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# **VOICES OF USU**

an anthology of student writing

**2015**

Editors: John Engler and Bonnie Moore

# **VOICES OF USU:**

an anthology of student writing

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## Dear reader of this anthology,

You're probably reading essays in this book because the instructor of your English 2010 class has asked you to read them. Or perhaps you've been intrigued by some of the titles or subjects. As the editors, we invite you to consider reading these pieces from a specific point of view: reading and analyzing these essays can help you hone your ability to use the core tool of modern society—the communication of ideas in clear, compelling, and persuasive ways.

Whatever your major, you are going to find yourself in situations where it will be helpful—perhaps even necessary—to clearly convey your ideas to others and convince them of your point of view. Perhaps you're sending a memo to convince your project team of the value of a certain approach. Maybe you need to write a sales document for your clients. It could be that you want to make a case for a raise or a promotion. There might be times you want to petition your community for change. Perhaps you've developed a new theoretical model that you're publishing in an academic or professional journal. In all of these instances, you want your writing to be convincing.

Your English 2010 instructor will guide you through the exploration of many persuasive, rhetorical tools. All of these tools can be found implemented—to a greater or lesser degree of success—in the essays within this book. When you find a compelling moment in an essay, ask yourself, “How did they do that?” If a section seems to fall flat, ask, “How come that didn't work?” Dig beneath the surface of the content to explore the construction of the argument.

Know that these essays represent a cross-section of some of the very best writing by USU students who have taken English 2010 in recent years, most of whom presented at USU's Citizen Scholar Conference. Consult with your instructor about the possibility of presenting at the conference yourself and submitting your writing for consideration by the editorial board for inclusion in next year's anthology.

Just as artists, athletes, and academics study the work of those who have gone before them, we hope that you find that standing on the shoulders of your peers gives you a leg up in a world that expects of you your very best work. We hope you enjoy reading and welcome any thoughts or feedback you have about this anthology at [esconf.usu@gmail.com](mailto:esconf.usu@gmail.com).

Regards,

John Engler

Bonnie Moore

## BACKGROUND

Sara Munns understands the stress of finals week, and she can help you understand that stress and how to cope with it better, too. In a clear way, Munns details the physiological response your body has to stress and what roles that plays on your health. She goes on to explain how your perspective on stress can be more significant to your life—and your lifespan—than the levels of your stress.

## SARA **MUNNS**



Sara Munns was raised in Kaysville, Utah and graduated from Davis High with high honors. She plans to major in Biochemistry with minors in Music and Chinese following her return from serving an LDS mission in Taichung, Taiwan. Sara loves to run (most days), read, study, play the flute and piano, and spend time outside with family and friends.

Sara's inspiration for this piece came from justifying past experiences with test anxiety. After reading a plethora of scientific journals, she quickly set a goal to present her research in a more enjoyable manner that wouldn't have readers reaching for the dictionary every sentence.



## KEEP CALM AND STRESS ON



Sara Munns

It is safe to say that the American population is closely acquainted with the song, “Let it Go.” And now that the Disney Snow Queen is presumably living happily ever after, I’d like to suggest that we consider those three words yet again. Now, before you roll your eyes and turn the page, let me ask you one question: what exactly is Elsa imploring us to release when she sings this phrase? While we could debate all day in a state of “*Frozen Fever*,” I argue that she is letting go of high-stress situations and anxiety-ridden relationships. So much of American society today worships low-stress living. In an era of skyscrapers, booming business, technology, and consumerism, it’s no wonder we idolize, try, watch, and ingest practically anything we think is going to help us relax or decompress. Despite the irony, we turn on and tune in to our TVs, cell phones, iPads, iPhones, and other blue-light-emitting devices in search of relaxation techniques that are trending on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. Perhaps you’ll see evidence of our obsession in a Dior perfume commercial—picture stunning models walking through surreal parties surrounded by million dollar men. They’re not only blissfully beautiful; they’re rubbing their relaxation in our collective countenances! Maybe you’ll find elements of escapism in a Disneyland advertisement with smiling parents, angelic children, large hotel rooms, and free massages. If neither of those work for you, how about our obsession with royalty, sugar, alcohol, or even drugs? It appears that to many stress is perceived as so bad that we have built an entire culture based on avoiding it.

You may be reading this article late at night as you sip coffee or some other caffeine-laden beverage and take a break, through continuous yawning, from studying for a test, getting a project done for work, or tending a now-sleeping child. Perhaps that was you last week or last night. I’d like you to recall one of the times you were so stressed you could not focus on a task at hand, lost precious sleep, or perhaps became ill. Now allow me to suggest that despite your distress, stress may not be the antagonist to our success we have made it out to be.

Stress becomes detrimental to our health when we experience it repeatedly and consistently resulting in a steady release of stress hormones. This chronic stress is infamously to blame for illnesses such as high blood pressure, heart disease, some forms of diabetes, and even freezing a fjord in a magical kingdom. However, it is more common to experience acute stress. This is the stress that occurs because of the unfamiliarity of a situation—the fact that we may not know how something is going to end or if a situation will hurt us (“Acute vs. Chronic Stress”). It is under these circumstances that stress can become a benefit for our body.

The fight-or-flight response, which is synonymous to our body’s stress response, originally evolved to help us protect ourselves from physical dangers such as bears, but it occurs when we experience emotional or psychological danger, as well. Adrenaline, epinephrine, cortisol, and a host of other hormones are released into the blood stream with similar hopes for our body as when a knight puts on his armor. In the hopes of making us more focused, these hormones lead to increased heart rate, pupil dilation, and the shifting of our blood flow from the extremities of our body to our core to list just a few effects. Similar to how Elsa’s powers control her when she’s stressed or afraid, if we let stress control us constantly, these hormones can lead to uncontrollable side-effects such as lack of sleep and fatigue of our immune system. Where these knights in shining armor fail though, there’s another hero hormone waiting in the shadows to prove itself. The time has come for oxytocin to suit up.

Probably one of the most hyped hormones due to its role in physical contact and positive emotion, oxytocin is actually released when the body is stressed and is paired against what we view as a few of the more destructive effects of stress. When you become stressed, your blood vessels constrict causing an increase in blood pressure, which, coupled with a heightened heart rate, can damage your heart, tissues, and organs over long periods of time. Oxytocin, however, works against the constricting forces in your blood flow that cause high blood pressure. Oxytocin dilates your blood vessels, causing the pressure of your blood speeding to and from your pounding heart to mimic the blood pressure you sustain during exercise and even intense joy. Oxytocin also works to rebuild heart cells that are damaged from stress (McGonigal). Still, those aren’t the only ways that heroic

hormones are fighting off the villainous side-effects of stress in your body.

Many of us have experienced the wave of sickness that occurs the week after finals, performances, or projects. So it may appear to go against logic that stressing patients before administering shots is actually being looked at as a way to make vaccines and shots more effective. Dr. Firdaus Dhabhar, the Associate Professor for Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford School of Medicine, says this is, in fact, the case. For example, let's say you're scared of, or strongly dislike, getting shots. As you see the nurse getting closer and closer to your precious blood vessels and as he or she begins squeezing your arm tighter to get a better path of attack, not only do you reconsider whether you actually need this shot (after all, you're a pretty healthy person, right?), but you feel your heart beat faster. You squirm and then flinch at the injection as your stress response attempts to come to your rescue, despite the fact you are literally pinned. Your body is also fighting to protect you internally as well, sending an aggregation of immune cells around the battle site. There they will perform a myriad of different tasks that start with recognition of the pathogen and lead to its eventual destruction. Experiencing stress while or before receiving the treatment puts your body's immune system on guard. When the dead pathogen of the vaccine or shot enters your body, your waiting immune system can develop a faster immune response for when you encounter the illness again (Dhabhar). This is similar to how studying prior to an exam prepares neurons to fire faster during a test, generally improving scores, or how gaining more experience with magical snow powers can facilitate building snowmen faster. Thus, stress has now worked to make the vaccine act faster and more efficiently.

Oftentimes when we're stressed, our grumpy and irritable side manifests itself. How many times do we complain or say something we don't mean under the guise that 'stress is making us lose control'? I mean Elsa went as far as sending a giant abominable snowman after her sister when she got stressed. Yet, perhaps it is once again only our *perception* of stress that is actually determining our body's reaction and our subsequent behaviors. Truthfully, our body actually encourages us to seek emotional support and not aggressive actions (Albert). While we've already talked about the physiological side effects of oxytocin, the reason oxytocin is so popular is because it's associated

with happiness. Oxytocin is often referred to as the ‘cuddle hormone’ because it is released when we hug or enjoy physical contact with those around us. It is also released into the blood stream when we reach out and seek emotional support from family, friends, and others, which often leads to more sympathetic, loyal, and caring behavioral patterns. Oxytocin makes us crave emotional support or encourages us to emotionally support someone else when we’re stressed (McGonigal). By crashing on our best friend’s couch and venting to them, we often let off steam, laugh, and relax, which causes us to release even more oxytocin while lowering blood pressure and decreasing our heart rate. But if we climb up a mountain, build a giant ice castle around us, and isolate ourselves from outside support, we’ll miss out on the full benefits oxytocin has to offer. Oxytocin indirectly reduces the depressive aftermath of stress, and thus our body has a built-in mechanism to help us healthily cope with emotional stressors. And as we’re in the brain talking about emotions, let’s also take a look at the effect of stress on cognition.

Looking at stress in the form of a bell shaped curve with performance on the y-axis and stress level on the x-axis, we can categorize three different areas of stress. On the far left is when we’re calm and experiencing little stress and on the far right is distress, where we are experiencing too much stress (perhaps your radio has played *Frozen* songs eight or nine times today). Peak performance, where stress is beneficial for an individual (known as eustress), is reached in the middle of the curve (see fig. 1). We actually need to be stressed to a degree

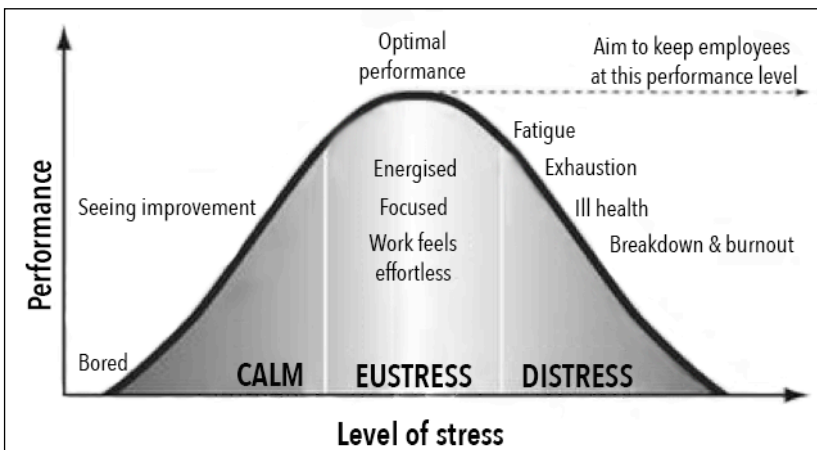


Fig. 1

to give our best physical or mental performance. This is because our brain is a muscle that needs to be constantly exercised. If we undergo too much stress, thinking critically is like running with shin splints or a sprained ankle. If we don't undergo enough stress, thinking critically is like running a marathon after having only ever run a 5k. If you get stressed before a test, you're actually optimizing your performance and are more likely to remember what you've studied as stress causes your neurons to fire faster. The trick with stress is to not "Let it Go" out of control.

Dr. Hans Selye, who is considered the founding father of stress research, said, "Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one." In a recent study that tracked participants for eight years, subjects were asked to rate their stress levels and whether they viewed stress as detrimental to their health or not. Researchers then tracked these participants to see who died. That probably seems rather drastic, right? Well, the statistics are drastic. Dr. Selye also said that "it is not stress that kills us but our reaction to it." This study works in strong correlation with Dr. Selye's work as people who viewed stress negatively and underwent high amounts of stress had a 43 percent greater risk of premature death than any other group (the groups consisting of high or low stress, believing either positive or negative effects). More importantly though, participants who reported high stress levels, but did not feel that stress negatively affected their health, had no increased risk of premature death (Keller et al.). Putting this in perspective, the negative perception of stress, and not stress itself, would be the 15<sup>th</sup> highest cause of death in the United States, killing

We are, both metaphorically and especially physiologically, not born to sit back in the shadows waiting for opportunities to come to us, but to rise to them.

more people annually than HIV/AIDS, homicide, and skin cancer. Maybe next time we'll consider whether or not we actually want to tell someone, "Don't get too stressed or you'll get sick."

The truth is that the effects of stress are simply dependent upon our perception of stress and not necessarily our ability to eliminate stress and stressors from our lives. When we start to become angry from stress, feel a headache or butterflies, the key is to tell

ourselves what we're experiencing is healthy and is the body's way of helping us out. We need to evaluate our reaction to stressors. Do we see them as a danger or an opportunity to grow? When opportunities arise for something we have been dreaming of, do we let them go because we're afraid we would get too stressed? By simply making small mental decisions regarding our attitudes towards a late-night assignment, child rearing, or a work project, we choose whether we will let stress benefit or diminish our health. These decisions even make a difference in what professions, majors, or jobs we choose. When we realize stress is on our side and tell ourselves we're in control, we don't have to let go of a high-stress job we're passionate about in place of a 'healthier' low-stress job (McGonigal). Perhaps it will affect our academic, physical, and musical performances or how willing we are to stand out at work. We are, both metaphorically and especially physiologically, not born to sit back in the shadows waiting for opportunities to come to us, but to rise to them.

It is past the midnight hour for this society to let go of our fear of stress. When we take a step back to see how prepared our body is to meet the challenges we face, we will realize it is time to emerge from our secluded ice kingdoms and to face our potential, doing whatever we aspire to do. Stress helps us to rise to challenges, focus, perform to the best of our abilities, and even be kinder to other people. Whether your goal is to rule a kingdom or to survive finals week, it is time not to let stress go, but to keep calm and stress on.

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## FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways is Munns using the allusion to Disney's *Frozen* effectively in her essay? Do you think it adds to or distracts from her argument about stress?
2. Munns says in her bio that her goal was to present her research in a less technical and "more enjoyable manner." How was she able to accomplish this?
3. To what extent is a research paper a mere presentation or summary? What aspects of Munns' essay go beyond summary?
4. Where does Munns most clearly express the thesis of her paper? How is this organization effective? Where are places she could have connected back to the thesis to focus the essay better?
5. Munns uses many personal pronouns (I, you, we, etc.). What effects do these have on the essay? How would the tone have changed if she had written without personal pronouns?
6. What audience is Munns writing to? Give examples of instances where you see her focusing her argument to that audience. Are there any moments when the focus is unclear?



The FIFA World Cup is one of the largest sporting events in the world and, like the Olympics, is economically advantageous for the country selected to be its host. The host country is selected by evaluating bids from various countries and picking the most attractive offer. For the 2022 World Cup, Qatar was the chosen host candidate. However, not everything is as it seems.

In a persuasive research essay (written prior to the recent 2015 indictments of FIFA officials), Lucy Stevenson uses a wide variety of sources to reveal some unsettling truths about the future host country's preparations for the World Cup, including the series of deceitful bribes and shady deals that made Qatar the winner of the bid. Her piece culminates in a call for soccer fans worldwide to, as a matter of principle, seriously reconsider their support of the 2022 event.

## LUCY STEVENSON



Lucy Stevenson is an English major at Utah State with a passion for writing, research, and prepared speaking. Outside of her academic work, she enjoys singing, playing volleyball and softball, and spending time with her family when she has a chance to visit her home in Parma, Idaho. Lucy is currently serving as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Chicago, Illinois. Upon her return in 2017, she plans to hit the

ground running again in her writing as a member of the USU Honors Program.

## THE **WORLD CUP** IN **QATAR**: a kick in the wrong direction



Lucy Stevenson

On December 2, 2010, Qatar was announced as the winner of the 2022 World Cup host bid. Over four and a half years later, the world's response hasn't changed; North America and Europe are still frustrated and confused, the Middle East is still ecstatic with anticipation, and the International Football Confederation, FIFA, is still adamantly determined to see it through. Despite the heated opposition Qatar has faced, including accusations of modern-day slavery, logistical evidence against the scorching summer climate, and allegations of corruption in Qatar's campaign and bid, FIFA has publicly announced that there will not be a re-vote for the host of the 2022 World Cup (Borden). Convincing FIFA officials to change the outcome of the vote now appears to be a lost cause, but that does not make the standing vote justifiable or right. It is blatantly obvious that FIFA has made a mistake, and it is now up to individual soccer fans to either support the 2022 World Cup or take a stand against it.

Because hosting the World Cup in the Middle East is a first, Qatar is determined to see that it is made a big deal. Unlike most host nations, who settle for the construction of a new stadium or simply an expansion of public facilities, Qatar is setting a new precedence by building an entire city in preparation for their role as host of the big game. According to CNN, this new city, known as Lusail, is set to be completed in 2019 and will cost an estimated \$45 billion (Griggs). But as construction progresses without hesitation, there are many voices speaking out against it. According to Brandon Griggs, the majority of the estimated 20,000 construction workers building Lusail are migrant workers from India and Nepal (Cable News Network). Even more disconcerting, an article published in *Sports Illustrated* stated that "an independent study by a multinational law firm cited 430 Nepalese and 567 Indian worker deaths in Qatar" over the last two years as a result of horrifying working conditions (Wahl). An article published by *The Guardian* claimed that the rate of migrant worker deaths in the summer of 2013 was as high as one fatality per day. The article states that

investigations have also exposed that workers have had their passports confiscated and their salaries denied for months on end to eliminate any possibility of leaving (Pattison). Being held against their will and forced to work in such awful conditions makes it certain that these individuals are not just migrant workers—they are modern-day slaves.

These slaves are literally doing the heavy lifting to make this World Cup happen, and their suffering is absolutely sickening. *The Guardian* has also stated that World Cup infrastructure projects were specifically said to have been worked on using forced labor (Pattison). As one migrant worker, Ram Kumar Mahara, told *The Guardian*, “We were working on an empty stomach for 24 hours; 12 hours’ work and then no food all night....When I complained, my manager assaulted me, kicked me out of the labour camp I lived in, and refused to pay me anything” (Pattison). Human rights activists are outraged at the thought of allowing these slaves to build the very stadium the games will be played in.

Some advocates, however, believe that allowing Qatar to host is exactly what the country needs to stimulate change in Qatari labor laws. Justin D. Martin, for example, firmly believes that the media attention Qatar will receive in hosting the World Cup will raise public awareness and place pressure on the Qatari government to not only make changes to their labor laws, but also to enforce them (*New Republic*). To some extent, this belief has already manifested itself in the fact that Qatari labor law underwent some reform in May of 2014 in response to criticism. However, Amnesty International has stated that “while some of the measures announced [in May] are positive and if implemented would improve conditions for workers, they do *not* go nearly far enough” (Bollier, emphasis added). According to a more recent article, published six months later, the organization warned that Qatar’s promised changes were “woefully inadequate” (Gibson, “Qatar Accused of Dragging”). Realistically, the Middle East’s revolution of human rights is much more of a stretch than many want to believe. In the meantime, as stated by the International Trade Union Confederation, “up to 4,000 workers could die before a ball is kicked at the 2022 World Cup” (International Trade Union Confederation). To support Qatar’s hosting of the World Cup *and* take an ethical stand for human rights is impossible.

The safety of these workers is not the only concern, however; concerns have also been raised by health officials about the safety of athletes playing in Qatar's scorching desert heat. This has caused FIFA to reconsider the feasibility of holding the Qatar World Cup in the summer. In the 2014 World Cup held in Brazil, games were stopped when temperatures peaked above 86 degrees Fahrenheit. Compared to Qatar's summer climate, however, Brazil's high eighties seem like nothing. As stated by Samuel Chi, summer temperatures in Qatar are commonly known to reach up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit (*The Diplomat*). Originally, Qatar promised to have the latest in air-cooling technology to keep fans and players safe and comfortable. But according to an article in *Business Insider*, "the promised cooling technology ... 'hasn't yet come into existence' ..." ("Qatar is Quietly Breaking"). According to another article, published in *The Independent*, medics have directly stated that allowing the Cup to take place in such heat is too great a risk. Forget the issue of comfort—it is simply too dangerous. Obviously, holding the World Cup games in the summer heat is not a viable option.

This has left FIFA to turn to other alternatives, and fans may be watching the World Cup in the winter months instead. But this solution isn't that simple. In another article by Tony Manfred, moving the World Cup to the winter months to accommodate the difficult climate will have adverse effects in other aspects. One option FIFA has considered is moving the Cup to January and February, which would certainly solve the heat issue but would also create a direct conflict between the World Cup and the Winter Olympic Games. Two of the largest world sporting events would be occurring at exactly the same time, and the media is anything but thrilled. According to Manfred's article, NBC laid \$7.75 billion down to claim coverage rights on the Olympic Games between 2022 and 2032, and Fox spent \$425 million on the World Cup. To have both occurring at the same time would divide viewers and hurt ratings on both sides (Manfred, "FIFA Might Move"). And on top of hurting news companies, the splitting of viewers would also result in less fan support for the athletes who have worked their entire lives to compete in such renowned sporting events.

From an American perspective, moving the World Cup to the winter will have adverse effects on ESPN and the NFL as well. Manfred points out that ESPN made record-breaking revenue in covering the

2014 World Cup in Brazil this past year in light of the fact that there was not another world event competing for viewers' attention. But holding the World Cup in the winter puts it in conflict with the NFL playoffs and the Super Bowl, and even if it was held in November and December, the Cup's publicity would go head to head with the regular NFL season. "Fox will have to compete with the NFL for interest and viewers," Manfred writes. "And to make things even more complicated, it will have to compete with itself for interest and airtime since it also owns NFL broadcasting rights" ("FIFA Might Move"). Even in America, where soccer is less prevalent, moving the World Cup will have a negative impact.

The consequences of allowing Qatar to slide through the cracks could create a snowball effect of corruption in international soccer.

The greatest argument against Qatar's right to host in 2022 is regarding the allegations of bribery made against the former president of the Asian Football Confederation, Qatar's Mohamed Bin Hammam. According to an article published in the *Sunday Times*, Bin Hammam was accused of bribing Caribbean soccer officials with envelopes stuffed with \$40,000. As stated by the anonymous author, "The payments were made...[in] May [of 2012], while Bin Hammam was standing for the FIFA presidency against Sepp Blatter" (*Sunday Times*). After examinations by both outside investigators and FIFA's ethics committee, substantial evidence was found to justify his suspension. In October of 2012, before he could publicly be banned from international soccer for life, Bin Hammam resigned from all soccer positions, leaving his opponent Sepp Blatter to win the election without competition (*Sunday Times*). In response, thousands of people are questioning whether Qatar really won the bid fair and square. In more cases than not, this article being no exception, most individuals are finding themselves rather doubtful of the ethics behind Qatar's victory.

Qatari bid organizers claimed that Bin Hammam's unethical actions had nothing to do with Qatar's win for the 2022 host bid. According to an article by Owen Gibson, Bin Hammam was not on the Qatari bid team and therefore had no influence over Qatar's win ("Qatar Hits Back"). However, an article in the *Sunday Times* has stated

that “although Bin Hammam was not officially part of the bid team, its chairman has described him as the bid’s ‘*biggest asset*’” (*Sunday Times*). Whether he was involved directly or indirectly, it is obvious that Bin Hammam had plenty of weight to pull Qatar into favorable standings.

After months of controversy, a recent article published in the United Kingdom’s *The Telegraph* announced that FIFA confirmed that Qatar *did* in actuality manipulate the vote by using bribery. FIFA’s report acknowledged multiple instances of unethical strategies used by Qatar, including bribing the African Football Confederation with 1.8 million dollars in return for exclusive marketing rights, making suspicious payments to Argentina and Brazil days before the ballots were cast, and having a “significant lack of transparency” in Qatar’s relationship with two consultants whose “‘questionable conduct’... could constitute chargeable offences” (Rumsby). The report also addressed and condemned the actions of Bin Hammam in his bribing of Caribbean soccer official Reynold Temarii of the Oceania Football Confederation, who was suspended for accepting Qatar’s bribes. According to FIFA’s report, Temarii’s suspension eliminated a vote in favor of Qatar’s biggest rivals. “It is evident that Mr. Bin Hammam supported Qatar’s bid” the report stated, “and that his actions with respect to Mr. Temarii influenced the voting process by eliminating votes for Australia (a direct Qatar 2022 competitor) and England” (Rumsby). Qatar’s discrepancy has now been admitted, proven, and confirmed, and yet FIFA will not back down.

Despite all of the facts pointing against Qatar’s ethics regarding their win of the bid, FIFA has stated that “there was not enough evidence to strip the Gulf state of the event” (Rumsby). FIFA has confirmed that these incidents took place—has proven that Qatar is guilty of these unethical offenses—and yet they are comfortable with applying the excuse of justification. Two wrongs do not make a right, and claiming that Qatar’s unethical actions weren’t weighted to sway the vote *enough* to change the outcome does not make its actions acceptable. If we act as if nothing happened and support Qatar in the 2022 World Cup, what other scandals will be faced in the future? The consequences of allowing Qatar to slide through the cracks could create a snowball effect of corruption in international soccer.

