

**Cross-Cultural Cannibalism**

**Throughout Human History**

**By**

**Melissa Cochran**

**Advised by**

**Dr. Stacey Rucas**

**ANT 461, 462**

**Senior Project**

**Social Sciences Department**

**College of Liberal Arts**

**California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo**

**December, 2012**

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## **Research Proposal**

Cannibalism is a behavior that has been observed in humans all the way back through our evolutionary history. The aim of this senior project paper is to write a history of human cannibalistic behavior, as well as examine the motivations that would drive people to conduct such behavior.

Cannibalism has been witnessed earlier than anatomically modern humans inhabited this Earth; all the way back as far as *Homo erectus*. This behavior is not a one-time occurrence in our evolutionary history and can be seen in cultures as diverse as indigenous Fijians and as close to home as the infamous Donner Party. Not only is it seen in diverse cultures, but over thousands upon thousands of years, as alluded to earlier.

The history section of the paper will start with a suggestion of cannibalistic behavior in chimpanzees. It will then move on to evidence for cannibalism in early *Homo* species as well as *Homo neanderthalensis*. The paper will then address cannibalism of indigenous cultures, such as the Fijians, the Aztecs, the Hopi and the Anasazi of the Four-Corners area in North America and then the Iroquois Nation. Historical accounts of survival cannibalism will then be addressed, being the Donner Party, the settlers at Jamestown, the survivors of the Andean plane crash and then those who resided in Stalin's gulags of Soviet Russia. Lastly, examples of unforgivable acts of cannibalism will be presented in the cases of Edward Gein and Jeffrey Dahmer.

Along with the history of cannibalism, the paper will address different theories as to why humans will behave in this manner. Some theories include ritualistic sacrifice to gods, the

taking of a person's power by consuming part of them, mortuary practices to keep a part of the deceased loved one with the consumer, psychopathic behavior and the need for calories to survive famine.

The research will be done with books that have been located at the Kennedy Library at Cal Poly State University, SLO, as well as through books suggested by anthropology professors. Anthropological and scientific articles will also be utilized; found through the Kennedy Library website.

Overall, the goal of this senior project is to provide a comprehensive overview of the behavior of human cannibalism. This will encompass the history and prehistory of the practice.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Amaya, Adolfo C. "Regimes of cannibalism: a peripheral perspective on war, colonization and culture." *Journal of Philosophy: A Cross Disciplinary Inquiry* 6.15 (2011): 1+. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.

This article discusses how the presence of war, colonization and culture affected the practice of human cannibalism in South America. It will help add to my investigation of the presence of war as being something that instigates (and perhaps heightens) the instances of ritual cannibalism.

Arbogast, Rose-Marie, et al. "Mass cannibalism in the Linear Pottery Culture at Herxheim (Palatinate, Germany)." *Antiquity* 83.322 (2009): 968+. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.

This article is one that discusses the possibility of mass cannibalism in Herxheim, Germany. There were over 500 individuals found and it is controversial as to whether or not humans consumed them after they had died. (I plan on doing more research about this site and deciding for myself if it was cannibalism at this site. If I decide yes, it will go into the historical instances section of my paper).

Carbonell, Eudald, Isabel Cáceres, Marina Lozano, Palmira Saladié, Jordi Rosell, Carlos Lorenzo, Josep Vallverdú, Rosa Huguet, Antoni Canals, and José María Bermúdez De Castro. "Cultural Cannibalism as a Paleoeconomic System in the European Lower Pleistocene." *Current Anthropology* 51.4 (2010): 539-49. *JSTOR*. Web. 7 Oct. 2012.

This article discusses the instance of human cannibalism at Gran Dolina and Sierra de Atapuerca. It goes into detail about the archaeology of the site and how the scientists determined, based on bone examinations, that hominids were being dismembered and consumed at this site. This article will be used in the discussion of the instances of cannibalism in earlier *Homo* species.

Culotta, Elizabeth. "Neanderthals Were Cannibals, Bones Show." *Science* 286.5437 (1999): 18-19. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.

This article discusses human cannibalism as is evidenced in the time period and culture of Neanderthals. This article will be used in the historical instances of cannibalism as it relates to earlier *Homo* species in my paper.

Defleur, Alban, Tim White, Patricia Valensi, Ludovic Slimak, and Évelyne Crégut-Bonnoure.

"Neanderthal Cannibalism at Moula-Guercy, Ardèche, France." *Science* 286.5437 (1999): 128-31. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.

This article is, again, another look at evidence of cannibalism in *Homo neanderthalensis* at a site in France. Once again, it will aide in the discussion of human cannibalism in earlier *Homo* species in my paper, posing that perhaps cannibalism was an evolved trait.

Gordon-Grube, Karen. "Anthropophagy in Post-Renaissance Europe: The Tradition of Medicinal Cannibalism." *American Anthropologist* 90.2 (1988): 405-09. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.

