

## e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work

---

Volume 3  
Number 1 *Vol 3, No 1 (2012)*

Article 1

---

September 2014

### Full Issue

e-Research Editors

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/e-Research>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Editors, e-Research (2014) "Full Issue," *e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work*: Vol. 3: No. 1, Article 1.  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/e-Research/vol3/iss1/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [laughtin@chapman.edu](mailto:laughtin@chapman.edu).

# e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work

## Volume 3, Number 1 (2012)

### Table of Contents

Introduction	1
<u>Articles</u>	
The Paradox of Commercial Photography: Power and Sexuality in Models <i>Christina Bell</i>	3
Damming Brazil <i>Thyra Brody</i>	9
The Bias of Neutrality: An Examination of a Congressman's Motivations on the Issue of Network Neutrality <i>Harrison Beau Bryant</i>	15
Filipinos Depicted in American Culture <i>Eileen Regullano</i>	21
The Bad Boy: A Cultural Phenomenon <i>Writing Collective FFC 100.12</i>	41
About the Contributors	55

## e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)

[HOME](#)   [ABOUT](#)   [USER HOME](#)   [SEARCH](#)   [CURRENT](#)   [ARCHIVES](#)

[Home](#) > [Vol 3, No 1 \(2012\)](#) > **Introduction**

*e-Research* 3.1 presents a variety of student work in several fields, by undergraduate students at all levels. Below we provide an introduction to each piece gathered in this issue. Three of our essays concern images or cultural terms and their effects in the media, or with respect to gender or an ethnic minority. Three other of our essays concern politics, both domestic and international.

**The Bad Boy: A Cultural Phenomenon:**The "bad boy" is a common term used in a wide range of contexts, and it can refer to people, literary figures, popular media characters, even objects. Bad boys can be class clowns or mass murderers, cartoons or cultural heroes, and many types in between. We can therefore consider the term "bad boy" a floating or empty signifier--a term that our culture leaves undefined, open, untied to specific historical era, social class, value system, or even gender. Your goal for this project is to work collaboratively to develop a richly detailed and theorized discussion/argument about the bad boy figure. The central objectives are 1) to illustrate the range of meanings the term/concept has, and 2) to present a credible argument (or multiple arguments) about why, culturally, the term is so unfixed. Our culture commonly uses the term "bad boy," but leaves it undefined, open, untied to specific historical era, social class, value system, or even gender. Working collaboratively, develop a detailed and theorized argument about the bad boy to illustrate the range of meanings the term/concept has and to explain why, culturally, the term is so unfixed. (written by: Jeanne Gunner, Professor of English)

**Filipinos Depicted in American Culture:** Racism toward Filipinos in American society has been historically present - most prominently in the earlier 20th century -- but despite a recent decline in such racism, it has been incorporated generally and considered harmless. In television, films, pictures, and jokes the amount of inattention to racial/ethnic sensitivity in this area is remarkable. This article seeks to illuminate these inconsistencies in what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of racism in the media.

**The Paradox of Commercial Photography Power and Sexuality in Models:** Commercial photography is a source of much torment especially in young impressionable girls. The idealization of the unhealthily slim, subjugated woman or the unhealthily powerful woman as a sexual icon is producing sentiments of insufficiency and abjection in young women. This article explores the effects of such developments.

**The Bias of Neutrality: An Examination of a Congressman's Motivations on the Issue of Network Neutrality:** Internet neutrality is the idea that no content on the Internet is given priority over any other. This idea is challenged by Congressman Gary Miller who maintains "freedom" of the Internet translates into no government regulation over the Internet; therefore the freedom is for the Internet Service Providers to regulate content on the basis of business interests -- giving priority to content which provides them financial incentive -- as opposed to freedom of the individual to view whatever content they choose.

**Damming Brazil:** There is no doubt that one of the most relevant and difficult issues we face in the 21st century will be the depletion of fossil fuels and the need for alternative sources of energy. Hydroelectric power is clean and sustainable, and thus a tenable alternative to coal or oil. Unfortunately there are negative consequences that result from hydroelectric dams that generate power that can be observed best in countries like Brazil, a country that leads the way in hydroelectric power which provides for 80% of national energy consumption. Among these

consequences are ecological degradation, indigenous cultural degradation, the rampant spread of disease through flooding, and food and water scarcity and degradation.

**e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)**

HOME ABOUT USER HOME SEARCH CURRENT ARCHIVES

Home > Vol 3, No 1 (2012) > Bell

## The Paradox of Commercial Photography: Power and Sexuality in Models

**Christina Bell**

**Abstract:** Commercial photography has a tendency to force upon us a standard template of what the ideal person is or looks like. Unfortunately, the artificial standard is horribly unachievable and detrimental to physical and mental health, which produces sentiments of insufficiency and abjection with the self, especially among young impressionable girls. In a sick - and very modern - twist of evolutionary progress we find ourselves idealizing the depictions of models appearing to be on the verge of starvation. This article examines the power and sexuality in models produced through commercial photography and its effects on society at-large.

**Key words, terms, concepts, names:** commercial photography, desire, sexuality, power, abject, abjection, Kristeva, Foucault, Mulvey, corps propre

---

### Introduction

For the impressionable viewer, commercial photography has the potential to alter how we view our bodies, influence us to want to change our subjectivities, and lead us into transforming the flesh. Commercial photography constructs society's cannon of what is beautiful or proper. However, if the viewer's body differs from the standardized ideal of beauty--more specifically, what should be desired--the spectator may interpret the subject in a way that generates insufficiency and abjection with the self. In reverse, as models become more and more emaciated, what was abject in the past is now considered commonplace today. Instead of being repulsed by a model on the verge of death, we can be caught up with trying to imitate what seems ideal. Julia Kristeva's concepts of abjection and the deject are present in several commercial images and communicate the paradox between the desired figure and her awful appearance. Shifting from consumer to viewer means that instead of looking at the actual product, we are drawn to the person selling the product or the image as a whole. However, the subject of our wanting can often be portrayed as the culturally abject, the grotesquely thin, the suspiciously airbrushed. Thus a tension exists between our discourse of desire and our disgust, that which breaches homogenized practices.

### Discourses of the Commercial Image: Desire

Relying on Michel Foucault's work, several discourses can categorize the characteristics of photography. These discourses can further represent various interpretations of an image, such as viewing through a feminist lens or through a mythological viewpoint. The main discourses within commercial photography are heterosexual desire and power.

Take, for example, a typical lingerie picture from a *Victoria's Secret* catalogue. Typically, we can see a young woman bearing her body to the camera, eyes daringly facing the lens in preparation for whoever stands behind it. The woman's rounded breasts are shaded in to highlight the size, and the room behind her is nearly pitch-black. In these typical images, women can be viewed as charged with sexual energy and seductive in the quest for a mate.

Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze further establishes the omnipresence of female sexuality in modeling. Applying the ideas of Mulvey, the sexualized model has set up "man as bearer of the look" in that the woman is

## C. Bell

the object of man's scopophilic desire; in her words, "In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey, 4-5). The woman has become less of a body and more of a subject to be critiqued by the male gaze; she "has not the slightest importance" on her own; only by aiding the male does she earn any sort of esteem (Boetticher in Mulvey, 5). Therefore, adopting the male gaze is the sole way to derive pleasure from an image[1]. With this impression of pleasure in mind, one can see the discourse of heterosexual desire. The term "heterosexual" is important as a label in relation to the male gaze upon a traditionally female figure, which further lends the frequent generalization of our desires as represented through the media. In clarification, industries have, rather conservatively, denoted attraction as a heterosexual force--even though the image is of sexual promiscuity, a more liberal concept.

Several movements have combated this conservative basis, as seen through *Gurlesque*. Originating in Australia, *Gurlesque* comments on female sexuality in the form of a lesbian strip show. The company's premise is for women to "confront fears and insecurities...challenge taboos, both sexual, social and those to do with the physical body, to explode myths about body structures and what a patriarchal society dictates is sexy or attractive" ([www.gurlesque.com/about/about.html](http://www.gurlesque.com/about/about.html) in Crowley, 30). In the shows, women of all body types--"be they athletic, balletic, with or without rhythm..."--honor who they are through comedy or other performance. Granted the show is not in direct opposition to commercial photography as an arbiter of conventional desire, *Gurlesque* comments on homogenized practices in two ways: the program advocates a celebration of lesbianism and a realization of the female body as something not just for sexual titillation, but more so for the acceptance of differences in personality and appearance.

#### Discourses of the Commercial Image: Power

In addition to the discourse of desire, power transcends the physical bounds of the image and has the potential to inculcate a sense of control or more rarely, inferiority. According to Foucault, power "is carried out on individuals by themselves" through "'self-surveillance'" or "'self-government'", both of which "operat[e] to extract time and labor from bodies and to produce and constitute social norms" (Foucault in Anderson, Schlunke, 53). Here, Foucault argues that power, although incorporated into the individual's behavior, is a result of an institution impressing expectations for behavior. With a standard commercial photograph, the model may appear upright and looming, as in a recent image of supermodel Tyra Banks, but only lets the viewer bear half of her body in the light. Controlled, the model places one hand on her hip, almost impatient with the lack of action. With the other hand, she clutches her lavender garb, letting some cleavage slip, though not enough to detract from her fiery red hair exploding about the scene. The viewer questions if we are to serve her, or are we to acknowledge her forceful presence. As with the image, several commercial models, like Janice Dickinson, pride themselves on dominating the camera, not with sheer appearance, but with force only the camera can illuminate. We are drawn to the woman of power for her confidence and bravery; however, going back to Foucault, the power can encourage viewers to react to an image as one of inspiration to be as powerful or as a commanding constraint on how we should act[2].

Power may not be as obvious in other images. Referring back to the *Victoria's Secret* piece--initially analyzed for desire--the woman cocks an eyebrow at the viewer with a mischievous half smile, as if she were a queen setting her subject in place. Some viewers may say that it's simply a look of seduction. This is true, to an extent, but it is far from simple. While seduction and desire are in play, power is enmeshed in her stare, which results in the persona of a siren or a dominatrix. Since *The Bible*, women have been seen as the seductress; Eve luring Adam to the forbidden fruit demonstrates, from a misogynistic perspective, that women use their charm to secure control over men, which violates the authority women should have. Connecting to Mulvey, the woman who should be simply an exhibitionist has escaped her bounds, engaging and captivating her audience in posture and in expression. At first glance, this conflicts with the idea of a woman passively accepting the male gaze. However, the paradox exemplifies the power of the model: she seems innocent or naive, but in actuality she is a tempting seductress who invites the audience into the image, then entraps viewers to fall under her power. In the commercial image, we can therefore interpret a discourse of desire and of power, and often combine the two instinctively to form the concept of a seductive overlord.

### Abjection: Additional Tension of the Siren

Exploring disgust in the context of semiotics, Julia Kristeva discusses the abject in her essay, "Powers of Horror". According to Kristeva, what the individual cannot name or categorize is abject. What is abject lacks identity or association with what the individual knows or what breaches the Semiotic Order. Abjection "turns [laws] aside, misleads, corrupts...takes advantage of them, the better to deny them" (Kristeva, 15). Perverting the rules or laws of established cultural expectations, abjection transcends what one is comfortable with and evokes a reaction of disconcertion, unsettlement with a misplaced identification. If we compare blood donated versus blood in a sink, the blood donated is associated with a benevolent act and accords with charity; on the other hand, blood in the sink is disconnected from any kind of self, lacking in identity and disturbing in its isolation. The blood donated clearly establishes a relationship between an altruistic subjectivity and his flesh. The act is within a system of behavior and cultural practice, and the audience knows what to expect. Regarding the blood in the sink, there is nothing to frame or categorize the blood. We have no way of ordering the loose and free-floating mass. Abjection consequently disrupts system, order, and identity.

Abjection is located in connection with the body. Differing between cultures, what is abject to one group (or culture) can be different to another group. The way we conceive ourselves can also be threatened, and it is through this risk of losing our sense of self that we worry about not being recognized as our subjectivity.

As a link to commercial photography, abjection comes in as a friction to what is desired, what is beautiful. A recent Ralph Lauren advertisement shows a disproportionate woman, her head dominating narrow shoulders and towering over an overly pinched waistline. The Ralph Lauren ad is one of many that employ the use of a dreadfully skinny model. For the sake of classification, or to normalize [3] what is in view, one might say how the body of a model is abject, thereby labeling the unnamed. By linking abjection to models, it is possible to overcome the discomfort in having no classification or designated order.

In a different circumstance, after repeated exposure to images of this sort, each sight grasping more grotesque bodies in control over their surroundings, one may set the initial disgust in a hidden corridor of the mind and consider the images as common, even typical. As the individual continues to suppress abjection, each new image has the possible consequence of causing distaste with the self for not looking a certain way. To look at a mainstream photograph--airbrushed or not--with a suppressed sense of disgust and not have one's own subjectivity recognized may lead to destruction of the flesh. In not being represented, the distorted psyche [4] thinks that the occupied body is inadequate and thus not worthy of representation by commercial media.

### Asymptotic Ideals and the Corps Propre

From the aforementioned circumstance, the distorted psyche can either choose to "endure" the shame of not fulfilling a proper representation of the body, or the body may turn to altering the flesh. Kristeva's "Powers of Horror" also introduced the concept of the *corps propre*, one's "own clean and proper body". The idea centered on a pure, clean figure, bordering perfection. Referring to Proust's writing, Kristeva states, "if the object of desire is real it can only rest upon the abject, which is impossible to fulfill. The object of love then becomes unmentionable, a double of the subject, similar to it, but improper, because inseparable from an impossible identity" (Kristeva, 21). Because that which is abject cannot be classified, and desire relies upon the abject, desire cannot be classified and consequently neither can love.

Going back to the discourse of desire, if the object of desire cannot live independently from the abject, it is unable to exist, for the sacred feeling can no longer be recognized as a separate entity from that which lacks an identity in the cultural order. So, not only can we not *feel* desire, we cannot attain what we once believed was the *object* of our desire. The models in the images, riddled with the paradox of what is longing and what is revulsion, are impossible to acquire for the male.

Now, for the female who once believed that to be desired was to embody the discourses in commercial photography, the *corps propre* has devastating implications. To begin with, the female must come to terms with

## C. Bell

knowing that she can never attain the unattainable. If she does not, and continues to try to alter her flesh, hoping to change her subjectivity to a beautiful object of longing, she will fail. Worse than sheer failure, she has the potential to develop body dysmorphic disorder<sup>[5]</sup>--an obsession with trying to fix perceived flaws--or an eating disorder (Mayo Clinic, 2010). The body, furthermore, can come to represent Foucault's utopian body. Facing the reality of one's appearance, even in circumstances of good health, the body may be seen as an "ugly shell of [a] head", possessed within a "cage", forced to "reveal" oneself and "walk around" (Foucault, 1966).

Even without abjection, I'd like to emphasize that the *corps propre* implies that one cannot attain the perfectly pure, clean body, for if we idolize an airbrushed, technologically enhanced form as ideal, our expectations are not only too high but also grossly miscalculated. Sadly, however, this has become truth. According to recent results posted from ABC News, "nearly half of all three- to six-year-old girls worry about being fat" (Bloom, 2011). Though there may not be a direct cause-effect relationship between the standards of commercial modeling and self esteem in women, there may be some correlation between how we socialize young girls and how they interpret their bodies. From a personal approach, children may hear their mothers discuss diet fads, while their older sisters could be posting up cutouts from magazines for motivation for their exercise regimen. The consequence of the repeated desire to change the flesh could be internalized by the child as something to strive for, to always strive for perfection. In the same article, Lisa Bloom warns that "teaching girls that their appearance is the first thing you notice tells them that looks are more important than anything."