FIFA has chosen to make justifications. They have chosen to let it go. But that does not mean that the 2022 World Cup in Qatar deserves our support. If the lack of human rights, the brutal heat, and the scheduling conflicts weren't enough to illustrate the lack of Qatar's qualification, its lack of honesty does. It is not right to shred an entire schedule of professional athletics to accommodate a country who doesn't deserve the opportunity. It is bad enough for migrant workers to die in the name of soccer, but for them to lose their lives in the name of a country whose intentions are unjust and scandalous is an outrage. Given the circumstances, hosting the World Cup in Qatar is more than just a kick in the wrong direction—it's a kick in the teeth.

If FIFA won't take a stand for what is ethically right, the United States must. This is why I urge American soccer players and fans to join in a boycott against the Qatar World Cup. It is obvious that this soccer tournament has become far more than just another competition. It is now a matter of corrupted leaders, unethical standards, and abused human rights. Real victory is now more than scoring a winning goal—it is taking a stand for progress. And that progress is a victory that, around the world, we should all be cheering for.

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1. Stevenson has many sources cited for her essay. How did she utilize these sources in the body of her essay? Were the sources cited correctly on her Works Cited page as well as throughout her essay?
2. What rhetorical elements did the author use to make this an effective persuasive research essay? Give specific examples.
3. Stevenson used a lot of evidence to support her opinion regarding Qatar hosting the FIFA World Cup. What could she have done differently to make her argument less biased?
4. How did the introductory paragraph set up the rest of the essay? What elements of the introduction helped catch the reader's attention?
5. What was the thesis statement of this essay? In what ways did each paragraph connect back to the thesis? Did the essay stick to the thesis or did it wander? Give examples.
6. Did this essay appeal to ethos/pathos/logos? In what ways? Did these appeals make the essay impactful? Why or why not? Provide examples from the text.

**FOR DISCUSSION**

## BACKGROUND

Isaacson begins with a familiar scene of a screeching alarm clock and a sleepy adolescent not ready for another early, first-period, high school class. Backing up her notions with research on circadian rhythms and the biological barrier teenagers face while trying to start an early morning, Isaacson comes to the conclusion that having later start times for schools would benefit students. While addressing the concerns that have arisen from this plan in the past, this essay explains how students' lives will be improved in not only their health but also their academic and extracurricular activities.

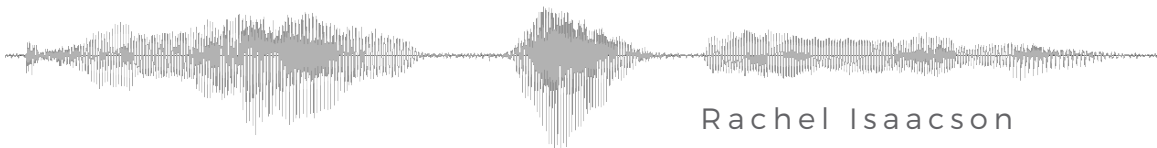
## RACHEL ISAACSON



Rachel Isaacson grew up in Roy, Utah and is the oldest of four children. She is beginning her second year at Utah State and loves every minute of being an Aggie. She also loves the color turquoise, singing anything and everything, creating jewelry, attending concerts, participating in musicals, and cooking. One of her favorite things in life is sleeping to her heart's content. This love of sleep (and lack of it) is

what sparked the interest in her topic.

## COME ON! FIVE MORE MINUTES!



Rachel Isaacson

It's 6:30 a.m. on a usual Wednesday morning, and the sound of my alarm clock blares at me from across the room. *Beeeeep! Beeeeep! Beeeeep!* I turn over and bury my head under the pillow. *Beeeeep! Beeeeep! Beeeeep!* “Will you stop already?!” I ask my alarm clock, who doesn't seem to care that I am sleeping. “Come on! Just five more minutes!” *Beeeeep! Beeeeep! Bee-* “Alright! Enough! I'm up!”

This is a daily struggle in the life of a teenager—waking up for school *before* the crack of dawn, getting ready only to stumble into first period still half asleep and face a teacher annoyed that their teaching time turns into nap time. Tired? Absolutely. Lazy? Perhaps. But could it be more than that? There is an ever-increasing demand on students to be involved in everything they possibly can. With school, homework, clubs, extracurricular activities, sports, music lessons, and part- or full-time jobs, teenagers have their hands full. Obviously, this busy schedule leaves little time to accomplish everything necessary and still get a good night's sleep.

Take myself for example. I was a junior in high school and had one too many things stacked on my plate. I woke up at 5:00 a.m. for early morning seminary and balanced a full class load including Honors Chemistry, AP Language, and two choirs. After a long day of classes, I stayed three or four hours after school had ended for play practice. I returned home only to face my list of daily chores, become a chaperone to pick siblings up from practices, and begin the hours of homework that lay ahead. I continually had plans to catch up with schoolwork on Saturdays, but due to my play schedule I spent my weekends at various Saturday rehearsals. This rigorous schedule left me hitting the pillow around 1 a.m. or even 2 a.m. and still facing a 5 a.m. alarm. Three to four hours of sleep is well under the recommendation of eight to ten hours from the National Sleep Foundation (“Teens and Sleep”).

But I was not alone. A poll from The National Sleep Foundation found that 87 percent of high school students are not sleeping enough at night (“Let Them Sleep”). Many ideas float around concerning the

best options for solving the dilemma of teens not getting enough sleep. Each suggestion has pros and cons, but when you consider all points of view it becomes clear that the benefits of pushing school start times later in the morning highly outweigh the downfalls. Pushing high school start times later than 8:30 a.m. will give teens adequate sleep, significantly impact them in a positive way, and could be the solution researchers have been looking for.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recently published a statement concerning high school start times being no earlier than 8:30 a.m. (“Let Them Sleep”). They believe that 8:30 is the optimal time for teenagers to wake in order to perform their best by allowing more time to sleep, and they believe students will reap many benefits if provided with the appropriate amount of sleep. These benefits all begin with understanding circadian rhythms.

What is a circadian rhythm, and why does it matter? Often referred to as your “body clock,” a circadian rhythm is a “24-hour cycle that tells our bodies when to sleep and regulates many other physiological processes” (“Circadian Rhythm”). As children reach adolescence and begin puberty, their circadian rhythms shift back a couple of hours causing their bodies to stay awake until around 11 p.m. This in essence places a biological barrier in front of teens, making a 6:00–6:30 a.m. wake-up call almost impossible! (Jacob, Rockoff 7-8). Paul Kelly, a sleep researcher at Oxford University stated, “The timing system for sleep in adolescents is involuntary. It’s a system they can’t control, and we can’t control, and it can’t be trained” (Reddy 3). This being said, we can’t fix or change what their bodies naturally want to do. The best thing society can do is try to accommodate these barriers.

Many improvements occur when teenagers get the appropriate amount of sleep. Dr. Owens from the American Academy of Pediatrics explains that research clearly states adolescents improve in many different areas of life when they get enough sleep. These teens have “a reduced risk of being overweight or suffering depression, are less likely to be involved in automobile accidents, and have better grades, higher standardized test scores, and an overall better quality of life” (“Let Them Sleep”). Many studies have been done to measure improvements that come to teens getting more sleep by pushing school start times back. One such study comes from Kyla Wahlstrom, the director of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improve-

ment at the University of Minnesota, who studied more than 9,000 students in eight high schools throughout three different states and found that “attendance, standardized test scores, and academic performance increased while tardiness, substance abuse, and symptoms of depression decreased” as teens began getting the right amount of sleep (Hanes 3). While these are all noticeable improvements, studies have also shown that benefits can range from minor to major issues such as changes in “mood and alertness to fewer automobile accidents and less engagement in high-risk behavior” (“Impact”). All changes, big or small, play a significant role in altering a student’s life for the better.

The changes can be compared to a puzzle. It is easy to see the correct placement of some pieces. Others might not be as apparent and will take more time to see. When all of the pieces are put together, you can step back and see the bigger picture. This bigger picture certainly manifests the importance of each piece and how they play a part in reaching a common goal. If we remember that each advance, no matter the size, is a step in the right direction, we will soon see how it can create a better future for students.

Believe it or not, some improvements actually stem from questions and concerns that parents, students, and even coaches have brought up. Sports coaches have voiced concern that later school start times produce later release times that will cut into practice and alter strict schedules. However, a study in the *Journal of Pediatric Orthopedics* has shown that inadequate amounts of sleep drastically increase the chance of a sports-related injury. They examined injury records and self-reported sleep times from over 100 student athletes and “found that adolescent athletes getting on average less than eight hours of sleep a night had a 70% greater chance of having a sports-related injury” (Reddy 5). This study is an excellent example to coaches of the detrimental effects sleep-deprivation can have on athletes. While later start times might seem like a problem for sports teams initially, they will help secure the safety of the players in the long run.

As we can change worries and concerns about sports into positive outcomes, we can do the same when we analyze the impact later start times have on elementary-age kids. Parents of these kids worry that pushing high school start times back ultimately forces the younger elementary-age kids to have earlier start times and give them the negative impacts we worry about with teens such as inattention and

sleepiness. Various studies actually show that elementary-age kids are naturally more focused earlier in the morning, and therefore can learn better in the early morning. One study in particular comes from Dr. David Sousa, author of *How the Brain Learns*. He suggests that elementary-age kids are more focused in the early-morning hours in contrast to teenagers. He explains, “pre-adolescent students have the same degree of focus at 7 a.m. that adolescent students have at 8 a.m. This suggests that elementary schools may be able to start earlier in the day without negatively affecting student achievement” (“Impact” 11). When dealing with a change that seems to impact only high schools and possibly middle schools, one must keep in mind the other side of the spectrum and what is going on with younger kids. This change not only affects high school students’ later start time, but it also changes things for elementary schools. Later high school start times would probably be equalized by pushing elementary times a little bit earlier.

This earlier start time, however, won’t disadvantage younger students the way it does teenagers. The aforementioned research by Dr. David Sousa explains that changing high school start times won’t conflict and push negative consequences on the younger kids. They automatically function better in the morning because, unlike teenagers, they haven’t hit puberty yet and their circadian rhythms don’t provide biological barriers. This barrier means teenagers don’t only need the right *amount* of sleep, they need it in the right *time frame*. Hanover Research discusses that “most research that does focus on elementary school students addresses the amount of sleep younger students get rather than specific times correlated to an ideal sleep-wake cycle” (“Impact” 10). From this we can clearly see that younger children need more sleep in general, not in a particular window of time like teenagers do.

The concept of later high school start times is a fairly new idea, and currently the majority of high schools have bells earlier than the

Pushing high school start times later than 8:30 a.m. will give teens adequate sleep, significantly impact them in a positive way, and could be the solution researchers have been looking for.

8:30 a.m. recommended start time for their first classes. This new concept brings up many questions from concerned parents. One parent wonders if the suggested improvements will actually happen, and what happens if nothing changes. There is a chance that changes won't be too drastic. With current early start times, Jacobs and Rockoff from The Hamilton Project suggest, "students might adapt in other ways (e.g., drink caffeinated beverages to stay alert, or study more in the evenings)" (Jacobs, Rockoff 8). If teenagers compensate for early start times by drinking energy drinks or coffee, studying more in the evening and late into the night, or even taking a power nap in their least favorite class, this could have a negative impact on their health. Removing some of the need to participate in these behaviors by providing more sleep to achieve the same outcome results in improvements that might seem minor.

After learning about the minor changes, it is important to recognize after-school activities and the large role they play in students' lives. Curious coaches and players wonder how later start times will affect practices and games. Jacobs and Rockoff suggest that schools with free periods could place those at the end of the day for students who participate in after-school activities (Jacobs, Rockoff 10). That way they can begin their practices at the typical time and not go too late into the evening. Schools without a free period could place the sports classes at the end of the day to achieve the same result.

After-school activities include jobs, and these jobs are also a major concern to parents and students alike. Parents ask, "My child works part-time. If school gets out later, how will that affect his/her work schedule?" A study conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota found "local employers that said that the later school hours did not affect their businesses or the amount of hours that students were available for work" ("Myths and Misconceptions"). This shows that employers don't necessarily see a threat to their business from the amount of time employees can work after adapting to a later start time. With that in mind, the focus now shifts to those who work to support their families. The study from the University of Minnesota continues to discuss the late hours that teenagers work in order to support their family. These later hours and early school start times often leave students sleep-deprived and wishing they had an extra hour of sleep in the morning. Pushing

start times later would actually help students by providing them with that extra hour that could make all the difference. If that doesn't quite calm anxious parents, they can always talk to school administrators on a one-on-one basis and discuss a waiver catered to their specific situation.

As we can see, teenagers have a very particular sleep cycle that we are unable to do much about. This un-trainable system causes many hurdles in the life of a teenager including sleep deprivation and inattention during classes. By examining the example of 9,000 students attending eight high schools in three states, we can clearly observe the wide variety of improvements that a couple more hours of sleep can make (Hanes 3). The main questions and concerns of parents, coaches, teachers, and employers can be remedied for the most part. Perhaps the biggest question of all is directed toward parents. Do you want students to be more successful? Instead of continuing to search for the answer to this life-long goal, we must look right in front of us. Simply pushing high school start times later in the morning could be a key factor in determining the success of students.

What if we could change the outcome to the daily morning battle with the alarm clock? Say it's 8:00 a.m. on a usual Wednesday morning, and the sound of the alarm clock blares from across the room. *Beeeeep! Beeeeep! Beee-* They're well rested, awake, and ready to face whatever challenges the day might bring.



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**FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Isaacson creates a familiar scene to relate to her reader and introduce her topic. Compare this intro with other *Voices* essays you've read. What are some pros to using a little creative writing as a hook? Can you think of any cons?
2. When addressing her argument, Isaacson acknowledges some concerns that parents have and then provides counter-argument. How does this add to the strength of her argument? Are there issues that weren't mentioned that you think could have strengthened her essay?
3. This essay not only explains the goal of setting later school start times, but states that classes should begin no earlier than 8:30. How does this specificity contribute to the essay as a whole? What would have been lost if Isaacson hadn't been precise?
4. Isaacson relates her own experiences in high school with extra-curricular activities. What does this contribute to the essay? Upon which rhetorical elements does this tactic rely and why?
5. Look at the first sentence of each paragraph. Do these topic sentences give you a good idea of what the paragraph will be about? Do they focus on her main point as well? Find some good examples and some that could use improvement.
6. There is a large contrast in paragraph length in this essay, ranging from paragraphs under 100 words to 300+ words. Why did the author write in this manner? How did this affect your reading of the essay? Do you think the variety makes it easier or harder to read?

In her persuasive research essay, Kohlts argues that her generation, the Millennial Generation, is plagued with an epidemic of narcissism. With the creation of selfies and increasingly popular social media sites, she says that her generation is becoming more and more entitled and self-important. Kohlts further notes that this essence of narcissism begins with the parenting of children who are rewarded for mediocrity and never taught to cope with disappointments and setbacks.

Kohlts's essay provides important points on a controversial topic that cause pause for self-evaluation.

## AUDREY **KOHLTS**



Audrey Kohlts is from Denver Colorado where she was raised with one older sister. She is a Utah State intramural enthusiast, a wannabe environmentalist, and a constant movie-quoter. Audrey grew up playing sports and hiking, both of which have continued into college. She loves poetry and has competed in slam competitions in Colorado. She did exceptionally average in most.

Audrey is majoring in Respiratory Therapy and was recently accepted into the Respiratory Therapy Program at Weber State University starting in the fall. She wanted to write about our generation because it is a controversial topic; she wanted to offer her perspective and find research to support it. She is very excited to share her writing.

## ENOUGH ABOUT YOU, LET'S TALK ABOUT ME!



Audrey Kohlts

I am surrounded by words I don't understand. When I don't understand a word—for example, *callipygian*—I often assume it's some sort of STD or European sculpture. There is nothing I hate more than feeling inferior, and, even though Eleanor Roosevelt said, “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent” (Lewis), *callipygian* makes me feel inadequate. So I researched. I turned to the reliable *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* and scanned the ‘C’ section. The definition was **not** a European sculpture or an STD; *callipygian* means “having well shaped buttocks.”

Having a well-shaped buttocks is of the utmost importance in this day and age. Image obsession is all around us. Many seek approval from outside sources when they are feeling inferior, having self-doubt, or experiencing those similar feelings of inadequacy that make us all human. When I first heard the word narcissism, I felt a similar sense of doubt. I knew it wasn't a sexually transmitted disease or a piece of art, but I didn't fully understand its meaning. There are notable tendencies of narcissism within our generation, the Millennial Generation. The research to support these observations is plentiful. Our perspective is a perspective of truth because we are the generation under the microscope—we are on the inside.

We have been influenced by our parents and our peers; however, we refrain from self-reflection when our actions are not comparable to our standards. We have become a generation of narcissists, which is one of the personality disorders categorized by psychologists (Burton). Author Jeffery Kluger wrote *The Narcissist Next Door* and is a senior writer for *TIME* magazine. He outlines three key characteristics in narcissists that classify the disorder. The classic behavioral traits are grandiosity, entitlement, and a lack of empathy. The Millennial Generation illustrates these characteristics in social media, in romantic relationships, and in work environments.

The term *narcissism* is derived from Greek mythology. Narcissus was a hunter known for his beauty. A mountain nymph named Echo loved Narcissus, but he couldn't love her back. He didn't have the capacity to see beyond himself. He saw his own reflection in the river one day, and he could not look away. He drowned lusting after his own image (Pontikis). This is the root of the term now describing my generation. We are drowning in vanity and entitlement, and it is affecting our sense of humanity. We personify the disorder of the narcissistic personality as we obsess over our own images and engage in unhealthy dependencies on social media. Grandiosity, or an inflated sense of self, is one of the three classifying characteristics of narcissism. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* describes narcissism as "having an exaggerated belief in one's importance, sometimes reaching delusional proportions, and occurring as a common symptom of mental illnesses, as manic disorder." Selfies are one of the most prominent examples of narcissistic delusion.

Selfies have become a popular trend for the Millennial Generation. They embody grandiosity on all different points of the spectrum. Our unhealthy fixation with selfies so directly parallels the behavior of Narcissus that the comparisons are uncanny. Though Narcissus' death was a physical one, the Millennials face a death of empathy and accurate self-awareness. These characteristics are what make humans relatable. We are in a world saturated with mirrors encouraging us to document and filter our every event. What are the real motivations behind posting on social media? Why are selfies so ubiquitous and accepted by this culture? USU student Mikell Wood wrote the essay "Selfies are Beautiful," which was published in *Voices of USU 2014*. As a Millennial, Wood also brought an inside perspective to selfies. She wrote, "People share selfies because they feel a desire to express their beauty" (34). Wood describes the empowering movement of #SelfieSunday and the lack of judgment that has followed now that there is a designated day of the week to post selfies. Wood also addresses the standards set by celebrities; the selfies they post influence us to normalize selfie-posting as positive behavior in our own lives. I appreciate Wood's perspective; however, I disagree. I am involved in social media, and I often make snap judgements based off of a person's profile. We judge everywhere, and in my realm selfies have a negative connotation.

The negative judgments I often make are propelled by the underlying question: what are your motives for posting? Thanks to the newest technology, the camera on the front of smartphones allows for users to see the picture of themselves as they are snapping the shot. Ultimately, the picture is a moment-in-time of a person admiring his or her own image. Once it is posted online, the already self-centered photograph is sent out for further affirmation. It is not “vivacious,” as Wood said. It is vicious. It’s a vicious cycle of vanity-blanketed and condoned societal trends.

Vain rhetoric is gratified all over suburban smartphone screens. The “inflated sense of self” sprays like toxic fumes escaping from a can of condensed paint. The issue is clear, but what needs to change are the attitudes of Millennials. Our attitudes of self-importance need to be replaced with self-awareness and humility. We are a generation of grandiosity. We are a generation so focused on the reflection in the water that we are drowning in lust of the image of our own romanticized significance.

As our generation has become less aware of our insignificance, Social Networking Sites (SNS) have inversely become increasingly prevalent. They have evolved from Myspace to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Each SNS has a slightly different theme or appeal; however, they are all the same genre: social. A study in 2014 concluded that those who post frequently on SNS feel a need to be admired (Davenport, et al.). The idea behind creating these sites was to better connect people who are not in the same proximity. Tinder is an SNS that has boomed in the last three years. It is a mobile dating application initially launched on college campuses. In an interview with the founders of Tinder, Mateen and Rad described the workings of the app: “Users are shown photos of nearby potential matches and can swipe right to ‘like’ and left for ‘nope.’ Mutual right swipes result in a match, followed by the prompt to either send a message or ‘keep playing’” (qtd. in Stampler). The app’s appeals are convenience, the buffer against rejection, and the power to decline or accept another person. It’s a narcissist’s dream! No wonder the app is doing so well with our generation. It coddles one’s ego by not letting the user know if they are rejected and gives immediate gratification of acceptance. Tinder magnifies and distorts the way romantic relationships are initiated in the Millennial Generation. Narcissists lack empathy, and with the inflated

sense of self, and the app's lack of rejection notification integrated into the profile, grandiosity is further reinforced.

Tinder users are prominently college students. The intent of users can be ambiguous, but thankfully biographies and profiles can state the intentions of those who are online. Whether the user is looking for a "good time" or a relationship, there are accommodations. It's almost like online shopping, but the merchandise is real people who have thoughts and emotions. The distortion lies in the attitudes being generated by Tinder. It puts the user on a pedestal and provides a platform for them to view others as appendages. The action of swiping left or right is shallow. It is as shallow as the water that drowned Narcissus; and it is similarly deceptive water that is drowning our generation. Echo was in love with Narcissus. He, however, couldn't see her because he was too involved with his own beauty. The issue lies within the thumb swiping of acceptance or rejection, which propels entitlement. It keeps us from appreciating those around us for who they are. People are not appendages placed on a screen for us to pick one to best serve our desires.

Relationships in our generation are not limited to Tinder, but SNS like Tinder greatly influence the way we court. Again, if we take a step back and question the motives behind a post, it opens the floodgates for vulnerability. Today, couples frequently post pictures with or about each other. The common hashtags #ManCrushMonday and #WomanCrushWednesday have similar intentions as the #SelfieSunday. These trends are excuses to post on social media and cast a false blanket of perfectionism. Online romance has evolved into a community of insecurities. We seek constant approval for our private relationships on the very public SNS. What are our motives for posting? The evidence is in the trends, and we are products of our environments.

In business there are products and there are demands, more commonly known as supply and demand. We are motivated to work by the incentive to gain something in return. The gains vary depending on the person. Some gains are emotional and some are physical, but mostly we as humans are motivated to work for financial gains in order to maintain a lifestyle we see fit. These motivations for gains in careers are the driving incentives to progress. Many in the Millennial Generation have been awarded, however, for mediocrity since we were

children. Repeated awards for mediocre performance have created a sense of entitlement in the Millennial Generation.

As children, we were granted awards for placing in all levels of competition. For example, in elementary schools, Field Day was a day for children to play games and compete in obstacle courses and races. It was a day full of fun and competition. Each place received a colored ribbon. No matter how poorly the child performed, they would still leave with a badge of honor. This is one of the things that set the standard in all aspects of the Millennials' lives. With consistent awards for average performances as children, entitlement has transitioned into the workplace. In an article for the *New York Times*, Ashley Merryman writes, "When children make mistakes, our job should not be to spin those losses into decorated victories. Instead, our job is to help kids overcome setbacks, to help them see that progress over time is more important than a particular win or loss, and to help them graciously congratulate the child who succeeded when they failed." We lack resilience, and a key contributor is the prevalence of mediocrity awards in our childhood. We are not entitled to awards. When we do not succeed, in order for us to learn and grow, it is important for us to try again.

Low resilience is paralleled with entitlement. They have both made their way into the workplace as we have grown older. In a survey conducted by "Future Workplace, Multiple Generations at Work," 1,189 Millennial employees and 150 managers were asked how long they anticipate staying at their job. "Ninety-one percent of Millennials (born between 1977-1997) expect to stay in a job for less than three years" (Meister). This lack of commitment over the long term is the perfect example of entitlement in Millennials. It propels the idea that if an extrinsic source isn't serving them well, then they have grounds to leave. The U.S Chamber of Commerce Foundation wrote an article, "General Foundation," comprised of research regarding the Millennial Generation. It states, "Many Millennials have grown up with parental sup-

Often disconnected from the realities of this world, the Millennials have been praised for their ambition but too often rewarded for their mediocrity.



port and encouragement and have experienced relatively comfortable lifestyles.” Approximately 20 percent of American Millennials living in poverty have not been so privileged.

The level of parental support coupled with an increasing amount of optimism could be argued as a benefit for our generation. We are optimistic, with 41 percent of our generation satisfied with the way things are going in the country, compared with 26 percent satisfaction in those over 30 (Myers). It is this support and unrealistic optimism which blinds us from the reality of the world and creates entitled attitudes in work environments. Often disconnected from the realities of this world, the Millennials have been praised for their ambition but too often rewarded for their mediocrity.