This article examines the use of human body parts as part of a medicinal tradition in post-renaissance Europe. This article will aide in the discussion of what would drive people to consume other human beings' flesh; the psychological examination of the behavior.

Herrmann, Rachel B. "The "tragicall Historie": Cannibalism and Abundance in Colonial Jamestown." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68.1 (2011): 47-74. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.

This article, though not to be used extensively in the paper, references that there were instances of human cannibalism at Jamestown when British settlers first came to the New World (North America). This piqued my interest and now I want to research this instance of

historical cannibalism in more depth. It will go into the historical instances of cannibalism section.

Kelly, Angela Burroughs. "Cannibalism in the Sierra Nevadas: the Donner Party: when most people hear the words 'the Donner Party,' the story of the wagon train members who ate each other in order to survive their trek across the Sierra Nevada mountains comes to mind. However, new evidence from archeologists suggests that the cannibalism might not have been as grisly as initially reported." *The Forensic Examiner* Fall 2006: 63+. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.

This article discusses the fate of the Donner Party, which got stuck in the Sierra Nevadas during a brutal winter. The history of the party is examined in depth and it will go into the historical instances of human cannibalism. This is probably the most well-known instance of cannibalism in modern day history.

McCurdy, Stephen A. "Epidemiology of disaster: the Donner Party (1846-1847)." *The Western Journal of Medicine* Apr. 1994: 338+. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.

This article will also be used in the historical instances of cannibalism section of the paper. It will go into the Donner Party section of the paper and help build the history of what transpired between and among these people when they were starving to death.

Vardy, Agnes Huszar, and Steven Bela Vardy. "Cannibalism in Stalin's Russia and Mao's China \*." *East European Quarterly* 41.2 (2007): 223+. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Web. 8 Oct. 2012.

This information in this article relevant to my paper is that which pertains to the instances of cannibalism described in Stalin's Gulags. It describes the conditions of the Gulags and certain case studies of instances when cannibalism was reported.

## **Outline**

- I. Introduction
  - A. Definition of cannibalism
  - B. Overview of paper
- II. Ancestral Cannibalism
  - A. Chimpanzee cannibalism
  - B. Early *Homo* cannibalism
  - C. *Homo sapiens ssp neanderthalensis* cannibalism
- III. Indigenous Cannibalism
  - A. Fijian cannibalism
  - B. Aztec cannibalism
  - C. American Southwest cannibalism (4-corners region)
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- IV. Survival Cannibalism
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- V. Unforgivable Cannibalism
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  - B. Jeffrey Dahmer

## **Introduction**

Human cannibalism, in its most basic sense, can be defined as “the usually ritualistic eating of human flesh by a human being,” ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)). As with many other complex human behaviors, cannibalism warrants extra attention to detail. This is because of its extreme complexity with regards to the types of cannibalism exhibited throughout history and the motivations humans have to consume the flesh of their fellow species. Human cannibalism is a cross-cultural taboo in many societies and something that is heavily frowned upon by most people and cultures.

This paper will provide an historical overview of the evolution and distribution of cannibalism. It will begin with our nearest relatives the chimpanzee and our ancestors and common genus *Homo*. After that, it will examine examples from indigenous societies such as the Fijians, the Aztecs, the Iroquois and Native Americans of the Southwest. The paper will then explore historical societies such as the Jamestown settlers, the Donner Party and the Andean Plane Crash victims. Lastly, it will look at modern-day, unforgivable examples of the practice of human cannibalism.

## **Ancestral Cannibalism**

Cannibalism is widespread cross-culturally, has existed throughout time among our ancestors, and is still exhibited today among our nearest relatives the common chimpanzee. Therefore, cannibalism among humans may have a genetic component, in that individuals may

be predisposed, through the processes of natural selection survival advantages, to eat other humans during desperate times of need. An example of this might be the trade-off of eating humans as a last resort when not doing so would result in nearly certain death from starvation. In other words, 'eat or perish.'

Still others argue that cannibalism is a conscious decision. A decision that people can decide whether or not to make regardless of the situation. In essence, that human cannibalism is a choice to be made. This question can be taken just as seriously as whether or not people have a choice to choose their sexuality. While neither question has been answered yet, there is some evidence that cannibalism offers a survival advantage in particular times and ecologies.

The first evidence of cannibalism in our evolutionary past, but also witnessed in the present, is seen in our relatives the chimpanzees (Goodall, 259). There have been many instances documented by Jane Goodall during her studies in Gombe National Park in Africa. During her observations, there were multiple instances of chimpanzee females killing and cannibalizing "stranger" infants from other family groups (Goodall, 270). It is also well known that chimpanzee males are extremely territorial and that they often have border patrol and hunting parties to defend their territories (Stanford, 400). Chimpanzee males are the only other species, besides human beings, that exhibit homicidal aggression towards their own species (Wrangham, 7). This being said, while the females have been known to cannibalize "stranger" infants, males have been known to cannibalize, usually male, enemy chimpanzees from different family groups when out on their border patrols (Watts, 357). Male chimpanzees also commit infanticide, which is most likely a result of the sexual selection hypothesis. A male

chimpanzee may commit infanticide and cannibalize an infant conceived by rival males in order to make sure that his genes have the best chance of being passed on in the future, while at the same time gaining additional valuable nutrients. Male chimpanzees are physically aggressively territorial against other out-groups in order to protect feeding and mating space in general (Watts, 357). Intracommunity aggression is commonly witnessed in the chimpanzee world (Watts, 358) and this is where primate cannibalism may have its roots.