On the other hand, the "deject" may come about instead--one that "strays instead of getting his bearings" in a situation of abjection. The deject "includes himself among [abjections], thus casting within himself the scalpel that carries out his separation" (Kristeva, 8). For Kristeva, the deject refuses, in a sense, to be a victim of abjection. As an alternative, the deject is a "deviser of territories" that "never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines...constantly question his solidity..." (Kristeva, 8) The deject, therefore, exists in tension to his surroundings and seeks to separate himself from the cultural order. By pulling himself out rather than getting situated, the deject displaces the discomfort that comes with abjection, for "the more he strays, the more he is saved."

### Closing Remarks

Connecting to the deject, the critics of photographer Diane Arbus argued that she took pictures of freaks, when they were really just ordinary people. Arbus' images prove that we have been using a canon that is unrealistic and confront the viewer of their socialized preferences for beauty. In many ways, the people in her photographs are more normal than advertisements, but viewers have unfortunately applied the frame of the freak. Taking pictures of those never represented or photographed, Arbus--inadvertently or intentionally--gave representation to the subjectivity of the many, thereby combating commercial photography's use of few body types.

Dove's True Beauty Campaign additionally contests the idea of beauty or desire. The premise of the campaign is both a celebration of the unenhanced body and a realization of the ideals imposed on viewers through airbrushing and other photographic technologies using in the modeling industry. When we see a picture in a magazine, we tend to adopt this image as part of our canon because we are confronted with it so often, but if we just think about what it is to be desirable, we can avoid this. Since there is nothing in and of the image that can control us, we have the ability to change how we see what is attractive, what should be desired, what is perfect. Similar Diane Arbus, the campaign thus introduces viewers to the truth of our irrational view of beauty, and rightfully addresses the individual's need for self-acceptance.

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze was intended for cinema only; in this paper I will apply her ideas to commercial photography because the idea of the female image as the exhibitionist connects to the concept of female sexuality.



## The Paradox of Commercial Photography

[2] Regarding "how we should act", I don't mean how we are to treat the image or if we are enslaved to it. I believe that images, when analyzed for power, can cause us to question how we behave. Should we be shy, while the true power is reserved for women given control by the media? Should we try to embody this power? Should we try to escape the model's blazing look for overthrowing our sense of control?

[3] In this context, I use the term "normalize" as to familiarize oneself with something. The viewer doesn't necessarily try to make sense of the photograph as normal, but tries, in a sense, to make the image less abstract so that he or she won't feel abject towards what cannot be classified or rationalized.

[4] Here, I'd like to point out that this situation is far from universal; nonetheless, I believe (from personal experience) that in repressing the effect of abject images, one might replace the feeling with inadequacy or resentment with one's own body.

[5] Interestingly enough, Mayo Clinic listed risk factors for body dysmorphic disorder, one of which being "Societal pressure or expectations of beauty."



e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)

[HOME](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[USER HOME](#)

[SEARCH](#)

[CURRENT](#)

[ARCHIVES](#)

[Home](#) > [Vol 3, No 1 \(2012\)](#) > [Brody](#)

## Damming Brazil

### Thyra Brody

**Abstract:** Hydroelectric power is often considered a safe and clean alternative to the combustion of fossil fuels. Although the consequences to the air and atmosphere are lower, damming large rivers in the jungles of Brazil have a significant impact on indigenous populations and environmental ecosystems. This article examines such fallout and calls out for equity, and social and environmental justice. As the fuel of the last century burns out the hectic scramble for a tenable alternative is becoming an increasingly serious question mark. We would do well for ourselves, and future generations, to try and solve the environmental issues associated with energy consumption as opposed to simply delaying them.

**Keywords:** Brazil, hydroelectricity, hydroelectric dam, indigenous people, energy, Vali Company, Belo Monte dam

---

In the present century dams are one of many a nation's biggest development projects, as demands for watering systems, power generation, and water supply grow. However, such dam constructions often have great consequences on social and environmental issues.<sup>[1]</sup> The lives of ethnic minorities and indigenous tribes are especially affected and form the largest group of people who have lost their homes, livelihoods, and natural resources to dams.<sup>[2]</sup> The purpose of this paper is to investigate the underlying cultural significance of water for indigenous people in order to understand the extensive effects on indigenous tribes when new dams are built.

Brazil is one of the world's leading dam-building nations. About 80% of Brazil's electrical energy comes from large dams, and continued construction is seen as a strategy necessary to sustain economic growth. Opponents to this type of power urge the use of less destructive energy sources. In Brazil, there was a heated controversy over the 6 km long hydroelectric dam,<sup>[3]</sup> Belo Monte. Located in Para, Brazil, the area around the dam is marked by a sparse population and a large mining company, Vali. The Vali Company has the biggest mining plan in the world and exports a vast amount of iron to China.<sup>[4]</sup> The government says that the Belo Monte dam is vital for the development of the economy and that the dam would produce 11,200 megawatts for industrial consumption. Accordingly, Belo Monte is thought to provide cheap energy to the mining company, Vali. Further, it is thought that the dam would increase the power supply to over 22 million homes. One aspect of the controversy that has arisen is the notion that Brazilian people would be providing cheap energy and iron for the benefit of the Chinese instead of themselves.<sup>[5]</sup> In addition to this issue, a more critical question concerns the fate of indigenous tribes.

The dams have an immense impact on the cultural tradition and lives of indigenous tribes. Indigenous communities constitute the largest population to have lost their living environment to dams. The Government claimed that the indigenous tribes affected by the Belo Monte dam would be compensated and resettled;<sup>[6]</sup> however, these reimbursements are often insufficient. The number of people eligible for compensation or resettlement were often underestimated.<sup>[7]</sup> Before the dam was supposed to be built, tribal groups claimed that they did not receive enough information about the project but that they knew the dam would destroy the rivers, jungle, their living environment and their way of life.<sup>[8]</sup> The tribes would lose fishing areas and boat transportation, as the river dries downstream. Upstream there would be permanent flooding that would bring diseases and destroy ecology crucial to the peoples' survival. The very survival of indigenous tribes would be threatened and they would become homeless as a large amount of land would be flooded.

## T. Brody

Many people protested and indigenous group leaders even delivered signed petitions against the government project, arguing the negative future perspectives that come with the Belo Monte dam construction. There would be more corporations, land invasions, conflicts and vast effects on the world's environment.<sup>[9]</sup> However, the project has been ratified and most indigenous people will have to lose sacred land, change the boundaries of their territories, and relocate into cities.<sup>[10]</sup> It takes little imagination to see that such relocation has great societal consequences, as groups have to readjust to entirely foreign lifestyles and will most likely fall into poverty.

Indigenous cultures not only suffer the loss of territories and the hardships of adjusting to a new location and lifestyle, but also have to face cultural deterioration. In the Indigenous Declaration after the Belo Monte Auction, the indigenous leaders stated that their people have already suffered numerous threats in the past, many members died and they had lost many of their rights and substantial portions of their culture. Some tribes have even disappeared completely. The indigenous people claim that the Belo Monte will not only endanger their environmental habitat, but also their culture. Focusing on the Xingu natives, there are fourteen different tribes. All groups practice agriculture and fishing except the nomadic Kayapo and Suyá tribes. Accordingly, most natives nourish themselves mainly with fish and manioc. Fish serves as their primary source of meat. The manioc, which complements this diet, holds poisonous toxins that have to be leached out with water.<sup>[11]</sup> The water of the Xingu river is not only important for the indigenous tribes because of the significance of transportation and food, but the different indigenous groups see the river as their home. Examining the meaning of the word *Xingu*, the true significance is evident, as it represents "house of God." The destruction of this waterway would symbolize a cosmological catastrophe.<sup>[12]</sup> Furthermore, lakes and rivers are considered the home of community ancestors. The river serves as a canal to carry the recently dead to the pool of dead ancestors.

In Peru the subterranean rivers represent the mountains' veins, and the ancestors who reside in them create the local springs and distribute water and land to local communities. Indigenous tribes believe that water represents the cycle of life and that human beings emerge from subterranean water and travel back through the water after their death. From there they are thought to provide for the well-being of their descendants. <sup>[13]</sup> Similar beliefs can be observed in some African countries, as certain tribes of the Congo talk to the river because it is a familiar element and is full of spirits that are open to discussion. Comparable are indigenous peoples from Ghana who refer to the sea as "Mammy Water"<sup>[14]</sup> and in festivals bring offerings and sacrifices to the spirits of water in order to express their respect and gratitude. As indigenous tribes believe in a cosmic circulation, they assume that Pachamama is considered Mother Earth, a fertile female "being", that is a vessel for the passage of water. <sup>[15]</sup> The Mother Earth receives rains sent by God the father. In this context, foam and moving water are associated with semen and the masculine fertilizing principle.<sup>[16]</sup> Accordingly Pachamama's productivity depends on replenishing the supply of water and the proper circulation of water around the mother as well as through her. The Milky Way draws water from the river, then the water rains down to eventually flow back to the river, which renews the cycle of life.<sup>[17]</sup> In order to preserve the cycle of water, humans need to perform rituals in order to sustain the flow of life. For example, Indigenous tribes from the Andes act out rituals to bring about rain.<sup>[18]</sup> If they do not present appropriate offerings the mountain may replace water with their human blood.<sup>[19]</sup>

In addition to acting as the life-giving element, water is also a symbol of community relations. The ritual of exchanging water, creates and bolsters community sentiment and social solidarity. In the water exchange ritual, each participant brings water from individual sources and exchanges the jugs of water to symbolize the connection between the fertility of earth, water and all human beings. By circulating the water through collecting, mixing and re-dispersing it, the indigenous people simulate the circulation of water.

The significance of water for indigenous cultures is demonstrated by the fact that it holds great value across different cultures. In India, water is considered sacred and the rivers are greatly respected for their divine nature. Rituals and rites are performed to evoke rainfall in times of drought.<sup>[20]</sup> Further investigation of literature shows how water is also a component of many faiths and historical societies, from ancient Egypt, to Islam and Buddhism. There seems to be not only the material necessity but also a spiritual tie with water that makes it relevant to religion. In some African countries, water is not only a symbol of regeneration, purification, and life, but also represents the origin of the world. African traditions have numerous symbolic meanings attached to water. As it

symbolizes life, it can not only awaken the dead, but also kill the living.[21] Water is used by various healers, witchdoctors and Shamans in their respective ritual practices.

As water is used medicinally worldwide its crucial significance is celebrated. Water festivals, like those of the Andean communities, are widely present in other populations as well. [22] For example, in ancient China, sacrifices were made to the mountains and rivers. Despite the modernity of Japan with its advanced technology, water celebrations are still very much present in their culture. Vietnam is no different with regard to their celebrations of water. The Vietnamese pantheon includes not only the spirit of agriculture but also the goddess of water, which is often the object of popular worship and is never absent from any feast. Water festivals mark the end and beginning of the Burmese year, which is comparative to the Indian festival Holi. In Hindu temples the faithful are sprinkled with "peace water." In African cultures the rituals of birth are closely linked to water, as the newborn is sprinkled with water as soon as it comes out. Furthermore, Cameroonian fathers bless their daughters during marriage with water and plants to ensure happiness and marital bliss. Indigenous tribes of Mali believe that the Niger contains the spirits of their ancestors.[23]

Research shows how water is not only a necessity for humanity's survival, but is closely linked to indigenous rituals and has deeper underlying meanings for many indigenous cultures. The religious and cultural symbolic meanings of water serve as an important foundation for the many rituals that are enacted by indigenous populations all over the world, including Brazil. The underlying symbolic meaning of water enhances the complexity of the Belo Monte dam conflict, as it not only encompasses environmental issues important for the whole world, but also affects the economy and the prosperity of the indigenous people. In my opinion, it would be vital to expand the research and implementation of alternative energy sources and, for example, to adopt greater dependence on solar energy. It is important for civilians to have access to information about Brazilian development and the dam projects. Most importantly, the government should provide immense financial and social support for the indigenous people. In other words, it is not only important to compensate the indigenous people financially, but to also assist the tribal groups with adjusting to the city lifestyle. The vast effects of the displacement of people should not be overlooked and should be further investigated in order to recommend alternative methods or programs for adaptation.

Nevertheless, efforts to adapt indigenous tribes or assistance in resettling them to other locations could never be enough to ensure complete satisfaction of the tribes. No compensation to the indigenous tribes could make up for the loss of their cultural ties to water. Thus, losing their living space does not only imply the destruction of their way of life, but also the elimination of important religious and cultural practices. Eliminating the access of the Xingu river tribes to their local river would prevent their spiritual connection with their ancestors and disrupt the natural circulation they believe in.

#### References:

Allen, Catherine J. "The Incas Have Gone inside: Pattern and Persistence in Andean Iconography." *RES Anthropology and Aesthetics* 42, Autumn (2002):180-203. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20167578> (accessed November 5, 2011)

"Brazil: Indigenous tribes protest against Amazon dam." *BBC News*, September 24, 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-12399817>

Bouguerra, Mohamed L. "Water: symbolism and culture", *Institut Veolia Environment*. (accessed November 5, 2011)

Cacique Bet Kamati Kayapo, Cacique Raoni Kayapo and Yakereti Juruna. "Indigenous Declaration After the Belo Monte Dam Auction." *International Rivers*. published April 20, 2010, accessed September 30, 2011. <http://www.internationalrivers.org/xingu/indigenous-declaration-after-belo-monte-dam-auction>

Diamond, Sara, Poirier, Christian. "Brazils Native Peoples and the Belo Monte Dam: A case Study". *NACLA Report on the Americas* Vol. 43, Issue 5. p.25-70.

T. Brody

<http://ehis.ebscohost.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/eds/detail?vid=2&hid=115&sid=c3503dd4-7015-4ee0-a583-e2ee55390cea%40sessionmgr111&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVpZCZzaXRIPWVkcylsaXZl#db=aph&AN=53844167> (accessed November 5, 2011)

Emilia Carvalho. in discussion with Thyra Brody, September 2011. "International Rivers."  
<http://www.internationalrivers.org/latin-america/brazilian-dams>

"The world Commission on Dams: A Review of Hydroelectric Projects and the Impact on Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities." *Cultural Survival*. accessed September 24, 2011.  
<http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterlybrazil/world-commission-dams-review-hydroelectric-projects->

Schwartzman, Gabriel. "Brazil's Dam Shame." *In these times with Liberty and Justice for all*. published August 19, 2011, accessed September 24, 2011.  
[http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/11783/brazils\\_dam\\_shame/](http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/11783/brazils_dam_shame/)

Sikkink, Lynn. "Water and Exchange: Th Ritual of "Yaku Cambio" as Communal and Competitive Encounter." *Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association*. 24. no. 1 (1997): 170-189.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/646571> (accessed November 5, 2011).

Smith, Margaret A. Amazon-Indians.org. "The Indians of the Xingu: Cultural Homogenization in the Amazon Rainforest." Accessed November 5, 2011.  
<http://www.Amazon-indians.org/page16.html>

---

[1] "The world Commission on Dams: A Review of Hydroelectric Projects and the Impact on Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities," *Cultural Survival*, accessed September 24, 2011

[2] The world Commission on Dams: A Review of Hydroelectric Projects and the Impact on Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities." *Cultural Survival*. accessed September 24, 2011.

