

Dahl Clark
UWC 5.48
December 6, 1999

Review of “Fooling with Nature”

This movie focused on the effects of endocrine disrupters and things the public can and cannot do to reduce exposure to them. I found the movie to be very enlightening. Not only did it help make me more aware of the dangerous hormonal effects of endocrine disrupters, but it gave several examples of how commonplace these compounds are.

My impression of the movie’s claim was that endocrine disrupters are dangerous chemicals, and we should take steps to educate ourselves about them so we can minimize our exposure to them. The movie then went on to argue that since endocrine disrupters are an integral part of many consumer products such as cosmetics, plastics, certain drugs, cleaning agents, and any chlorine-containing compounds, we cannot completely eliminate exposure to endocrine disrupters without eliminating many of the products necessary for modern life. However, this was not antithetical to its argument in any way. We might not be able to completely eliminate our exposure to endocrine disrupters, but when we know more about them, we might be better able to make decisions governing their use in consumer products and to create replacement products that do not use endocrine disrupters.

We can’t do without plastic or drugs, but everytime we use them, we expose ourselves to endocrine-disrupting compounds, which have the effect of mimicking the effects of hormones in the body. The movie demonstrated that precise levels of hormones are necessary for proper growth and development of living things, and catastrophic effects can be seen in the development of animal embryos that have been exposed to endocrine disrupters. Showing

pictures of frogs with multiple or missing limbs and giving stories about women with serious reproductive problems that arose because their mothers were exposed to endocrine disrupters during pregnancy really strengthened the movie's argument that we should reduce our exposure to them.

Seeing the effects of endocrine disrupters is, to me, is much better evidence to support an anti-endocrine disrupter argument than reading about it in a book or journal. The use of real people who have suffered health problems due to these chemicals, coupled with reports of decreasing bird populations due to affected egg shells and other anomalies in animals, really helped me to understand the movie's argument. I think the movie did try to make a bit of an emotional appeal to its audience, which is made up of everyone who is unknowingly exposed to endocrine disrupters daily. One kind of emotional appeal that was made were the interviews of women who related their ongoing reproductive problems and the interviews of other women who had lobbied to get money for breast cancer research in Rhode Island. I think that when the audience sees that the endocrine disrupter problem is not something fictitious or far away, but is actually something that can affect our next-door neighbor, someone in our family, or even ourselves and our children, we are more likely to sympathize and listen to this argument. However, the movie was not over-emotional; overall, it was quite objective and presented a wealth of factual information about endocrine disrupters, where they can be found, and what they do to the body. This objectivity, after all, is what was required to make it a scientific documentary. However, the pathos of the movie helped to make it easily accepted and understood by the majority of Americans who are not scientists, but who still would like to be aware of the real hazards to their health caused by these endocrine disrupters.