Narcissus was disconnected from his world in a similar regard. He was unable to perceive his destructive actions. He only saw his strengths and positive abilities. As a member of the Millennial Generation, I am speaking as a voice from the inside. There are mirrors on our phones reflecting selfies, and SNS profiles embodying self-centeredness. There are mirrors in the eyes of our peers and on their profiles; we are constantly seeking how extrinsic influences can serve us. There are mirrors in the expectations of our parents, who encourage love and support with optimism; but shield us from the reality of this world. We are encompassed in mirrors and, as a whole generation, are Narcissus. We are drowning in grandiosity and entitlement and lacking in resilience and empathy. We are drowning despite the constant support of those around us; perhaps we are drowning *because* of the constant support of those around us.

Narcissists are incapable of listening to criticism (Kluger). As we grow and evolve throughout our lives, we can counteract the mirrors around us. I believe that we can evolve beyond Narcissus and shatter the mirrors. We are capable of hearing and reflecting on criticism around us. We are capable of thinking critically of the trends surrounding our generation. We are capable of going against the grain of social media trends that seek immediate gratification. Will you swipe left or right to dictate the delusional convenience of your peers? What are your motives? These observations are major generalizations about our generation, but we are the ones under the microscope; thus it is our responsibility to decide which mirrors we give permission to reflect.

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1. Were you able to identify a clear thesis statement in the introductory paragraph? If so, what is it?
2. Were you able to figure out what the topic of Kohlts's essay is from her thesis?
3. Kohlts argues that the Millennial Generation is narcissistic. What credible evidence is present in her essay to back up this claim?
4. One of the main issues discussed in Kohlts's essay is the narcissistic connotations that come with selfies. If you had written this essay, would you agree or disagree that selfies are a result of narcissism? How would you back your argument up?
5. What type of essay is this? Does it work effectively as this type of essay? Why or why not?
6. Do each of the paragraphs have a clear transition from one to the next? Does each paragraph, including the conclusion relate back to the thesis?

## FOR DISCUSSION

## BACKGROUND

Do you know much about the American government? According to Maranda Haderlie, the majority of American citizens lack very basic knowledge about the U.S. governmental system. She argues that it is the responsibility of the citizens of the U.S. to be knowledgeable about the government so that they can vote for laws and leaders that will help protect the freedoms fought for by the founding fathers. She asks, “How can this be accomplished if we don’t know our own government?”

In this persuasive research essay, Haderlie discusses the need and benefits of having all high school students pass the U.S. citizenship test in order to graduate.

## MARANDA **HADERLIE**



Maranda Haderlie is a Utah-native English Major with a longtime love of literature. She loves traveling, reading, and spending time outdoors. Maranda is an avid unicyclist, slack-liner, and artist, basically a thrill seeker who will ride any roller coaster in her path. She is always looking for a new adventure or hobby and isn’t afraid of a challenge. She earned her Associate’s Degree as a freshman and is excited to

continue her education at Utah State in the fall.

# TESTED AND TRUE

Maranda Haderlie

Who is the current Chief Justice of the Supreme Court? When was the Constitution written? What are the three branches of government? A surprisingly large number of American citizens cannot answer these simple questions about our country. It is becoming more and more apparent that civics education is lacking in the public school system. According to a survey done by *The Washington Post*, only 15 percent of U.S. citizens knew who the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was (Wilson). It's John Roberts, in case you are among the other 85 percent. To encourage a better understanding and knowledge of our government, passing the U.S. citizenship test should be a graduation requirement for all U.S. high school students.

The problem may not be obvious to you yet. Why does it matter if people don't know when the Constitution was signed? Is it really that important to be politically active and aware? It is important; the founding fathers would not have fought for freedoms they didn't care about or thought were just a passing trend. They did not set our government up to fail or to turn into a dictatorship. Part of our responsibility as citizens of this great country is to uphold the laws, use our freedoms, and stand up for truth. We also need to keep the government in check and keep it "by the people, for the people" (Lincoln). How can this be accomplished if we don't know our own government? New citizens are required to learn the information presented on the citizenship test, and they come to America because of the values and freedoms we have. Yet, most natural born residents forget these important facts and take for granted the many privileges we have.

This new requirement would help increase knowledge and awareness in our country. People who understand and have even a basic knowledge are more likely to do something with that information than those who remain ignorant. Knowing about the government encourages people to participate in the democratic process, vote, and be more engaged with the government in general. "Brandt Shaw, an eighth-grade U.S. History teacher at Monticello Academy...said many grad-

uating seniors don't know the duties of citizenship, which can lead to voter apathy" (Schencker). Knowing that a major cause of this "voter apathy" is a lack of knowledge, especially in high school-aged citizens, it makes sense that "civic engagement among young people is low" (Lopez et al. 2006). Giving students the opportunity to learn and be tested on basic civics will directly result in the encouragement to vote as well as prevention of voter indifference. This will lead to a more engaged populace who can monitor and have a say in what happens to them and their country.

Some argue that this will be just another requirement that high school students will stress about. However, if properly integrated, the curriculum would fit into other required government and history classes. According to Mike Rigby, a government and history teacher at Sky View High School, "I could teach it in a day in class; they can handle it" (Rigby). This requirement could be taken care of in less than a week; it could be taken at any point in the high school career of the student; and, like the ACT, students would have the chance to take it as many times as they needed or wanted to. One idea specifically mentioned by *Greenville News* is that each school could decide how to give the test to students (Smith). It has even been proposed that passing the test would be a sort of extra credit for students' GPAs. Higher scores could be applied as high grades that would help bring up the GPA. However, low scores would not be penalized as long as the student passed. A perfect score would not be a requirement. According to the lawmakers and political spokespeople pushing this requirement, the same scoring method will apply at the high school level as now applies when the test is taken by prospective citizens. This means that only a 60 percent score is necessary. However, according to Aston, a participant of the study examined in "High School Students' Knowledge and Notions of Citizenship," "scoring well... show[s] that you have a passion for living here." (Feinberg and Doppen). Usually a passion for something drives people to fight for, respect, and nurture the thing they love. When one has a better understanding of the government, they are more likely to stand up and defend it or stand up against injustices that sometimes slide by unnoticed. Overall, this would lead to the improvement of the whole country as more people pay attention and care about important issues and find ways to participate and use their voice.

On the other hand, some students may take the U.S. citizenship test not as a chance to learn but as one more check-box and not realize the importance behind it. “Whenever you are forced to do something, I tend to be cautious” (Rigby). Ultimately this should be a step towards helping students understand how fortunate they are to live in this

Part of our responsibility as citizens of this great country is to uphold the laws, use our freedoms, and stand up for truth.

country. When they are just trying to pass a test and are not looking at the big picture, that point might just go over them. “They should take it to be aware of what others go through to be a citizen” (Rigby). It is because of the principle of *Jus soli* that if you are born in the U.S. you are automatically a citizen. Most people take this for granted and don’t realize this is fairly unique to our country. Just by taking the citizenship test, they would gain a better appreciation for

their rights and freedoms and would have a greater respect for this country and what others do to be a part of it.

Another question commonly brought up is, “why should this be implemented in high schools?” It is argued that there is plenty of time to learn about the country and government elsewhere such as when you are in college or in activities like We the People, Close-Up, and other extracurricular events that encourage government knowledge and learning. While these programs do a lot of good, they just aren’t enough, and not everyone has access to them. We the People teaches specifics in groups and requires a time dedication that most high-school students can’t or don’t want to commit to. Close-Up incorporates more history but only lasts a week. Other extracurricular programs depend a lot on the motivation of the students. The U.S. citizenship test is a good overall view of many important points of our country and how the government works. The timing and accessibility is also extremely logical for teaching high school students. Senior year in high school is generally the first year that many students can participate in the voting process and also when they need the most information and direction to begin making important political decisions. Being taught material at a younger age also encourages a life-long interest and respect.

Next, The U.S. citizenship test contains information that is necessary to be a good citizen. While just knowing what one should do does not automatically make everyone a good citizen, being more aware of responsibilities and ways to participate in the government of our country will encourage people to be better. Feinberg and Doppen discuss the idea that a personally responsible citizen will make use of their knowledge to better the community. This means more people would be looking into volunteer work, running for local offices, and even organizing community events and rallies. The citizenship test emphasizes some of the qualities of this type of “super citizen.” Several of these qualities include being loyal to the U.S. and the laws of the land as well as honest, caring, and hard working. “A good citizen obeys the laws...for the benefit of the nation” (Feinberg and Doppen). A good citizen also understands and practices habits that contribute to a healthy democracy.

One concern brought up is the cost factor. However, this will not be a problem. The test has been around and re-figured enough that “the tests and study materials have already been developed” (Schencker). An easy search of the internet already reveals a vast amount of study help that is updated along with the test and is available to everyone. Also, as the schools will individually decide how to administer the test, there will not be a “one-size-fits-all” feel to the requirement. The test can be administered orally, on paper, or even online. Special equipment will not be needed to ensure that all schools can participate, and all students have equal access to the test and study materials.

Without too much trouble, this initiative can easily be introduced into the school system and immediately begin to benefit the nation and general knowledge of our citizens. By learning these basic principles, high school students will be better enabled to vote and participate in democracy, civics education will have higher, more measurable standards, and this will lead to better informed and engaged citizens overall. Also, it will not cost schools extra money or add more stress for high school students to accommodate this requirement. When this knowledge is more readily available and used, we can truly live up to the principle our government was based on: “We the People” (U.S. Const.). If you’re still left hanging from the questions I asked earlier, the Constitution was signed in 1787, and the three branches of govern-



ment are the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial. Now you know, and soon thousands of high school students will too.

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## FOR DISCUSSION

1. Haderlie begins her essay with three questions. Is this an effective way to begin her essay? Why or why not? How does beginning an essay with a question catch the reader's attention? How does it add to or detract from her argument? Give examples.
2. Do you think that the suggestions made in this essay could feasibly be considered by the state lawmakers? Why or why not?
3. Can you identify clear transition sentences in each paragraph? Do the transition sentences clearly connect the paragraphs to one another? Give specific examples.
4. What are the benefits of requiring every student to pass the U.S. citizenship test before graduating from high school? Are there any possible issues with this proposition according to the author? What are they, and what evidence points to them?
5. If you were writing an essay arguing against Haderlie's opinion that the U.S. citizenship test should be a requirement of all high school students, what points would you use to make your argument credible?
6. The author cited a personal interview with a high school government and history teacher as one of her sources. Do you think this is a credible source for this topic? Do you think it added to her argument? Why or why not? Give examples.

# BACKGROUND

After an experience on the bus, Todd Partridge became interested in society's avoidance of physical contact. He commands a strong ethos on the importance of physical interaction and utilizes 30+ sources into an organized and persuasive essay, which leaves the reader contemplating their own communication habits. But Partridge doesn't abandon his readers with the problem; he also clearly explains how individuals can improve their relationships through simple measures of touch.

## TODD PARTRIDGE



Todd Partridge is a Mathematics and Psychology dual-major with a minor in Economics. He loves to get his figurative hands into everything and to explore and think critically through every subject and experience available to him. His physical hands are usually busy creating professionally-made board and card games. He was inspired to write this essay after noticing that, whether he was with strangers or close friends, people seemed very uncomfortable touching each other. Experimenting and researching the causes of this social drift has been one of his most rewarding journeys and has permanently and significantly changed the way he approaches relationships for the better.

## SOCIAL TRUST: a touchy subject



Todd Partridge

The other day, I hopped onto a bus that was just crowded enough that as the bus made its way down the road, a bump caused a girl to slightly graze my arm with her sleeve, after which she immediately said, “*Sorry!*”

This really struck me. In an environment where bumping into one another is likely and even expected, this girl made such little contact I might not even have noticed, and yet she felt the need to apologize for unintentionally touching my arm. People today are hyper-aware of when they are touched or when they touch someone else, and with any accidental brush comes immediate apology, or at least an awkward look that communicates, “I didn’t mean anything by that.”

My experience on the bus is typical of many in American society. We are not a culture of touch. Sidney Jourard, a pioneering psychologist in touch studies, highlights how various cultures communicate through touch. In one study, he traveled across the globe observing conversations of two friends in different countries as they went to lunch. In most countries, he observed that friends made contact with each other an average of 90 times per hour, with France averaging 110, and Puerto Ricans exhibiting up to 180 times per hour. However, in America Jourard observed a mere 2 points of contact per hour—usually in bursts of enthusiasm—trumped only by England with a stunning zero (Jourard). This does not insinuate that Americans and Brits have lost their capacity to feel, as research has confirmed that certain climates can contribute to this mindset, such as colder climates or urban areas (Chillot, Zur).

While these environmental factors might be partially to blame for Americans’ “touch avoidant” attitudes, Caroline Johansson’s study in *Current Psychology* reveals that many don’t touch simply because they don’t know how, never having been taught by their parents. She explains that a major factor of their avoidance behavior was a percep-

tion that they lacked the skill or knowledge necessary to touch others appropriately. Johansson reports,

It appeared that their inability derived from childhood.... This inability concerned both not knowing how to touch practically (that is how to put one's arms around another person or how to carry a newborn baby) and not knowing when and what kind of touch to give to whom (for example, shake hands). (51)

As making contact demonstrates vulnerability and a desire for deeper connection, the fear of exclusion can be paralyzing for those who are insecure in those abilities (Johansson 53).

Americans lose a staggering number of social and personal benefits by avoiding touch. The most overwhelmingly proven benefit from physical touch is its ability to create and deepen lasting personal relationships between humans. In a study led by Daniel Nicholls at the University of Canberra, Australia, researchers sought to learn what affect compassionate physical touch had on dementia patients. Families and caregivers of these patients reported feeling more hope in their patient's progress and satisfaction in their relationship when they made physical connection a regular part of their visits. In contrast, those who made little to no physical contact over time felt feelings of helplessness and despair when asked about the patient's improvement (576). Philip Shaver and Cindy Hazan, psychologists in the field of intimacy and relationships, found that not only did couples who touched each other openly and frequently demonstrate a greater ability to accept and support their companion in view of faults than those who did not touch often, but the longevity of those individuals' other close relationships tended to average *twice* as long as those who avoided touch (Hazan 515). Additional research on the subject by Johansson revealed that "touchy" and "non-touchy" people alike consider physical intimacy to be an essential part of their marriage relationship (50).

While touch significantly improves relationships, studies have also established that expression of sympathy through physical contact is crucial for proper growth and evolution of a species. Charles Darwin's well-known "survival of the fittest" theory of biological evolution would seem to contradict this, except this was a title coined, not by Darwin but by Herbert Spencer, to justify a desired recognition of class superiority. In a comprehensive view of Darwin's writ-

ings together, his feelings about his own race can be more accurately described as “survival of the kindest” (Keltner, “Darwin’s Touch”). Darwin observed across mammalian races that sympathy is expressed through tactile communication, and this expression is a key influence in a female’s choice to mate with a male of her species (Darwin).

To further explore the necessity of compassionate somatic expression among mammals, Darlene Francis and Michael Meaney at the Developmental Neuroendocrinology Laboratory at McGill University studied the maternal behavior of rats to lick and groom their pups. Environments filled with compassionate touch fostered rats that were better equipped to survive and reproduce successfully. Mature rats raised in high-contact settings also showed lower stress levels when restrained, explored newer surroundings more confidently, and had more effective immune systems (Champagne). These findings only confirm Darwin’s hypothesis that sympathetic contact is a hardwired component in furthering the evolution of a species, demonstrating what many Americans are missing through minimal physical contact.

Recognizing that tactile communication is a basic part of the human experience and even survival, the questions arise: why are Americans so hesitant to touch each other? Is it simply the weather, or the way children are raised? While these are certainly contributing factors, the answer seems to lie in Americans’ ability to *trust* each other.

A recent Associated Press poll discovered that a mere third of Americans feel like they know and interact with people they can trust (Cass). Intrigued by this statistic, a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune* asked the director of the General Social Survey what this drop in trust might be attributed to. “Society has become less close in terms of interpersonal contact,” he said. “People have a lot less close, personal ties. If you have those ties, you tend to trust people. If you don’t, you become more skeptical because you don’t know most of the people you come into contact with” (Huppke). Trust seems to be key in identifying and solving Americans’ touch avoidant attitudes.

If becoming “less close,” as the director of the General Social Survey puts it, is the cause of society’s deterioration of trust, social networking devices are one of the main culprits of the problem. A study by Andrew Przybylski and Netta Weinstein at the University of Essex revealed that—because of the wide and current preoccupation

in the population's mind with instantly connecting to virtually anyone in the world at any moment (Przybylski 237)—people who “engaged in personal discussions when a cell phone was nearby, even if neither was actually using it, reported lower relationship quality and less trust for their partner. They also felt their partner was less empathetic to their concerns” (Kerner).

The ever-present smartphone's ability to connect a person to the World-Wide Web at a moment's notice is not the only way it has crippled the everyday American's ability to trust his cohorts. Americans ages 18–29 communicate using an average of 88 texts per day (in comparison to the only 48 points of physical contact a day [Jourard]). In a *TIME Magazine* poll in 2012, 32 percent of people preferred communication via text, even with close friends. This is most concerning for young people because their communication abilities have not totally developed. Due to the buzzing phones in their pockets, they have limited experiences that cause those areas of the brain to mature (Kluger). Sherry Turkle, founder of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self, noted the texted apology as a clear example of how much we lose when we use text rather than voice, explaining that “a full-scale apology means I know I've hurt you, I get to see that in your eyes. You get to see that I'm uncomfortable, and with that, the compassion response kicks in. There are many steps, and they're all bypassed when we text” (Turkle). But Dacher Keltner, Ph.D., founder of the Greater Good Science Center, discovered that even a vocal reconciliation can fall short; compassion is interpreted through physical touch with a greater accuracy rate than verbal or written communication across the board (Keltner, “Hands On”).

However, these alarming statistics do not necessitate online interaction's abolishment. We have experienced the exciting capability to be transported to a different world, and to experience cultures and ideas that were never available to our ancestors (Price). We can share our experiences and memories with family and friends instantly, across the world (White). The resources available to raise a thousand-member protest in a day have never been closer to our fingertips (Couts). The explosion of social media has helped us renew our understanding of the power of the “social” (Fay).

However, it has also instilled a habit of immediate escape from awkward situations, which shelters us from the personal growth that

buds from confronting difficult subjects (Price). Internet communications cause our first impressions of people and situations to be cold, less important, or insincere (Bradt). It causes constant distraction overload, continuous partial attention, and lack of awareness of our physical surroundings (Rader 44). Social media have brought out the most bigoted, insensitive sides of a great majority of people and caused many to prefer a screen and a keyboard over faces, handshakes, and speech (Fowlkes, White). As Americans grow accustomed to communication via text and tweet, they learn to not fully trust their interpretation of those communications. This fosters distrust throughout society that is powerful and habitual. Reliance on social media degrades social trust (Fay).

Some argue that internet avenues are a necessity for creating lasting change in today's age (Aguirre), but many attribute many social movements' successes to the Web that were actually influenced very little by it. When 10,000 protestors swarmed the streets of Moldova in Iran to stand against their communist government, many called it the "Twitter Revolution," expressing that the people of Iran would never have had the confidence to stand together for freedom without Twitter (Gladwell). Closer investigation, however, reveals almost *all* tweets about the demonstration occurred in the West, since very few Twitter accounts are actually held by Iranians ("An Exhaustive Study"). As expert social site designer Seymour Chwast said, "social media can't provide what social change has always required" (Gladwell).

Americans' social suffocation by technology is analogous to the plight of ducks found in metropolitan areas. Many families have participated at some point in feeding bread to the ducks in a nearby pond or lake. Most are unaware that because it carries almost no nutritional value for the birds, this can lead to malnourishment and extreme weight gain. In small amounts, it is not harmful, but this is too difficult to moderate as so many families routinely feed ducks. According to bird expert Melissa Mayntz, this practice often leads to overcrowding, greater pollution, diseases, and a loss of the inborn instinct to find natural sources of food. When wild ducks discover a constant supply of free bread, they effectually kill themselves off (Mayntz).

Social media have become the human race's plentiful outpouring of free bread, full of carbohydrates with little nutritional value, which we use, attempting to satiate our hunger, for connection (White). It



Social media have become the human race's plentiful out-pouring of free bread, full of carbohydrates with little nutritional value, which we use, attempting to satiate our hunger, for connection.

is a synthetic replacement for the real, lasting connection that comes from a kiss, a touch, or a shared glance. As we make a conscious effort to rely less on digital interaction and more on our analog experience, we will give precedence to the people we are with over people who are elsewhere (Price), gain a greater feeling of being worthy of love and belonging (Brown, Brené), find a boost in self-esteem and control over our work environments (Rader 45), and wield

more power in our words as we strive to promote real change in our public policies and cultural behaviors (Fay).

Relying less heavily on social media takes discipline. This is an addictive aspect of the American life, making it a painful habit to break (Rader 45). **First**, we can make a habit of posting only the simpler, public parts of our lives for the world to see, decreasing our likelihood to use the internet in search of deeper connection. **Second**, we can create “sacred spaces” around certain activities where no technology is allowed, such as at mealtime, while playing with children, or chatting with friends (Price). **Third**, we can create friendly competitions to see who can go longest without checking their phones during a get-together (Fowlkes). But, just as the bread-fed duckling starves to death when bread can no longer be found, so may our own social lives perish if we shun Facebook without replacing it with something new—or in this case, something forgotten. The second step to restoring Americans’ willingness to trust is to bravely experience the vulnerable world of physical interaction (Bradt).

An effort to begin touching friends and acquaintances can seem awkward in a society where passersby instantly apologize for grazing arms on the sidewalk or bumping hips on a crammed bus seat. It is not nearly as awkward as we imagine (Spechler). A fear of physical touch can easily be unlearned (Greene). **First**, we should make contact when we greet someone. A hug, a high-five, a touch from behind, or a

squeeze of the arm are all initial contact behaviors that communicate “*I accept you,*” “*I care about you,*” and “*I am invested in you.*” This causes the friend to be more comfortable around us (Nicholls 576) and sends endorphins through both bodies that make participants happier to see one another (Spechler). **Second**, we should touch a friend when asking a question. A hand on the shoulder, a pat on the knee, or a touch on their side are all appropriate question-asking gestures. This is a little less natural, but reaps a willingness to serve (Nicholls 576), a feeling that the question is important (Darwin), and increased eye contact (“Oxytocin”). **Third**, we should make a physical connection when we apologize or show sympathy (Spechler). An arm around the shoulder, a squeeze to the wrist, or a grab of the hand effectively communicates a compassion that is instinctively trusted (Keltner, “Darwin’s Touch”).

When a friend has some new object we want to learn more about, we ask, “*Hey, can I see that?*” What we are really asking, however, is that they hand it to us. Evidently, in our minds, we have not truly seen something until we have touched it (Bradt). In the same way, we cannot fully *see* our friends through a computer screen. Our firewalls not only shield us from viruses and pop-ups, they shield us from the people we love (White). When we rely on social media, human vulnerability is lost. As Brené Brown, a leader in the field of sociology, said, “I’m just so grateful, because to feel this vulnerable means I’m alive” (Brown). As we turn from the ever-tempting shower of “bread” and practice behaviors that provide the real nutrients of connection, we will find healthier and longer-lasting relationships that will bring greater fulfillment and personal confidence (Greene, Rader 45). The stars on our spangled banner may be scattering, but we can reconnect them still simply by using the reliable, effective, and personal means we have had at our fingertips since our birth: *our fingertips*.

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**FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Partridge begins by relating the experience that inspired his topic. How is this hook a good introduction to his paper? When would this approach be less effective?
2. Although all the sources Partridge uses are focused on his argument, they cover a vast range of topics (dementia patients, duck feeding, texting, Charles Darwin, etc.). How does approaching the subject from many angles add to this essay? What are potential risks of covering so much?
3. Find some examples of where Partridge transitions well from one paragraph to another. What makes those transitions work? Did any transitions confuse or distract you from the main point of the essay and why?
4. The author bio expresses Partridge's passion for what he learned while composing this essay. Where can you see this passion in his essay? Provide textual examples. Did it change the way you read his argument?
5. Towards the end of his essay, Partridge directs the reader in two three-step processes for how to fix the problems of interaction he's addressing. How does clearly laying out a procedure make his essay more effective? Were there negative aspects to this approach?
6. The long paragraph on pgs. 55–56 could be read as a series of quotations without the author's voice coming through. What strategies could be employed to include more authorial ownership?
7. Identify an analogy Partridge employs in this essay and analyze how it works to build up or detract from his argument.

## BACKGROUND

We live in a time when putting a pen to paper seems old-fashioned and outdated. With e-mails, text messaging, and various social media sites, handwriting has become obsolete.

Mortensen argues against this exact mindset in a persuasive research essay. She suggests that learning to write, and write well, is a vital skill that extends into many other aspects of learning and development. As a student of English at USU, Mortensen is an advocate for handwriting and hopes to demonstrate the value of developing it.