There is evidence for cannibalism among several *Homo* species. In particular, sites of *Homo antecessor*, *Homo erectus* and *Homo habilis* all show evidence of cannibalism (White, 508). Tim White and his colleagues discovered cut marks in the skull of the *Homo sapiens spp rhodesiensis* (Kalb et al., 17-25) recovered from the Bodo area of Africa (White, 504). This site is an example of a mortuary ritual and it is suggestive of early hominid cannibalism (White, 508). There have also been suggestions of early hominid cannibalism arising from the archaeological site of Zhoukoudian (Roper, 436). The way that the long bones of these humans have been split suggests that Peking Man was consuming the flesh of his own kind (Binford, 413). The techniques used in the breakage of the bones imply that the marrow and brains were being extracted (Binford, 413). Another important site is Level TD6 of Gran Dolina in Spain. Evidence here suggests the earliest example of cannibalism in the genus *Homo*. The specimen is that of *Homo antecessor* (Carbonell, 539). At Gran Dolina, the cut marks that were found on the skulls, zygomatic bones, and temporal bones of the human individuals all indicate that these individuals were skinned and defleshed (Carbonell, 545). The way that the bones are all broken is similar to the cannibalized remains found in certain Native American communities (Carbonell,

545). It is impossible to know why cannibalism took place during this time, but one theory is that it significantly increased the consumption of protein, which has a beneficial impact on the survival of any hominid.

*Homo neanderthalensis* also shows physical evidence for cannibalism. Several Neanderthal sites suggest the eating of human flesh. The case of cannibalism at Grotta Guattari in Italy is still contested by some. But, three Neanderthal fossils that were discovered at the site were the “icon for Neanderthal mortuary practices,” (White, 118). They provided the perfect example of mortuary cannibalism for half a century after they were discovered in 1939. Some of the evidence presented suggestive of mortuary cannibalism is that the intentional mutilation of the skull is identical to headhunters in Borneo and in Melanesia, who are known to have practiced a type of ritualistic cannibalism in the naming of their newborns (Blanc, 126). At Moula-Guercy, there were a minimum number of individuals of six Neanderthals, all of whom display evidence of being post-mortally dismembered, defleshed and then consumed (Defleur, 131). The evidence lies in the clavical cut marks found, the cutting of the achilles’ tendon and tendons in the elbow, cut marks in the mandible (evidence of cutting out the tongue) and cuts along the femur bones (Defleur, 131). All of these, along with the breaking of the bones to get at the marrow, are indicative of cannibalistic actions such as dismemberment, defleshing and consumption. Further, the Neanderthal remains were all processed in similar fashion to the deer remains that were also found at Moula-Guercy (Defleur, 131).

## **Indigenous Cannibalism**

The Fijian culture, the Aztecs of South America, the Natives of the American Southwest region and the Iroquoian Nation also practiced human cannibalism. These are culturally codified and morally accepted instances of human cannibalism. Though occasionally archaeological, they are typically historical in nature when examining the evidence.

According to Peggy Sanday (152), Fijian cannibalism is deeply rooted in Fijian culture. When asked why they practiced cannibalism, Fijians responded “revenge, a gourmet appreciation of human flesh, political ambition, masculine bravado, fear of the chief, or because it was the custom,” (152). None of these reasons imply that Fijians ate human flesh because of a lack of protein resources, but rather that it was simply an accepted part of the Fijian culture. The individuals that were cannibalized by Fijians were usually enemy warriors that had been captured in war and were sacrificed to the gods in order to gain *mana* (a sort of manly bravado, luck, life-force or status influence) from them (154-155).

Many European missionaries, who were some of the first to make contact with Fijians, puzzled over what to make of this cannibalistic behavior (152). They tried to attribute it to a dietary need or a nutrient deficiency, but the reasons that the Fijians supplied were solely cultural in nature. However, the emic reasons for this behavior as explained by Fijians may not match the etic ones, particularly since regardless of the cultural reason given by a society for cannibalism, eating humans always conveys a caloric net gain, and thus is the unifying theme in every circumstance. Still, some might argue that many Fijian myths of culture and creation

contain references to the consumption of human flesh (151-168), furthering the claim that cannibalism played more of a role in shaping their culture than in supplying them with a food source.