[3] "Brazil: Indigenous tribes protest against Amazon dam," *BBC News, September 24, 2011*.

[4] Emilia Carvalho. in discussion with Thyra Brody, September 2011.

[5] Emilia Carvalho, in Interview with Thyra Brody, September 2011.

[6] "Brazil: Indigenous tribes protest against Amazon dam," *BBC News, September 24, 2011*.

[7] "International Rivers," <http://www.internationalrivers.org/latin-america/brazilian-dams>

[8] "Brazil: Indigenous tribes protest against Amazon dam," *BBC News, September 24, 2011*.

[9] Cacique Bet Kamati Kayapo, Cacique Raoni Kayapo and Yakereti Juruna, "Indigenous Declaration After the Belo Monte Dam Auction," *International Rivers*, published April 20, 2010, accessed September 30, 2011.  
<http://www.internationalrivers.org/xingu/indigenous-declaration-after-belo-monte-dam-auction>

[10] Emilia Calvalho, Interview, September 2011

[11] Margaret A. Smith, "The Indians of the Xingu: Cultural Homogenization in the Amazon Rainforest", accessed November 5, 2011, <http://www.Amazon-indians.org/page16.html>

[12] Sara Diamond, Christian Poirier, "Brazils Native Peoples and the Belo Monte Dam: A case Study," *NACLA Report on the Americas* Vol. 43 Issue 5, p.25-70,

[13] Catherine J. Allen, "The Incas Have Gone inside: Pattern and Persistence in Andean Iconography", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 42, Autumn (2002):180-203, (accessed November 5, 2011)

[14] Mohamed L. Bougerra, "Water: symbolism and culture", *Institut Veolia Environnement*

[15] Allen, "The Incas Have Gone inside: Pattern and Persistence in Andean Iconography"

[16] Lynn Sikkink "Water and Exchange: The Ritual of "yaku cambio" as Communal and Competitive Encounter", *Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association*, 24 ,no.1 (1997):170-189, (accessed November 5, 2011)

[17]Catherine J. Allen," The Incas Have Gone inside: Pattern and Persistence in Andean Iconography, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 42, Autumn (2002):180-203 , (accessed November 5)

[18] Sikkink, "Water and Exchange: The Ritual of "yaku cambio" as Communal and Competitive Encounter"

[19] Allen, "The Incas Have Gone inside: Pattern and Persistence in Andean Iconography"

[20] Mohamed L. Bouguerra, "Water: symbolism and culture", *Institut Veolia Environnement*

[21] Mohamed L. Bouguerra, "Water: symbolism and culture", *Institut Veolia Environnement*

[22] Ibid

[23] Ibid





**e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)**

[HOME](#)   [ABOUT](#)   [USER HOME](#)   [SEARCH](#)   [CURRENT](#)   [ARCHIVES](#)

[Home](#) > [Vol 3, No 1 \(2012\)](#) > **Bryant**

## **The Bias of Neutrality: An Examination of a Congressman's Motivations on the Issue of Network Neutrality**

**Harrison Beau Bryant**

**Abstract:** The United States Congress is an institution that, especially in recent times, is continuously faced with more modern and complex problems. The political dilemma surrounding the issue of network neutrality is a perfect example of a highly complex and technical problem that members of Congress have been forced to think about and act on. Because use of the Internet has now been almost entirely integrated into American society, with nearly 80% of the U.S. population connected in one way or another, the Internet's priority as a subject of legislation has seen a meteoric rise in Congress ([data.worldbank.org](http://data.worldbank.org); [opencongress.org](http://opencongress.org)). In fact, many representatives in Congress have taken a firm position with regard to how they approach regulation and the Internet, though these positions can be a bit complicated because of the convoluted nature of the "free internet" arguments. This essay will narrow down the issue and look specifically at Representative Gary Miller's stance on "net neutrality," examining how party affiliation, district interests, and fundraising needs have influenced the Congressman's position on the subject.

**Key words, terms, concepts, names:** congress, congressman, internet, internet neutrality, internet regulation, internet service providers, ISPs, Gary Miller, FCC, David Cohen

---

In order to understand the two sides of the net neutrality argument, it is crucial to first gain a general understanding of what exactly is meant by the term "net neutrality." Network neutrality, defined most simply, is the idea that all of the information that is shared on the Internet ought to be done so without any priority, i.e., neutrally (FCC 10-201). Simply put, this means that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) cannot discriminate between content distributed over their networks. For example, ISPs could not arbitrarily cause a certain website to load more quickly than another website, though they may have an economic incentive to do so. The debate over net neutrality has reeled in some big-time commercial players. Companies that traditionally provide free services over the Internet tend to be in favor of net neutrality. For example, Google, eBay, and Amazon are all outspoken advocates of the policy, while major ISPs such as Verizon and Comcast are, for the most part, opposed to the idea ([http://www.google.com/...](http://www.google.com/)). In fact, David Cohen, the Executive Vice President of the Comcast Corporation, claimed that any regulation of the Internet "would likely do more harm than good" (2006). The debate reached its peak in 2010 when the Federal Communications Commission decided to release a report laying out its proposed "rules" of network neutrality, which it said would become the foundation for its policies concerning internet regulation (FCC 10-201). From 2010 to present, the debate in Congress has been framed by the FCC's proposed rules, with the two sides demonstrating their respective positions on net neutrality by either supporting or opposing the FCC's report.

## H. B. Bryant

As mentioned, the Internet has become such a pervasive and underlying issue in technology legislation that it would be next to impossible for a representative not to hold some kind of opinion regarding it. Representative Gary Miller of California is no exception. Miller has served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1999; thus, his congressional career has "grown up" alongside the Internet. When Miller began his first term in the House, only 36% of American households had access to the Internet. Miller, however, serves the 42nd District in California, which is the second wealthiest district in the entire United States. The median annual income of his district is over \$90,000 - nearly twice the national average. Because of this concentration of high-income households, it is more than likely that Miller's constituents have had access to the Internet for a greater amount of time than districts with a lower median income (Jansen 2010). The 42nd District is also notably well educated: 89% of the residents in the district hold a high school degree (national average: 84%) while 37% hold a college degree (national average: 27%). This means that Miller's constituents are more likely to be informed or at least interested in the decisions that he makes, because of the influence that education can have on one's political participation. Luckily for Miller, the 42nd District is a solid, Republican stronghold, consistently voting for most Republican candidates (elections.nytimes.com). In fact, over his time in office, Miller has been steadily reelected with at least 60% of the votes gathered in his district. His seat, however, is not as safe as it once was.

In the 2012 election cycle, because California's Congressional districts have been slightly redrawn, Miller will be going toe-to-toe with another Republican incumbent who has been widely popular in his district, Representative Ed Royce. The threat of losing his Congressional seat has no doubt heightened Miller's sense of urgency regarding the maintenance of his own image as a solid politician, and perhaps more importantly, as a solid Republican. He has begun campaigning in his district once again, this time with the realization that there is a chance he might lose. House campaigns are not an easy affair even when the district is relatively secure. Incumbents spend an average of just over one million dollars operating campaigns (Smith et al. 2011). During the 2010 election year, Miller spent \$749,000 for this purpose even though he had relatively little competition (elections.nytimes.com). In light of the newly redrawn districts and the heightened competition for his seat, it is likely that Miller will need to spend even more money this time around. In order to do this Miller will have to turn to his primary sources of campaign financing for help.

In previous election years, the majority of Miller's campaign contributions have come from the real estate and construction industries. The top two contributors to his 2010 campaign were the National Association of Mortgage Brokers and a company called Lytle Development. These two contributors donated \$19,000 and \$12,000 respectively (opensecrets.org). It is not surprising that the real estate industry would have an economic interest in supporting a strong Republican incumbent for Congress, especially one whose district is in Southern California. Republicans typically have a pro-business outlook towards politics, and Miller himself is no different. In his "Capitol Connection Newsletter," Miller continually promotes the Republican ideology of deregulation and supports the idea of the free-market economy (garymiller.house.gov). Therefore, real estate interests have plenty to gain if Miller is elected. Interestingly, though, the number three spot for top campaign contributor is held by a company outside of the real estate industry: AT&T Inc. Having contributed \$10,000 to Miller's 2010 campaign, it appears that the telecommunications giant also has a vested interest in helping Miller remain in Congress (opensecrets.org). Because it is highly likely that Miller will reach out to these contributors again, it is safe to assume that many of the decisions he makes as well as the actions he takes will occur with these contributors, as well as their interests, in mind. Miller, then, has to be significantly concerned with how these donors and his constituents will react to his issue positions. What, then, is the position he takes on net neutrality?

Miller has sided with the overwhelming majority of Republicans on the issue of net neutrality. He espouses the opinion that any regulation of the Internet is bad regulation and is harmful to the "free and open" nature of the

network ([garymiller.house.gov](http://garymiller.house.gov)). In order to make his position on the issue clearer, Miller, along with 79 other Republicans and 1 Democrat, cosponsored the "Internet Freedom Act" (H.R. 96). The bill's stated objective is to "prohibit the Federal Communications Commission from further regulating the Internet," and it is a piece of legislation primarily designed to nullify the net neutrality rules issued by the FCC. The FCC's rules, though they are lengthy and contain several prerogatives, have the general goal of promoting the freedom of the Internet by *protecting* it from ISPs and big-business. The FCC, in doing this, operated under the viewpoint that the Internet is currently not as free as it might seem to be because of the threat that the companies controlling it pose (FCC 10-201). Miller sees things a different way, though. He believes that any federal regulations of the Internet, even those designed specifically to protect and promote its freedom, inherently diminish that freedom and "hinder investments in new technologies and broadband access" (see Miller's email response provided in Appendix A). In his email, he argues that "since the Internet's inception, the network has been neutral;" this statement assumes that the ISPs and businesses have not affected the freedom of the Internet whatsoever. He calls the FCC's rules an "unprecedented move" and vows to stop their implementation at all costs. With regard to the issue of net neutrality, it is clear that Miller has an opinion and that he has no reservations about making it widely known. It is important to analyze how and why his issue position may be affected by the political pressures that he faces from his constituents and contributors.

Miller needs to worry about the opinions of his constituents because they control his job security with their votes. His stance on net neutrality, like his position on any issue, is probably motivated in part by a desire to appeal to his district. By talking up the harmful effects of the FCC's rules on "competition" and "broadband access," Miller solidifies his own position as being a positive influence on these two factors. Because residents of his district are comparatively wealthy, it is likely they not only desire basic Internet access but they also want the ability to access other quicker Internet connections as well. Miller uses his position to demonstrate that he wants the ISPs to have absolute control over their networks so that they have an economic incentive in strengthening their networks' infrastructures, thereby increasing competition and network access. Additionally, because his constituents are more educated, there is a good chance that they are aware of the options available to them as compared to the options available in the rest of the nation. Therefore, if Miller did not work hard to make sure that they had, at the very least, the option to get better Internet, they may begin to question his effectiveness. His constituents are only one aspect of his motivations, however, perhaps more important are the pressures that he faces from those who hold the money that he needs for reelection.

It is safe for Miller to assume that the organized interest groups that finance his campaign, most being private sector corporations which operate - to some degree - within his district, want to see him promoting the interests of business in general. With respect to net neutrality, his number three contributor, AT&T, is directly affected by his opinion on the issue. AT&T provides several telecommunications services to Miller's district, including: broadband access, dial-up services, and mobile access ([att.com](http://att.com)). All three of these services would be affected by the FCC's rules on net neutrality. For example, if the FCC's rules were to be put in place, then AT&T would not be allowed to block or impede the operations of a website that provides voice over internet protocol services which compete with their own telephone plans. Because of this, AT&T has an enormous economic interest in blocking the FCC's rules from being put in place, an interest that certainly exceeds a relatively small campaign donation to a single representative. Miller, however, is much more reliant on AT&T for his campaign finances. He needs to maintain all of his connections in order to successfully raise the necessary funds to operate his campaign every time he goes up for reelection. In addition, AT&T as well as other companies and interest groups have the power to send messages to Miller's constituents, messages that can either help or hurt him. Interest groups can use "scorecards" to effectively rate politicians based on how well they are working on specific issues; these scorecards then become quick reference material for voters. Taking this into account, it is difficult to believe that the interests

## H. B. Bryant

of AT&T and the rest of the telecommunications industry have not affected Miller's pro-business position on net neutrality.

Finally, there are the pressures that Miller faces from his political party. In this highly partisan era of Congress, Miller benefits from voting with his party on specific issues. Net neutrality, as demonstrated by the members who supported H.R. 96, is one of those issues. Nearly every Republican member of Congress feels that the Internet needs to be left alone and that it is especially not in need of protective Federal regulations. They voiced this opinion when they approved House Joint Resolution 37, a "largely symbolic" measure passed to show Congressional disapproval of the FCC net neutrality rules (nytimes.com). The measure passed on partisan lines, with 234 Republicans and 6 Democrats voting "yes," and 177 Democrats and 2 Republicans voting "no" (opencongress.org). As a member of the Republican Party, it would be unwise for Miller to go against the overwhelming majority of his fellow Republicans on an issue that seems so dividing, especially considering the fact that his district is composed primarily of Republicans. These political pressures end up being yet another influence on Miller's stance on the issue.

The debate over net neutrality has, to this point, been carried out as a proxy battle using the FCC's proposed rules for regulating the Internet; so far, no specific, broad legislation has been enacted by Congress that does anything but oppose or support the FCC's rules concerning net neutrality. In the future, it is likely that Congress will itself address the issue in a more comprehensive way by creating legislation that reflects its own opinions on the matter. The Republican Party and, more specifically, Representative Gary Miller, will probably remain true to the platform and support the interests of the big businesses that support them. Miller's position on the issue might come from preexisting convictions concerning neutral networks, but it is certainly not absurd to think that his ideology is influenced to some degree by his constituents, the funders of his campaign, and the other members of his party.

**References:**

Smith, Steven S., Jason M. Roberts, and Wielen Ryan J. Vander. *The American Congress*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2011. Print.

"Net Neutrality." *Google*. Web. 02 Dec. 2011. <[http://www.google.com/help/netneutrality\\_letter.html](http://www.google.com/help/netneutrality_letter.html)>

*OpenCongress - 112th Congress - Track Bills, Votes, Senators, and Representatives in the U.S. Congress*. Web. 02 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.opencongress.org>>

"World Development Indicators | Data." *Data | The World Bank*. Web. 02 Dec. 2011. <[http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators?cid=GPD\\_WDI](http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators?cid=GPD_WDI)>.

"New California Map Leaves GOP on Defense, If Slightly Less so - The Washington Post." *Washington Post: Breaking News, World, US, DC News & Analysis*. Web. 02 2011

Miller, Gary. *U.S. Congressman Gary Miller*. Web. 02 Dec. 2011. <<http://garymiller.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=270995>>.

"Campaign Finance/Money - Top Donors - 2010 | OpenSecrets." *OpenSecrets.org: Money in Politics -- See Who's Giving & Who's Getting*. Web. 02 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.opensecrets.org/politicians/contrib.php?cycle=2010>>

"AT&T High Speed Internet Access - Broadband Internet Service Provider." *AT&T | Cell Phones, U-verse, Digital TV, DSL Internet, and Phone Service*. Web. 02 Dec. 2011.

