauer, and Jacques Szaluta; Sustaining Members Peter Barglow, Dick Booth, George and Carolyn Brown, Ruth Lijtmaer, Alan Mohl, Burton Seitler, and Arlene Steinberg; Supporting Members Michael Clifford, Paul H. Elovitz, Judy Gardiner, Sue Gouaux, Bob Lentz, Joel Markowitz, Marcie Newton, Mena and Dominic Potts, Arnold Richards, and Christina Stern; and Members Lawrence Friedman, Irene Javors, Margaret Kind, Denis O'Keefe, and Vivian Rosenberg. Our special thanks for thought-provoking materials to Fred Alford, Herbert Barry, David Beisel, Jessica Bloom, Matthew H. Bowker, Helen Cairns, Marissa Cooney, Marc-André Cotton, Brian D'Agostino, Paul H. Elovitz, Ralph E. Fishkin, Ken Fuchsman, Jennifer Howard, Juhani Ihanus, Irene Javors, David Lotto, Allan Mohl, Joyce M. Rosenberg, Paul Salstrom, John Shandra, Howard Stein, Hanna Turken, and Alec Weissman. To Nicole D'Andria for editing, proofing, and Publisher 2013 software application, Caitlin Gaynor for editing, and Professor Paul Salstrom and David Cifelli for proofing. Our special thanks to our editors and to our numerous overworked referees who must remain anonymous. ❑

Call for Associate Editors

The Editorial Board of Clio's Psyche welcomes applications for the position of Associate Editor.

Included in the job description is editing a special issue on a yearly basis. Interested colleagues should direct inquiries to the Editor at pelovitz@aol.com.

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