The Aztecs are another group of indigenous people for whom cannibalism played a large role in their societal structure. The cosmology of the Aztecs included a belief in many deities and one of their main goals was to appease the gods. In order to do this, human sacrifices were made on a regular basis for a multitude of reasons. The underlying purpose of human sacrifice was that the gods relied on the transfigured energy of human hearts “torn from the living body in solemn sacrifice,” (Sanday 171) to survive. As for the cannibalistic part of the ritual, the corpse of the sacrificial victim (a slave or a captive of war), after having been thrown down the side of the temple, would be collected by the captor at the end of the ritual. The captor would then take the corpse home to feed to his relatives in a stew (172-173). The number of sacrifices ranges from 20,000 victims to 80,000 victims from the time spans of a single day to a year (Harner 119). While the exact estimates of sacrificial victims vary greatly, what is certain is that many people were sacrificed to the gods on these temple altars (often atop great pyramids). The two most reliable sources of the accounts of cannibalism in Aztec society were the Spanish explorers and conquistadores Hernán Cortés and Bernal Díaz. They wrote eye witness, terrifying accounts in documents that were sent back to the King in Spain, Charles V (120).

There are two competing theories about why cannibalism and ritual sacrifice took place among the Aztecs. One perspective, of cultural underpinnings, is that it was a response to an ecological problem. This problem was population pressure and the resulting famine (Harner

118). Michael Harner is the main proponent of the hypothesis that population pressure led the Aztecs to this ritual behavior of human sacrifice and then cannibalism of the victims. The hypothesis states that the population growth of the Aztec empire led to intensified resource use which, in turn, led to famine during times of drought. Harner argues that the majority of the population had to get their protein from a mix of maize and beans and that, in order to obtain the eight essential amino acids needed to survive, the commoners would have to consume vast quantities of these resources simultaneously (129). He also points out that, in accordance with population pressure theory, as time went on and population grew, there would be an increase in sacrificial victims, leading to more meat for the common people to consume. This increase did, in fact, occur (128). In response to Harner's research and publication of his findings, de Montellano argues the opposite. He says that the consumption of human flesh had naught to do with protein consumption, but rather that it was strongly rooted in the culture of the Aztec people. De Montellano's first rebuttal to Harner's thesis is that the consumption of human protein did not provide a large enough increase in protein intake to be considered significant. He further asserts that only the upper 25% of the population were allowed to consume this source of food and that the amount they did consume was negligible (de Montellano 611). Increased protein consumption among the elite is seen in all stratified societies, and is therefore a cultural factor and not a response to a protein deficit, invalidating Harner's argument. De Montellano next argues that the Aztecs ate a wide variety of food, much larger than the one that Westerners consume today, and that they had ample sources of protein apart from maize and beans (612); human flesh was not needed to supplement their available diet to maintain adequate nutrition for the entire population.

The next part of Harner's thesis that de Montellano refutes is that increased cannibalism, an unusual behavior, was a response to population pressure. De Montellano argues that if there was population pressure that resulted in shortages of food, the normal response would not be an increase in an abnormal behavior, but rather intensification of agriculture or in conquests of neighboring areas for their resources (614). The intensification of agriculture and an increase in the number of neighboring areas that were conquered both occurred. The last rebuttal to Harner's thesis is that if there were a need for the increase in protein for the commoner, then why would he fight so valiantly at a young age to gain notoriety? The status gain and the ability to consume the flesh would take years to accomplish, doing nothing in the short-term. Only the upper 25% of society had the ability to consume this flesh (615) and therefore it did not make much sense for those of lower social status to fight to gain notoriety. This is because, in all reality, the notoriety would not benefit them nutritionally when food was needed most (615). A famine is something that happens in the present and starvation would require a solution immediately, not years later. The answer to this rebuttal is that it is not uncommon to see those at the bottom of society take greater risks to gain access to resources that are restricted due to a cultural rule, not just because of a momentary shortage of resources. Though both Harner and de Montellano have valid arguments, the evidence for cannibalism being a culturally proscribed occurrence in the Aztec society is much stronger.

Native Americans (the Hopi and the Anasazi) of the four-corners area of North America are also believed to have practiced cannibalistic rituals. It is important to note that the context in which the bones were discovered also implies the consumption of human flesh. The human

bones appear to have been processed and disposed of in the same manner that animal bones were (Turner 421), implying that they were used for the same purpose as the animals, which was to be consumed. The remains in question were not buried with any kind of ceremony (430), as a burial ritual would indicate, but were rather tossed aside as in a manner similar to any other item of refuse.

Christy Turner identifies what he believes are the six defining characteristics of cannibalism in the American Southwest in one of his articles. This article examines the remains of individuals found in Small House in the Chaco Canyon area excavated by Frank Roberts in 1926. The six types of damage indicative of American Southwest cannibalism are bone fragment polishing, a large number of missing vertebrae, cranial and postcranial bone breakage, presence of anvil-hammerstone abrasions, burning of the bones and cut marks (Turner 421).