<[http://www.att.com/shop/internet/index.jsp?\\_requestid=1513260](http://www.att.com/shop/internet/index.jsp?_requestid=1513260)>.

"California's 42nd District Race." *Nytimes.com*. New York Times. Web. 2 Dec. 2011.

<<http://elections.nytimes.com/2010/house/california/42>>.

Jansen, Jim. "Use of the Internet in Higher-income Households | Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project." *Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project*. Pew Research Center, 24 Nov. 2010. Web. 02 Dec. 2011.

<<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Better-off-households.aspx>>

Cohen, David. "Hearing On Reconsidering Our Communication Laws: Ensuring Competition and Innovation." (Date: 6/14/2006). Available from: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41120.pdf>

Federal Communications Commission. *FCC 10-201*. 23 Dec. 2010.

H. B. Bryant

**Appendix A:** original email from Congressman Gary Miller

October 11, 2011

Mr. Harrison Bryant

6 Leonado

Rancho Santa Margarita, California 92688

Dear Mr. Bryant:

Thank you for contacting me to express your reservations about Internet network neutrality. I appreciate hearing from you on this important issue. The advent of the Internet has led to advancements that were unimaginable even a decade ago. I believe it is vital that we allow the Internet to continue to provide economic benefits to innovators and consumers.

Congress is currently revising the nation's communications laws. An important and contested issue under consideration during this process is Internet network neutrality. In a neutral network, all network traffic is treated the same, regardless of origin or destination, and all content, applications, and equipment are treated similarly, regardless of function, ownership, or implementation. Since the Internet's inception, the network has been neutral. Network operators allow the application and content providers free access to the network. However, network operators claim no incentive exists to continue investing in and upgrading existing broadband networks. Congress is seeking a careful balance to ensure that continued investment in new technologies and infrastructure allows for cutting-edge advancements to be made available for consumers and industry alike.

In 2005, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced four network neutrality principles, which have been incorporated into the Commission's policymaking activities. Since then, current FCC Chairman Genachowski announced an expansion and codification of the 2005 principles and the FCC issued a notice of proposed rulemaking. While a federal appeals court ruled that the FCC lacks the authority to regulate the Internet, the Commission has continued to seek ways to circumvent the ruling and expand and codify into law net neutrality. On December 21, 2010, the FCC adopted rules regulating the management of Internet networks.

Like you, I have serious concerns that the Commission's rules will hinder investments in new technologies and broadband access. That is why I have co-sponsored H.J. Res. 37, a disapproval resolution that if enacted into law would prevent the FCC from implementing these troubling regulations. You may be pleased to learn that H.J. Res. 37 was passed by the House of Representatives on April 8, 2011, and now waits further consideration by the U.S. Senate. As your Representative, you may be assured that I will continue to work to ensure that American consumers have access to the widest possible array of communications services and stop the FCC's unprecedented move.

Again, thank you for contacting me. I hope you will remain in touch in the future on other issues of importance to you.

Sincerely,

GARY G. MILLER

Member of Congress

**e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)**

HOME ABOUT USER HOME SEARCH CURRENT ARCHIVES

Home > Vol 3, No 1 (2012) > **Regullano**

## Filipinos Depicted in American Culture

**Eileen Regullano**

**Abstract:** From the early 20th century, Filipinos have been depicted as treacherous savages or as innocent children in America, evidenced in political comics and comments from the time. In today's society, even though the depictions are not as blatantly racist as they were in the early 20th century, Filipinos are dehumanized, exoticized, or idealized and represented in a two-dimensional way. However, this construction of the Filipino identity may be starting to change with the advent of more ardent vocalization by Filipinos with regard to the production of their images.

**Key words, terms, concepts, names:** Filipina, Filipino, exoticize, hypersexual, yellowface, Frank Dumont, white man's burden, Gene Cajayon, Desperate Housewives, The Debut

---

Part of the reason Filipinos were depicted so negatively in the early 20th century was because of the global political climate and the relationship between the United States and the Philippines. Shortly after the Spanish-American War was over and the United States gained possession of the Philippines, political cartoons such as the one titled "The White Man's Burden" from *The Journal, Detroit* began to spring up, depicting the United States as a paternal figure forcibly carrying a Filipino to a schoolhouse. This image shows the Filipino as extremely dark, implying some sort of evil or savagery within him. In addition, the fact that the US is carrying the Filipino, as a father might carry his child, implies that the Filipino is naïve and innocent like a child; a depiction of the noble savage. Not only that, but the Filipino seems to be wearing a grass skirt and appears to otherwise be naked, furthering the image of the Filipino as a savage character. The forcible carrying of the Filipino to the schoolhouse (which bears an American flag at the top) implies that the Filipino is uneducated and must be taught--not by just anyone, but by Americans--as if the Filipino knows nothing. Finally, the popular phrase "The White Man's Burden" scrawled across the bottom of the image is telling of the popular ethnocentric American attitude that prevailed at the time: a paternal philosophy that because America was educated and civilized, it had a duty to its "little brown brothers" (Filipinos) to educate them.

Around the same time, a one-act skit titled *The King of the Philippine Islands*, written by blackface veteran Frank Dumont, became popular. An example of yellowface, the skit follows Willie Danger, a "colored cook" who, "through cowardice and stupidity, brings about an attack by Filipino rebels on an encampment of American soldiers" (Lee 111). Danger survives and offers the Filipinos citizenship to a made-up republic over which he rules, at which the Filipinos stop trying to cook and eat him. Danger goes on to reap the fruits of the island and eventually dies by being blown up. The representation of Filipinos as cannibals once again conjures up an image of a primitive people. This representation also serves to "corroborate David Starr Jordan's contention that the native of the tropic lacks the capacity to participate in democracy. Finally, the image of the two colored peoples coming together to form an ersatz republic underscores the need for a policy that ensures white supremacy" (Lee 111).

## E. Regullano

Once again, we see the paternalistic idea of the White Man's Burden--the need to provide a form of government for the colored people because they can't provide one for themselves. Interestingly though, the offer of citizenship to the Filipinos mirrors the actual promises of the US to the Philippines of a free democracy. Interestingly, if one were to reinterpret the intention of this skit, these promises of citizenship to a sham republic could become a commentary on the betrayal (or at least perceived as such by Filipinos) of the US to the Philippines when it simply treated the Philippines as a colony rather than as its own sovereign republic.

A shift in the popular view of Filipinos began to arise when waves of Filipino immigrants came to the US around the 1920s and 1930s. "Anti-Filipino sentiment was rampant on the West Coast," (Min 140) as the Filipinos provided cheap labor and married white women. Filipinos were unable to own land (Min 140) and faced discrimination in many arenas. Many writers, such as the famous Filipino immigrant Carlos Bulosan, would later write about these experiences, while it is difficult to find any information on these sorts of incidents written by non-Filipinos (i.e. coverage in the news, etc.). Bulosan's novel *America is in the Heart*, published in 1943, included an incident in which a family comprised of a Filipino husband, a white American wife and their baby were refused service in a restaurant, the proprietor saying, "You goddamn brown monkeys have your nerve, marrying our women. Now get out of this town!" (Bulosan 144-145) The proprietor hit him and the Filipino retaliated; the proprietor and other white men in the restaurant proceeded to beat the Filipino until the two deputy sheriffs came to take him away. It reflects the high tensions between white Americans and Filipino-Americans at this time, making it clear that discrimination against Filipino-Americans was culturally acceptable. This is especially seen in the fact that the two sheriffs came to take the Filipino man away and not the white men who ganged up on and beat him. Bulosan's heart-wrenching depiction of this incident attempts to humanize and make real the discrimination with which Filipino-Americans had to deal.

A picture taken c. 1930 in Stockton credited to Sprague Talbott, made into a poster, also deals with the discrimination Filipino-Americans faced in the 1920s and 1930s. The photograph depicts a door with a sign saying "POSITIVELY NO FILIPINOS ALLOWED," and was later made into a poster with the caption, "WELCOME TO AMERICA" printed underneath the photograph. This representation of the invisible discrimination the Filipinos had to deal with is a stark, cynical one that neither romanticizes nor overly victimizes the Filipino. It is a realistic representation and commentary with these words added below the photograph.

Blatant discrimination against Filipinos (or anyone, for that matter) is rarely depicted clearly on television these days. However, in the 2007 premiere of the popular television series *Desperate Housewives*, Teri Hatcher's character is getting treated in the hospital and says, "Can I check those diplomas, because I want to make sure they're not from some med school in the Philippines." Filipinos were outraged by this comment. Personally, I vividly remember when this comment was made because my parents are Filipino doctors. They and all their colleagues, when they heard about this incident, were outraged that the ABC network would allow a comment like that to go on the air. Petitions, text messages, emails and phone calls were flying everywhere among the Filipino-American community when this occurred. How could any primetime television show allow such a comment to slip past censors? This racist joke really hit home for me and for many Filipino-Americans across the nation. ABC later apologized, saying, "There was no intent to disparage the integrity of any aspect of the medical community in the Philippines. As leaders in broadcast diversity, we are committed to presenting sensitive and respectful images of all communities featured in our programs." But by the time ABC apologized, the damage had already been done; my parents and all of their friends still boycott the ABC network to this day because of that comment. Frankly, if ABC were really "committed to presenting sensitive and respectful images of all communities," it wouldn't have let a joke like this slip through. The same sort of joke would probably not be tolerated for other minorities such as the African-American or Hispanic communities. That this comment could be construed as a joke at all says something



## Filipinos Depicted in American Culture

about the ethnocentrism still prevalent in American popular culture today that assumes that medical schools not in the Western world are inferior.

As a Filipino-American, I am directly affected by the representations of Filipinos in popular culture, and some of the most pervasive representations of Filipinos in popular culture come from jokes, like the one made on *Desperate Housewives*, and common stereotypes of Filipinos. I don't know what it's like not to have people make jokes around me like, "Don't leave her alone with your dog or else she'll eat him!" These jokes aren't always aimed at Filipinos by non-Filipinos, as in *Desperate Housewives*; within any community self-stereotyping is certainly a common experience that often serves to unify communities, especially those in the diaspora. A well-known (among Filipinos) example of this self-stereotyping is a "quiz" on the Internet titled, "Are You Really Filipino?" The quiz consists of a list of jokes about what Filipinos often do, say or have. (See Appendix A) These self-representations of the Filipino identity were intended originally to unify Filipinos using these culturally based behaviors as a "common root among all Filipinos" (Ignacio 131). However, some Filipinos denounced this list as a bad representation of Filipino culture. Someone from the Filipino-American newspaper *Philippine News* reacted to the list, saying that it is "'self-deprecating' and hurtful to the Filipino community." (Ignacio 132) This assessment is accurate in that this list can easily be misconstrued and used to essentialize Filipino culture rather than to acknowledge certain aspects of it (an "aberrant reading" as described in Martinez's writings on the construction of anthropological knowledge). When I first saw this list, as a 2nd-generation Filipino-American, I actually reacted in both ways. While I could relate to many of the descriptions of "Filipinoness" in the list, there were probably just as many to which I could not relate. The effect of only relating to half of the list resulted in, on the one hand, being able to feel like I was part of the Filipino community. On the other hand, the traits I could not relate to made me think at that young age that those traits defined Filipinos; I naïvely thought that true Filipinos had to do, say or have most or all items on the list. The effect of feeling half-in and half-out of the community allowed me to experience both the sense of community building that this representation of Filipinos offered and the feeling of being an outsider. Because the list was compiled by Filipinos, I didn't question the validity of the list, resulting in my own projection of essentialization.

This essentialization of Filipinos can also be seen in a similar list of jokes posted online by a self-identified white American male titled "You May Be Married to a Filipina If." (See Appendix B) This list of jokes is more problematic than the previous example because not only does it essentialize Filipinos (women in particular) in a condescending manner, but it also objectifies and exoticizes the "Filipina" (Filipino woman). The author feels the need to state explicitly after the title that he "loves his Filipina wife *in spite of* the following idiosyncrasies" (emphasis added). The author's ethnocentric attitude is evident here in his belief that the things defining his wife as "Filipina" are negative attributes he must overlook in his marriage. His condescension toward Filipinos and Filipino culture is also obvious in his wording. For example, the man describes that "Her friends are named Chinky, Girlie, Boy, and Bimbo and you are not allowed to smirk." His desire to smirk at these common Filipino nicknames betrays disrespect for Filipinos in general, and shows a level of condescension that is quite offensive. However, the most offensive item in this list is the last: "...You are pretty proud of yourself because you think that you snagged up for yourself some unique, rare, tropical goddess type until you go to the Philippines and can't tell her apart from anyone else in the whole country." The comment dehumanizes and exoticizes the Filipina; when I read the descriptors "unique, rare, [and] tropical," I could have easily thought the author was talking about birds. He idealizes the Filipina, putting her on the same level as a "goddess," rather than treating her as a person. Even worse, he lumps all Filipinas together; they are all basically faceless to the author; again essentializing the Filipina.

The exoticism and idealization of Filipino women apparent in this list by an American man is hardly uncommon in American popular culture. Films, television and literature perpetuate the stereotype of Filipino women as ideal

## E. Regullano

lovers who are hypersexual. Emily Ignacio describes how she and several of her Filipina friends "have also felt the effects of and have been subjected to many media images of Filipino women (and Asian women) as hypersexual: 'Hey! Are you Vietnamese? Filipina? Are you guys as good in bed as that chick in 9 1/2 weeks? Me so horny!'" (Ignacio 83) In the Canadian teenage drama series *Degrassi* (included here because it was aired in and popular in the United States), the Filipino character Manny represents this stereotype of the hypersexual Filipina, as well as others. Manny begins the series as innocent and cute, then is told she should change her image when she complains that everyone only ever sees her as cute. Afterwards, she begins hypersexualizing herself, wearing skimpy clothes and allowing her thongs to be visible above her jeans. These two extremes in her image represent the aforementioned stereotype of Filipinas as slutty nymphomaniacs, and also in the beginning of the series the common stereotype that any Asian girl is cute, innocent and shy. Throughout the series, this image of Manny as hypersexualized is perpetuated in several situations, such as when she becomes pregnant (and gets an abortion) and when she gets drunk and strips in front of a camera.

After this last incident, Manny's father kicks her out of the house. This also upholds the stereotype of a powerful, intimidating Filipino father figure, presented in this case as a villain. Yet later in the series, Manny locks horns with her father in her desire to be an actress and his wishes for her to become an educated young lady. Eventually, her father gives in but insists she pursue an education. They come to a compromise where she will major in theater but maintain a minor in science. Finally, we see an example of Filipino representation in the media in which a Filipino stereotype is somewhat deconstructed. The image of an intimidating Filipino patriarch is dispelled when Manny's father softens enough to allow his daughter to study theater. In this example we also see a stereotypical situation that is common among Filipino families, portrayed in the struggle between parent and child over career choices, though it is not resolved in a stereotypical fashion. Stereotypically, the child would lose the situation and follow what the father had prescribed. In this case, however, they become somewhat equal as they negotiate a compromise for the situation.