## MATILYN **MORTENSEN**



Matilyn Mortensen was born in Portland, Oregon but has lived in Herriman, Utah ever since she was four years old. In fourth grade she discovered her love for writing and now one day hopes to write children's stories. While in high school she wrote for her school's paper and represented her school as the English Sterling Scholar. She is majoring in English with a journalism minor and received her Associate's Degree in

Spring 2015. She is currently serving an LDS mission in Vancouver, Washington and will return to USU in Spring 2017.

# PRINT IS NOT DEAD

(and neither is cursive)



Matilyn Mortensen

Technological advances in the digital era raise the question of whether or not good handwriting is still a valuable skill. Neat, clear penmanship, once necessary for all forms of communication from applications to letters, is becoming outdated as digitally based communication becomes a cultural norm. It is often assumed that once students reach the real world, typing skills will be far more valuable than the ability to write quickly and legibly by hand. This conclusion would be true if the benefits of cursive and print were found solely in communicating information between two parties. Texting, emailing, and social media allow ideas to be clearly and quickly expressed without a pen or pencil ever making a mark on paper. However, experiments and studies have observed that the benefits of learning to write well by hand go far beyond communication. Handwriting stimulates the brain differently than typing does and therefore plays a separate and necessary role in learning and education.

It is crucial for student success not to undermine the value of handwriting in the classroom. Learning to write by hand is an essential piece in building an educational foundation. Just as basic addition is not retaught in each grade level, yet still necessary for any type of math, handwriting is the beginning of learning how to express ideas and concepts when writing and will always be valuable to students in every stage of their lives and education. Not only that, handwriting aids in the memorization and understanding of information. Younger children are better able to express themselves when writing by hand, thus improving the content of their compositions (Wise 31). Writing by hand additionally benefits students because it stimulates the brain differently than typing does. The process of writing activates the same areas of the brain activated when reading, which typing does not (Leadership in Focus 55). From this research, it is logically concluded that time spent practicing handwriting or simply composing by hand will improve a child's reading. If too much time is devoted to typing,

the areas of the brain for both handwriting and reading will be negatively affected.

Some people may regard handwriting as a subject itself when in reality it is a tool for teaching and enforcing other areas. Focusing more on handwriting in the classroom is not about placing higher emphasis on the subject of penmanship, but realizing the ways writing by hand works in tandem with all other school subjects. It requires understanding that handwriting is as much, if not more, about brain activity as it is about simply communicating. In social studies, significant historical passages can be copied down for understanding. The act of writing assists the students in better processing the information while improving their penmanship. During science experiments, notes can be taken by hand with clarity as an expectation. What the students write in their notes will be more solidified in their minds and will be easier for them to recall later on. This will help them make connections between what they are learning and help them to test better. Handwritten rough drafts, which will later be peer-reviewed, demand neatness if a student expects valuable feedback or a positive grade. When students need to memorize material, such as a poem or a script, teachers can encourage them to use writing as a means for understanding and retaining the pieces. Additionally, teachers can teach their students about the value of handwritten notes in recalling information later. This skill of note taking will benefit them well into college and after they graduate and begin their professions.

Although typing is now used for almost all formal communication, handwriting is still the default for casual communication and personal communication. When it comes to individual reminders, like shopping lists and planners, the only important aspect is that the writer can later read the note they have made. Personal notes taken in classes or during meetings usually are only to be read by the one taking them; however, they have to be written down quickly to not miss any essential information. It is common that the faster a person writes the more their handwriting deteriorates. Typing the notes on a personal computer would solve the issue of clarity, but there is a memorization link in writing down information by hand not present in typing. Losing the benefit of memory assistance has negative consequences later on when the information is being assessed or needs to be recalled. Notes recorded by hand are more likely to be remembered by the stu-



dent writing them. Knowing how to write quickly and clearly makes note taking more beneficial, and knowing how to write well in cursive usually provides even more of a speed advantage.

Writing clearly in cursive is not only helpful when taking notes in class, but in being able to sign one's name. Signatures are required in numerous situations, such as when paying with a credit card or check at a restaurant or store, completing legal documents, accepting scholarships, and so forth. Understanding cursive well enough to create a unique and legible signature is important because this form of signature is harder to copy. Printed letters are much easier to forge and therefore make the "signature" less secure. The same can be said for the so called "cursive" scribbles many people use to represent their names. Signing as a form of verification is still an essential life skill and will not be replaced anytime soon. It is important to be able to use this tool correctly in order to protect your identity (Steinmetz).

Not only this, but understanding how to read cursive can help students understand how to decipher the handwriting of others—whether print or cursive. Everyone's handwriting is unique and can sometimes be challenging to understand. The more familiar students are with a variety of writing styles, the better they will be able to read what others write to them. A broader knowledge of handwriting styles also helps a student control their own writing quality and neatness as they correspond with others. Yes, they can type their communications, but there are some instances where that is not an option. It is satisfying to be able to briefly write a note to someone and to not worry that the note is too messy or illegible. On multiple occasions, roommates and friends have asked me to write on a poster they are using for a class presentation or some other type of visual aid because my handwriting is neater. Good handwriting allows a person the freedom of simply expressing themselves quickly and free of worry. Good handwriting is a matter of pride.

The process of writing in cursive is distinct when compared to print, not only in the way it looks on a page but also in the way it activates the brain. Just as print and typing stimulate the brain differently, cursive is its own process and requires different brain activity. In fact, some people who have sustained traumatic brain injuries are able to remember how to write in cursive, but not print. Additionally, studies show that writing in cursive can help children who have ADHD

(Steinmetz). The unique process of cursive has also been shown to help students with dyslexia. As previously stated, cursive and print are not the same processes. The brain is activated differently in both processes, and “cursive can help [those who have dyslexia] with the decoding process because it integrates hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills and other brain and memory functions” (Brown, Jones). Another benefit of cursive script is there are fewer similarities between the letters. Even if the final product of one letter resembles that of another, the process is unique. For those with dyslexia, this lessens the possible confusions. The process of writing words as entire chunks, not individual letters, helps with spelling and remembering letter order. This benefit extends to everyone, including those people who do not have a learning disorder (Blumenfeld).

Handwriting and typing are two very diverse acts. They serve similar purposes but each process is completely unique and consequently activates the brain in different ways. A study conducted by Indiana University observed the brain patterns of pre-literate five-year-olds. When the children simply looked at letters there was no change in their brain patterns. However, when they made self-generated marks by hand, their brain patterns changed. By performing an act that mimicked writing, the children’s brain activity became “more adult-like.” Additionally, “the brain’s ‘reading-circuit’ of linked regions that are activated during reading was activated during handwriting, but not during typing” (Leadership in Focus 55).

When writing by hand, communication occurs between the single hand and the opposite side of the brain. Typing, however, uses both hands and requires communication between both sides of the brain (Wise 31). Because elementary age children are still developing the fibers supporting communication between both sides of the brain, keyboarding does not emerge as an advantage until seventh or eighth grade when these fibers are more mature (Wise 31). Multiple observations have concluded that students “wrote faster, better sentences and expressed more ideas when using a pen and paper as opposed to a keyboard” (Petrescu 394). Since elementary students’ brains are still developing, typing may become a barrier rather than a tool in teaching writing. If students are expected to sit down at a computer and compose their ideas, what they create will weakly reflect their true thoughts and opinions. However, if children brainstorm and write

rough drafts by hand, they will be able to quickly and accurately express how they feel. Later on they can practice their typing skills by typing a final copy.

I distinctly remember being in third grade learning both cursive writing and typing for the first time. Although cursive was challenging to learn, I liked the product. Throughout middle school, I stuck to print, but when I was in high school I began using cursive as my preferred method of writing by hand. I loved how the letters flowed together, and when I took AP tests in high school I wrote my essays in cursive and was able to respond to the questions more quickly. On some of these tests, I even had extra time to go back and edit my essays. Even now as a college student I use cursive when I am brainstorming and making lists. There is something about a pen and paper that takes away the impersonal barrier that a keyboard and screen can create and allows my ideas to more easily flow.

Some people may regard handwriting as a subject itself when in reality it is a tool for teaching and enforcing other areas.

As I reflect on learning how to type, I remember being extremely frustrated. The process was so hard for me. Some days I would cry from the stress it created. Even when I was in sixth grade and had been learning how to type for three years, I still struggled. My typing speed was slower than it should have been, and because of these experiences I believed I was a slow and incompetent typist all throughout my schooling. Just recently I have learned I actually type slightly faster than the typing average speed. From my research, it is logical to conclude that as an elementary student I did not have the mental capacity to be a proficient typist. However, as a child, I was not aware of this and saw my struggle as failure. It was important for academic success that I begin typing at this young age, but it would have been very valuable for me to understand what I was capable of at the time. Elementary students need to understand that if they practice typing the skill will eventually come together when their brain is more mature. While their brains are maturing they need the tool of handwriting to support the current state they are in.

Assessment is another reason why good handwriting is still crucial. Standardized tests like the ACT, the SAT, and all AP tests have writing portions that are handwritten. Although this could change in the future, and probably will, it hasn't changed yet, and students need to be prepared to perform well on these tests. As I said before, I completed the essay portions of my AP tests in cursive, which helped me have a time advantage. However, the style of writing chosen is really insignificant. What matters is that the student can write quickly enough to express their best ideas and clearly enough for the test reader to understand them. Many students who went through the school system not caring whether or not their handwriting was clear because they planned on typing everything were met with a brutal surprise as they practiced writing essays for the AP test and realized they couldn't write legibly as fast as they needed to. In testing, the quality of the ideas expressed doesn't matter if no one can decipher them.

Whether intentionally or not, handwriting (both print and cursive) is being eliminated from education as the influence of technology in the classroom increases. Tablets and other digital devices are viewed as making learning more fun and exciting. Additionally, understanding how to manipulate various forms of technology at a young age may assist students later in life. Both of these ideas have importance in improving student success. But, if the attempt to get students ahead replaces time spent building their foundation, there will undoubtedly be negative consequences. Because young students cannot type quickly, they will be under pressure to perform at unrealistically high levels. This will result in stress, and the students will not be able to focus on creating new ideas and improving their writing. The emotions a child feels when learning subjects in elementary school are often irreversibly attached to those subjects for the rest of the person's life. When I was younger, I hated doing math. To this day, basic math concepts will often give me anxiety or make me feel unsettled. If students are so anxious about typing that they cannot create good ideas in their compositions, this stress will permanently be attached to writing their entire lives. Because students will need to write their entire lives, an anxiety attached to writing could become crippling.

Regardless of the benefits of handwriting, learning to type at a younger age is still essential for student success in the digital era. Typing and handwriting should never compete with one another for

the place of most importance in education. Rather, instruction of both should be used as a tool to support the curriculum already implemented in the classroom. Teachers need to work to communicate the value of good penmanship to their students. Although handwriting cannot be assessed in the same manner reading or math might be, students should be held to a higher standard of neatness and quality in written assignments. It would be false to believe that handwriting will ever replace the role of typing in communication. It would be equally foolish to ignore the value handwriting has in a student's ability to learn. Increasing the importance of handwriting in the classroom is not a matter of introducing a new subject area, but a matter of better utilizing an already existing tool. As "new and improved" methods appear, it is important to avoid too quickly dismissing tried and true ways of teaching before their time.

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**FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Mortensen describes her love for cursive and her struggles learning to type. Do you think that her personal experiences add to the effectiveness of her essay? Why or why not? Provide specific examples.
2. The author uses a variety of sources to support the claims made in her essay. Do you think she utilized these sources well? Give examples from the text and analyze them. If you had written this essay, how would you have used these sources to support your claims?
3. Identify parenthetical citations in the essay. Were they placed well in the essay? If not, take a paragraph in which a quote or source is inefficiently utilized and try to improve it.
4. Was the use of these citations beneficial in the development of the argument? Give at least two examples.
5. Did the author clearly state the main idea of her essay in the opening paragraph? What is the thesis statement? Did each of the following paragraphs support that main idea consistently throughout the essay? Provide specific examples.
6. Did your opinion about handwriting change based on the information presented in this essay? Which evidence changed your mind? What were some things that contributed to the strength of the argument? What were some things that could have been improved? List specific examples.

# BACKGROUND

Utah is well known for its National Parks and Forests, but what if that were to change? Over 60 percent of Utah land is managed by the federal government, but House Bill 148 was passed in 2012 in an attempt for Utah to get control of the federal land in their territory. Thomas uses his ethos as a wild land firefighter and his passion for the outdoors to appeal to citizens of Utah while he details why the land in Utah may be better managed by federal hands.

## WYATT **THOMAS**



Wyatt Thomas grew up in a small farming community in central Utah and is currently an aviation student in his second year of studies here at Utah State. He hopes to fly for any airline upon graduation from Utah State. The outdoors have always played a big part in his life. As a current wildland firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service, he cares a lot about how the public land is managed.

# FEDS VS. UTAH



Wyatt Thomas

On March 12, 2012 Governor Gary Herbert of Utah signed House Bill 148, which demanded that the federal government hand over possession of federal land within the borders of Utah. This bill was passed almost unanimously by the state House of Representatives and the state Senate. Passing a bill of this size and content would drastically change the face of Utah forever. There would no longer be national forests, federal ranges, or federal wetlands in Utah. National parks would remain under federal ownership because they are protected by the Organic Act of 1916, which created the National Parks Service. However, Forest Service and BLM are not included. Losing our forests and ranges to state control would mean losing a part of our national heritage. Having federal lands within our state shows that we are part of something bigger and ties Utah residents to the rest of the nation. Everyone recognizes a U.S. Forest Service sign on a road and knows it as a representation of America.

Although the federal government has not acted on this bill, it is still a hot debate. Utah needs to leave the public land how it is and keep federal land in the hands of the federal government. House Bill 148 was intended to act upon an agreement that came from the federal government back in 1894. In 1894, Utah was in the process of becoming a state. The 1894 Enabling Act set guidelines for what the current territory of Utah needed to do in order to become a state. Guidelines of this act included various points such as abolishing polygamy, Senate and Representative guidelines, and setting land aside for universities and other government-run institutions.

Important parts of the Enabling Act of 1894 that reference setting aside land are as follows:

For the establishment of permanent water reservoirs for irrigating purposes, five hundred thousand acres; for the establishment and maintenance of an insane asylum, one hundred thousand acres; for the establishment and maintenance of a school of mines in connection with the university, one hun-



dred thousand acres. The United States Penitentiary near Salt Lake City and all lands and appurtenances connected therewith and set apart and reserved therefore are hereby granted to the State of Utah. (sect. 12)

These lands were indeed set aside for the state of Utah. Looking at this in a realistic way, Utah in no way, shape, or form needs 100,000 acres for an insane asylum or 50,000 acres for a miners' hospital. Utah claims that they need this acreage; what they want from it is money from its resources. With land, you have to make a profit on it in order to have it worth owning. This could be from natural resources, recreation, or grazing.

The Governor's office quotes Representative Ken Ivory as follows:

A unanimous U.S. Supreme Court recently declared that congress cannot change the "uniquely sovereign character of a state's admission" into the Union and that this proposition applies with even greater force where "virtually all of a State's public lands are at stake." With trillions of dollars in mineral resources and millions of acres of our lands tied up by acts of congress, what is at stake is a \$2 billion education funding gap and nearly \$5 billion in federal funds to Utah that are seriously at risk from a fiscally reckless federal government. After waiting 116 years, we simply can't wait any longer for Washington to honor to Utah the same promise it made and kept with all states east of Colorado to transfer title the public lands in a timely fashion from being admitted into the Union.

From this statement, it is clear that Utah lawmakers want this land that was set aside from the Enabling Act of 1894. Utah wants to use public land money for education funding. With oil and gas industry royalties going toward education funding, Utah would be better off financially; however, there has to be some other way for this money to come in. Education is indeed an important part of our state but there are other ways of obtaining these funds. Utah residents have the fourteenth lowest taxes in the nation (Kiernan 2015). Utah has vast amounts of public land in comparison with many eastern states. Yet states on the east coast are able to fund their education systems just fine without public land. It is clear public land alone does not need to fund state education, yet this is Utah's main argument in House Bill 148.

At the current moment, gas and oil companies are required to pay royalties to the government for drilling on public land. The majority of drill sites are on federal land with some on state land. The state sees very little of these royalties in comparison to its big brother, the federal government. This plan of funding education with oil and gas money may work, but only if their prices stay at an ideal level. Because oil and gas are on the open market, their profits are unpredictable and hard to rely on for education funding.

If the state were to obtain the millions of acres of federal land and could not make a profit, they could do something even more destructive and long-lasting than drilling sites. Utah could sell land off to private owners. This land would never again be open to the general public. Where we currently hike, fish, hunt, and bike could be chained off with no trespassing signs from Moab to Logan. I would feel much better as an outdoor enthusiast knowing that my land is safe under federal rule, and not living under the shadow of possible private ownership.

For citizens who are unaware, public land is owned either by local, county, state, or the federal government. These lands are national forests, federal rangeland, federal wild life preserves, and national parks. The previously mentioned types of federal land are owned and managed by four main federal agencies, The U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Many states have an agency that owns and maintains state lands. In Utah this agency is named the Utah Department of Natural Resources. Being a state-controlled agency, it is smaller than the four federal agencies but, in a nutshell, does the same thing only on a smaller scale. Federal agencies are unified across the entire nation. National forests in Utah have much greater access to resources outside of Utah because it is federal. The Utah DNR only has its own resources.

Both state and federal land agencies are in charge of managing wildlife, grazing for ranchers, hunting, archeology, natural resources, fire suppression, conservation, recreation, and many other responsibilities that come with managing large tracts of land. Without these various agencies, the public would be able to cut down trees wherever they wanted, kill as much wildlife as they wanted, and off-road

where they please. There would be no order or conservation of Mother Nature. Land management agencies are vital to the wellbeing of our country and states.

The federal government manages most of its land in the western parts of the country. In western states the population is less dense. Large unpopulated tracts of land are common in western states while in the east and south there is more population. By percentage, Nevada is number one in the country with 81 percent of its land managed by the federal government. Utah is number two with 66.5 percent, and Alaska is number three with 61.8 percent of land being owned by the federal government. This is quite a lot considering a state like Texas only has 1.8 percent of its land owned by the federal government (Gorte, et al. 8). It is clear to see how the state of Utah would want to control more of the land contained within its boundaries, however there is no reason to fix something that isn't broken. The federal agencies have been managing land in Utah for more than 100 years. That's longer than the Utah Department of Natural Resources has even been around.

The question arises, does the state of Utah even have the resources or the experience to manage that much land? Current circumstances

The federal agencies have been managing land in Utah for more than 100 years. That's longer than the Utah Department of Natural Resources has even been around.

would point to no. If one looks at the current resources such as biologists, law enforcement officers, fire fighters, archeologists, road crews, camp hosts, vehicles, equipment, offices, and others that are under federal jurisdiction, it is a very large number. If the state were to take over this land, it would need all of those resources to keep managing it. People

would lose their jobs. It would be possible for the state to obtain these same resources, but who's to say that they would keep the same people who have well-established careers and practices.

I am currently a wild land firefighter for the U.S. Forest service. Just looking at fires suppression resources that the federal government has in Utah is enough to see how such a change would affect the state.

Every fire crew the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Parks Service runs within the state would have to be replaced. That is a lot of new expensive fire engines, water tenders, and replaced hand crews.

The state's wild land fire agency is known as FFSL, which stands for forestry, fire, and state lands. 2012 was one of the worst fire years Utah has ever had; 1,020 different fires burned more than 422,000 acres. 50 million dollars were spent on fighting these fires; only 16 million of that was covered by the state. Federal funding covered the rest (Styler 7). Fire suppression costs vary from agency to agency. A report that was prepared for the Public Lands Policy Coordination Office states the following:

From FY2003 to 2012, FFSL spent \$11.44 per acre burned for fire suppression, a rate that is higher than BLM costs of \$8.95 per acre but significantly lower than Forest Service costs of \$44.62 per acre. These amounts do not include fire prevention and preparedness or burned area rehabilitation, which collectively were more expensive than suppression in Utah during the five years. One reason for relatively high Forest Service suppression expenditures is that the two federal agencies, BLM and the Forest Service, do not cross-bill each other for shared equipment, particularly aircraft, for which the Forest Service bears disproportionate costs. Joint federal suppression costs in Utah during the ten-year period were \$17.79 per acre burned in 2013 dollars. (Stambro, et al.)

As the quote above explains, the reason the Forest Service's spending is so high is that it covers aviation costs for the BLM and under charges the state. If the Forest Service did not exist in Utah, there would be a large increase in fire suppression costs just from aviation alone. Fighting wild fires is very costly, and the state of Utah is very dependent on the federal government's help.

Utah is truly one of the most beautiful states in the union. From the red rock canyons in Southern Utah to the towering Wasatch peaks in the North, Utah is full of endless outdoor recreational opportunities and breathtaking vistas. It would be a shame if current public lands within the state were to be changed from what they are now. Not much has changed with federal land in the past 100 years. There is no reason

it needs to change in the next 100 years. Let's preserve our national heritage of having BLM and Forest Service land and resources within our state. Smokey Bear says "only you can prevent forest fires." Well Utah, only you can preserve public land.

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**FOR DISCUSSION**

1. This essay rarely uses personal pronouns (I, we, you, etc.). What mood does this create? How is this appropriate to his audience? How would the mood change if he were to address the reader conversationally?
2. Thomas uses a few large quotes packed with data to get his information across and then explains their significance. Did there seem to be a balance between information and explanation? When is it better to quote directly rather than paraphrase and summarize?
3. In two places, Thomas brings his own life and interests into the essay to explain that he is an outdoor enthusiast and also a wild land firefighter. Did this information change or mitigate his argument?
4. Because of his experience as a wild land firefighter, Thomas focuses a significant portion of his essay on wild fires. How does his focus on fires make this a better essay? What did he lose by narrowing his focus to one part of the consequences?
5. Legal documents such as Thomas used for sources in this essay are often full of technical language, numbers, and statistics. How was Thomas able to make his information more reader-friendly? What risks are there in over-simplifying content?
6. What can you deduce about the audience Thomas was writing to based on the style of his writing (age, education, interests, etc.)?
7. Thomas appeals to the reader's patriotism in his opening paragraph especially with the line, "Having federal lands within our state shows that we are part of something bigger, it ties Utah residents to the rest of the nation." How is this effective for his audience? What other techniques does Thomas use to appeal to his audience?

“I’ll start tomorrow.” How many of us have said these words in relation to a goal we have set for ourselves? Our intentions of being strong-willed are good, but when it comes to putting forth the effort to achieve our goals, for most of us, “tomorrow” never comes.

In this Research Essay, Malmstrom explains why willpower is imperative when it comes to achieving goals in life. She also shares some ways she has found to make the everyday struggles with willpower a little bit easier. Using a variety of sources, as well as drawing from personal experience, Malmstrom outlines the benefits of fighting against laziness and instant gratification.

## CANDACE **MALMSTROM**



Candace Malmstrom is a non-traditional student who is back at Utah State after taking time away from school to raise four children and create a successful family business. She is pursuing a degree in social work and looking forward to helping others through therapy. She is endlessly fascinated by the choices people make, which led her to the topic of motivation and habit formation. She is her own test subject and enjoyed creating habits and routines that support her goals. She currently works as the Logistic Coordinator for the Small Satellite Conference.

## THE **POWER** OF **WILLPOWER**



Candace Malmstrom

I wake up, and I feel powerful. It is the first Monday of the new month and, according to the Aztec stone calendar, today is the first day of the sign of the wind, which must surely mean something. I do my hair in under five minutes, and it looks great; there is just enough milk in the fridge to feed all six of us breakfast; and I notice three bumper-stickers on the way to school that read, “I can do hard things.” Surely these auspicious symbols are a sign from the universe that today is the day! I am going to write that great American Novel starting today. Maybe I am going to take charge of my health by not eating sweet snacks—ever again. Perhaps I will set my resolve to start the company I have always dreamt of creating.

These moments of allegiance to an authentic life hit all of us. Surely the goals and visions may differ, but, whatever our aim, we all stand firm and face the direction we want to go having high hopes those Aztec winds will carry us towards success. We might make a personal commitment, sure of our success because we have a *spreadsheet* complete with calendared installments of success. We can declare our intentions for all to hear or maybe even start a blog about our new inspirations. In other words, we can really, really mean it.

Fast-forward one week from that declaration of resolve. It’s been a long day at school; you missed the Aggie Shuttle and are now late to work. At the end of the day you are drained, and you know that you promised you were going to write for one hour every day, or have almonds and apples for emergency snacking but . . . there’s a basketball game tonight or leftover peanut butter pie. It is suddenly much too easy to break that cross-your-heart commitment. You may find yourself making an exception—after all, today was a really hard day! You don’t have the time to write or the energy to fix something healthy. It feels beyond your control. Your plans for greatness have just been hijacked by what Brian Wansink calls the “tyranny of the moment” (qtd. in Rubin).