Even though there were not a large number of vertebrae missing at the Small House assemblage, it is widely accepted as an indicator of cannibalism because the missing vertebrae were broken and processed in order to extract and consume the oil, similar to the way that long bones are broken open to obtain the marrow inside (422). The cut marks indicate that the body was dismembered in order to be consumed and the bone fragment polishing is a result of bones being boiled to remove the flesh (422). As they are boiled, they become polished from the repetitious bumping against the sides of the pot.

The anvil-hammerstone abrasions at Small House indicate that bones were broken and that marrow was extracted for the purpose of consumption. The abrasions also show that the

bones had been defleshed before they were broken (426). The marks on the bones would not look the way they do if the flesh had been on the bones at the time the breakage occurred (426). The burn marks are evidence of the body parts being roasted before being consumed (422). The cranial and postcranial bone breakage indicates that the brain was removed from the skull, postmortem, presumably to be consumed (421). The last thing that suggests that these individuals were cannibalized is a certain lack of damage; there were no signs of weathering or of sun bleaching on the bones, which leads to the conclusion that the damage done to them was not caused by the elements (428), but rather by human destruction.

The Iroquois nation is also believed to have practiced human cannibalism. According to *Divine Hunger* written by Sanday, “the motive for cannibalism was to appease the appetite of the war god who demanded that captives be taken and eaten. The motive for torture was to avenge the death of a family member lost in war,” (125). The Iroquois have a reputation for not only cannibalizing their victims, but of first inflicting extreme torture on the individual.

The evidence for Iroquoian cannibalism comes not from the archaeological record, but rather from historical accounts of missionaries who worked with the Iroquois and the Huron nations, both of whom warred with each other. Most of the accounts of cannibalism come from *The Jesuit Relations*, which is a compilation of accounts from Jesuit missionaries in the area. The accounts take place during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the Iroquois were reported to practice cannibalism all the way up until 1756 (Sanday 125). There are also numerous Dutch, English, and French accounts of captives witnessing the fates of their comrades who were tortured, cut up and eaten in front of them (Abler 314).

One researcher, William Arens, questions whether or not Iroquoian cannibalism actually took place based on the historical facts. In his book, *The Man-eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy*, Arens argues that there are no actual first-hand accounts of Iroquoian human cannibalism (129). Thomas Abler, however rebuts Arens's assertions that cannibalism among the Iroquois was fictional on the basis that the accounts in *The Jesuit Relations* are all consistent and are extremely numerous. Abler does not believe that the Jesuits would go to such lengths to produce "Jesuit propaganda," (Abler 313). Abler concludes that the only way anyone could possibly deny Iroquoian cannibalism is through sheer naiveté of the numerous accounts found all throughout anthropological literature (314).

### **Survival Cannibalism**

The story of the Donner Party is one of The American Dream. A story of people making a move in hopes of finding better fortune for their families. This was a move of Westward Expansion. The Donner Party started out as twenty two people leaving Springfield, Illinois headed for fortune in the state of California in April of 1846 (Grayson 151-152). The group had decided to take the California Trail instead of the Oregon Trail, which was the other popular route in Americans expanding westward at the time. They reached Fort Bridger, Wyoming where the California and the Oregon Trails split and went took the California Trail (152). They finally reached Utah, which is where the group attained its final numbers of 87 people (152). The party had some significant difficulties traversing the Wasatch Range in Utah getting the

wagons through narrow canyons and difficult terrain which resulted in them being delayed a few weeks (152). The delay would turn out to be the crucial factor in determining the party's fate.

When the party finally exited the Wasatch Range, they then faced the Great Salt Lake Desert, which is 130 miles of heat (the group crossed in August) and no water. Even though there were no fatalities, wagons were abandoned and many of the livestock were lost (152). The loss of supplies would also have an impact later on when the party was in desperate need of sustenance. After surviving the desert crossing, the group made the rest of the journey to the Sierra Nevada Range smoothly. It was, by now October, though. This meant that the group would fail at crossing the Sierra Mountains because of the abundance of snow that they encountered.

The Donner party established two base sites by the beginning of November when they realized they would be unable to cross the Sierras and it settled upon them that they would have to establish temporary encampments in order to survive the winter (152). They did not, however, expect to starve, because they had sent two men ahead of the party in order to obtain provisions. They expected the men to come back and aide the eighty seven people that were trapped in the snow (Johnson 37). The two men never returned due to the blizzards and impenetrable snow that they encountered on their way back.

In total, four relief parties finally reached the Donner party camps (The Lake Camp and Alder Creek Camp). And, it was between the first and the second relief parties that the Donner Party made the decision to start eating those comrades who had died from the cold and

starvation (48). When the fourth relief party finally made it to the Donner Party (those who had yet to be rescued), they found one person alive and the bodies of numerous dead laying about, dismembered and butchered along with human remains in pots that had been used to boil flesh (53). By the end of the ordeal, only forty of the original eighty seven members of the Donner Party had survived (Grayson 152). The Donner party is an ideal example of what can happen to people who are starving to death in extreme ecological conditions and who have no choice but to resort to human cannibalism or perish. Another example are the English settlers at Jamestown in the early seventeenth century.