A similar conflict can be seen in the movie *The Debut*, conceived and directed by Filipino-American Gene Cajayon. The main character, Filipino-American Ben Mercado, wishes to become an artist, while his father, Roland, pushes him to become a doctor. Unlike in *Degrassi*, the Filipino father is a well-constructed, rounded character. *Degrassi* leaves the motivations behind the father's harsh behavior vague, and leave him as a rather flat character. *The Debut*, on the other hand, clearly shows that Roland's harsh behavior toward his son is not simply cruelty or stubbornness; rather, he is driven by his desire to see his children succeed after the sacrifices he has made trying to give them a better life than the one he led in the Philippines. This is one of the real issues facing Filipino-Americans that the film explores and represents, and it does so without romanticizing, victimizing or otherwise objectifying the Filipino. I believe this is the reason why it was so successful in the Filipino community despite having been a self-distributed, independent movie.

*The Debut* is the only example of a film I have ever encountered that I feel doesn't treat Filipinos this way, and is also the only film I have seen that had a Filipino-American director and writer and a predominantly Filipino or Filipino-American cast. *The Debut* is a good example of why "indigenous media" is so valuable, as discussed in Ruby's *Picturing Culture*. The Filipinos in the film are not flat, two-dimensional characters; they are not shown as the noble savage or as primitive beings, and they are not exoticized or idealized, as opposed to many representations of Filipinos made by Westerners that do.

This is not to say that Filipinos will never exoticize or condescend in representations of other Filipinos. Certainly in Bulosan's novel there are times when I feel he is romanticizing his cultural heritage. However, in my personal

experience I have encountered many more dehumanizing representations of Filipinos produced by non-Filipinos than produced by Filipinos.

Of course, my own identity as a Filipino-American may bias my views on the issue of Filipino representation in American culture despite my best attempts to remain (relatively) objective, so some reflexivity is warranted here. I grew up in a culture that had latent resentment toward Westerners--Americans especially, for historical reasons--and this may affect my views on the subject. It is also hard to evaluate just how much bias has made its way into this paper because there is very little scholarship on the specific issue of representation of Filipinos in American culture, and of the few resources available on the issue were produced by Filipinos or Filipino-Americans themselves. This being said, I would like to acknowledge again that Filipinos may sometimes dehumanize themselves, but examples of this are not nearly as prevalent or influential as those produced by non-Filipinos, in general.

Over time, representation of Filipinos has changed to fit contemporary audiences. However, for the most part Filipinos are still dehumanized and essentialized. Rather than being shown as noble savages these days based off physical appearance and lack of technology in the Philippines, Filipinos are essentialized and stereotyped according to culturally based behaviors. A step forward, away from the overly simplified portrayal of Filipinos in American culture, is exemplified in the film *The Debut*, which was directed and written by Filipino-Americans, and also had a predominantly Filipino and Filipino-American cast. The movie successfully presents Filipinos in a way that humanizes them, portraying them as a people with struggles: just like any other. The image of Filipinos in American culture needs to continue to be reconstructed in a way that will present them in a more humanistic light through a bigger voice of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans in cultural artifacts and mediums. Perhaps in a similar way the negative depictions of all minorities can be dispelled.

---

#### **Appendix A: Are You Really Filipino?**

Are you confused about your ethnic identity? Want to know just how Filipino you are? Take this less-than-scientific quiz to rate your "Filipinoness."

#### **SCORING**

3 points if you can relate to the following characteristics yourself

2 points if it relates to an immediate family member, i.e., Mom or Dad or sister/brother

1 point if you know someone who has the characteristic

#### **MANNERISM AND PERSONALITY TRAITS:**

1. You point with your lips.
2. You eat using hands--and have it down to a technique.
3. Your other piece of luggage is a Balikbayan box.
4. You always have at least three other people taking you to the airport.

## E. Regullano

5. You're standing next to eight big boxes at the airport.
6. You not upwards to greet someone
7. You put your foot up on your chair and rest your elbow on your knee while eating.
8. You use a rock to scrub yourself in the shower.
9. You have to kiss your relative on the cheek [sic] as soon as you enter the room.
10. You collect items from hotels or restaurants "for souvenir." [sic]
11. You smile for no reason.
12. You flirt by having a foolish grin in your face while raising your eyebrows repeatedly.
13. You go to a department store and try to bargain the prices.
14. You use an umbrella for shade on hot summer days.
15. You scratch your head when you don't know the answer.
16. You never eat the last morsel of food on the table.
17. You like bowling.
18. You know how to play pusoy and mah-jong.
19. You find dried up morsels of rice stuck on your shirt.
20. You prefer to sit in the shade instead of basking in the sun.
21. You add an unwarranted "H" to your name, i.e., "Jhun," "Bhoy," "Rhon."
22. You put your hands together in front of you as if to make a path and say "Excuse, excuse" when you pass between people or in front of the TV.
23. Your middle name is your mother's maiden name.
24. You like everything imported or "state-side."
25. You check the labels on clothes to see where it was made before buying it.
26. You hang your clothes out to dry.
27. You are perfectly comfortable in a squatting position with your elbows resting on your knees.
28. You consistently arrive 30 minutes late for all events.

29. You always offer food to all your visitors.

**VOCABULARY:**

30. You pronounce F's like P's and P's like F's.

31. You say "comfort room" instead of "bathroom."

32. You say "for take out" instead of "to go."

33. You "open" or "close" the light.

34. You asked for "Colgate" instead of "Toothpaste."

35. You asked for a "Pentel-pen" or a "ball-pen" instead of just "pen."

36. You refer to the refrigerator as the "ref" or "pridyider."

37. You say "Kodakan" instead of "take a picture."

38. You order a "McDonald's" instead of "hamburger" (pronounced ham-boor-ger).

39. You say "Ha?" instead of "What."

40. You say "Hoy" to get someone's attention.

41. You answer when someone yells "Hoy."

42. You turn around when someone says "Psst!"

43. You say "Cutex" instead of "nail polish."

44. You say "he" when you mean "she" and vice versa.

45. You say "array" instead of "ouch."

46. Your sneeze sounds like "ahh-ching" instead of "ahh-choo."

47. You prefer to make acronyms for phrases such as "OA" for overreacting, or "TNT" for, well, you know.

48. You say "air con" instead of "a/c" or air conditioner.

49. You say "brown-out" instead of "black-out."

**HOME FURNISHING:**

50. You use a "walis ting-ting" or "walis tambo" as opposed to a conventional broom.

51. You have a "Weapons of Moroland" shield hanging in the living room wall.

## E. Regullano

52. You have a portrait of "The Last Supper" hanging in your dining room.
53. You own a Karaoke System.
54. You own a piano that no one ever plays.
55. You have a tabo in the bathroom.
56. Your house has too many burloloys.
57. You have two to three pairs of tsinelas at your doorstep.
58. Your house has an ornate wrought iron gate in front of it.
59. You have a rose garden.
60. You have a shrine of the Santo Ninyo in your living room.
61. You own a "barrel man" (you pull up the barrel and you see something that looks familiar, schwing).
62. You cover your living room furniture with bedsheets.
63. Your lamp shades still have the plastic covers on them.
64. You have plastic runners to cover the carpets in your house.
65. You refer to your VCR as a "beytamax."
66. You have a rice dispenser.
67. You own a turbo broiler.
68. You own one of those fiber optic flower lamps.
69. You own a lamp with the oil that drips down the strings.
70. You have a giant wooden fork and spoon hanging somewhere in the dinning [sic] room.
71. You have wooden tinikling dancers on the wall.
72. You own capiz shells chandeliers, lamps, or placemats.

### **AUTOMOBILES:**

73. You own a Mercedes Benz and you call it "chedeng."
74. You own a huge van conversion.
75. Your car chirps like a bird or plays a tune when it is in reverse.

76. Your car horn can make 2 or 3 different sounds.
77. Your car has curb feelers or curb detectors.
78. Your car has too many "buroloys" like a Jitneys back in P.I.
79. You hang a Rosary on your car's rear view mirror.
80. You have an air freshener in your car.

**FAMILY:**

81. You have aunts and uncles named "Baby," "Girlie," or "Boy."
82. You were raised to believe that every Filipino is an aunt, uncle, or cousin.
83. Your dad was in the Navy.
84. You have a family member or relative that works in the Post Office.
85. Your mom or sister or wife is a nurse.
86. Your parents call each other "mommy" and "daddy," or "ma" and "pa."
87. You have a family member that has a nickname that repeats itself, i.e., "Deng-Deng," "Ling Ling," or "Bing Bing." Etc.

**FOOD:**

88. You put hot dogs in your spaghetti.
89. You consider dilis the Filipino equivalent of French fries.
90. You think that eating chocolate rice pudding and dried fish is a great morning meal.
91. You order things like tapsilog, tocilog, or longsilog at restaurants.
92. You instinctively grab a toothpick after a meal.
93. You order a "soft drink" instead of a "soda."
94. You dip bread in your morning coffee.
95. You refer to seasonings and all other forms of monosodium glutamate as "Ajinomoto."
96. Your cupboards are full of Spam, Vienna Sausage, Ligo, and Corned Beef, which you refer to as Karne Norte.
97. "Goldilocks" means more to you than just a character in a fairytale.

E. Regullano

98. You appreciate a fresh pot of rice.
99. You bring your "baon" most of the time to work.
100. Your "baon" is usually something over rice.
101. Your neighbors complain about the smell of tuyo on Sunday mornings.
102. You eat rice for breakfast.
103. You use your fingers to measure the water when cooking rice.
104. You wash and re-use disposable plastic utensils and Styrofoam cups.
105. You have a supply of frozen lumpia in the refrigerator.
106. You have an ice shaver for making a halo-halo.
107. You eat purple yam flavored ice cream.
108. You gotta have a bottle of Jufran or Mafram handy.
109. Your fry Spam or hot dogs and eat them with rice.
110. You think that half-hatched duck eggs are a delicacy.
111. You know that "chocolate meat" is not really made with chocolate.

***BONUS QUESTION;***

You understand this joke (make sure you read the punch line with a Filipino accent!):

How many bears were in a car with Goldilocks?

Four--the momma bear, the poppa bear, the baby bear, and the driver.

Tally your scores and see what category you belong.

**259-327 points:** Welcome to America! Judging from your high score, you are an obvious (something) from the Philippines. There's no doubt what your ethnic identity is! You're a Filipino, through and through.

**173-258 points:** Congratulations, you've retained most of the Filipino traits and tendencies your family has instilled in you.

**172-151 points:** You have OFT (Obvious Filipino Tendencies). Go with the flow to (something) Filipino potential. Prepare for assimilation; resistance is futile!

**50 and under:** You're white, aren't you?



**Appendix B: You May Be Married to a Filipina If...**

(written by an American guy who loves his Filipina wife in spite of the following idiosyncrasies)

\*Instead of a dowry, you got the whole bill for the wedding and the honeymoon.

\*Most of the decorations in your house are made of wicker.

\*You are expected to be able to read her mind just by watching her eyebrows move up and down and which way her lips are pointed.

All her relatives think your name is Joe.

Your in-laws take 10 years to acknowledge your existence and to call you by something other than "that white guy."

The instant you are married you have 3,000 new close relatives that you can't tell apart.

Your refrigerator is always full but you cannot find any food that you recognize.

All the desserts are sticky and all the snacks are salty.

You throw a party and everyone is fighting to chop the leathery skin off a roast pig.

All your kids have 4-5 middle names.

You try to call her up on the phone and someone tells you "for a while," and you want to know "for a while, what?"

You are trying to go to sleep and she keeps asking for the comFORT'r, and you ain't got a clue what she's talking about.

Your phone bills are all international and average 3 hours per call.

She sweeps with something that witches usually fly around on.

The rice cooker is on 24 hours a day and uses up 50% of your electric and food budget.

On your first trip to the Philippines, you have 18 giant boxes that weigh 1,000 pounds each and your "carry on" luggage requires a small forklift truck.

The first time she's pregnant you have to go out at 4:00 in the A.M. for some weird type of greasy sausages.

You buy a new \$500 freezer so she can store 200 pounds of SPAM that was on sale.

Everything in your house was bought on sale, even if you don't need it as long as it was a "bargain" is all that matters.

## E. Regullano

All your postage bills instantly double.

Her favorite sauce is called "patis," Americans call it turpentine.

She prefers bistek to beef steak.

She'll offer you a halo-halo with 2 straws for a romantic dessert.

You still don't know what's the difference between manong and manok.

Her homeland has more Megamalls than islands.

Before every holiday and visit, her sisters fax you a 10 page "bilins" list which says suggestion only.

Your kitchen table has a merry-go-round in the middle.

All the vegetables she buys at the Filipino store look like they were grown at Chernobyl.

Your in law's first visit lasted 6 years.

Her friends are named Chinky, Girlie, Boy, and Bimbo and you are not allowed to smirk.

All your place settings have the silverware backwards and there are no knives.

She's done her best job planning a surprise party for you if she manages not to tell you about it until a week or two before.

She "cleans" her closet by throwing all the crap into your closet.

You were married 5 years before she explained to you that "ARAY!" doesn't mean "ohh baby!"

And last but not least: You are pretty proud of yourself because you think that you snagged up for yourself some unique, rare, tropical goddess type until you go to the Philippines and can't tell her apart from anyone else in the whole country (unless she's taller than 5'1", then it's a bit easier)

### References consulted and/or informing this essay:

1. Agbayani-Siewert, Pauline and Linda Revilla. "Filipino Americans." *Asian Americans: Contemporary Trends and Issues*. Ed. Pyong Gap Min. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. 1995. Print.
2. Borah, Eloisa Gomez. "Origin of poster: Positively No Filipinos Allowed?" *Americans of Filipino Descent FAQs*. Web. 15 Dec. 2009.
3. Bulosan, Carlos. *America Is in the Heart: A Personal History (Washington Paperbacks, Wp-68)*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1943. Print.
4. *The Debut*. Dir. Gene Cajayon. Perf. Dante Basco, Bernadette Balagtas, Joy Bisco. Sony Pictures, 2003. DVD.
5. *Degrassi: The Next Generation*. The N. Television.

6. Ignacio, Emily Noelle. *Building Diaspora: Filipino Community Formation on the Internet*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 2005. Print.
7. Lee, Robert. *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999. Print.
8. Martinez, Wilton. "Who constructs anthropological knowledge? Toward a theory of ethnographic film spectatorship." *Film As Ethnography*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1992. Pgs. 130-161. Print.
9. Nepales, Ruben V. "ABC Studios sorry for racial slur on 'Desperate Housewives.'" *Inquirer*. 4 Oct. 2007. Web. 15 Dec. 2009.
10. Ruby, Jay. *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2000. Print.
11. Talbott, Sprague. *Positively No Filipinos Allowed*. 1945. Web. 15 Dec. 2009.
12. Van Gelder, Lawrence. "Film in Review; 'The Debut.'" *The New York Times*. 18 Oct. 2002. Web. 15 Dec. 2009.
13. "The White Man's Burden." Political cartoon. *The Journal, Detroit*. (Reproduced in) Miller, Stuart Creighton. *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1982. Print.



## e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)

[HOME](#)   [ABOUT](#)   [USER HOME](#)   [SEARCH](#)   [CURRENT](#)   [ARCHIVES](#)

[Home](#) > [Vol 3, No 1 \(2012\)](#) > **FFC 100.12**

### The Bad Boy: A Cultural Phenomenon

#### The FFC 100.12 Writing Collaborative

**Abstract:** The bad boy is a cultural phenomenon that exists as an archetype in all sorts of artistic mediums, though most prevalently in literature and film, and even in the real world. The bad boy is defined through his actions and his philosophy of resistance - of challenging the world (ours or his own) on the normalcy of its convictions. This article explores the ways in which the bad boy manifests and the vast categories he may occupy - from hero to criminal, introvert to public performer, or sexual deviant to authoritarian dictator. The bad boy is many things: a liberator, agitator, loner, performer, and above all a timeless icon.