How is it that the plan to create the job we love takes second place to the new episodes in our Netflix queue? Why do we often find ourselves at odds with creating the life we are capable of in favor of a life that is convenient? I call it being of two minds. Psychology calls this the prefrontal cortex versus the midbrain. Religion calls it the natural man vs. the soul. Jerry Seinfeld calls it Today Guy vs. Tomorrow Guy. It doesn't matter what we call it, this inner struggle with "I will. I won't. I want." is a major determiner of our happiness.

The great Chinese philosopher Confucius said, "I want you to be everything that's you, deep at the center of your being." That sounds amazing. In our moments of reflection we plan how to create this for ourselves, but how do we consistently follow through? Philosophers and theorists have been debating this for years. Psychologists and social science experts have recently entered the conversation and offer studies that suggest improving willpower wisely is the surest way to a better life (Baumeister, Tierney 2). I say that we can use willpower to create habits that are stronger than the power of the moment, helping us to achieve our lives' ambitions.

Willpower is one trait that has been a hot button of study in recent years. Willpower has been tagged as *the* most important characteristic to develop, making it the king of character traits, as all other traits take a measure of willpower to develop.

There was a study conducted by a nurse who worked with patients that had come home to die. She asked her patients if they had any regrets about their lives and found that their answers had consistent similarities. While most of their answers have an element of regret that tied in with self-control, one answer particularly stood out: "I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me" (Ware).

This regret, not living up to personal dreams and expectations, was the number one answer haunting those close to death. Having the willpower to follow our dreams and not be distracted with the ease and entertainment of life can lead us to a life free from the number one regret of the dying.

Another interesting study cataloged the results of using our willpower. Hundreds of preschoolers participated in what is now called "The Marshmallow Test." This research study has been analyzed and

publicized so often that it has become synonymous with willpower and self-control. The test brings up the iconic image of a young child alone in a room staring down a marshmallow with a look of concentration across his face. The children in the study were told that they could eat the marshmallow now, or, if they waited fifteen minutes for the researcher to return, they would receive two. Most children said they would wait. Some children could not resist the desire to eat for even one minute. Other children gave a valiant effort, but eventually gave in to temptation. The most successful children of the test spent the fifteen minutes distracting themselves from the tasty morsel by turning their chair away from the treat, kicking the desk, or playing games with their shoelaces (Baumeister, Tierney 161).

Follow-up studies on these preschoolers found that “those who were able to wait the 15 minutes were significantly less likely to have problems with behavior, drug addiction, or obesity by the time they were in high school, compared with kids who gobbled the snack in less than a minute. The gratification-delayers also scored an average of 210 points higher on the SAT” (Szalavitz).

Studies like these help us to understand that in the world of character traits, willpower is king. It takes willpower to accomplish all of the life tasks that are important to us. Is there a way to truly become masters of our willpower?

One of the first things we need to understand is that no matter how mentally disciplined we think we are, at some point our motivation fails us because our willpower is fatigued. Willpower is similar to a muscle. Every time you call upon it to help make a decision, it is as if you have done a rep at the weight set. After a hard workout, it may be hard to lift your arms to shampoo your hair, let alone the heavy weight you exercised with. Willpower is much the same: strength fades as you use it to make decisions. This happens in all areas of our lives (Baumeister, Tierney 96).

Six weeks before I was to be married, I went to a large department store to register for wedding gifts. Walking into that store I had dreamy visions of domestic dinnerware and linens. I knew how I wanted my future home to look and was very excited to register for free swag to bring about my kitchen bliss. After two long hours of plate pattern and silverware size comparisons, I no longer cared! I was tired of making

decisions and couldn't motivate myself to create the cozy cookhouse of my dreams. I was experiencing decision fatigue.

Suffering from decision fatigue affects our important life ambitions. After a long day at work and school, our willpower is exhausted. We have had to muster motivation to pay attention in class, handle our homework, and deal with a decision-heavy day at work. At this point we may want to head to the gym to keep on track with an important health goal we have set, but our minds just want to default to what they know, or to any easy decision. Suddenly we find ourselves checking Facebook while lounging on the couch.

Decision fatigue stealthily creeps up, robbing us of lives and dreams that are important to us. Becoming masters of our willpower by creating habits, life designs, and routines is a sure way to fend off the thief of decision fatigue.

In order to create these habits and life designs, we have to believe that having a positive experience with our self-control will actually increase our willpower. There are two basic theories one can subscribe to in regard to personal character traits: entity theory/fixed mindset or incremental theory/growth mindset (Job). The fixed mindset belief promotes the idea that our core qualities are built-in and that any character trait is simply a fixed attribute in which you come with a pre-determined amount. In contrast, the growth mindset adheres to the theory that qualities can be developed or enhanced through our own persistent efforts. This line of thinking claims that people develop character traits by taking steps to develop that trait and believing it is possible (Dweck).

If willpower can be compared to a muscle which fatigues, then it should also hold true that willpower can grow and gain strength, just as a muscle does with repeated hard use. We have the ability to change our own mindset, creating a growth mentality through personal success with using our willpower. As we strengthen our willpower we have more confidence in our ability to self-regulate during a demanding situation, contributing to a growth mindset.

Carol Dweck, the theorist behind the growth/fixed mindset, has said that her best-performing participants don't believe that willpower is infinite. Rather, "these people believe in momentum. Once you're working hard, you get energized; once you resist something tempt-

ing, you're better able to keep on resisting." She says, "they don't think it's infinite, and neither do we. But it seems to be far less limited than some research suggests." Having successful experiences with our ability to self-control are vital to changing our personal mindsets.

A positive way to use willpower that will yield high success is to create habits that support your goals. Often the hardest part about starting is . . . starting. Newton's first law surely applies to motivation: objects in motion tend to stay in motion. A wise ultra-marathoner once said, "the first two steps out the door are the hardest part of my run." It often takes less willpower to finish a task than to start it. In regards to the goal of waking up to write for an hour every morning, what if the only withdrawal you had to make from your willpower reserves was to wake up and put in your contact lenses?

Routines are a springboard to behavior. Creating a simple routine, like waking and putting in your contacts, grabbing some hot tea, and then settling in front of your computer to write, tells your mind that this series of events is how you always do it. Following this pattern every single time—contacts, tea, and then writing—will make it easier to follow through on your target behavior: writing. The idea is that once you start the ritual the follow-through will naturally happen after you have set up a consistent pattern. If you were to develop this particular routine, the first act of putting in your contacts makes your chances of writing almost sure. Why? The internal debate is over. There is no more self-conflict over motivation or emotions. Your mind doesn't have to waste any energy thinking about what to do next. The custom of putting in those contacts removes the decision-making about what your first step should be, thus conserving precious willpower. By simply putting in the contacts the ritual is complete.

These habits and patterns that you repeat everyday will, over time, form an identity. Creating identity-based habits is a sure way to overcome the fixed mindset belief while also using very little willpower once you have proven to yourself that "this is who I am."

Our belief determines our actions and our actions transform our perception of who we are...

My friend has an impressive ability to memorize people's names. We went to a large party where we knew almost no one, and she was able to remember every person's name. When I asked how she was able to do this, she commented that when she was in Junior High, her teacher had each student introduce themselves and then asked if anyone in the class could remember everyone's name. My friend was able to recount the names and some small detail about each one of the students. She commented that after that experience she felt like she was "the type of person who is good at remembering things." She has since had great success with any memorization exercise. Before identifying herself as "a person who is good at remembering things," she says she was mediocre, at best, with memorization.

In order to believe in a new identity we have to prove it to ourselves (Clear). The behaviors we have now are simply a reflection of our current beliefs about ourselves. What we do is a living picture of the type of person we believe ourselves to be, consciously or not. Creating identity-based habits that support our goals is vitally important because these repeated actions not only reinforce the good habit, but create feelings and new beliefs as well. Pretty soon, our habits will not only help us reach our goals, but will have aided in creating an identity that takes very little willpower to maintain because, "this is who I am." When you want to conquer a goal or become better at something, proving your identity to yourself is going to bring very satisfying results more so than simply motivating yourself. Motivation runs out.

To change our behavior for good, we have to start believing new things about ourselves. Our belief determines our actions, and our actions transform our perception of who we are, allowing us to become the type of person who accomplishes whatever life ambitions we have set out for ourselves. Using willpower to create this identity is a great use of this "king" character trait. In creating identity-based habits and life designs that support our goals, we can decide the type of person we want to be and prove it to ourselves with consistent small wins. This allows us to become not only the ruler of willpower, but the masters of our own lives as well.

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1. Are there clear transitions with each paragraph of this essay? Identify them.
2. Malmstrom uses several rhetorical questions in her essay. How are the rhetorical questions helpful in developing her essay? Give specific examples and analyze.
3. What qualifies as a strong thesis statement? Can you identify a strong, clear thesis in this essay? Where does it appear?
4. Did each paragraph state a main idea and develop it? List the main ideas found in each paragraph.
5. Does the author effectively use parenthetical citations? Give examples.
6. Was this an effective research essay? Why or why not? Provide specific examples of good or poor use of rhetorical elements and/or evidence from the text.

**FOR DISCUSSION**





**PAST**

FAVORITES

## PAST FAVORITES

Smith writes one of the best Rogerian style persuasive research essays that we've seen at Voices for a long time. He continually acknowledges the opposite points of view, allows them credence, and then makes his strong and persuasive arguments in favor of allowing nerf guns on campus during HvZ. Because he focuses on one person, Eric Olsen, Associate Vice President for USU Student Services, he really zeroes in on his audience and knows the opinions of that audience. No matter how individuals feel about HvZ at USU, this essay illuminates the topic and adds a nuanced and in-depth understanding of what may seem, at first glance, to be an insignificant activity.

## DON'T NERF THE ZOMBIES



Brayden Smith

Dear Mr. Eric Olsen,

As I'm sure you are aware, the most recent edition of Humans vs. Zombies has just taken place here at Utah State University. It was a great success, as always. Players had fun, friendships were formed, and memories were made.

However, I understand that you and some other University officials have taken issue with the use of Nerf guns in the game and have requested that a partial ban be put into place. You listed a number of concerns, among them the somewhat juvenile nature of the game, the distraction to students who aren't playing the game, and, most importantly, safety. These are clearly valid points. If I may, I would like to address them and offer you some alternate points of view with which you can view the game and what it means to players.

Firstly, you express discontent with the “juvenile nature of the game.” This is always the elephant in the room for players and non-players alike. Everyone who goes to USU has experienced this in some form or another. Players have to deal with the smirks and snide remarks offered by non-players trying to impress their girlfriends, and non-players have to cope with bypassing “humans” or “zombies” and the occasional zombie attack nearby as they walk to class. Players can’t help but feel somewhat sheepish as they walk around campus with neon orange bandannas, rolled-up socks strapped to their chests, and toy guns that say “Ages 6+” on them. I’ve even had little children come up to me and ask, “What game are you guys playing? Can I play with you?”

You also mentioned that the game is a distraction to students not participating. Again, this is a valid concern. It’s hard to not look at a horde of zombies chasing after a couple humans across the quad in the middle of the day, screaming “BRRRAAAAAIIINS!!!,” and whooping all the way.

Finally, and most importantly, you expressed several concerns about safety, all of which certainly have merit and validity. I will do my best to address those as well.

In an email to Brice Colby, RHA Events Coordinator and head of the USU chapter of HvZ, you mentioned an incident when, out of instinct, a Veteran subdued a player who startled him and broke his Nerf gun. This clearly presents a danger for both Veterans and players alike and is not something we’d like to have happen again. This is a scenario that, if it can be, absolutely should be avoided.

You also referenced “an increasing number of students with serious mental illnesses” that presented a danger as well. In referencing this, you cited the Virginia Tech tragedy, stating, “We live in a day and age where violence on campus is a reality.” Taking steps to reducing the possibility of that reality actually taking place is certainly a goal worth reaching for. Other schools share this fear as well, in fact. Alfred University had an incident where campus was shut down due to reports of a man carrying a gun around campus only to discover later that it was simply an HvZ player walking around with his Nerf blaster. However, it’s clear that no school is taking any chances. Charles Edmondson, president of Alfred University said, “After Virginia Tech,

no one would take any report of this nature lightly, and we did not” (ynn.com). Some schools, like Bowling Green State University, have banned Nerf entirely (chronicle.com).

Clearly, the school has major concerns, all of which are perfectly reasonable and valid. However, Mr. Olsen, as a two-time player and avid fan of the game, I have some alternative perspectives I would like you to look at. While I understand all of yours and the university’s concerns, I was disappointed to hear of the partial ban on Nerf guns. At least in part because of this ban, we saw participation drop from over 850 participants last semester to around 420 this semester, cutting the number of players in half and seriously detracting from the overall experience. I hope that after reading the remainder of my letter, you will re-evaluate the necessity of this new policy.

I speak for all HvZ players when I say that you and I are not as far apart on this issue as you may think. Utah State University is a school that prizes and encourages student involvement and experience more than any school I can think of. The thing I hope to be able to help you understand is that we prize the same thing. HvZ is simply another, if somewhat unorthodox, way of accomplishing the same objective.

Firstly, the game means much more to many Aggies than some administration officials may realize. When talk of entirely removing Nerf blasters from the game began to occur, a survey was sent out to players asking them about their experiences with the game. One of the questions asked how much of an impact the game had on players and their experience at Utah State. The average score was a 7.5. I have included a histogram of that question’s results to give you a clearer picture of exactly how high this score is (see fig. 1).

These numbers are remarkable. 78 percent of respondents answered with a seven or higher. Additionally, 84 of the 246 respondents (over one in three) gave the highest possible rating on how much the game influenced their USU experience. One would be hard-pressed to find many other events, traditions, or aspects of student life here in Logan with such massive influence as this.

Also included in the survey was a comment box for respondents to include any commentary they would like to be brought before the Administration. The comments revealed just how much this game means to some players. For some, HvZ ranks with many events widely con-

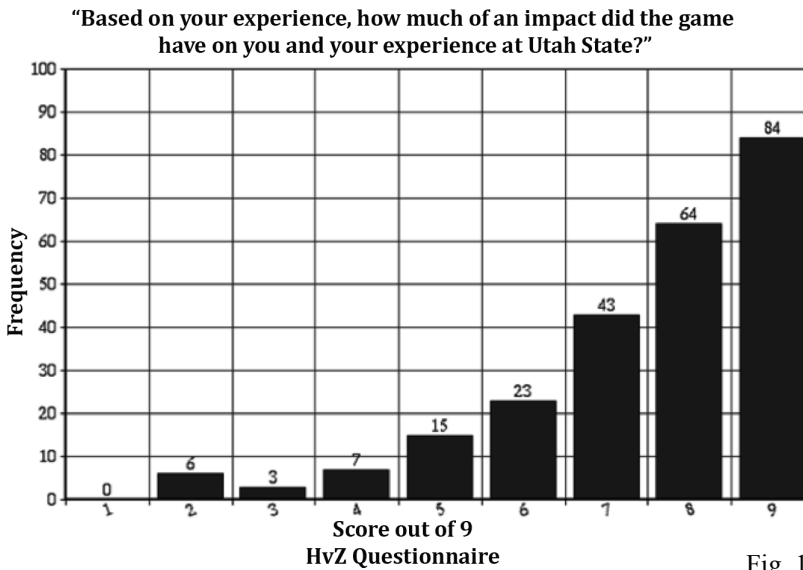


Fig. 1

sidered to be core to USU’s identity. One said, “As a Utah State student, I pride myself in basketball games, ASUSU, and now Humans vs. Zombies.” When another was talking about his friends at other Utah schools, they said, “They get to have boring college experiences on campus. I don’t. I get to have the most fun I have ever had for a full week.”

Many wonder why this game has such a powerful effect on many of those who play it. After all, it’s just a glorified game of tag. What’s so incredibly profound about a game with pretend humans and zombies who chase each other around campus with children’s toys for a week? The answer is simple: Humans vs. Zombies transcends awkward social barriers and brings people together in a way that no other event, tradition, or organization on campus can. This is accomplished in a number of ways. Put simply, neither side can survive the game alone. Because of this, humans are constantly looking out for other survivors to team up with, and zombies are constantly looking out for other zombies to form a “horde” with. In these groups, friendships are made instantly.

Let me tell you a story about how I experienced this myself. During the last game, I was zombified on the first day. Along with me were three others named Hyrum, Josh, and Mitch. After we had become zombies, we were all angry about what had just happened. So

we went out into campus determined to take down some humans in revenge. After an hour or so, we discovered that the four of us made a good team. So we exchanged numbers and agreed to text if we ever wanted to meet up for another hunt. Now, I consider them to be my newest friends.

This experience was not unique to me. One comment submitted via the survey talked about how the game gave them a “venue to make friends quickly and to have fun with large groups of people,” which they acknowledged is “something I usually avoid.” Another commented, “Players in the game become instant friends [and] learn to work together as teams.” One talked about how one of his roommates, “who would not leave his computer for any social interaction, actually participated with the rest of the campus for once!” I cannot name a single staple of Utah State University that does this as well as Humans vs. Zombies. I have been to the Howl, basketball games, and frat parties. I’m a True Aggie and have fallen in love with the city of Logan. I’ve gotten involved with the LDS Institute, my church callings, and Area Government, along with various clubs and organizations around campus where I’ve held leadership positions and organized events. And still, after eight heavily involved months of being an Aggie, I have yet to encounter anything that can hold a candle to HvZ’s ability to bring hundreds of people together and foster automatic friendships. From what I’ve seen, it just doesn’t exist. There are no cliques. There are no qualifications. There are no prejudices, judgments, or expectations; only players wearing orange bandanas.

Given all this, I think it’s unfair to dismiss the game as “juvenile.” Is it somewhat ridiculous? Absolutely. However, in my opinion, the administration shouldn’t discredit the game’s importance to hundreds upon hundreds of students because they personally feel that a game with pretend humans fighting pretend zombies is “juvenile.” This game is a core aspect of student life to hundreds of students, and as a school that cares so much about enhancing that very thing, it seems somewhat contradictory to characterize this game as such.

With regards to your concerns of the game being a distraction, this can be addressed with simple rules and regulations put into place by the HvZ Council of War (HvZCoW). Already we have made efforts to do this, asking that players leave non-players alone when playing the game. Violations incur severe penalties from the many moderators

officiating the game as they walk to and from class. Additional rules and penalties can be put into place if the need arises.

However, as far as in-class distractions go, HvZ (specifically Nerf guns) should be far down on the list of culprits. In a world where smartphones and laptops are commonly found in the classroom, it has never been easier for students to be distracted in class. This applies not only to those using them but also to those sitting nearby. Nerf guns stand out because they are unorthodox and irregular, but, in the worst-case scenario, they catch a couple students' attentions for a couple seconds. Maybe even the professor makes a sarcastic aside comment like, "Glad to see you're surviving the Apocalypse." However, in a matter of seconds, the distraction is over, and class resumes as normal.

If the school would like to remove major distractions from the classroom environment, Mr. Olsen, I would suggest taking a look at ways to regulate the use of technology in class for things other than productivity. However, banning Nerf guns from classrooms for one week per semester isn't going to do much to solve the problem. Sure, it may remove a distraction that would not be there otherwise, but at what cost? In my opinion, it isn't worth the hundreds of students who chose not to play simply because this compromise was reached.

Finally, on a more serious note, I'd like to show you how HvZ is not a safety concern you should be worried about. Because it's important to ensure that USU is a safe place for everyone on campus, this needs to be approached with caution. As far as minor safety concerns go, rules and regulations can be, and have been, enacted to keep players from hazardous areas such as the TSC patio or staircases. However, I recognize that this is not your chief concern and that the administration is far more worried about an active shooter on campus.

Here is a scenario I'd like you to consider. HvZ came under fire in 2007 when the horrific events at Virginia Tech took place, after which many called for the game to be banned. However, at Goucher University, the game's birthplace, President Sanford J. Unger recognized how the game's benefits far outweighed its drawbacks. Because of this he wrote this in a column for the school's newspaper: "In the wake of murders at Virginia Tech, we must be careful not to overreact" ([goucher.edu](http://goucher.edu)).

President Unger was right. What happened at Virginia Tech and

Northern Illinois University, while both were tragedies beyond measure, were certainly “horrific aberrations,” not a regular occurrence. The game was ultimately allowed to continue unchanged, and no tragedies have befallen Goucher. In fact, no tragedies have ever befallen any HvZ player in over 5,000 games played at over 650 locations around the world ([humansvszombies.org](http://humansvszombies.org)). In an email from Max Temkin, administrator of the official HvZ website, he writes, “There has never been an incident of violence related to HvZ.”

Mr. Olsen, if the school would like to improve campus security, I would again argue that Nerf blasters should be far down on the list of priorities. At a university where people over the age of 21 can carry real firearms capable of actually killing people, it seems trivial to focus on foam dart shooters as a safety threat. I recognize that as a public university, you have to abide by state law, which permits concealed weapons to be carried anywhere on public lands. However, as lethal weapons present the far more clear and present danger to students’ security, the debate should be between the University and our elected representatives not between the University and students wanting to play Humans vs. Zombies.

In closing, I would like to restate a point I made earlier. Mr. Olsen, you and I, as well as the administration and hundreds of HvZ players across campus, are not as far apart on this issue as you may believe. Both of us want every Aggie to have a memorable college experience they can take with them when they graduate. We want everyone to be safe and respectful of others as they do this. However, we feel that the partial ban on Nerf guns has detracted from what is quickly becoming one of Utah State University’s most celebrated traditions. For hundreds upon hundreds of Aggies, it makes one of the most enjoyable aspects of Aggie life less enjoyable and ultimately makes Aggie life itself less enjoyable.

And so, having said all this, it is my sincere hope that you take the time to reconsider the necessity of this partial ban. Should you decide to lift it, you would be making a decision that restores an important, if not unorthodox, tradition to its true and pure state, bringing the most joy and most memories to the greatest amount of people.

Sincerely,

Brayden Smith



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## FOR DISCUSSION

1. This essay is formatted as a Rogerian argument. The author chooses to state all of the concerns of the other side at the forefront of the essay before presenting any counterarguments. How is this effective? When might this not be the most effective way to present an argument?
2. The author uses a lot of personal experiences as well as experiences of other students to argue his points. Is this a compelling method? How does this make his essay stronger or weaker?
3. Were you able to clearly identify the thesis statement? What is it? Does the thesis create a strong introduction for the rest of the essay?
4. Was the style of this essay appropriate for addressing a university administrator? Why or why not? Is there a different style that may have been more appropriate?
5. Was each paragraph fully developed? Did they all have a main idea that was properly expanded upon and led back to the point of the letter?
6. Is this essay a credible persuasive research essay? Does the author cite enough legitimate sources to make the essay credible? Why or why not? If not, what other types of sources would have strengthened his argument?

Recent changes in the NFL rulebook have caused concern among some fans, including Ashton Edwards. Although the rule changes were made in an effort to prevent players from getting injured, Edwards worries that it will change the original game. Edwards addresses the NFL Commissioner and suggests solutions to prevent injury without changing the game. Edwards draws from his love of football as well as research to back up his argument.

# LET THE PLAYERS PLAY



Ashton Edwards

Dear Commissioner Mr. Roger Goodell,

Much to your knowledge there has been a great amount of criticism due to the recent changes the National Football League has made in the rulebook. These rules include the following: tacklers and runners hitting with the crown of their helmets will be penalized fifteen yards, during kicking plays only six defenders are allowed on the line or they will be penalized, and peel back blocks are now illegal everywhere on the field. One season has officially run its course with the new rules in place. As always, it was an entertaining affair with thrills for some fans and disappointments for others. Many fans, players, and coaches have been complaining about the new rules and the effect they are having on the game. Plays that would have made highlight reels before the rule change are now penalized, and games are being dramatically altered mostly in part to the human element that comes from the power of the referees. I agree with many of their arguments

due to the fact that I am an avid football fan, and I follow the sport with much appreciation. Even though there are arguments in favor of changing these rules, I argue that the business and popularity of the NFL will eventually fade out if the game's originality is changed, and, regardless, players are still going to get injured.

I understand that you have reasons behind the League's sudden change in rules, and probably know more about the game than average fans like me that are so quick to criticize. You have stated more than once that by putting these rules in force, the league will avoid lawsuits that are carried out by former NFL players who have suffered from lifelong injuries. Also, because of your caring nature, you are naturally concerned for the welfare of the players themselves and the very health of the originality of the game. If you would, I would like to address your concerns and possibly give some alternate points of view with the hope that we can reach a compromise which will better suit owners, players, and fans alike.

To begin, the National Football League recently dealt with a lawsuit from 4,500 former players who now live with "brain injuries suffered on the field" (Smith). Many of these men suffered multiple concussions and played in a time when equipment wasn't as reliable as it is today. These players feel that the league owes them many privileges because of their ailments. The NFL and former players finally came to an agreement of 765 million dollars "to provide medical benefits and injury compensation for retired NFL players, fund medical and safety research, and cover litigation expenses" (Smith). I understand that you fear future lawsuits that could sink the league financially and the discouraging lack of support from former players who drive the popularity of the sport downward. You feel that by changing the rules, injuries will be avoided that will connectedly decrease the likelihood of future lawsuits.