The race for gold was taking place between the Spanish and the English in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. King James I of England chartered a stock company known as the Virginia Company whose goal it was to establish a route to the Orient and to secure riches for the English nation (*The Nightmare at Jamestown*). The expedition started out in the year 1606 from England bound for the eastern coast of North America. The initial settlers were 108 English gentlemen and they established Jamestown in what is now the state of Virginia (Carroll). The settlers at Jamestown encountered a series of setbacks. These included conflicts with area Natives, internal strife among settlers, unusually bad weather, communicable diseases and a lack of food resulting in chronic malnutrition.

The settlers reached the New World expecting to be welcomed by the Natives who inhabited the area, but instead were met with hostile Natives determined to defend their land. Chief Powhatan of the Powhatan Confederacy had just received a prophecy that an enemy nation would rise to overthrow his own. The English had just arrived in his territory and were

starting to establish themselves (Carroll) presenting the expected threat. The gentlemen of the Virginia Company were relying on the fact that the Natives would offer them food because they had been delayed at sea for an extra month and were low on rations, but instead had arrows shot at them. The English came prepared to fight the Spanish that they had expected to encounter, but their muskets and armor were no match for the bows and arrows and guerilla warfare that the Indians offered them (Carroll). Because of this, they suffered mass casualties over their initial years of settlement.

Throughout the first three years at Jamestown, many casualties occurred, sometimes with a death rate of up to 75% of their population (Carroll) due to diseases and Indian conflicts. But, eventually those who survived were joined by their families from England and the settlement seemed as if it would persevere.

But then came the winter of 1609, and with it what is now known as “The Starving Time” (Herrmann 48). The best accounts we have of this time are from five sources: Captain John Smith, George Percy, Sir Thomas Gates, William Strachey and The Virginia Assembly. During The Starving Time, George Percy was the president of Jamestown and he was the only one actually present during the time that cannibalism took place (57). In one of the instances of cannibalism at Jamestown, a man was reported to have killed and eaten his wife (47). All five independent accounts of the human cannibalism that took place during The Starving Time noted this occurrence. Others were also reported to have been digging up the corpses of those who had perished and then consuming their body parts (Hume). Another reason that there was a food shortage, apart from the bad weather, was that most of the men that had settled the

colony were gentlemen and therefore not used to doing physical labor (Hume). These upper-class gentlemen were not seasoned farmers and therefore did not know how to farm in the most effective manner. When they did farm, the yields were not sufficient to sustain the colony. As more people arrived over the years, they too were of the gentry class and only added to the burden of feeding the colony (Hume).

When Thomas Gates returned after that winter had ended, he witnessed all that was left of the colony of Jamestown. While the reports of how many settlers were actually present at the beginning of that winter differ greatly (between 200 and 500), all accounts report that only a mere handful of about sixty were left when spring arrived in 1610 (Herrmann 48; Carroll; Hume). Gates realized that the only way to keep the survivors, along with the men he brought back with him, alive was to abandon Jamestown and head back to England. In June the colonists had everything packed up and were on their way down the James River when reinforcements and aide they had not known were on their way arrived (Herrmann 51). Thomas West was the leader of the reinforcements and he convinced the settlers to return to Jamestown. He then took over as president of Jamestown and Gates returned to England in July, thus ultimately saving the colony (51).

A Uruguayan rugby team was on its way to a match in Chile when disaster struck in October of 1972. There were forty passengers on the plane, along with five crew members. The flight was detained in Argentina due to bad weather but got back on course the next day. (Lopez 7-8). The airplane crashed in the Andes Mountain Range and the survivors were stranded for several weeks due to the pilot's misinformation when he gave the plane's last

known location as being above Curicó (14). Colonel Ferradaz thought they had made it past the mountain range, and flying blindly through the storm, started his descent (14). This proved to be a fatal mistake as the weather started battering the plane and it ended up being torn apart by the mountains as it hit ground. The plane's final resting place was at an elevation of 12,000 feet above sea level (8). Eleven of the passengers died immediately in the crash or would die from injuries within only one hour (15).

The survivors had to watch many of their loved ones die from exposure to the elements as well as from complications from injuries resulting from the original crash. One man was so excited and grateful to have actually survived the crash that he didn't notice his surroundings and fell into a ravine, "never to be seen again" (Lopez 19). A little more than two weeks later on October 29<sup>th</sup>, after having buried many family members and comrades in the snow, the group lost another seven to an avalanche (39). The morale of the remaining survivors was extremely low, but their drive to survive prevailed. In one attempt to bring their spirits up, everyone devised the best birthday feast they could come up with for one of the players' nineteenth birthday (41). Coming up with meals started to become one of their rituals and food became an obsession because they were increasingly hungry and rations were getting dangerously low (41). The remaining men (for there were only males left at this point) complained about how all they got to eat were small slices of cheese, which were becoming increasingly thin, and tiny slivers of chocolate (41).