**Key words, terms, concepts, names:** bad boy, social rebel, superheroes, villains, societal norms, rebellion, resistance, Captain Jack Sparrow, Kerouac

---

#### Introduction

Think of a bad boy - of any figure that this term calls to mind - and now try to define this term. This is the icon we studied in our course and this essay presents our discoveries. To define the term "bad boy" requires it be examined from multiple perspectives, acknowledged in its multiple forms, and understood within its distinct cultural meanings. The existing scholarly literature only addresses individual characters such as Tom Sawyer, for example (Geller). We studied the bad boy as an archetypal figure and the numerous categories into which he fits in order to better understand his relevance and role in relation to the rest of society.

Oftentimes a bad boy is not constituted by something one *is*, but by something one *does*. To "bad boy" as a verb is "to go against" and to convince others to go against. The bad boy therefore needs to be understood as a social, psychological, and imaginative/creative cultural phenomenon. The act of being a "bad boy" is usually attractive in some way while it can also cause readers and viewers to question the norm. By introducing difference and queering the status quo the bad boy serves as a release for our idic pleasures and liberates us from conventional social and moral customs, allowing us to question ourselves and to question if we too are capable of becoming this attractive rebel. However, just as often the bad boy goes too far and violates too many ethical codes and so repels us from him. The bad boy then may have a conservative effect, driving us back to the security of traditions and social controls. Whether he is altering a stable situation or forcing society to question its standards, the bad boy is always working to convey the maladies of society and illuminating the options for resistance and rebellion.

Throughout history bad boys have been prevalent in literature, film, and other variants of media. The significance of our interest and rationale for researching this cultural phenomenon is to present an alternative perspective on the topic of social and cultural change and a questioning of the constructed norms that society has put in place. Classic bad boy figures can be found in almost every period of social uprising and are deemed liberators and instigators of cultural and social reform as inimical to the society they are attempting to change.

## Writing Collaborative

### Bad Boy: The Liberators

Although the general use of the term "bad boy" erroneously labels them all identically, bad boys fall into several disparate categories. However, these distinct types of bad boys do share a common feature: their role as liberators in society. Bad boys can catalyze liberation on many different levels, ranging from the sociopolitical to the intrapersonal. On one end of the spectrum lies perhaps the most obviously liberation-oriented type of bad boy: the rebel. Rebels incite large scale emancipation through their overt rejection of societal norms. Some bad boys liberate not just the inhabitants of their own worlds but also their viewers or readers themselves.

How a bad boy is defined as a liberator is entirely based on his world view. This determines the bad boy's course of action: he may lash out as an act of resistance or rebellion against society, or instead shut himself away and become a luminary for the readers or viewers and guide them towards revolutionary thought. The bad boy's critical view reveals how they react to their surroundings and to society itself: it determines whether they challenge society head on or from the shadows, whether they protest with elaborate speeches or Molotov cocktails, and whether they are remembered as renowned public heroes or controversial social outlaws. It varies with each individual bad boy: some may not even have the conviction to state outright their desires for emancipation. Instead, their goals may be disguised in a comedic form allowing for plausible deniability of statements they make or actions they commit that society finds completely intolerable.

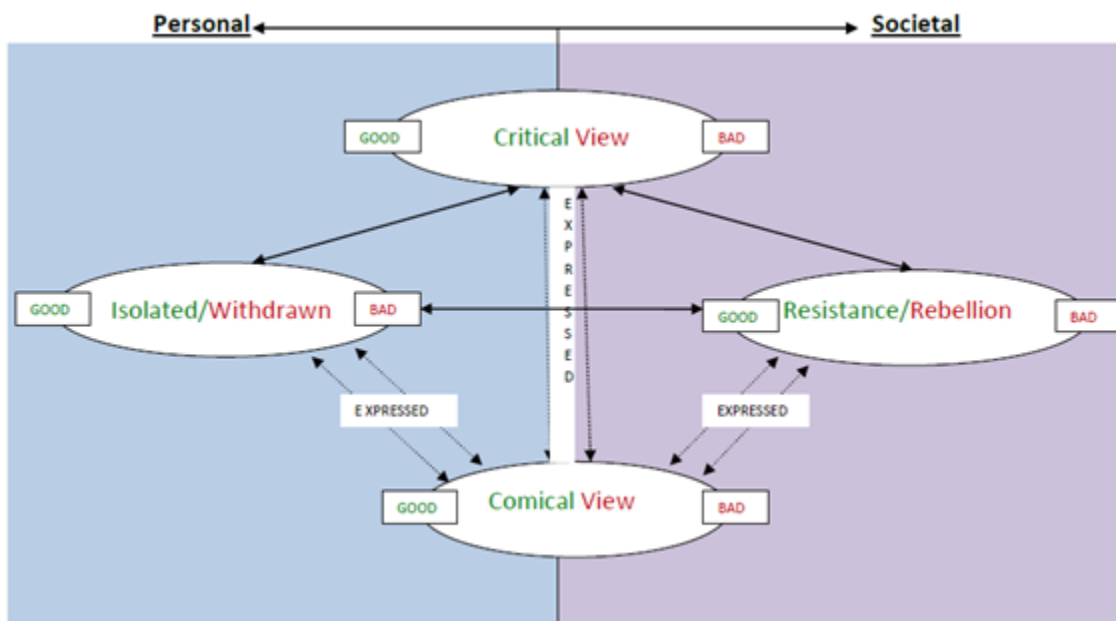
The bad boy's outlook shapes how we, the readers, view his world and how it functions. These black sheep in society surprisingly have the most influence over our recreation of how the story is told. For example a reader's conviction that Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* is a completely lawless world is a revelation that stems from Anton Chigurh's attitude towards his own life. The critical view of the outlaw character then defines what type of action they might take against society. Their method for coping with the "flaws" they perceive in the world then resolves into either insurgent characteristics towards society or a withdrawn approach involving a more internal and personal liberation.

Critical bad boys' otherness can manifest itself in two different ways: the rebellious or the withdrawn. The rebellious bad boy focuses his badness into inciting rebellion and literally liberating oppressed people. This bad boy usually appears in worlds with overtly totalitarian manipulative governments and the bad boy makes tangible the complaints and desires of his fellow men. One example of this type of bad boy is V in the film *V for Vendetta*. V lives in a futuristic United Kingdom where a fascist government rules with an iron fist and performs lethal experiments on disabled people, homosexuals, and dissenters. He fights against the power in an extremely overt manner by blowing up Parliament and inspiring the majority of citizens to rebel against their own government. V is definitely a bad boy for he believes in carrying out the justified murders of high-ranking government officials, and he fits the rebellious bad boy genus because he uses his "bad boying" to physically liberate people from government oppression.

Open rebellion is not the only way in which a bad boy can liberate people. Many bad boys liberate not the people of their own world but also the readers or viewers themselves. Obviously fictional characters do not rise up to incite rebellion in the real world, so it follows that the withdrawn bad boy liberates his audiences within the psychic realm. A solid example of this isolated bad boy is Mr. Kurtz from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Kurtz is not a liberator of people - in fact he practically enslaves the native people he lives among - but Kurtz's liberation is instead of the story's narrator, Marlowe, and of the audience through his philosophy. While V and Kurtz's respective bad boy qualities may manifest themselves in opposite ways, their methods of dealing with the worlds they occupy are both extremely critical.

Most rebellious and withdrawn bad boys present an incredibly serious critique of society, but oftentimes the most effective way to bring about change in the world is to affect audiences in a less heavy-handed manner; which brings us to discuss the comical bad boy. The comical bad boy succeeds through his presenting information in a way that the spectator will not find repulsive: by paralleling the flaws of society in a light-hearted fashion. A perfect manifestation of this can be seen through the characteristics of Captain Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Sparrow is a pirate who steals, womanizes, and mocks the legal system which is never able to catch him. After escaping the confines of imprisonment he states that officials will remember the date "as the day that [they] almost caught Captain Jack Sparrow". Sparrow is portrayed as an addled character which adds comedy to the entire situation and makes the audience instantly fall in love with him.

Why would it be beneficial to express liberation through a dim-witted character? In Jack Sparrow's case the fact that he is dumb and the government is not able to catch him demonstrates the ineptitude of the legal government system which, like him, is equally nonsensical, dumb, and even corrupt. The comedic bad boy parallels and illuminates these flaws in the society, and the standards to which he is being judged. Furthermore, the spectator is more open to receive such criticisms, because it is funny, and at a base level it can go unnoticed. When a criticism is put in a comedic way the speaker is able to step back from the offense to the spectator and assert that he is "just kidding".



- Bad boys have the ability to liberate at the personal and societal levels
- A bad boy with a critical view of society can liberate on both personal and societal levels
- A bad boy's critical view can lead him to become isolated or withdrawn on a personal level or become a leader of resistance and rebellion on a societal level
- The comedic bad boy parallels the evils of society and can shed a critical light on what is happening, which in turn can express the need for resistance as well as encourage the individual to retreat from social functions and live in an isolated manner

## Writing Collaborative

### The Conflicted Bad Boy

The multidimensionality of society means we cannot limit the bad boy to a specific category because the bad boy comes in many forms. Still, we know one when we see one whether it be a fictional character or a real life individual. Among these we find figures diverse as Batman, James Bond, Tupac Shakur, Mike Tyson, and Anton Chigurh. The way each one acts defines him as a bad boy, from *On the Road's* Dean Moriarty to Charles Manson. Despite their differences, all bad boys share a crucial connection: they are all internally conflicted. Batman watched his parents die in front of him, Spiderman felt the guilt for Uncle Ben's death, Jason Bourne lost his memory and with it his entire sense of identity. The internal struggle that the bad boy endures manifests itself through the bad boy's fashion, language, rugged individualism, and constructed persona.

The bad boy is in a constant state of turmoil: he is at war with himself, a war that both isolates him and works to erode his sanity. He resists his norms and he fights against his own emotions and conscience. This struggle takes a hefty toll on the bad boy, pushes him past his limits, and wears him down physically and mentally. For example, Dean Moriarty's urge to break societal norms causes his inevitable mental deterioration. Because Dean is so focused on queering the status quo he eventually loses his grasp of all concepts except for that of time. This mental breakdown is common among bad boys because when one's id seizes control the balance is lost and chaos ensues. This shift from order to entropy invites society to question the moral constitution of the bad boy, which in turn further isolates the bad boy figure. This sort of resistance is prevalent in all aspects of the bad boy's life since even he resists himself. To "bad boy" is therefore to embody resistance.

The bad boy and his resistance to society are also embodied in the bad boy's sense of fashion. Rarely is the bad boy seen in Vans, high socks, cargo shorts, and a white t-shirt. Instead, he expresses unique individuality through his clothing. He is not willing to be another cog in the social machine, because the bad boy wants to stand out: he wants to be the one in the spotlight. A prime example of the bad boy using fashion as a tool of social defiance is Lady Gaga. Her fashion sense is definitely unique and whether you like her music or not, there is no denying she is abnormal. For instance, Lady Gaga wore a costume made entirely of meat to the Video Music Awards. She used this meat suit to protest "don't ask, don't tell," claiming that we are all more than mere pieces of meat and need to stand up for our rights. In an industry full of conformity and falsehoods, Lady Gaga is a beacon of individualism.

In Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* Alex and his droogs use their clothing to differentiate themselves from the society that they are resisting. In all-white clothing and a bowler hat, Alex goes a step further with a false eyelash under one eye. By wearing flashy, unique clothing, the bad boy not only illustrates his defiance of cultural norms, but also displays his own individual character to the world.

The bad boy also defies society with his language. The bad boy's vocabulary and diction are weapons against the society that he despises. Bad boys possess a certain wit: they usually are skilled orators and able to convince others of what they believe or verbally tear them apart. Bad boys such as James Bond, Indiana Jones, and Captain Jack Sparrow all exude a charming quality when they talk. Their words carry weight and are uniquely their own. In *The Breakfast Club*, John Bender uses his words as a weapon against the other students in detention. His smartass remarks and verbal abuse are hilarious to listen to, but also carry a disdain for society (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsZkkqLDFmg>). Despite his humor and cruelty, Bender's words ring true and his critiques of the status quo are honest.

But not every bad boy possesses Bender's sharp wit: some are just extremely vulgar. Notorious rapper Tyler the Creator is known for his homophobic and misogynistic lyrics and he embodies profanity. His lyrics possess a shock value due to their offensive nature. With lyrics like "I'm a fucking paradox/no I'm not threesomes with a fucking triceratops" and "making crack rocks outa pussy nigga fishbones" (Okonma) there is no doubt that Tyler the



Creator goes against the social grain. Words are a powerful tool of the bad boy both allowing him to stand out as individual and lash out at the society that he despises.

The individualism of the bad boy is further shown by his accented personality quirks and eccentric behavior. Every Bond villain elucidates this notion: Jaws has metal teeth, Knick Knack is a midget, Oddjob murders with his hat. By embracing their oddities these characters are able to free themselves from the doldrums of society. To "bad boy" is to embrace what makes one unique - to embrace the individual - as Batman villain and bad boy Two Face (*Batman Forever*) illustrates perfectly. Two Face was not deterred when half of his body was horribly disfigured, instead he used it to his advantage. Acknowledging that there is a good and ugly side to everything - just as there is a good and an ugly side to him - Two Face becomes notorious for flipping a coin. By embracing his quirks Two Face found success, and in the process rebelled against the society that scorned him.

Just as Two Face constructed a villainous identity around his disfigurement, the bad boy artfully constructs a persona to influence how he is perceived. The bad boy society sees is exactly the person the bad boy wants society to see. Their very existence is dedicated to the pursuit of an ideal. The bad boy is a performer: he is playing a part. Such is true with real life bad boys like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin; both dictators developed a cult of personality. Through the use of propaganda, they appeared to transcend mere mortality.

In *V for Vendetta*, V adopts a larger-than-life identity. By donning a Guy Fawkes mask, V becomes more than a person - he becomes an idea. The same can be said of masked super heroes like Batman, Spiderman, *Watchmen's* Rorschach, and Iron Man. By putting on their masks these heroes make the transformation from men to the personification of justice.

### Questioning of Societal Standards

The bad boy is generally an appealing figure that excites us in some way. Although there is no single concise definition of the bad boy he is usually attractive: either physically or through his actions or his lifestyle. However, the function of the bad boy is not just to be entertaining. Within society bad boys serve to question standards and bring to light issues that they feel need to be publicly addressed. Thus the bad boy figure plays an important role in society no matter what form he adopts (the "bad boy" indeed does not have to be human, let alone a boy). The term is used to classify anyone or anything that questions the standards society has accepted as normal. Bad boys do not always question the same standards nor do they expose the same critiques. This diverse range of bad boys is part of what makes them bad: we can't group them all together as they are all so dramatically different. But one of the traits they do have in common is their questioning the standards of society.