Another reason you have pushed for such drastic change in rules is in large part due to the overall health and safety of those who play the sport. Many times players use their heads as a weapon to strike other players during a tackle or even use their helmet as a shield against a defender. Year after year players get concussions, neck injuries, and other long term injuries that could potentially affect the remainder of their lives. It is truly sad to hear stories from around the country of young players who get paralyzed or die due to head related injuries.

To make matters worse, during the course of 2012, four current or former players took their own lives, and one even took the life of another. These deaths, along with others from prior years, have been associated with head injuries and the effect they have had on the players during their lifetimes. Those among the deceased include Junior Seau, O.J. Murdock, and Jovan Belcher. Activists who wanted so desperately to see our beloved sport reform saw these deaths as fuel to an already burning fire. Concussion history from some of these men and many others who were involved in the lawsuit has resulted in the “war against roughness in pro football” (Goodell, 008).

I come to you with great respect, because I recognize your efforts in trying to improve football so it can continue to flourish and succeed. You have mentioned time and time again that every decision to change the game is only to improve it and make it safer. In the midst of all the criticism you have received you have remained true to your stance. You recently said, “the rule in our league is simple and straightforward: medical decisions override everything else” (Goodell 007). This statement has influenced every decision the NFL has made in recent years. Coupled with new innovation in equipment, and especially helmets, you have said that “preserving the essence of the game, while reducing unnecessary risk, means we have to constantly reevaluate and refresh our rules reasonably and responsibly” (Goodell 007). Results have already been seen, as last year there was a forty percent decrease in concussions on kickoffs. This kickoff statistic has caused more and more to lean towards the side of changing gameplay rules.

Your concern with the direction of this game, and more importantly the health and safety of the players is inspiring. To not properly address your concerns listed above would be foolish. Due to the sensitive nature of these topics, I hope my perspective and opinion on them will potentially provide possible ways the NFL can change its culture and continue financial growth without destroying the originality of the game through the changing of rules.

As much of a blow as the lawsuit was to the League’s wallet and to your heart, it was just that: a blow. Seven hundred and sixty-five million dollars is an amount the NFL can pay and move on from. Changing rule after rule will not stop former players from suing when they suffer from injuries. The best thing the league could do would be to move on from this lawsuit, and legally protect the NFL by means

of before-play waivers and better ground communication between the Players Union and the League.

In 2010 you set a goal for the League that by the year 2027 the NFL would accumulate twenty-five billion dollars in yearly revenue. That would mean the League would have to grow its revenue by at least one billion dollars a year for seventeen years in a row (Kaplan). I think this is a great goal that has been set, especially when considering the “massive upside internationally” (Kaplan). Your desires to take this great sport and popularize it overseas would probably lead to a surpassing of your financial goals. However, if rules continue to change and the originality of the game continues to decrease, how do you expect fans to spend even more money on game tickets and television subscriptions that fund your goal? Even more, how do you spread the popularity of football into foreign countries when the fans in America are becoming less and less impressed with the game because of its evolution? If this is a money issue, I think careful examination of the big picture will show that changing the rules will not only appease the men who sued you, it will lead to a much bigger financial crises later when you have no fan base.

The NFL as a business would be smart to focus on its main contributor, which is the American fan base. Pleasing the customer will increase revenue and therefore allow the sport to expand internationally as you desire. If you look into fan pages, blogs, and listen to everyday sports commentators, the vast majority are outraged by the changing of rules, because they feel that the sport they grew up loving has changed into something completely new. I do not wish to see players injured, I just want to see alternative measures taken instead of rule changes to ensure player safety and sport originality.

The issue of player safety is much more complicated. It is heartbreaking to hear of the tragic stories of players taking their own lives, which many claim is due to the injuries they sustained while playing in the National Football League. Upon closer observation of these stories though, I find that the whole truth is not being told. Jovan Belcher is a perfect example of a kindling in the burning fire of game changing activists who use his death as a reason to change the rules in football. In December of 2012, Belcher, a linebacker for the Kansas City Chiefs, shot his girlfriend in their home and then drove to the team’s practice facility where he shot himself in front of his coaches. An au-

topsy after his death revealed that his alcohol level was double that of the legal limit. He had been drinking the duration of the night before and “apparently had troubles” (Gregory 36) with his longtime girlfriend Cassandra Perkins. The Chiefs organization also said Belcher had “no long concussion history” (Gregory 36). You can look into almost every story similar to this and find similar facts. Junior Seau is probably the most famous player to commit suicide recently, but he was also known to have drug and alcohol problems. In an article that is trying to promote rules changes, they even admit, “it is impossible to pinpoint the degree to which CTE [chronic traumatic encephalopathy] drove Seau’s rapid decline” (Penn).

These players probably did suffer concussions during their playing careers, but it is extremely premature to say these deaths were caused by issues that stemmed from hits to the head when not all of the facts are being properly evaluated. If the league is going to change rules that affect gameplay because of player safety, wouldn’t it be wise to stiffen the drug and alcohol testing to further protect players and find the real cause behind many of these off field deaths?

Football is a contact sport that has risk as well as reward. You cannot take injuries completely out of the game. Due to the recent deaths of famous players, and the claims that their deaths are directly related to concussions received in football, there has been a decrease in little league football players of 9.5 percent in the last three years. That’s roughly 23,612 kids who don’t play the sport anymore (Fainaru, Fainaru-Wada). A great amount of these kids have stopped playing because their parents are afraid they will be injured. Much of this is because of the lack of valid information about the concussion crisis and the lack of positive motives to why a kid should play football. You may be wondering what these statistics have to do with the new rule changes. The decrease in little league players represents the decrease in popularity the sport has seen recently. You have attempted to address the issues of player safety and business lawsuits without going into full detail of why both of these problems arose. To the public eye it appears as if football is a barbaric sport that will surely put their children’s lives at risk, when in reality many of these injuries or deaths happened because of outside factors or bad decision-making on the field. Rule changes alone will not satisfy the public enough to let their

children play the game, but improved player education and training will help calm their fears.

In order for our sport to evolve and grow in a positive way, player education is critical to success. Teaching children from a young age how to tackle properly will decrease injuries as well as getting them out of the “suck it up” mentality which plays a large part in repeating concussions. Teaching parents about the positive attributes that can be developed in football, like leadership, hard work, and tough mentality, will help parents accept the risk that is associated with any contact sport. Newsletters, commercials, and internet advertising are just a few of the ways the NFL could educate parents and attract future players. If the next generation doesn’t fall in love with football like we have, this conversation will be pointless anyway. Instead of changing the game so much, the NFL should worry more about player education and elevating the image of the league, which will eventually serve as an alternative that brings about similar results and a happy fan base.

I completely agree that “medical decisions override everything else,” but that doesn’t necessarily mean that rules have to change. Zack Lystedt is a young man who suffered a brain injury in a football game in 2006 when he was just thirteen years old. It wasn’t necessarily that the initial concussion crippled him; it was that the concussion wasn’t properly treated or detected, and he was put back into the game to continue playing. Since then, you have been heavily involved with passing the Zack Lystedt Bill in every state, which makes sure that when a player of any age appears to have concussion-like symptoms, they must come out of the game and cannot return to the field unless they have been cleared by someone who is trained to deal with head injuries. Also, new helmets have been tested and created which can cut the amount of G-force the head experiences during contact nearly by half and lowers the chances of being dealt a head injury of any sort. These are just two of many examples that the game of football is already making changes which are safe and responsible without altering the rules in any drastic way.

Last season the New Orleans Saints and the San Francisco 49ers faced off in what turned into one of the best and most controversial games of the season. On a 3<sup>rd</sup> down and 2 situation in the fourth quarter, Quarterback Drew Brees dropped back to throw a pass and was hit squarely by Ahmad Brooks causing the ball to come loose and the



49ers to recover it. A flag was thrown and a penalty was assessed for a high hit to the head area. Ahmad Brooks stands a tall 6'3 and Brees a mere 5'11, so even though Brooks made a textbook play, it appeared that Brees took a headshot. It is easy to see upon closer review that Brooks did not even make head to head contact with the quarterback. So why was he penalized for the play? Why did the Saints retain the ball and eventually win the game because of this call? Simply because the hit was so fundamentally sound it looked extremely violent to the spectator's eye, and, in the culture football is developing, one must think a hit that hard deserves punishment. In no way am I against protecting players or their futures, but it is difficult for me to support rule changes that determine the outcomes of games and seasons.

Mr. Goodell, the fears you have are fears that we mutually share. Neither of us wish to see players injured, and neither of us wish to see the originality of our beloved sport die. There are measures already being taken, such as the Zack Lystedt Bill, which will serve to better protect players in the future. Better equipment is produced every year that protects our players against head injuries and so on. You have a special opportunity before you to change football's culture in a positive way by providing improved player education starting at the ground level. Teach these players the risk of playing football and the importance of playing football the correct way, which promotes safe play. Of course you cannot take out all the risk, but just as underwater welders are constantly threatened by potential electrocution and construction workers know they may have back problems in their later years, NFL players know that they may get injured. Why do these professions continue on? They pay good money and bring life satisfaction. Our NFL players know the risks, and they are very aware of the rewards. Even if after all of these alternatives you still wish to change rules, at least consider designating a referee who can review dangerous play penalties and make the correct decision so that games will be unaffected by a bad call. Let us change this game by improving its culture, protecting the league financially, and understanding the deeper underlying problems that lead to later problems in a player's life. Then, Mr. Goodell, we will have a game that will spread across the world like wildfire.

Sincerely,

Ashton S. Edwards

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1. How was formatting the essay like a letter effective? Did it increase the strength of the argument to write the essay this way? Why or why not?
2. What points brought up by the author give him credibility? Could the suggestions made in this essay could feasibly be considered by the National Football League? Why or why not?
3. The essay seems to be written as a Rogerian argument. Is it strong as a Rogerian argument? What things make it strong? What things could be done to strengthen the argument so that is more clearly identifiable as Rogerian?
4. Does Edwards' bio affect how you read this essay? How does his personal interest in the topic help or hinder his argument?
5. Can you find the thesis statement? Does the content of the essay stay focused on the thesis, or does it go off on tangents?
6. Go through each paragraph and identify the transition sentences. Do the paragraph transition smoothly from one to another? If not, what would you need to do in order to make the paragraphs' transitions clearer?
7. Consider the tone of Edwards' essay. How would it have been different if he were writing to a family member or friend?

## FOR DISCUSSION

Introducing his topic with a personal narrative scene, Halvorsen begins with an image that many can relate to and then discusses the history of profanity since the mid-1950s. Perhaps the most powerful section of this essay comes when Halvorsen describes the English of a Nigerian in Benin, West Africa, who proudly claims to have learned his profanity-riddled English from American movies. Halvorsen poses an interesting question: While profanity is often necessary in movies, is there a limit to its real usefulness? And if so, how much is too much?

## WHAT THE **CENSORED?!?!**

profanity in film



Cameron Halvorsen

It is a Friday night and the family is fidgeting. We are all so bored that we would do anything to do something. What is the solution to Friday night boredom? Well, the movies of course! We all hop in the Suburban and head off to The Regal. Walking into the dimly lit, curtain-covered, stadium-seated cinema, our excitement builds as we see the 50 foot-ish screen stretching across the vast expanse of black. As we finally find the best ‘middle-of-the-screen’ seats, we plop down and notice the smell of buttery theatre popcorn wafting through the air and the dimmed lights that signal the commencement of the movie. We are hoping that this film, *Tower Heist*, with Eddie Murphy, Ben Stiller, and Matthew Broderick will be comical and appropriate for our family. I mean, it is PG-13. How bad could it be? Fifty-some-odd unnecessary vulgarities later, “appropriate” is no longer applicable. After leaving the theatre, my youngest brother asks the question that we have all been mulling over: “Why did they need to talk like that?”

This is not just a one-time occurrence for a family of six, but something that millions of people are noticing in our films. As films are allowed to include more profanity, words that used to be taboo are becoming mainstream. Many argue that the level of profanity has passed the allowance for 'reality' and crossed the borders to 'unnecessary.' The amount of profanity allowed in film should be reduced to diminish the harmful effects to the international public. To understand why profanity in film is becoming more of an issue, we must first understand when it made its debut and who is permitting the added stage time.

Profanity has been found in many films since the mid-1950s. It has been used to add a touch of reality to movies so that the everyday person can relate to and enjoy the film. Profanity today is still scattered throughout the cinematographic world, but who creates the criteria for the allowable quantity of profanity in different movie ratings? The Motion Picture Association of America, or MPAA, is the designated group that is responsible for fashioning the criteria for the different movie ratings for each film. They set the guidelines for how many profanities can be used during a film, how much violence (and what kind of violence) can be shown, and what amount of sexual content is passable. Why is all of this important? As newer movies take to the big screen, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of profanity that comes with them.

As the years continue to increase in number, so does the amount of profanity in our films. Films are now using the "F" word (the one that rhymes with truck) up to a record high of 428 times in one film, this film being *Nil by Mouth* (Heath). There are sneaky renditions of this word prominent throughout many American films, such as *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*, where the "F" word is present on three different occasions. Don't forget the other famous words that begin with "S", "A", and "D". They still receive plenty of publicity. The only way that someone can escape hearing unnecessary profanity is by watching rated G Disney movies, and even some of those have subtle references to various vulgar words. As the MPAA permits more obscenities to be used in film production, we see Hollywood taking advantage of the opportunity. When a parent allows his/her child to do something, of course the natural instinct is to act upon that allowance. Hollywood believes that adding profanity brings reality to a film. Evan Schaefer-



fer, a well-published writer, lawyer, and author simply asks, “Who hasn’t noticed Hollywood’s increasing reliance on profanity to add some extra *oomph* to its films?” (Schaeffer). To an extent, this is true. You can’t expect a military movie to be filled with, “Oh Golly-gee. You flippin’ messed up. Get up and try the dadgum wall again.” I think everyone knows how this would *really* sound. However, there is a line which separates reality-based profanity (well-placed profanity that adds to the

film) from unnecessary profanity, or the overuse of profanities that no longer add substance to a film. The question stands: is this distortion of reality affecting us? As our films become more and more populated by these different vulgarities, we actually do see a change in ourselves.

Firstly, swearing is something that everyone can relate to. When someone gets overly angered because of an unfortunate event in life, normally a cuss word is integrated in a sentence used to express how that person feels. When an audience member hears an actor/actress using this type of language, they immediately know what the person is feeling in terms of emotion. Research has been done to show that we react to these words when heard or read (Sorry, subtitles. You’re in this, too.), and the reaction is more than just sympathetic understanding. Harvard University experimental psychologist Steven Pinker stated that “once a word is seen or heard, we are incapable of treating it as a squiggle or noise; we reflexively look it up in memory and respond to its meaning, including its connotation,” and “... taboo words are especially effective at snatching a reader’s attention” (Pinker). This response is what causes us to root what we hear into our minds. Once a thought enters into our minds, the likelihood of it becoming an action is drastically increased. As words become more ingrained in our stored memory and thoughts, they become easier to utilize. The first time is always the most difficult, but vocalizing becomes progressively easier with time and practice. How do these taboo words have harmful effects?

Simple. The utilization of these words can offend, degrade, and harm as we have seen in many cases around the world. The term that has been coined for this type of degradation is ‘verbal abuse.’ From all of the articles ever read, abuse never means anything good. It is destructive and cutting and can affect someone’s life forever. Valerie Belew, an internationally certified substance and abuse professional, says that verbal abuse, especially to children, can lead them to *allow* people to verbally abuse them, it can lead to aggressive behavior, it can cause a delay in their development in areas such as academics, trust and relationship building, and can lead to self-destructiveness (Belew). This is not only an issue for our society, but relevant in other countries around the world where these movies are shown or distributed. It is especially prevalent in poorer countries with lower levels of spoken, written, and understood English, where our films can be a means by which audiences learn English. I have been in several third world countries and have seen the effects of profanity in film on many people. I can recall one such instance where I was taken aback at how these movies affected one such individual’s life on a hot and humid day in the small French-speaking country of Benin, West Africa.

My friend and I, both serving ecclesiastical missions, plow through the mounds of sand that engulf our feet. Dripping with sweat, we decide to seek shelter under a large palm tree to avoid the gaze of the large globe of yellow up above. As we pass from heat to refreshment, we find that we are lucky enough to have found a nice, well-worn bench held together with a few nails and smooth from years of supporting the weight of passersby. We allow a couple of minutes to pass before my friend says, “We still have a ways to walk. We should probably get going before noon comes and we have to head back to the apartment.” I agree, and we start gathering our things. Just as we are about to depart, a man that has been cooking spaghetti omelets nearby rushes over to where we are. He fumbles with his words for a second and then stammers, “I am Nigerian. Can you teach me about the Word?” Delighted to have found another English speaker in this country, we invite him to sit down to teach him.

We begin to talk, and right from the start, I notice that there is something that makes me cringe when he speaks. Every other word is vulgar. I begin to wonder if he can finish a sentence without using some sort of profanity. I look to my friend and see a wide-eyed look

on his face as this man proceeds to use every word we have been told as children to never use. That is, of course, unless you like the taste of soap. “Excuse me sir, but where in the world did you learn your English?” He smiles and politely replies, “Your American movies! This is how you speak in your country.” This is just one example of how the quantity of profanity in our films affects those who watch them and how reality is lost and unnecessary profanity wins out.

There are many people who enjoy swearing and therefore do not mind the amount of profanity used in movies. One such person, Peter Sessum, an army veteran and a journalist for *The Daily*, claims that swearing is a coping mechanism that is used for venting and for use when no other word works. Like when your favorite team is losing the soccer match (see picture below). He also expresses that swearing “...is about being unedited. Everyone [in] the United States has the Freedom of Speech” (Sessum). Scientifically, swearing actually does help. Studies show that swearing increases the level of pain a person can tolerate. One such study done at Keele University in the UK was performed on students to test the amount of pain that a person could withstand by plunging their arm into a bucket of ice cold water. The first time, they were told that they could swear as much as they wished. During the second attempt, they were not allowed to swear at all. The research showed that when the students swore, they were able to tolerate pain longer than when not swearing (Gibson). Unfortunately, swearing does not turn you into an invincible Superman. There is a point where the swearing becomes useless and unnecessary. Unnecessary swearing, the overuse of profanities, brought no additional help to the students. Peter Sessum also agrees and says that there is no need to swear too much (Sessum).

While swearing does bring reality into movies and can help people to endure pain, the unnecessary quantity that is present in our cinemas, past the point of reality, does more harm than good, bringing no additional benefit or substance to the movie.





It is for this reason that the MPAA should amend the criteria for profanity in film in order to reduce the amount of unnecessary profanity in films, especially PG-13 and PG movies. I have heard numerous people say that the amount of swearing in many films is superfluous. Not just words, but action is necessary for change. Simply by writing a letter or email to the MPAA and letting such concerns be known, we can lessen the amount of excessive profanity that exists in our films. Not only will this help our nation reduce the level of profanity that is brought to us via the big screen, it will help those in other nations to understand that profanity is not an American's vocabulary. We should always be seeking to better ourselves, so why should bettering our films and the world be any different? Let us make a push to ameliorate our cinema so that we can enjoy the fun and positive experience of a film without the negative impact of profanity.

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**FOR DISCUSSION**

1. To what degree are you persuaded by this essay? Why or why not? What evidence did you feel was the most compelling to prove the point of the author?
2. How does the inclusion of the research showing that individuals who swear can withstand more pain than those who don't swear affect the argument? Do you think this paragraph undermines the argument or does it lend credibility to the author? Why?
3. How do Halvorsen's personal narratives affect your reading of his argument? Provide specific examples of where one of his stories added to or detracted from the argument.
4. Does the fact that the author is on an ecclesiastical mission change your reading of the essay? Why or why not?
5. Look at the organization of the essay. Do you feel that the organization adds to the power of the argument? Are there ways the author could have changed or rearranged any of the segments to add strength?
6. What role does the title play in introducing the topic of an essay? How does the title of this essay impact the meaning?
7. Halvorsen asks readers to make a difference by "writing a letter or email to the MPAA" (111). How does his argument build up to this call to action? Should Halvorsen have spent more page space on this? Why or why not? Provide specific examples.

In an engaging persuasive research essay, Camille Jensen examines sexualized media and its damaging effects on young men and women. In a skillful resemblance argument, she compares the sexualized beauty rituals of today's young women to the centuries-old foot-binding practices of China that lasted well into the twentieth century. Using a variety of sources, from books about Chinese culture to interviews with recovering pornography addicts, Jensen calls the reader to action, asking us to teach children "to treat these [sexualized] messages critically, rather than passively absorbing them" (117).

PAST FAVORITES

## **BINDING OUR FEET THE AMERICAN WAY**



Camille Jensen

Let me paint a picture for you. Footbinding. Chinese women hobbling on three-inch feet; infected limbs broken and folded like grotesque origami; little girls tightening their bandages in hopes of beauty and a rich husband. The practice is both horrifying and fascinating to us, twenty-first century Westerners. Why would an entire society submit to such a horrible custom?

Contrary to popular belief, the now-illegal Chinese practice of footbinding was not thought up by men to oppress women; rather, it was developed by jealous female concubines in the emperor's courts. Recorded as early as the twenty-first century B.C., footbinding began as a high-class women's fashion trend and immediately escalated into a rich man's erotic craze. By circa 1300 A.D., footbinding had moved into the common class, evolving from a token of sexual allure into the very basis of feminine identity. Young feet all over the Chinese empire

were broken, pushed inward toward the heel, reshaped, and bound tightly to eventually reach the three-inch-long ideal. These “three-inch lotuses” became the sole definition of a woman’s self—and social—worth and an erogenous fantasy that men blindly toddled after (Wang). According to Ping Wang in her book *Aching for Beauty*, “A woman with her feet unbound was not really a woman, no matter how pretty her face, how slim and willowy her body. Binding their feet, women... became the codes of beauty, femininity, and eroticism” (226).

But unnatural beauty comes at a price. The violence with which mothers deformed their daughters’ feet is appalling. Five and six-year olds were forced to walk on broken bones wrapped as tightly as possible; with each weekly wrapping, more flesh decayed from blood loss and infections spread through the crevassed flesh. Every living moment was excruciating. But the girls, reminded constantly that they were worthless with big feet, diligently bound their feet tighter every morning for the rest of their lives (Wang ch. 1).

How bizarre, how cruel. A woman’s value determined by broken, rotting feet, not by her intelligence or her talents or her humanity. How could so many mothers submit to such a horrible practice? How could millions of men really think that a stinking, infected, inhuman foot was attractive? How could an entire society conform to abuse, pain, objectification, all in the name of sex?

Let me paint another picture for you. Billboards. Airbrushed skin, ballooned breasts, shrunken waists, coy smiles. Video games. Heaving bosoms, scanty armor, lithe animated bodies. Magazines. “His Best Sex Ever!” plastered next to 17-year-old Dakota Fanning’s underage smile (*Cosmopolitan* cover). Blockbusters. Women using sex as power over the gullible men around them. Porn.

The reality is that this fantastical, glorified version of sex has taken over our society. It breaks, pushes, reshapes, and bandages the minds of our children. The onslaught of images specifically targets girls, demanding that they be flawlessly alluring, but catches boys in the cross-fire, insisting that their sex drives can and should define them. Girls are taught that their self and social worth depends on their sex appeal; boys are taught to grow an all-consuming appetite for the unnatural products of Photoshop and animation. It is the American lotus foot.

The reality is that, even after multiple waves of feminism, women in our culture are not expected to have successful careers, powerful personalities, or extraordinary talents. Women are expected to be shapely, sly, seductive sex kittens. And men are expected to be stupidly spellbound by them. From sexually charged movie characters like Vicki Vallencourt from *The Waterboy* to Disney princesses baring breasts and bellies for their wide-eyed audience, the expectations for our children are clear. Do you remember the women of the 2008 American presidential campaign? Michelle Obama was called a “slut,” Sarah Palin “masturbation material,” and Hillary Clinton a “haggard” 92-year-old, to name only a few of the sexist insults these women endured (CNN). Independent, inspirational, and overweight female celebrities, such as Adele and Queen Latifah, are criticized for being “fat” or praised for being “sexy” by gossip columnists, but never judged solely on their talent. If the most powerful, charismatic, successful women in our country are being ranked by their sex appeal, how is primetime television teaching our boys and girls to judge each other?

One study surveyed adolescents who were exposed to media with varying degrees of sexual explicitness, asking them to agree or disagree with statements such as “Unconsciously, girls always want to be persuaded to have sex” and “There is nothing wrong with men being primarily interested in a woman’s body.” As we can expect, the correlation between explicit media exposure and agreement with these statements was positive, but the surprise was that *there was no difference between boys and girls* (Jochen, 2007). This means that while young boys are being taught that a woman is a sex object, young girls are being taught to ignore their personal identities and only invest in their sex appeal. Our little boys are drooling over lotus feet; our little girls are tightening their bandages.