One man, Dr. Nicola, advised two of the men who were acting as leaders, that the time had come for desperate measures. On his death bed Nicola, dying from injuries sustained in

the original crash, told them that they must start consuming the flesh of those who had perished and that it would be beneficial for them to start drinking their own urine as well (43). He laid it out scientifically and convinced them that they were getting neither the electrolytes nor the protein that their bodies needed in order to function (43).

Nicola died, but his words had a lasting effect on the remaining survivors. The two young men knew that Dr. Nicola was correct, but they also knew they would be hard-pressed to convince everyone else of what needed to be done in order to survive. They also knew that they would need everyone to agree as a group, lest any dissenters make the remaining people feel guilty about consuming their friends and comrades (44). In the end, the two men dispassionately laid out the survival argument and got everyone to outwardly agree and cooperate (45).

It was after this decision that a couple of the men started dismembering the first body. Luckily the bodies had been buried in the snow and the cold had frozen them, which preserved their corpses. The men strung the strips of flesh in the fuselage in order to let oils drain for use later as “salves and healing agents” (46). The survivors were not keen on eating the flesh of their friends and family members so they ingested the meat as little pellets that were coated in the remaining chocolate (47). Their health improved immediately upon consuming protein again (47), and so they continued to wait for the rescue party that would never find them.

As time went on and no rescue party came, a group of survivors set out to find *someone* who would come back and save the remaining passengers. The party had much difficulty in climbing the great volcano El Tinguiririca and injuries were sustained. But finally, in the end,

they came upon a cattleman who would prove to be their savior (93). After more than two months of starving in the snow, the sixteen remaining survivors were rescued and fed (95).

There was a long struggle with the media after they had been rescued as they wrestled with the decision of whether or not to divulge how they had survived their ordeal (96-111). The first people to figure out that the survivors had pulled through the ordeal by consuming the flesh of those who had perished were the doctors that examined them, who advised them not to divulge the truth (119). The information finally came out in the press and the survivors had to deal with it for the rest of their lives as members of a society that does not generally, culturally accept cannibalism (143).

Another recent instance of cannibalism was a result of Stalin's reign in the Soviet Union. Cannibalism in Russia occurred because of two factors. The causes were Gulags, or forced labor camps, and the intense exportation of grain (Vardy 224, 226). The first Gulag camp was established in 1918 in response to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 (223). The main goal of the Gulags was to eliminate any threat to the new Stalinist regime, being those who were loyalist to the Czarist regime that had just been overthrown (223). There were eventually many thousands of these slave labor camps throughout the Soviet Empire (223).

The conditions inside the Gulags were horrendous, resembling Nazi concentration camps. Under Stalin's rule and his Five Year Plans, human life was dispensable as long as all of his plans were carried out smoothly. Further, exterminating dissenters was always high on his list of priorities (224). Anne Applebaum, in her book *Gulag: A History*, explains that in one

instance, 6,114 prisoners were taken to Nazino Island and were left with no food whatsoever (76), and by the time officials returned three months later, approximately only 2,000 remained alive. The ones that did survive had done so by feasting on the flesh of their companions who had perished (76). Applebaum also describes that during attempts to escape the Gulags, criminals often enlisted the help of another lowly prisoner and while on the run, after consuming their supply of food they would turn to their “help” and eat them to improve chances of success and survival (88). It is explained that escapees planned for “the help” to be their food all along, expecting to run out of rations on the run.

Out in the country, peasants had been surviving off of their plots of land by consuming the grain that they produced and then selling the remainder to make a profit. Under Stalin’s Five Year Plans, the peasants were forced to export almost 50 times as much grain as usual, all in a matter of three years, leaving them with nothing but an artificially-induced famine (224). To add to the problem, Red Brigades would come and raid the small villages of any food they had remaining, leaving them to starve to death. The peasants would consume grasses, their draft animals, and the cats and dogs of the village. Eventually reports surfaced of people, driven to insanity by hunger, consuming the children of the village in order to survive (225).

The cannibalism explained in this section is cannibalism that is ecologically driven by the need to survive. Even though it is still reviled and frowned upon by most, societies will often forgive this type of human cannibalism. The Indigenous Cannibalism section gives examples of types of human cannibalism that are culturally proscribed and codified. The cannibalism in the next section, however, is never accepted by any society under any circumstances.