***The Bad Boy Questions Gender Roles:*** In David Henry Hwang's play *M. Butterfly* the bad boy protagonist, René Gallimard, questions gender roles and expectations as well as social standards in the East and West, particularly in how we view our Western cultural customs as being superior to those of "the Orient". It is loosely based on the true story of French diplomat Bernard Bouriscot. The play centers on Gallimard, a married diplomat in China, and takes place during the time the French - and later the U.S. - fought in Vietnam. At a party he meets Song, a male Chinese opera singer who cross-dresses as a woman. They soon begin what becomes a twenty-year long affair, Gallimard believing the entire time that Song is a woman, and never realizing he is actually a spy. Until the very end the play mirrors the Italian opera *Madame Butterfly*: the story of a Japanese woman who falls for a white sailor and then kills herself when he leaves her. Gallimard believes he is with the perfect woman - a docile "lotus blossom". After the affair is revealed and he is ridiculed he can only say that he has been with the "Perfect Woman" (4). What made being with Song - his so-called Butterfly - so perfect? Well according to Song, "only a man knows how a woman is supposed to act" (63). Their relationship raises questions about cultural standards of

## Writing Collaborative

femininity. Every Western woman offends the standards expected by Gallimard in some way; they are loud, question male authority, and use offensive language, like his mistress Rene's term "weenie" (54). The idea that cultural expectations of women somehow seem to embody the "Oriental" woman, and yet can be fulfilled by a man, brings into question the boundaries of gender if it is biological or pure performativity, and if heterosexual normativity is even relevant. The ending of the play, in which Gallimard kills himself, reverses the end of the opera *Madame Butterfly* and once again questions the nature of gender roles and their validity. Based on an opera in which an Oriental is submissive to a white man, and referring to the Chinese as "Orientals," which could indicate any person in Asia or the Middle East the play makes it apparent that the West is extremely ethnocentric and views all other cultures as their subordinates. This view hurts Gallimard and his career because it leads him to believe that Asians are meek and wish to be tamed by the superior French. He predicts that the Americans will easily win in Vietnam (historically, that is obviously inaccurate) and when the Vietnamese continue to fight effectively for their freedom it ruins his credibility and he is sent back to France. Paris soon breaks out into riots and protests in support of North Vietnamese and communist ideology, proving that many aspects of culture are global and that underestimating or undervaluing the East is untenable. Hwang brings doubt that there can only be one civilized or "correct" society, which if accepted by the West would mean admitting to the value of equality. Though based on a real person, the true function of Gallimard as a bad boy figure is to question these standards and make readers reexamine their own interaction with cultural standards and normativity.

**The Bad Boy Questions Social Norms:** The antagonist Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is an extremely unconventional character who rebels against the standards of the society he lives in. His singular name alone challenges the normal standards and he has no known history. The townspeople think of him as evil because of his gypsy-like skin color. While at the home in which he was meant to be treated as a family member he becomes a slave. He is a unique character whose rebellion and behavior cause us to question the boundaries that society imposes. Heathcliff's actions prove that he is different from those around him. Even after his childhood sweetheart Cathy gets married he pursues her relentlessly, going against the moral standards of the time, and follows his romantic passion. He marries Isabella Linton - Cathy's sister-in-law - to hurt Edgar, who is Cathy's husband. Heathcliff is cruel to those he should have loved and protected including his own sickly son. He calls him cruel names and treats him like a pawn. Heathcliff even goes so far as to manipulate Cathy's daughter into marrying his son, in order to take revenge on Edgar and obtain his estate. He rebels against society in almost every aspect of his life, and yet even though he is cruel and overbearing readers still sympathize with him. He causes us to question the standards society imposed on him to the effect that we actually support his rebellion.

**The Bad Boy Questions Social Constructions:** Alex, the fashionable and hip bad boy of *A Clockwork Orange*, is perhaps one of the most shocking modern literary figures. At fifteen years old he is the leader of his gang of droogs: several other teenagers who commit heinous crimes with him for sport in a futuristic dystopian society. After many violent acts including a brutal rape Alex finally commits a murder and his droogs, sick of his cruel tyranny, ensure that he is apprehended and sent to prison. While in prison he volunteers to participate in an experiment in which society would theoretically be able to reform him, but while it renders him harmless it also leaves him utterly defenseless. In this helpless state he is used by politicians who accuse the current government of violating human rights but they are taking advantage of him in quite a hypocritical fashion. Alex only loses the ability, not the desire, to commit violent acts and in desperation to escape the music that automatically sickens him he jumps out a window. He is later deprogrammed and can return to his former violent repulsive self. The repugnance of Alex at the young age of fifteen calls into question what could have possibly made him the way he is. Although he is poor he is not neglected by his parents or treated in a way that could logically explain his fetish for violence. Therefore we conclude that forces within society have influenced him to his monstrous behavior. Corruption within the judicial system allows many teenagers to act as he does without consequences yet it treats

them as inhuman when they are apprehended. While we cannot connect with him, let alone bring ourselves to like him, he questions how society allows for the creation of the monster that is Alex by extolling the fear that he could possibly exist, and galvanizing the conservative effect of trying to ensure that he never will.

**The Bad Boy Questions Limits:** The bad boy exists as a kind of human question mark: he can challenge norms and uniformity in such a way that calls attention to and criticizes certain social constructs. Kerouac's *On The Road* is one of the most important novels in American culture largely because of how much the characters challenge the uniformity of the American identity. The novel takes place in conservative post-war America that revolves around Mom, God, and hard work. However, Kerouac's autobiographical journey exposes the true underbelly of this world in which bop and alcohol fly around the cities and people are sexually uninhibited. Dean Moriarty serves as the largest question mark of them all by undercutting all of the supposed tenets of his society. For one, Dean has no real family which is a fundamental part of the American identity. This serves as his initial severance from any root system in his culture. Furthermore, Dean is godless and searching for faith of a different kind. Because God is such a large part of the moral and cultural fiber of America Dean sets himself further apart; questioning God's identity, he is also questioning the identity of traditional America. But Dean is less a warning to society than he is a sign of change. Dean fits himself into a third category of American citizens; the first being a hard-working member of the American workforce, the second being the dropout punk who ends up with nothing and thinks he stood for something, and the third is Dean who works hard so he can afford big-ticket items like cars and has a family, but whose wonder and excitement are just as short-lived as the adventures that take him away from them. He commits only to adventure, in an eternal search for "it".

**The Bad Boy Is the "Other":** Anton Chigurh, in *No Country for Old Men*, embodies the "other" quality within the category. From a Freudian perspective bad boys are attractive figures because they appeal to the id's fascination with violence, resistance, and libidinal desires. It follows that bad boys represented in film and visual media tend to be sexually attractive to the masses. But Anton Chigurh is not a sexually attractive figure. The most physical description that is available comes from his name and his boots, neither of which is very descriptive. The closest Chigurh gets to women is when he is either about to kill them or when they have information about someone else he is about to kill. The novel as a whole does not lack romantic relationships, as we see with Llewellyn and his wife Carla Jean and Ed Tom and his wife Loretta, but Chigurh is a completely asexual figure.

Chigurh's actions could be the source of attraction, yet he is presented as a kind of emotionless force just murdering throughout Texas. We sympathize with characters who commit crimes when their motivations are rooted in good intentions, but Chigurh does not appear to have any normal human motivations. The closest thing to a driving force for Chigurh is the idea that fate and chance will determine who lives, as shown when he puts a man's life in the hands of a coin toss: "I can't call it for you. It wouldn't be fair. You stand to win everything," Chigurh said, "everything" (56). This man's life depends on whether he can correctly call heads or tails. Chigurh is noticeably irritated with him and has killed others for much less, yet he abides by the rules of chance and spares the man's life, even telling him to keep the lucky coin. Other criminal bad boys commit petty crimes that do not hurt anyone, or the victims have wronged someone else, and thus their pain can appear warranted. Chigurh on the other hand "others" himself by killing innocent victims. In his mind, the acts are justified, but the audience does not understand him. In fact, though mystery is deemed "sexy" in popular culture his mystery increases the terror. Yet because we are curious about him we are still attracted to him in a strange way (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhXJfczNlc>).

**The Bad Boy May Be a Principled Loner:** In Raymond Chandler's novel *The Big Sleep* Philip Marlowe challenges societal standards by following his own laws rather than those of society. He is not a regular police officer enforcing laws for the government: he is a private detective working only for the justice of his clients. In this way

## Writing Collaborative

he evades the norm of lawfulness while still appearing to be morally just. He is cold, jaded, sneaky, and troublesome, but he seems to soften these negative terms with his honesty and humility to the point where we almost don't pick up on the fact that he is a very bad boy.

His code of honesty is genuine but it doesn't encompass the same moral standards of his society such as obeying the law, treating others respectfully and politely, and practicing non-violence. Marlowe is honest to the point of downright cruelty at times, such as with Carmen and Vivian Sternwood, his client's beautiful daughters. For instance, in one scene in which Marlowe wants information from Vivian he attempts to seduce her into telling him. She gives in to the seduction, but will not give Marlowe the information he requests, so he bluntly and honestly states, "Kissing is nice, but your father didn't hire me to sleep with you" (151). While most people choose to be friendly and considerate Marlowe does not accept this norm as it is not beneficial to him or his duty as a detective.

Perhaps the biggest questioning of standards is Marlowe's refusal to abide by the rules. Marlowe does not see the laws of state as the highest code by which one should abide; he has predetermined moral values that he believes surpass the law in certain circumstances. Marlowe takes orders only from those who have hired him to complete a duty, and even then he does things his own way. In his final visit with General Sternwood, Marlowe tells the General, "You don't know what I have to go through or over or under to do your job for you. I do it my way. I do my best to protect you and I may break a few rules, but I break them in your favor" (212). Marlowe has carefully chosen his profession in order to best get away with defying the rules and standards of society (bravo, Mr. Marlowe!).

### Performing Bad Boys

Bad boys question uniformity in fields other than literature. In the realm of musical recording artists examples of bad boys abound. Where these artists show their individuality is particularly in their live performances, although some also question uniformity in their interviews and general behavior. This identity in music has existed in some form since slaves sang songs on plantations to pass the time under the unforgiving sun. They attempted to bring light into their dim circumstances on the plantations. In a way, their singing was a form of protest against their horrible conditions (see "Evolution"). As the music that the slaves sang evolved through the twentieth century it became more popular and its styles changed. It became the blues which promoted a similar style of protest against general conditions of the African American community. This became rhythm and blues, which subsequently gave way to rock 'n' roll. Rock spawned or helped spawn countless revolutions. By questioning the way things were in Western society, specifically in Britain and America, rock 'n' roll became a catalyst for much change. In the 1960s countless stars became such "question marks"; writing and performing music that called for a change in the way things were.

**The Bad Boy Resists:** The best example of musical bad boy resistance to norms is Jim Morrison who is the lead singer of The Doors. Morrison questioned the conservative ways of the typical America culture, just like Dean in *On the Road*, but he took it to a new level. He was often found drunk or high in public areas and was arrested on some occasions for his behavior. His most famous arrest came from a stunt he pulled during one of his performances during which he exposed himself on stage to a large crowd of adoring fans. Similar to Dean, Morrison questioned the boundaries of sexual freedom. On top of sexual freedom Morrison was challenging the norms of law abidance. If he could have fun and not directly harm anyone while simultaneously breaking the law then he felt others should be able to also. Because of him artists like the Red Hot Chili Peppers can perform on stage with nothing but a single, well-placed tube sock to cover their genitals. Most notably, the bassist Flea from the same band has been known to come on stage with nothing on but his bass. However, he has never been arrested for such behaviors, because Jim Morrison set up the standard for breaking the norms of musical performance.

**The Bad Boy Questions Belief Systems:** Rock 'n' roll took many different forms as it progressed through the late twentieth century, and with each form came a new set of questions posed by the artists. Through the 1970s, the band Black Sabbath pioneered what is known as heavy metal: a harsh and dark sounding music, with horror-inspired lyrics. The lead singer of the band, Ozzy Osborne, was considered to be a Satanist and was seen on one occasion biting the head off of a bat during a gig (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3V5IHg3opM>). Ozzy's supposed worshiping of Satan was completely against the ways of American and English culture largely because the two cultures were based on a Christian value system. After Ozzy came Marilyn Manson in the early 1990s: an outspoken Satanist and musical icon. Manson's stage name was highly controversial in that it juxtaposes two of America's icons: Marilyn Monroe (America's sexy sweetheart) and Charles Manson (America's most hated killer). This questioned the esteem we give to celebrities, because we give both the villains and the heroes the same attention. Not only did people attack Manson for his crude music and performances, during which he mimicked many sexual and violent acts, but he was also attacked for his personal life and especially his membership in the Church of Satan which directly challenges the tenets of Western culture.

**The Bad Boy as Transgressor:** Also during Marilyn Manson's rise to fame hip-hop music began to stake its claim in American culture. With this came the further questioning of sexuality and violence guidelines. One group has recently worked its way up the ranks through their obscene music and obnoxious persona that thoroughly questioned uniformity. The group Odd Future will forever be known as the wild Los Angeles teenagers who most heavily impacted hip hop music "not giving a fuck" (to use their diction). The group's leader, Tyler the Creator, stands strong amongst the rest of our musical bad boys with a signature attitude that seems to be everyone's guilty pleasure. His lyrics are dark and murderous but contrast his actual lifestyle. There are kids everywhere dreaming of living lifestyles parallel to any of the members of Odd Future. They get famous for creating the music they find interesting, doing things they think are funny, and the fan base follows closely behind; backing every last bit of madness.

### **Bad Boy Attraction/Conservative Reaction**

The bad boy is conflicted and the reader, not surprisingly, may be as well; with attraction can easily come repulsion. Therefore the bad boy can just as easily lead to conservative reaction instead of liberation as a result.

*On the Road* would not exist at all without the inspiring and attractive qualities in Dean; Sal's initial description of Dean exemplifies his stimulating qualities, as he describes him as "tremendously excited with life" (4). It is Dean who prompts Sal to go on the road in the first place. "With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road" (1), says Sal after Dean left for the west. Sal would soon after follow him to Denver. Dean's carefree attitude and sense of adventure influences those around him to change their lives and desires. Dean provides Sal with a different option in life; he creates difference and queers the status quo. Instead of living a normal stationary life Dean opts for a nomadic existence. Dean truly sparks the change in Sal's life as he questions the social norms by which Sal abides. Ultimately Sal goes back to his previous way of life but will never forget what Dean taught him, closing with "I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty" (307).

In *Fight Club* Brad Pitt plays a schizophrenic hallucination by the name of Tyler Durden. He is the projection of an unnamed narrator who is an emasculated introvert. The narrator has a dead end job and spends his nights going to support groups in order to release whatever emotions he is feeling. After the narrator's apartment blows up, he moves in with Tyler, who is in many ways his antithesis. To put it in Tyler's words, "I look like you wanna look, I fuck like you wanna fuck, I am smart, capable, and most importantly, I am free in all the ways that you are not" (*Fight Club*). Once they start living together the narrator's life begins to change rapidly. Together they create *Fight Club*

## Writing Collaborative

which is a secret club where men fight each other in order to release their aggression, with many of its members using it as a type of therapy. The idea catches on and fight clubs pop up all over the country. This ring of underground fight clubs soon turn into something more as Tyler begins Project Mayhem. The end goal of project mayhem is to destroy the credit system and modern society as we know it, as Tyler sees it; "you're stalking elk through the damp canyon forests around the ruins of Rockefeller Center. You'll wear leather clothes that will last you the rest of your life. You'll climb the wrist-thick kudzu vines that wrap the Sears Tower. And when you look down, you'll see tiny figures pounding corn, laying strips of venison on the empty car pool lane of some abandoned superhighway". The film ends with a final confrontation between the narrator and Tyler Durden. The narrator decides that he has no need for Tyler and destroys him (remember that Tyler is a figment of his imagination). Tyler is a bad boy, the narrator is not. The narrator uses Tyler in order to do what he subconsciously wants to do. Using Tyler, the narrator completely alters his own life; something he was too afraid of at the beginning.