Like three-inch Chinese feet, the sex appeal that American girls are expected to exude is naturally unattainable. The viral internet video “Evolution” shows this first-person; a model, before being placed on a billboard, is first doused in makeup—foundation, eyeliner, eye shadow, blush, contour powder, highlighting cream, mascara, brow liner, lipstick—and then put under the knife in Photoshop: lengthening her neck, thickening her hair, manipulating her facial bone structure, enlarging her eyes, and shaving her cheeks. The final product rings

eerily similar to the intricate breaking/folding/binding procedure followed dutifully by generations of Chinese mothers and daughters. We are watching deformity become the status quo.

We can all agree that the media is the root of the problem. Every day, our children are confronted with obvious and subliminal messages alike through the television, internet, and grocery store checkout lines. We need it to stop if we want to protect them from the toxic effects. But can we expect an entire corporate market to change overnight simply because we ask them to? However ambitious we are, however protective of our youth, that hope is unrealistic. This culture has become a foundation of our society, in the same way that the twisted fashion trend took over ancient China, and it can't be overthrown with one email petition. But there is a way to uproot it. It starts from the bottom up, and it's something we can all do today.



Natural Feet (Radiopaedia)      Bound feet (Library of Congress)      Fig. 1



Natural model      Photographed model      Photoshopped model  
(Evolution) Fig. 2

It was the adults of China that fostered their tradition through their daughters' abused feet and their sons' lotus-footed wives. If we, as parents and educators, can fight the spread of our sexualized media by teaching our children to recognize and reject its claims, we can change

this society with each new generation. We need to take responsibility for educating our children about sex, gender, and identity to protect them from the media's onslaught of detrimental images. That's how we fight the lotus foot.

Forty-nine percent of alcohol commercials include a close-up of a woman's chest. Men exposed to advertisements that portray women as sex objects are more likely to believe gender stereotypes and rape myths, while women are more likely to experience depression and self-damaging behavior (Snigda, 2011). In the top one hundred grossing films of 2007, 2008, and 2009, only one-third of speaking characters were female, but female characters were more likely to be dressed partially nude, referred to as attractive by the opposite sex, placed in "following" rather than "leading" positions, and less likely to achieve their goals (Azad).

These messages seep into a young person's mind and create unconscious beliefs that are difficult to correct. Girls are taught from an early age that their skills, intelligence, and independence do not matter unless they have an extraordinary sex appeal. Boys are taught that it's okay, even expected, for them to have endless sex drives with no regard for the woman or the situation. But imagine if, in our homes and our schools, we encouraged our young people to pick out the messages they see—the gender discrepancies, the objectification, the often laughable sexual advertising—in a carefully selected media clip then describe what is unfair or inaccurate about it. Boys and girls alike can learn to treat these awful messages critically rather than passively absorbing them. Of course, do not subject your children to full-on pornography, and be tactful in your choice of material, basing it on the age, needs, and maturity of each child. But don't leave our children to fend for themselves in this world.

We can't shut out the media from our children's lives, and we can't change an entire culture just by asking. But we *can* lessen its effect with each generation, and we can protect each individual child from being shaped by the images they see.

Our children need this help more than we realize. I've been watching my younger sister "bind her feet" for years, basing her own and others' worth on physical appearances. It started with rating teen movie stars by their attractiveness; now, at twelve years old, she won't

even be friends with girls she doesn't think are pretty. And her view of herself? She wears heavily caked mascara, frets over her breast size, and periodically flies into frenzies about her weight. In her own words, after a conversation with our mother about her sinking seventh-grade report cards, "I don't need to be smart as long as I'm pretty."

I wish we had taught her to see and laugh at the messages in the media years ago. I hope it's not too late for her to correct the beliefs that have been nurtured inside her psychological structure. I don't think it is. I think that humans of any age can relearn and redefine their beliefs. But the key is that we, as adults, are responsible for our children, students, and little sisters. And if we can equip every child with the means to combat the toxicity in our media, they will have the ability to change the world.

The issue is more urgent, more immediate than we may realize. I had the privilege of anonymously interviewing recovering pornography addicts, male and female, ranging in age from fourteen to twenty-two. The mediums with which these young people struggled varied from pornographic novels to filmed videos to animated pictures. Although interviews were completely separate, each interviewee had the same impressions about gender roles from their medium. The men in pornography are

"emotionally detached" (Anon. 1),

"always in control" (Anon. 2), and

"uncaring assholes" (Anon. 3).

"You never see their faces" (Anon. 4), and

"the focus is never on them" (Anon. 5).

In contrast, pornographic women are

"unintelligent" (Anon. 1),

"frail" (Anon. 6),

"submissive" (Anon. 4), and

"morally bereft" (Anon. 5).

"The woman was not really a woman. She was often completely willing to go along with whatever the man suggested or led her into, without any word otherwise" (Anon. 7).



Can we really let our boys be stereotyped as faceless “assholes”? Can we really let our girls be “unintelligent” and “submissive”? Pornography was once a socially taboo vice but is now commonplace in American homes. You can bet that it will only get worse if we allow our media to continue its current ways, and these gender roles will become more and more pervasive. Footbinding will not stay in the emperor’s courts for long. As experienced personally by the young people I interviewed, it’s already on its way.

Wherever they are in their lives, however deeply the media has already affected them, we need to educate our children and give them the means to fight for themselves. Procrastination on our part could find them trapped in the same awful situation that my seven anonymous friends now battle.

The media is binding our feet the American way. Little girls are being forced by their societal “mothers” to do everything it takes to be beautiful. Adult women are finding that their worth as a human depends paradoxically on their inhuman sex appeal. Men and boys are being taught to fixate on women with misshapen lotus bodies. But if we can help our children learn to take the bandages off, one by one—gender stereotypes, sex in advertising, Photoshop, pornography—perhaps we can truly leave them a better world than the one they live in now.

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**FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Note how often Jensen refers to Chinese foot-binding during the essay. She reinforces the notion that the practice of foot-binding is much like the effects of sexualized media today. Do you find the repetition effective? How might you do something similar in your own essay?
2. Jensen makes some strong claims all throughout her essay. Are these claims hasty generalizations? Provide examples of where these claims are well-supported and where they could be better supported.
3. Jensen skillfully uses her source material. Note how she discusses a study by researchers where adolescents were “exposed to media with varying degrees of sexual explicitness” (115). She summarizes the study, includes some direct quotes, then spends some time expounding on the study and how it relates to her thesis. Choose a direct quote or paraphrase from your own writing. Discuss it in your own words and then directly tie it back to your thesis.
4. How do visuals add to Jensen’s argument? What would have been lost in her argument without the images? Consider how visuals might be effective in your own argument.
5. Jensen uses images not only with pictures but also by describing vividly foot binding and modern media. Find an example of descriptive language that emphasizes her argument and explain why it has this effect.

## PAST FAVORITES

Teenagers are notorious for staying up into all hours of the morning and playing mischievous pranks that are often found less-than-humorous by their adult neighbors. Unfortunately, this mischief often escalates to partying and drug-use. In a persuasive research essay, Cody Cleverly discusses the vital importance of parent-enforced curfews for teens. Using a combination of personal experiences and academic research, Cleverly argues that not only are curfews effective for keeping teenagers out of trouble with the neighbors, but they may even save them from damaging their lives long-term.

**C U R F E W S :**

the responsibility of parents



Cody Cleverly

At around 2:00 a.m. on Friday night, I could almost taste the spongy soil of the recently tilled garden I was using as my spur-of-the-moment hideout. Terrified almost to tears at the sound of a grown man's uncontrollable profanity, I couldn't move. I said a silent prayer promising God I would never do anything bad again, if only I got away. Before I had a chance to run, I was blinded by the headlights of an approaching police squad car. The officer pulled to the side of the road to get close to the old, rusty passenger vehicle lodged in the neighbor's bushes. After exchanging a few words with the obviously disgruntled vehicle owner, the officer walked to the middle of the road to have a closer look at the four legged figure that stood motionless despite the collision that happened just a few feet away. It appeared to be a cat, with its arched back and eyes that glowed at any sign of light. I knew it was nothing more than a portion of a refrigerator

box that I conveniently found in my parents garage. After cutting it into the shape of a cat, spray-painting it black, gluing two dimes on for eyes, and placing it strategically in the road, my next door neighbor and I found ourselves in the present sticky situation. When the officer sat down in the driver seat of his car to fill out a report, we both knew what we had to do. At that very moment we stood up and started to run, working every tense muscle in our thirteen-year-old legs. No more than a few minutes later, we had climbed a number of jagged chain-link fences and found our way back to the refuge of my basement. This is only one example of the mischievous activities that consumed my weekends as a teenager.

When I was growing up I did a lot of stupid, reckless things with my friends. I think it's safe to say that at least eighty-percent of the ignorant, irresponsible things I did as a teen were at night, and specifically after midnight. Because I didn't have a curfew, I was at liberty to do basically anything I wanted whenever I wanted. If my parents had required me to be home at a specific time, I wouldn't have had as much time to throw eggs at passing cars and put flaming bags of my own feces on peoples' doorstep. My completely uncontrolled behavior was the result of a lack of adult supervision. A curfew is an excellent way for parents to adequately supervise their teenagers.

A study by Andre Sourander, an acclaimed adolescent behavior researcher, concludes that one of the strongest predictors for adolescent delinquency is poor parental supervision (Sourander 579). When unsupervised, teenagers have a tendency to do things that they know their parents wouldn't approve of. These disapproved activities could be listed for pages, but for now I'll focus on one: premarital sex. According to D. Hollander, a child research leader, "The more time that high school students spend without adult supervision, the higher their level of sexual activity" (Hollander 106). This statement is one finding from a survey taken by 2,034 teens in six urban public high schools during the 2000–2001 academic year. As a result of this premature sexual activity, sexually transmitted infections are on the rise. Parents could save their teenagers a lot of pain and suffering by simply supervising them more. The solution is pretty clear. Parents need to be close enough to their teenagers to be able to exert necessary control over their actions.

Although they don't have a lot of control, parents need to have power over some aspects of their teenager's lives. When studying parental control, a doctoral student at the Center for Developmental Research, Fumiko Kakihara, found that, "Children need sufficient regulation of their behavior to learn the rules and structure of social functioning" (1722). An essential part of learning the rules of social functioning is learning and following the rules set by one's parents. Parents must inform their children what is expected of them. After their children know what is expected, parents need to have enough control to discipline their children for non-compliance to the said rules. Curfews are an incredibly effective way to regulate consequences. Whether consequences are rewards for good behavior or punishments for bad, they provide important incentives leading teens to follow their parents' rules.

One major consequence of a teenager's decisions is trust. A study about parental trust was conducted by M. Kerr, H. Stattin, and K. Trost of La Sapienza University. Their article reads, "Trust should be important in parents' relationships with their adolescents because parents know that teenagers today face many temptations and that their own teenagers could be exposed to risky situations and bad influences" (737). The study concluded that teens with a trusting parental relationship are less likely to break their parents' rules or get into serious trouble. It's apparent that trust between teenagers and their parents is necessary to keep them from making bad decisions. The best way for teens to gain their parents' trust is to follow the rules and make responsible decisions that both parties can be proud of. An excellent starting place for rules and expectations is a curfew. Parents should impose a curfew on their teenagers when they first begin to do things away from home on their own. As part of imposing this curfew, they should explain to their teens that it is in place to give them a chance to earn parental trust. The curfew can then be adjusted according to whether the teenager meets their parents' expectations or not. If they follow the rules and obey their curfew, an extension should be considered. If they break rules or curfew, they should have to follow stricter rules or an earlier curfew.

I feel that it is a parent's moral obligation to be completely responsible for their children. As part of this responsibility, parents should make sure their children are at home under parental supervision at a

decent hour. Not only are curfews a moral obligation of parents, but also a civic obligation. In order to prevent crime and other related issues, cities in the United States have a legal curfew for juvenile individuals. If parents aren't taking it upon themselves to require their children to follow these curfew laws, they are failing as a responsible parent.

I was raised in a home with a high standard of family values. My parents did an excellent job of teaching my siblings and me what was acceptable in our home. Although we knew very well what was expected of us, we needed more than just a conscience to keep us on the right track. While I was at home with my parents, I didn't have a choice. I had direct supervision leading me to do what I knew I should. But as soon as I was away from my parents, they didn't have any control. I was free to stay out as late as I wanted making irresponsible decisions because I was free of a curfew.

Melanie S. Farkas and Wendy S. Grolnick, authors of a number of books about successfully raising children, wrote about a study concerning parental structure in the lives of adolescents. They state, "Findings indicate that structure makes unique contributions to children's motivation" (266). Because of my lack of structure, I didn't have the motivation to please my parents with good decisions. As a result, I made a lot of bad decisions. I wasn't the only one either. Compared to my brothers, my decisions were the work of an angel. Since they didn't have a curfew either, they fell into the unrelenting drug culture. They were free to stay out as late as they wanted, and ended up doing illegal drugs and engaging in excessive underage drinking. My parents travelled a lot because my sister played competitive softball. When they were gone, my brothers and I were free to do whatever we wanted in our home. One Saturday night I came home from my friend's place to see more than a dozen cars parked outside my house. It was after 3:00 a.m. when I walked in the door. Upon entering, I could hear loud music echoing from the basement, and I was immediately set back by the stale, dry but sweet smell of marijuana. I knew my brothers were druggies, but in the house? They were smoking drugs in my parents' house?! Disgusted and overwhelmingly infuriated I warned everyone involved that they had two minutes before the police arrived. Apparently they believed I had really called the cops because the house was empty before I could say Bob Marley.

Where did the parents of twenty teenagers think their children were at 3 a.m. that Saturday night? Because my parents were out of town, they didn't have any control over what my brothers were doing, but what about the parents of the others? In their article about marijuana use in young adults, J. Alfonso and M.E. Dunn of Emmanuel College in Boston state, "Despite the universal implementation of drug use prevention programs in schools, overall use of marijuana among children and young adults has not decreased substantially" (1,009). Since public and government drug prevention programs are failing, there is only one solution: Parental drug prevention. As I have stated before, the best way for parents to prevent teenagers from doing irresponsible things is to implement a curfew. Had twenty teens been required to be home at a specific time, my brothers wouldn't have had anyone to party with and likely would have been doing something significantly more responsible.

This past December, my younger brother was caught with drugs and a scale in his backpack at school. He was charged with possession of narcotics with the intent to distribute. Christmas wasn't as fun last year because he was in Juvenile Detention. If he had a curfew during the preceding years, I truly believe his life would be a lot different. He wasn't mature or educated enough to know that drugs would devastate his future when he first started using them, but my parents could have given him the direction he needed had they only given him a little more structure and discipline.

Some argue that curfews aren't effective, and are simply a false sense of security for insecure parents. They argue that other things determine the responsibility of one's children. The truth is, a curfew alone won't make or break successful parenting. There are many factors involved in being a successful parent and raising mature, responsible children. Each parent will have child-raising techniques, and children will end up being a variety of different kinds of people. But studies and reliable observations have shown that when a curfew is imposed on a teenager, he/she is much less likely to make irresponsible decisions. This curfew lays the foundation for a trusting relationship between teens and parents. I didn't have a curfew as a teenager, and I wish my parents had given me one. Although I believe I turned out okay, my brothers didn't. Their case isn't uncommon in teens either. Teenagers should be required to follow a curfew because they



aren't equipped with the knowledge and experience necessary to make rational, responsible decisions without their parents' guidance.

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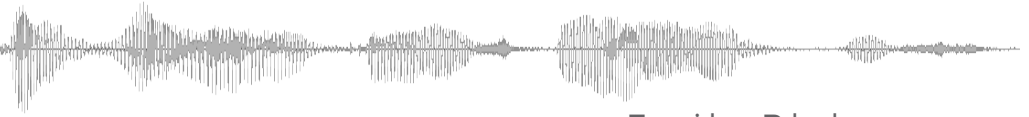
**FOR DISCUSSION**

1. In the introductory paragraph, the author recalls a personal experience to present the topic of the essay. How is using a personal experience effective in introducing the topic of an essay? In what situations would this particular kind of introduction be less effective?
2. Identify the thesis statement in this essay. Do you feel that this is a good place to have a thesis? Why or why not?
3. A solid paragraph should have an idea that it develops. Does each paragraph state its own idea? Are there any points where the focus may shift from the main idea?
4. Do the paragraphs transition smoothly from one to the next? Identify distinct transition sentences and transitions that could be improved. What elements does a solid transition sentence contain?
5. Does the author make it immediately clear who the audience is that he is addressing in this essay? What makes the address clear or unclear? How does this affect his argument as a whole?
6. Does *Cleverly* find a good balance between personal experiences and objective research? If yes, explain how this balance is created, and provide specific examples of how these different sources of evidence work together. If no, identify examples of where the balance may be off, and discuss ways this could be fixed.

In her freshmen year of college, Emily Blake learned many things, but one thing in particular—she hated Mormons. Living in a predominantly Latter-day Saint (Mormon) society caused Emily to feel discriminated against and judged.

In a persuasive research essay, Blake discusses the concept of faith and spirituality and its impact on social interactions. She reflects on her own interfaith journey and suggests ways to improve understanding and enhance communication among USU's student body, faculty, and staff.

## THE **WAR** AGAINST MORMONS



Emily Blake

During my freshman year of college, my LDS roommates told me that my case of strep throat was God's punishment to me for partying on Saturday. That was the moment I realized I hated Mormons. I hated that I felt marginalized for wearing a tank top or drinking coffee. I learned to recognize church members by their wedding rings, polo shirts paired with plaid shorts, or women's ambitiously modest necklines, all with the intention of actively avoiding interactions with them. I hated how many words beginning with the letter "f" could awkwardly replace fuck: freak, frick, fetch, french toast, fack, frigin, front door, eff. I hated that our door was always plastered with family home evening activities and notes from home teachers. I was sick of being asked which ward I was in, always followed up with the pestering explanation that I am, in fact, still in a ward even though I am not Mormon. But mostly, I hated that my favorite part of my

freshman year was those three hours on Sunday when my supposedly Christian-minded roommates were at church, relieving me of their judgment.

Religious discrimination is not a unique or singular struggle. Former president, John F. Kennedy (JFK), suffered the same religious judgment while running for president in 1960. In a speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, a group of Protestant ministers, Kennedy explained that “while this year it may be a Catholic against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed, in other years it has been, and may someday be again, a Jew—or a Quaker or a Unitarian or a Baptist...Today I may be the victim, but tomorrow it may be you — until the whole fabric of our harmonious society is ripped at a time of great national peril” (“Transcript: JFK’s Speech on His Religion”). As JFK depicted, religious discrimination is poison to societies. The unwarranted discrimination Kennedy felt is parallel to the judgment and discrimination happening on Utah State University’s (USU) campus. The culture of religious intolerance has become a norm for many USU students, faculty, and staff which, much like Kennedy described, is ripping apart the fabric of the relationships of those attending USU. Kennedy urges Americans to judge him on his character and previous decisions as a U.S. Senator, as I would urge affiliates of Utah State to judge their peers on their character rather than religious beliefs. The same religious discrimination was felt 48 years later during Mitt Romney’s campaign as a Republican Party candidate. Romney is a member of the LDS church and was judged harshly by the American public for it. In a Gallup poll, “17 percent of respondents said they would never vote for a Mormon” (Roberts). This is yet another example of judgment being cast purely based on religious beliefs and stereotypes of those beliefs.

USU students have felt similar discrimination to that felt by Kennedy and Romney. Utah State’s campus newspaper, *The Utah Statesman*, interviewed students about their feelings on the Mormon majority on campus. One student said, “A lot of [LDS] people are raised with a belief that people that aren’t LDS are bad or wrong, they do bad things” (Baker). Students feel the impacts of this belief. Non-Mormons feel like outsiders while LDS church members feel the pressures of the majority. Mormons stick with Mormons and non-Mormons stick with non-Mormons. It is not rare to feel instant camaraderie with a fellow

non-Mormon, comrades in a civil war against Mormons. When you buy into the war against Mormons, bashing begins, followed by the generalization of the LDS church, a church 15-million strong (“Facts and Statistics”). When members of the church congregate, a sense of almighty holiness seems to appear. Both of these nasty byproducts of the segregation of religion merely feed on each other, deepening the mutual ill feelings.

By my second semester as a freshman at USU I had somehow allowed myself to become a soldier in the war against Mormons. I had decided that if I made it through college without stepping into the Institute building or any other Mormon church, I would have had a successful college experience. I participated in the same nasty marginalization I had been a victim of. This translated into resentment, the generalization of mass groups, and the treatment of anyone associated with the church as wholly insignificant. It wasn’t until my sophomore year that I recognized the struggle and negative impacts of a Mormon majority are mutual for both LDS and non-LDS students. Oftentimes, non-LDS students feel that “it’s not safe to be different at USU” and that they often feel the need to “camouflage or closet” their beliefs (Glass-Coffin, 2014). Students “camouflaging and closeting” their non-LDS beliefs are doing so to relieve themselves of the scrutiny felt for religious differences.

While non-Mormon students feel the judgment of not being a member of the church, Mormon students feel the judgment of not being “Mormon enough.” It is not uncommon to hear things like, “she is kind of Mormon” or “he is a bad Mormon.” A type of snobbery of the faithiest Mormon has grown and flourished through the high concentration of church members who appear to feel competition within the LDS church. There is a struggle to become the “most Mormon” or a “good Mormon.” When interviewing USU sophomore, Sean, he explained that his decision to serve an LDS mission was due to pressures from fellow members and cultural pressures rather than feeling a calling to serve. He came home from his mission early and has since felt the scrutiny for his decision. He worries that this choice will hurt him in the LDS dating scene as it is taboo and traditionally shameful to come home early from an LDS mission. Sean also feels obligated to defend himself when exposed for coming home early. He described

the shame and embarrassment he feels for his choice, but also feels that it was in the best interest of the Church and himself to return early.

Similar pressures are felt by young women in the church. Junior student, Caroline, feels pressure from peers to get married at a young age. "I am barely 20 and am regularly asked when I plan to get married. I am not interested [in getting married] anytime soon, but don't want to be the only one left [who isn't married]." Caroline described Sundays back in her hometown at church as uncomfortable. She feels uncomfortable because the only question she is ever asked is if she is dating someone, and she never gets asked about her academic life or studies. She explained how she increasingly feels as though her worth is based on her marital status. This is an example of the increasing marginalization that is happening, even to members of the dominant group.

Religious intolerance, in its many forms, is perpetrated by Mormons and non-Mormons alike. This hurts USU's students by individuals harboring intolerance and suppressing the desire to "engage with the risk of challenging and reconsidering [our] own views" (van der Straten Waiet). Considering the degree of intolerance and recognition that "[the discussion of] religion makes people uncomfortable," Utah State University must take the first step towards tolerant religious pluralism (Glass-Coffin). Tolerant religious pluralism is often times referred to as interfaith. USU must harbor, celebrate, promote, and help create an inclusive environment for all students by utilizing interfaith practices.

A specific interfaith practice that needs to be implemented at USU is interfaith roundtables. These are roundtable discussions that invite all faiths and traditions to have open dialogue about religion. USU's Dr. Glass-Coffin, a professor and researcher in the department of Sociology, Social Work, & Anthropology, held an anonymous interfaith roundtable and explained to participants that once we have recognized that discussing religion makes us uncomfortable, we must then ask, "why?" Others around the state are holding interfaith events and seeing really positive results. An interfaith roundtable program was started in Salt Lake City in 1999 to provide support for Olympic athletes and tourists during the 2002 Winter Games (Lenord, 2014). The group now meets monthly but emphasizes February as an interfaith month which hosts events that give Utahns the opportunity to gather and

have meaningful discussion about religion. A regular attendee of these discussions said, “I don’t feel that different from everyone else here. We’re all trying to build compassion, love and understanding” (Leonard). The lack of compassion, love, and understanding are the roots of many disputes worldwide as well as within conflicting religious traditions. The implementation of interfaith dialogue at USU would help students “appreciate compassion, peace, love and harmony, which are tenets of many religions” (Leonard). Utah State University could easily model interfaith programs after the Salt Lake City interfaith program as well as use information and people power from the interfaith discussion and research USU’s Dr. Glass-Coffin is in the midst of.

An idea suggested to help USU cultivate a climate that is tolerant of diverse religions was the implementation of “faith-zones.” These faith zones would be much like the Ally program, which is recognized nationwide as a place or person that supports the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, and allied (LGBTQA) community. An interfaith counterpart would look similar in terms of a safe place or person who is supportive of a diversity of faiths. It would give students a person or place to go where they were guaranteed to not be judged or scrutinized for their religious traditions. This idea was suggested by a professor who is not a member of the LDS church. In the past, she had run into difficulty advising LDS students who seemed to trust her less because she was not a church member. Having “interfaith allies” would give students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to connect with one another as well as reach out to other students who would benefit from interfaith practices.

Another great suggestion fostered through Dr. Glass-Coffin’s studies is to offer a general education course that teaches interfaith literacy as well as discuss interfaith opportunities. This course would help build the capacity for interfaith dialogue as well as the recognition that “high education includes the health of a whole person (body, mind, spirit, relationship)” (Glass-Coffin). This inclusive atmosphere can be recognized and supported by upper administration but has to be embraced by the student body in order to be effective. This is why I would like to see a student-driven movement away from “Mormon bashing” and the judgment of non-Mormons based on their religious traditions and towards an inclusive interfaith environment that fosters

“compassion, peace, love, and harmony” which were so beautifully described by the SLC interfaith program.