## **Culturally Unaccepted and Unforgivable Cannibalism**

Not everyone is driven to acts of human cannibalism by famine or by cultural rituals. Some people exhibit other types of what society would term unforgivable cannibalism. Unforgivable cannibalism is human cannibalism that is not condoned by any culture for any reason. This type of cannibalism is considered heinous and is never accepted by societies. History has described many such instances across many societies. In the United States, just such an example is typified by the story of a man named Edward Gein. He was a farmer from Plainfield, Wisconsin and he was also a murderer. Not only did he kill at least three people, he also dug up the bodies of another fifteen women who had passed away by other means and been buried by their families, in order to eat them. The bodies were found in 1957 (Bell 6) when authorities searched his house and made the gruesome discovery. Gein had dismembered the corpses and skinned the bodies in order to wear them around the house, similar the fictional story portrayed in the film *Silence of the Lambs*. Lastly, after all of these atrocities, including necrophilia, Gein cannibalized some of his victims. When the police executed the search of his house, they discovered the heart of one of the women still boiling on the stove (6). This story typifies the type of cannibalism that is typically considered morally reprehensible and punishable by most societies, that of the unnecessary killing and eating of members of one's own society.

Another such individual of note is Mr. Jeffrey Dahmer. Dahmer's obsession with human body parts and his knowledge of how to dismember them was learned at a very early age. His father taught him how to use chemistry to dissolve animal flesh and preserve the bones as a

child (Silva 2). Dahmer also derived sexual gratification from cadavers. His knowledge of the human body coupled with this sexual gratification from the dead resulted in his being a necrophiliac. Dahmer discovered that he gained even more sexual gratification when he practiced human cannibalism, consuming the genitals, brains and thigh muscles of his victims (*Jeffrey Dahmer Biography 2*). He preyed mostly on the people who lived on the fringes of society and young men that he met in gay bars. He stated that his motivations for killing were not racially-driven, but this is not something most people believed because the majority of his victims were young men of color or of Asian descent (Berglund 17).

Dahmer had many run-ins with the law for masturbation in public and he evaded capture for decades, while carrying on with rape, murder, dismemberment and cannibalism. The police finally arrested him in 1991 when, in doing a search of his house, they found jars with preserved genitalia and other body parts as well as four heads that he had been preserving in multiple freezers (*Jeffrey Dahmer Biography 3*).

Such individuals tend to be reviled by other members of their society and severely punished for what are considered ultimate crimes against humanity. For example, Jeffrey Dahmer was convicted of murder and sentenced to fifteen life sentences in prison for his crimes. But in 1994 he was murdered in prison by a fellow inmate, who believed that Dahmer's crimes were racially-motivated. The response from the general public was one of relief at his passing (Berglund 17).

## **Discussion**

Cannibalism is a behavior that is witnessed in many species. One thing that human beings do not like hearing is that this fact applies to our species as well. Humans are not above the food chain and are a viable source of protein. If eaten, our bodies can sustain life, not just for other animals, but for other human beings as well.

Human cannibalism can be traced back to our roots along the evolutionary line and has persisted to modern day. Our relatives, the chimpanzees, our *Homo* ancestors, indigenous societies and people that we see and recognize in our world today have all exhibit instances of cannibalism. The things that differentiate them are their temporal location and the cultural, ecological or individual motivations behind the act of cannibalism.

The different types of cannibalism that have been touched upon in this paper are survival cannibalism, ritual/cultural cannibalism and sexual/criminal cannibalism. Survival cannibalism is simply a matter of people consuming other human beings because they have no choice and their options are eat the available source of protein or die (Bell 4). It applies to the instances of The Donner Party, the survivors of the Andes plane crash, Soviet peasants and the settlers at Jamestown. In all of these situations the people were ecologically driven by starvation to consume fellow human beings in order to improve their chances of survival. This is the only type of cannibalism that most societies will show any sort of sympathy towards. Ritual cannibalism is one that is commonly seen practiced by indigenous societies and is either performed as a mortuary ritual for loved ones who are deceased or as a result of warfare and

cultural/religious beliefs (Bell 2). This type of human cannibalism is culturally proscribed and, within these societies, it is not something that is frowned upon. The last type of cannibalism discussed is criminal/sexual cannibalism, which can be defined as people killing others and then cannibalizing their remains. The purpose of this type of cannibalism is to gain sexual gratification or to fulfill a desire to torture a victim and then consume him/her. In some instances, the act of getting away with the crime adds to the gratification (Bell 6). This type of cannibalism is the one that is frowned upon most seriously and is not accepted by any societies under any circumstances.

Human cannibalism is a part of our history, whether humans want to acknowledge it or not. For most societies and cultures morals dictate that the act of cannibalism is generally unacceptable. In other instances, such as when the cannibalism is culturally codified, the morality of the situation is different and the behavior is accepted and even revered at times. Human cannibalism is an extremely complex behavior and there is no one way of analyzing any one instance of cannibalism. This is because most are ecologically defined, when individuals must go against cultural rules in order to improve survivorship, or they are culturally defined and therefore morally accepted. Lastly, there is the mentally insane cannibalism that is the result of mental illness in certain individuals. Cannibalism shows up in many species, not excluding our own. It always has been, and always will be, a unique occurrence.

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