Tyler Durden inspires the narrator similarly to how Dean inspires Sal. Without inspiration it is likely that Jack Kerouac, the real life Sal, would never have left the east coast in search of adventure. Without Tyler the narrator would have been unable to accomplish anything. Using Tyler he creates two organizations, he alters the lives of many, and in the end the narrator manages to destroy many credit companies which he finds evil. The inspiration provided by the bad boys is often necessary to incite change.

The greatest attraction towards the bad boy comes from his ability to act on his idic desires. His attraction derives from the viewer or reader because the reader wants to see his or her own self in another. Basically, the reader is attracted to the bad boy because bad boys are a fantasy without reality. A fictional bad boy can do anything without consequence which is what draws the reader towards him. A bad boy fulfills the fantasies of the average person by acting on the id, which according to Freud operates on the "pleasure principle," leading us to seek immediate and total gratification of our desires (Kagan and Havemann). Fictional bad boys can act in ways that can gratify the pleasure principle. James Bond does this by way of gunning down a Ukrainian terrorist or making love to a damsel in distress many times. The most obvious bad boy trait of James Bond is the fact that he's a no-nonsense kind of guy. Because he has travelled the world and experienced over a dozen near deaths and countless women, he is tough as nails and super suave. When somebody is in Bond's way he takes them down using various gadgets and skills. Almost everyone would love to have the ability to take someone down the way he does. Societal rules state that we can't, but James Bond can.

Unlike the attraction to James Bond most people would prefer not to act like Anton Chigurh (which doesn't make him any less attractive or any less of a bad boy than James Bond). "Chigurh shot him through the forehead and stood watching. Watching the capillaries break up in his eyes. The light receding. Watching his own image degrade in a squandering world" (McCarthy, 122): Chigurh is not likable, in fact most readers would want him dead but his attractiveness as a bad boy comes from how extreme and altered his idic desires are. People who have read the novel or seen the film become wildly interested in Chigurh because he acts through his idic desires in an incredibly disturbing way. Chigurh is a bad boy whose aggression has completely taken over; so much that his libido is centered on his enjoyment of killing things. An example is when he randomly shoots at a bird sitting on a bridge. There is no reason to try to kill it other than he just wants to. The reason that Chigurh's bad boy traits are so far off from James Bond's and other "attractive" bad boys is because his desires are completely altered from the average man. He is pure id transposed to pure violence.

This archetype of a bad boy may set up a conservative effect. In general, "conservative" in American culture has a Christian connotation though more broadly a conservative effect encourages members of society to maintain their roles and the status quo as determined by society. While initially audience members may find themselves drawn to bad boys' unconventional personae, by the end of a story such as Chigurh's audiences interpret the bad boy as

detrimental to daily society and their daily lives. On the surface films, media, and literature appear to display open-minded thinking, the definition of bad boy queering of traditional social roles. However, media depictions of the bad boy, even in the attempt to question common social mores, may further encourage conservative thinking. When the audience is exposed to differences in gender roles, for example, there is an underlying element of irony to the depiction of bad boys in transgendered and cross-dressing roles. Even when this effect is unintended it encourages conservative thought on gender nonetheless.

Bad boys and bad girls are often portrayed in female/male dress for comedic effect (rarely are transgender movies or shows seriously portrayed). Popular examples include comical cross-dressing films *Some like It Hot* (1959) and *She's the Man* (2006). Each features a main character (or characters) who "acts" as the opposite gender for a period for some desired purpose. Highlighting Judith Butler's theory that gender is performative, such characters suggest that the perception of gender depends on a series of actions (Salih).

In pop culture men dressing as women is generally more prevalent and considered more comedic than females pretending to be men, most likely due to the fact that it requires more effort for a man to act "womanly" than vice versa. Many types of masculine clothing that men wear or use are available to women (pants, ties, shorts, shoes), but there are more female products that men do not use (blouses, heels, dresses, makeup). Additionally it requires more feminine products to make a man "womanly" (wigs, shaved legs, heels, dress, jewelry, makeup) than it requires for a woman to be "manly" (short hair, bound chest, boxers, and shaving kits). Men are more "exaggerated" in terms of dress when disguised as female, whereas women must limit their femininity (including hair, makeup, and genitals).

In both portrayals of cross-dressing when characters are out of their "façade" they revert quickly back to their "correct" gender stereotypes. In *She's the Man* the main character Viola (who has a distinctly female name and is portrayed by Amanda Bynes) occasionally switches from her disguise as her brother Sebastian back to her normal self. When she does so she dons tight-fitting dresses and heels, even though she is generally depicted as a soccer-playing tomboy. Furthermore, at the end of the movie after fulfilling her purpose of putting her "sexist" ex-boyfriend to shame on the soccer field, she actually embraces her overly feminine mother's request to become a proper debutante. The act of becoming a debutante (gender roles requiring a woman to "come out," marking their availability in society for marriage) and the stereotype that women must have a happy ending with a man by her side encourage sexist conservative attitudes to the irony of the film. Likewise, in *Some like It Hot* characters Joe and Jerry pretend to be women in a female band to escape mob figures who are searching for them (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWS2NVX6VP0&feature=related>). Joe often dresses in his male form (but under the ruse of a millionaire Junior to seduce Sugar Kane, played by Marilyn Monroe). Joe acts as a gentleman and often "borrows" actual millionaire Osgood's yacht and ring to convince Sugar of his affection and money. While Joe has little money he furthers conservative thought that women must be taken care of in observation of conventional gender roles.

There is a libidinal aspect to cross-dressing films most of which feature a cross-dressing character as appealing to a "normally" heterosexual character. A straight female character, Olivia, falls for Viola/Sebastian as Viola/Sebastian falls for Duke. This gives rise to change in the norms of attraction as Olivia likes Viola and Sebastian likes Duke. The climax of the movie is reached when Olivia kisses and declares her love for Sebastian to the "real" Sebastian - the point being that the film conforms to conservative notions by preventing any "actual" homosexual actions from occurring - thus setting the conservative standard that "homosexual thoughts and feelings are okay," but homosexual actions are not. Olivia is visibly relieved when Viola explains that Olivia kissed her brother not Viola/Sebastian. Though Olivia marks Viola's/Sebastian's caring and sweet qualities (generally seen as female characteristics) as her reasoning behind her passion, when Viola/Sebastian turns out to be male she immediately

## Writing Collaborative

accepts a date from the true Sebastian. This appears to be a strategic move of Olivia's character to get back into conservative thought by "jumping back on the straight train" so to speak in order to prove her sexual identity. Now Viola is now free to stare dreamily (often shown in the movie as being comedic due to homosexual connotation) at Duke because she is now female and "normal" by conservative standards.

Although *Some Like it Hot* does contribute to conservative values, Jack Lemmon's character Jerry is clearly more of a bad boy than he is a beacon of the conservative view. Queering his gender role with the memorable line "Oh boy, I'm a boy!" Jerry becomes caught up in his role as the female Daphne and accepts an engagement proposal from millionaire Osgood (temporarily forgetting his actual identity /gender). This is uncommon within most comic cross-dressing media as most characters are depicted as separating themselves from their disguise (often forgetting their "pretend" gender, which leads to comic activities). When Daphne/Jerry admits that he is a man to his "fiance" Osgood, Jerry is only met with the vague response, "Well, nobody's perfect," leaving the audience, and Jerry, to wonder if Osgood is gay or loves Daphne's character no matter the gender. The conservative notion of gender is queered but becomes comedic in the eyes of the viewers. Rather than discouraging social constructs this scene actually embraces them, as the Osgood character is seen as "bizarre" and Jerry is seen as being the "sane" confused heterosexual.

Dean Moriarty in *On the Road* can create a conservative reaction in a way that changes the reader's mind about the appeal of the road. A major aspect of Dean's life that attracts many readers to his lifestyle is that he is essentially free. That does not mean that people in America are not free but it is rather saying that Dean brings out a whole new meaning to freedom. Dean is carefree and has no responsibilities to worry about. There is no work to tie him down and he is without a stable job. Dean does not have people depending on him nor does he depend on people for his survival. He is free in his travels to aspire to the true "pursuit of happiness": chasing after his dreams. Throughout his travels he is free to try new things, gather new experiences, and make many heartwarming memories. He has a laid-back attitude allowing him to have a worry-free untroubled view on life. That being said, Dean also has little to no moral concern. He parties night after night, sleeps with countless women, and lives the nightlife to the fullest. When things become too stressful or too tough for him he is able to go on the road time after time again.

Though Dean's lifestyle is attractive he also constantly finds himself in trouble whether it is with the law or one of his many girls. Breaking women's hearts is one of his specialties. He marries three different women and flip-flops among them. He doesn't have a stable family to go back to nor does he have true friends despite Sal. The women that he created families with learned not to depend on Dean: they know he's unreliable. With his way of living it is very hard for Dean to provide for any of his wives or children. He doesn't accomplish anything worth being proud of. Another worrisome characteristic to Dean's lifestyle is the fact he's continuously chasing after something new. He uses people and manipulates them to assist his travels in search of "it".

At the end of the story the conservative reaction has taken place in many reader's minds. Seeing Dean leave his families to fend for themselves the reader feels pain for them, and becomes aware that family is important to them, and that they want to provide for their family. People like the feeling of accomplishment, and they see that if they act like Dean they will not accomplish much. The reader feels a need to belong to society. Dean is a social outsider and the attractiveness of Dean's lifestyle diminishes. Dean's character ultimately suggests that perhaps one should remain in one's "proper" role in society. This conservative view encourages the status quo.

### **Bad Boys Are Forever**

In literature, film, and history, a broad spectrum of categories and classifications encompasses the bad boy. From Martin Luther King, Jr. to Gandhi to Hitler, he has invigorated us and at times he has deterred us. Political bad boys



have influenced the course of history as well as turned the public's attention towards social norms in need of reform. Bad boys challenge us to admit that changes are necessary but they can also indicate that current social norms should remain unchanged. Whether they are loved or hated by the public or even cause a social divide, these figures succeed in drawing attention to social issues and providing commentary on them.

**References:**

- Batman Forever*. 1995. Dir. Joel Schumaker. Perf. Val Kilmer, Tommy Lee Jones, and Jim Carrey. Warner Bros., 1995. Film.
- The Breakfast Club*. Dir. John Hughes. Perf. Molly Ringwald, Emilio Estevez, and Judd Nelson. Universal Pictures, 1985. *Youtube*. MovieClips, 16 June 2011. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. New York: Norton, 2003. Print.
- Burgess, Anthony. *A Clockwork Orange*. New York: Norton, 2011. Print.
- Chandler, Raymond. *The Big Sleep*. New York: Vintage, 1939. Print.
- Evolution of African American Music - YouTube*. *YouTube - Broadcast Yourself*. Lydiiajay, 13 Feb. 2009. Web. 09 Dec. 2011.
- Fight Club*. Dir. David Fincher. Perf. Helena Bonham Carter, Edward Norton and Brad Pitt. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2000. Film.
- Geller, Evelyn. *Tom Sawyer, Tom Bailey, and the Bad-Boy Genre*. *Wilson Library Bulletin* 51.3(1976.): 245-50. Web.
- Havemann, Ernest, and Jerome Kagan. "Introduction to Psychoanalysis." *Grounds for Writers: Critical Perspectives for Reading*. By Jeanne Gunner and Doug Sweet. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008. Print.
- Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*. New York: Plume, 1989. Print.
- Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. New York: Penguin, 1957. Print.
- Lee, Roger A. "Iron Man/Tony Stark." Digital image. *History Guy*. 10 Oct. 2011. Web. 6 Dec. 2011
- Mazur, Kevin, Kevin Winter, and Getty. "Lady Gaga's Meat Dress." Digital image. *Just Jared*. 13 Sept. 2010. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- McCarthy, Cormac. *No Country for Old Men*. New York: Vintage, 2005. Print.
- Mr. Crowley*. Perf. Ozzy Osbourne. *YouTube - Broadcast Yourself*. Karimisfan, 10 Feb. 2010. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- No Country For Old Men*. Dir. Joel Coen. Perf. Javier Bardem. *Youtube*. Binuthomz, 19 June 2010. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- Okonma, Tyler. "Yonkers." Rec. 10 Feb. 2011. *Goblin*. Tyler, the Creator. Tyler, the Creator, 2011. CD.
- Partridge, Kenneth. "Red Hot Chili Peppers performing in tube socks or nothing at all." Digital image. *Spinner*. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*. Dir. Gore Verbinski. Perf. Orlando Bloom, Johnny Depp, Geoffrey Rush. Walt Disney Pictures, 2003. Film.

## Writing Collaborative

Salih, Sara. *Judith Butler*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

*She's the Man*. Dir. Andy Fickman. Prod. Lauren Shuler-Donner and Ewan Leslie. By Ewan Leslie. Perf. Amanda Bynes, Laura Ramsey and Channing Tatum. DreamWorks, 2006. Film.

*Some Like It Hot*. Dir. Billy Wilder. Perf. Marilyn Monroe and Jack Lemmon. MGM/UA Entertainment Co., 1959. YouTube - Broadcast Yourself. Lozek3, 12 Dec. 2010. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.

*V for Vendetta*. Dir. James McTeigue. Perf. Rupert Graves, Natalie Portman and Hugo Weaving. Warner Bros., 2005. DVD.

**e-Research: A Journal of Undergraduate Work, Vol 3, No 1 (2012)**

[HOME](#)   [ABOUT](#)   [USER HOME](#)   [SEARCH](#)   [CURRENT](#)   [ARCHIVES](#)

[Home](#) > [Vol 3, No 1 \(2012\)](#) > **[Contributors](#)**

**Christina Bell**, whose Faculty Mentor was Kelli Fuery (Communication Studies), is a Business major who plans to pursue a Masters in Business after she graduates in May, 2015.

**Thyra Alexa Brody**, whose faculty mentor was Angeliki Kanavou (Peace Studies), is a Sociology major and a Peace Studies minor who is yet undecided about her future plans and will graduate in May, 2014.

**Harrison Beau Bryant**, whose faculty mentor was John Compton (Political Science), is an English Literature and Political Science double major who plans to attend law school after he graduates in May, 2013.

**Eileen Regullano**, whose faculty mentor was Stephanie Takaragawa (Sociology), is a Piano Performance and Keyboard Collaborative Arts double major and Anthropology and University Honors double minor who plans to pursue a doctorate in Anthropology or Music after she graduates in May, 2012.

NOTE: "The Bad Boy: A cultural Phenomenon" reflects a collaboration among all 26 students in Dr. Jeanne Gunner's Freshman Foundations class, fall 2011. These students are: Christina Bell, Austin Buerger, Carissa Callas, Timothy Cook, Kevin Gustafson, Megan Henretta, Lindsay Holt, Gregory Johnson, Henry Kuckens, Joy Lakey, Katie Leonard, Justin Martin, Kyle McGanty, Brenna McNabb, Alex Meixner, Darek Mendoza, Christina Monahan, Nicole Moy, Elise Muench, Karina Muniz, Robert Murray, Alexandria Nichols, Sten Olson, Elise Pertusati, Katerina Raff, and Michael Scott.