It seems like we have lost sight of the goal and beauty of faith. We have become elitist in an inclusive tradition. We, as a culture, have twisted and manipulated words and changed the meaning of faith and spirituality. We have backed these words into a dark street alley where no one goes unless they are looking for trouble. Why have we pushed what is often times our largest pieces of identify so far away that we don't even feel comfortable discussing it? USU's students, staff, and faculty are vehicles for this culture of religious taboo. We burden ourselves with this stigma that openly discussing traditions, religion, and spirituality are poison in a learning environment when it is so clearly the antidote.

When I tell people I am a student at Utah State the following sentence is usually, “Oh, I didn't know you're Mormon.” or “Aren't there lots of Mormons there?” To understand the implications of the Mormon majority, you need not quantify the member, but rather live and feel the implications. You feel it through not understanding what FHE stands for, or thinking every bishops name is “Rick” because you always hear members talk about their “bishopric”. You feel it through the criticisms you receive for “unique” beliefs. This feeling of being misplaced or misinterpreted is a huge struggle for students at Utah State University. This struggle must be addressed in order to give students the opportunity of a wholesome higher education.

My personal interfaith journey has given me the tools and capacity to practice interfaith as well as promote it. An LDS Bishop in Dr. Glass-Coffin's roundtable discussion suggested visiting other church's services with the intention of finding common ground and building understanding. This really struck me and made me reflect on my own personal religious literacy, a literacy that I had originally felt secure and confident in. My feelings of security and confidence were really barriers I had put up to avoid the fact that I was embarrassingly illiterate in my religious beliefs as well as beliefs in my surroundings. Upon realizing my fault, I researched local churches to attend, hoping to gain some insight into this taboo world of religion. I eased into it. The first church I attended was the St. Jerome Catholic Newman Center near campus. This wasn't much of stretch for me given I am baptized Catholic and have family members devout to this religion. It ended up



being a really beautiful sermon that talked about time commitments and doing what is best for you and those around. The message I took away was a message of love and compassion for both myself and others. The next Sunday was spent in Boise with my mom. She regularly attends a non-denominational Christian church. The sermon preached was about forgiveness and how crucial it is in our relationships with each other and with God. Again, I left with lingering feelings of love and compassion for one another. Upon explaining my interfaith mission and tolerant religious pluralism to my mom, she asked me when I planned to sit in on an LDS sacrament. Somehow I had completely disregarded the LDS church as being a vital part of my interfaith journey. My mom caught me participating in the same behavior I was working so hard against.

The following Sunday, cap sleeve t-shirt under my spaghetti strap dress, I attended an LDS sermon. I attended knowing that my original basis of college success (not going into the Institute building) would be surrendered. The bishop preached about the importance of family and all of the benefits a family provides to an individual's well-being. It was a talk based around love and compassion. It finally hit me that the love and compassion we as USU students have been so desperate for is found in every church and every person regardless of their religious traditions. Our college experience shouldn't be measured by the conflicts we avoid (in my case the religions we avoid) but rather measured by the conflicts we confront and embrace.

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1. Discuss the elements of ethos, pathos, and logos in this essay. Does this essay appeal to one of these more than the others? If so, which one?
2. Does this essay have a clear thesis? Identify the main purpose of this essay. Does the entire paper support this argument?
3. Did this essay change your opinion in any way? If so, what were you persuaded of? What evidence/research do you feel was the most compelling to prove the author's argument?
4. How does the title and introduction of this essay affect the way you read it? Does it make you defensive? Excited? Intrigued?
5. Blake describes her own experience with religious and non-religious judgment and persecution. How does her use of personal experiences strengthen her essay? Provide specific examples.
6. Identify the audience that this essay is written to. Does the essay make it clear who the audience is? Would the introduction of the essay appeal to this audience? Why or why not?
7. Is this essay credible? Was there enough evidence and significant sources to make her argument valid? Where could her research have been expanded?

**FOR DISCUSSION**

Each of us has a different background with different strengths and different struggles. Uniqueness is an unarguable part of humanity. So how do we define “normal”?

In a personal narrative, Gemma Koontz discusses the idea of normalcy and how it has impacted her life despite late diagnosis with Autism. Koontz reflects on what she learned about herself and what she thinks of being “normal.”

## NOT NORMAL



Gemma Koontz

Normal. Webster’s defines normal as, “usual or ordinary: not strange.” Normal, such a simple term, nonchalantly uttered so often in everyday conversation making it nondescript. Your blood pressure is normal. That’s a normal thing. He led a normal life. Test results exhibited normal distribution. It’s normal for kids to do that. Normally our office hours are from nine to five. After five days all side effects will dissipate and normality will resume. Normal. Normally. Normality. So monotonously commonplace. Yet, for an extensive period of my life, normal appeared to be something that one was either born with, taught, or achieved. It took a run-in with a bubbly, fun-loving, square-shaped sponge who lives in a pineapple under the sea to alter my views on what it means to be normal.

As a small child I was slightly different. My two older sisters set a precedent, and my parents knew what to expect of a normal pregnancy, child development, and behavior. With two pregnancies behind

her, Mom foresaw no issues and felt that all would progress normally. As is usually the case with me, prior expectations were not to be followed. Six weeks prior to delivery, test results indicated white blood cell levels were far below normal, making it an awfully real possibility that either Mom or I could bleed to death. Fortunately, with regular assessments by excellent medical professionals, all progressed normally, resulting in a delightfully, adorable, normal daughter.

Summers came and winters faded as time perpetually marches forward. Mom, comfortably situated in a chair stitching away on her handicraft, enjoys time to herself as Heidi and Nikki are out frolicking with friends. Next to her sits her little lamb, perfectly content to play quietly with herself. This was a typical scene from my early childhood. While my sisters spent time running with friends, laughing loudly with juvenile innocence as any normal child would, I was at home within an arm's reach of Mom, playing discreetly like my namesake. Besides remaining quietly unsociable and declining to walk of my own accord until the age of fourteen-months, there was nothing to indicate that I was anything but normal. Yet with each passing year, small idiosyncrasies began to surface. First, it was an extreme aversion to loud sounds. Crying would ensue as I covered my ears tearfully, exclaiming it was too loud. Fireworks, airplanes, rodeos and similar venues or events were out of the question. To combat this and make it possible to attend such events, it was of paramount importance to have earplugs. After loud noises it was water—which was so akin to evil one would have thought I was a wicked witch with how much I dreaded getting wet. Bath time meant desperately running around and hiding to evade it. By this I earned myself the nickname “Tigger” as he, too, despised baths. What had previously been an endearing attachment to Mom and disinterest in socializing soon became a pressing concern on the part of my parents and a stumbling block in my life. Obsession with stuffed animals and stickers soon took over any remaining desire for friendship. Tantrums exploded as a result of seemingly small issues, such as the tightness of my shoe laces or the brushing of my hair. However, all of this was simply chalked up to being the sensitive baby of the family.

This all changed when we moved to Germany. As a six-year-old I was enrolled in first grade, a time for normal kids to be excited, yet slightly nervous that they are attending big-kid school. Not in my case. It was a living nightmare for me and subsequently for my parents.

Extreme crying and desperate tantrums ensued as I pleaded with my parents not to force me to go. For a time Mom was usually able to coax me to go to class. However, this behavior quickly escalated in severity resulting in me running away from school, sometimes into the surrounding forest, in an attempt to evade capture and return. The resemblance to a terrified rabbit, sheer panic and fear visible in its eyes as it realizes a fox has cornered it, was frightfully uncanny. A flashbulb memory, painfully searing across my mind, is that of an awfully pathetic child. She is dreadfully small and alone, desperately trying to navigate a strange and terrifying world. No respite to be found except in the warm embrace of her mother's arms—unable to explain why it was so. From here it only grew worse. My parents helplessly stood by watching as their sweet, beautiful, normal lamb steeply spiraled down further and further into the darkness of frightful abnormality.

Much energy and TLC was invested in me by my family in an attempt to return me to normality. Mom discussed my issues with the school administration, who were more than unwilling to help, resulting in Mom pulling me from public school and beginning homeschool where I could fill out workbooks under her constantly watchful eye. My ever-loving sisters unceasingly took me under their wings, playing lots of animal memory and wondrous games in the woods with me and doing everything in their power to cheer me up. After work, Dad treated me as any normal child, playing with me and reading stories which filled my mind with fantastical worlds into which I longed to step and leave my fears behind. He also fostered my desire for knowledge by providing challenges for me to solve, engaging my mind and turning my focus elsewhere. While all of this helped tremendously, it was still apparent that professional aid was required.

Dr. Hardaway, a child psychiatrist, was the first of many. After some observation of clinical signs and learning my case history he offered the diagnosis of generalized depression and anxiety. While this gave my parents something to work with, it didn't seem to fill the missing piece they were looking for. Some of his suggestions to combat my fears and anxieties were ridiculous—such as having my parents physically restrain me until I calmed down. My parents flat out refused, the thought bringing to mind an image of a lion gripping the throat of a wildebeest as it strives to evade the death grip until it slowly suffocates and stops struggling. Despite these sometimes peculiar

suggestions, he did offer a lot of help such as prescription medication and enrollment in a new school. However, much of the help I received and benefited from came as a result of my parents following their gut instincts and trying everything they could to help control the fears and idiosyncrasies that held me back from normality. Thus began the arduous journey on the “fix-it” highway, the way replete with potholes, mile markers of success, and signposts pointing to normality and giving warnings as to its passing.

Normal kids don’t take antidepressants since the age of six. *How about some Zoloft with that chocolate milk?* Normal kids have real friends. *This is my friend Sarah. Well this is my friend Bunny. Um you do realize he’s a green stuffed rabbit? And your point is?* Normal ten year olds don’t read at a post-graduate level. *History of the Vikings anyone?* Eye contact is a normal social gesture. *I will now stare into the depths of your soul in a friendly, non-creepy fashion as a way to connect with you.* Normally kids have already outgrown school separation anxiety by now. *You are fifteen, now get out of the car and go to class.* Normal kids aren’t so sensitive and quick to cry from offense as a result of comments from adult authorities. *Where have you been? Whaaaaa!* It’s normal for kids to participate and enjoy extracurricular activities. *Dance, soccer, cheer, swimming? No thanks, I’ll pass.* Reading so much instead of socializing is not normal. *Books don’t judge and they’re portable.* Normal kids actually have hand-eye coordination and reflexes. *Hit in the face by another ball, what a surprise!* Normal teens don’t need to have a free pass to the guidance counselor because they are anxious. *May I please be excused? I am having a slightly major freak out.* Teenagers normally want to date before they reach the age of sixteen. *Get in the car and chat with a real boy, like as in a human—does my horse count instead?* Normal kids watch who knows what. *After Jeopardy I think I will watch a documentary on the building of the Roman Empire followed by some cartoons.* A high attachment to mother is not normal for one of her age. *What apron strings? Oh you mean the ones that I am tightly gripping to?* Seeing so many different counselors is not normal. *Hi, my name is Dr. Jones..., Yeah, Yeah, just to get to the part where you fix me.* It is not normal to be referred to as an enigma by my counselor of two years. *Do you think you could have told me this like, umm I don’t know, twenty-three months ago?* Obsessive behavior over certain aspects of life, such as

clothing, food, and hand washing is not normal. *This shirt is .3333 cm too short and the fabric is scratchy. I can't eat this! It's been contaminated by garlic! Sterile hands are happy hands.* Being anxious over little things is not normal. *I have to go to the store and buy socks. Ok inhale for four, exhale for six and repeat.* Normal, normal, normal.

My life became one lacking in normalcy, so much so that I began to think of and view myself as not normal, basing my identity around this belief. I desired so much to be taught how to be normal and attain the status of normality. Where did one go to learn how to be normal? It appeared that everyone had attended Normality 101, but I had missed the memo. Or perhaps in heaven I had skipped the line to be endowed with normality. I strove to become normal, to cast off my peculiarities so I could join the ranks of normal. I felt insecure and ashamed of my quirks and foibles, trying to hide them from others and assume the guise of normalcy, but, like a leopard pretending to be a tiger, it never quite worked.

Days faded into weeks and years full of unsatisfactory answers from bystanders and professionals alike as to the reason for my abnormality. Frustration, patience, moments of small accomplishments, and continued seeking for understanding marked the passing of time as I resigned myself to live in a tunnel of a not-normal life. It cannot be said that I wasn't happy, because I was. Yet the puzzle of my life contained pieces that didn't quite fit where they were placed and there were several pieces missing. A marriage counselor deftly provided the missing piece. Autism. At the age of seventeen I found myself on the high end of the autistic spectrum. Turns out that I wasn't normal. Finally the missing pieces were filled in and the image of the puzzle of my life became clear. I received specialized assistance. True, some of it came too late as I had already formulated my own coping skills, but much of it was greatly appreciated on my part and even more so on the part my family. Struggles still came, and I was never completely comfortable with the label of my diagnosis, but it was more to work with than had previously been available. Nevertheless, a niggling belief that surely now normality was in my grasp still germinated below the surface.

Flopped out in my reserved spot on the pluffy couch, gooey doughnut in hand, and surrounded by three small dogs, I grabbed and aimed the TV remote, the screen blinking to life. Flicking through channels



I stumbled across SpongeBob Squarepants, a show I invariably loved despite the nonsense of it all. Taking a bite of doughnut I lackadaisically settled back to engage in some mindless entertainment before pursuing normal activities. The episode started out with the usual silly antics of SpongeBob driving sarcastic, intellectual Squidward to the brink causing him to accuse SpongeBob of not being normal. My ears perked up; there was that word that had haunted me since childhood. More attentive now, I sat up, doughnut forgotten in hand, as I watched the episode unfold. Upset by this accusation, SpongeBob procured a self-help guide entitled, *A Journey into Normality*. He followed the advice and over time became a dull version of his previously boisterous self. Physically he transformed into a round, smooth version with proportional facial features along with thick straight appendages; nothing like the wavy, porous, big eyed, nosed, and toothed sponge with wiggly arms and legs. No jelly-fishing, bubble-blowing, making of Krabby Patties, or any other nonsense. Just plain normality working behind a computer with absolutely no personality. Soon everyone around him, even Squidward, became annoyed with new normal SpongeBob, driving his attempt to regain what he had lost. With the aid of Patrick the starfish and some very strange activities it appeared as though he would return to his former bubbly self, but alas he was to be doomed to a normal life. That is until the astonishment of seeing normal Squidward shocked him back to his prior, not-normal self. Tropical music then ensued signaling the end of the episode.

Stunned, I sat back and took a thoughtful and final bite of doughnut, pondering what I had just seen as three eager-eyed dogs looked on. To be normal is to be boring; to be bubbly and quirky is to be amazing. Everything I had believed growing up was blown away in eleven minutes by a talking sponge. Did I want to resign myself to normality or embrace my quirkiness? I realized that, no I don't want to be normal; I want to be me, be Gemma. Quirky Gemma, shy Gemma, crazy Gemma, anxious Gemma (well to an extent), "I-don't-eat-that" Gemma, giggly Gemma, witty Gemma, geeky Gemma, just Gemma. Surrounded by highly disappointed dogs, I resigned that I would be Gemma, no more of this normal stuff.

Some six months have passed since that spongy day. Through a large mental shift I have come to embrace myself, all the quirks and insecurities, and I love it so! Just the other day my sister inquired as to

why I did something a certain quirky way. The explanation I provided caused her to laugh as she thought it was kind of silly. In retort I told her that if I didn't have these sorts of eccentricities then what would my family have to chuckle at? What would life be like without silly Gemma to cheer them up? Normal? No, I am not normal, but that is how I like it.

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**FOR DISCUSSION**

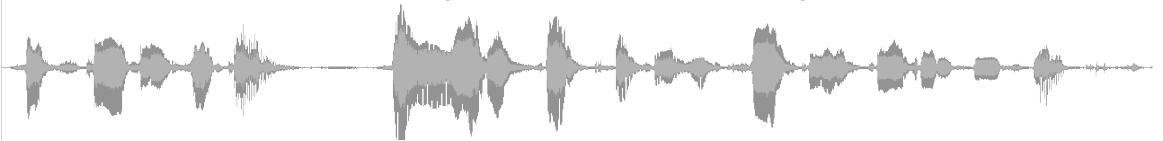
1. What qualifies as an effective essay? What characteristics does this essay possess that make it effective or ineffective?
2. Although this essay is not traditional, it has a clear purpose. How does Koontz focus and organize her essay without the traditional approach?
3. What audience is this essay addressed to? Is it made clear? If not, how would you make it more clear who the essay was directed to?
4. This paper has only one source cited. Because it is a personal narrative, is this an adequate number of citations? If not, what types of sources would contribute to the effectiveness of this narrative?
5. Often it is preferred in writing to use different words to explain a concept and to avoid repetition. Do you think the repetition of the word “normal” contributes to this essay or detracts from it? Does Koontz balance out the repetition? If so, provide examples of how she does this.
6. In the introductory paragraph, Koontz brings up the idea that normal is something that one is either born with, taught, or achieves. Do you think her essay supports one of these more than the others? Provide evidence from the essay to support your view.
7. Koontz’s realization and self-acceptance is largely due to a cartoon, however many say that cartoons are mindless entertainment. How would you use Koontz’s experience to counter that argument? Write a thesis statement for an essay arguing that cartoons are educational.

In his essay, Campbell argues that the hipster culture has caused a resurgence in smoking, evidenced by the popularity of Hookah and e-cigarettes. He discusses not only the negative implications of alternative smoking but also the larger truth that society is extremely impressionable to such trends. Campbell further notes that we should be wary of our own susceptibility.

His essay prompts the question: how susceptible are we really? Can that be a good thing, or is it always a bad thing?

## HIPSTERS AND HOOKAHS

how the latest subculture has caused  
a resurgence in smoking



Justin Campbell

The Hipster, the definition of originality, has become the opposite of just that: commonplace in society. This emerging counterculture trend has had a far reaching impact on society, especially on this generation's youth. Odd fashion trends, and a resurgence in vintage everything, among other things, both have their roots in the growth of the movement. As the new trend gains popularity, so too does the culture it embodies; one of rebellion, nonconformity, and expression of individuality. In just the recent past, there were the "greasers", and soon after, the "hippies," both of which symbolize a subculture of opposition to authority, embodied with a "don't care" attitude, and by that very nature, never far from drugs or cigarettes. As time has passed, the culture has developed into the current manifestation: the hipster. But this trendy and carefree movement has its drawbacks. In conjunction with this movement we have seen a nationwide reemergence of pop-

ular smoking. The smoker of today isn't the wealthy adult of the past, rather it is the popular and trendsetting young adult. As new methods of smoking are being developed, these naive individuals are being targeted; hookahs and E-cigs in particular have been the tools for this campaign. With new developments, the undesirable effects of smoking have been eliminated: fewer toxic effects, limited smoke, and reduced smell. Simultaneously, youth-specific features are being added to make these products more marketable: style features and unique flavors, to name a few. The hipster movement, the actualization of counterculture and rebellion, has instilled a careless attitude among the nations youth, an attitude which has fostered the reappearance of smoking in society and media, largely due to modern social pressures and youth-specific marketing through the use of E-cigs and Hookahs. By looking into the rise of the hipster movement and its significance, the social acceptance of electronic cigarettes particularly among young Americans, and how marketing for these products is directed specifically towards these individuals, we can see how the subcultures of rebellion have specifically stimulated their growth.

The "counterculture" image isn't a new one. In fact, most generations experienced some sort of rebellion against conventional society. These atypical, and often eccentric, groups all share the same fundamental idea: an expression of individuality—an individuality often demonstrated through art and self-expression. However, as these movements become more trendy and popular, that uniqueness is lost and is replaced with conformity; the antithesis of what was the crucial essence to begin with. As the "non-mainstream" hipster movement develops into an actual mainstream culture, so too does the image it promotes. However, there is one major caveat: the culture has changed to emphasize subscribing to a particular guise, an individual favoring looking and acting cool over the previously cool self-expression. Societal pressure to fit in, has overcome the original intention of standing out.

Today, the stereotypical hipster isn't an uncommon sight. The urban-outfitter clad, artsy, independent coffee-shop aficionado, never far from Indie music and mustaches, can be recognized from anywhere and is often seen validating this cool, careless attitude by smoking. Smoking conveys an important part of that image: a nonchalant disregard towards what is considered socially "acceptable." In fact, simply

the action of smoking is considered an act of rebellion to some. In the past, smoking was all over media. Actors, celebrities, and popular people in general were often found with cigarettes, at the time that was cool. Cigarettes were promoted throughout the public and became a contemporary cultural symbol.

Despite opposition, smoking is regaining popularity quickly, particularly among high school and college students. As more individuals become manifestations of this image, a greater number of people have begun smoking.

Recently, the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control, released the following findings: “From 2011-2012, electronic cigarette use doubled among middle and high school students... and an estimated 18.1% of all adults in the United States smoke cigarettes,” citing current social norms as a major cause of promoting smoking in young people (“Youth and Tobacco Use,” 2014). Typically, smoking is opposed heavily by the public. Anti-smoking ads run constantly on television, and in the recent past cigarette smokers have been ostracized by those who don’t participate. However, the new trend, electronic cigarettes, is perceived very differently. Because of the limited smoke, and absence of a foul smell, they are often viewed as acceptable in public places, even indoors. In addition, they possess far fewer negative effects on one’s health and, as a result, are thought of as a safe alternative to traditional cigarettes. It is no longer socially reprehensible to smoke around others, rather it has become a group social activity.

Another form of smoking, hookahs, in particular, emphasize this group mentality. A hookah is essentially an instrument for vaporizing flavored tobacco, and often has multiple stems attached, designed specifically for multiple individuals, making it a very social activity. Many “Hookah-bars” have sprung up in major cities, further showing this communal design. There are few social pressures greater than the desire to fit in. Seeking approval, many may try smoking just for the public validation. An article from the text, “Addictive Behaviors” by Adrienne Heinz, found that “Relative to cigarette smoking, hookah smoking was associated with less perceived harm and addiction potential and higher social approval” (Nov. 2013, Vol. 38 Issue 11, pg. 2751). The article emphasizes just how important and influential that social endorsement may be, citing it as a major cause of first-time smoking. However, peer pressure isn’t the only force at play causing

individuals to take up smoking; companies are now marketing specific products geared towards young individuals, in a way that highlights the popular subcultures.

Each product is geared towards a particular audience. Whether it is a new car or brand of cereal, marketers have a specific target, a distinct type of individual in sight. To be successful in business they must focus their ads to what appeals to that specific person. Today, the emerging market for electronic cigarettes is largely due to their popularity among young adults, and consequently, marketing is directed towards youth. The article, “‘Smoking Revolution’: a Content Analysis of Electronic Cigarette Retail Websites” by *the American Journal of Preventative Medicine* found that websites which sold electronic cigarettes had the following frequency of advertisements: “Youthful appeals included images or claims of modernity (73%); increased social status (44%); enhanced social activity (32%); romance (31%); and use by celebrities (22%).” In addition, “Eighty-eight percent stated that the product could be smoked anywhere and 71% mentioned using the product to circumvent clean air policies. Candy, fruit, and coffee flavors were offered on most sites” (395-403). In a subculture which holds great importance on appearance and image, social status and modernity are given great value. Numerous companies have taken advantage of this and, in doing so, directed their business towards hipsters.

The hipster ideology has had a large impact on our culture. Beyond the obvious trends in fashion and music, this movement has had subtle but influential effects on society. Smoking, the example shown, is one such result. However, it’s not the negative health effects or issues with legislation of smoking we should concern ourselves with, rather it is something far more grand.

The increase in smokers, in part due to a cultural image, shows us just how susceptible we are to trends and fads in media. Beyond gaining opinion and favor for what they promote, these movements have a profound effect on the mentality of the people involved. They change social norms, and consequently, alter the individual’s preferences and frame of mind. In our recent past, smoking was seen as a distasteful and disagreeable thing largely because of progress made by TheTruth.com and other media sources. However, as smoking regains its popularity, one can notice a different opinion among the public.

With little research these alternative methods of smoking, electronic cigarettes and hookah are not only viewed as safe, but acceptable and commonplace. They are often used indoors and around others, with little opposition or criticism. As a whole, we are susceptible to what media and society promotes for they have a constant inescapable influence on our lives. Whether it's smoking or funny mustaches, we should be aware of what the trends in our culture advocate because we are impressionable towards these ideas.

The fast-growing hipster movement has had lasting effects beyond what is apparent on the surface. The original tenet of individuality has dissolved into conformity alongside the movement's growing popularity. It has since been replaced by an image, a distinct persona, a facade that all must subscribe to. As a result, societal pressure to stay with the trend, to personify that very image, has increased. This has evolved to form a group mentality towards what is perceived to be "cool and contemporary". With new alternative forms of smoking, such as electronic cigarettes and hookahs, gaining popularity and favor among the public, the hipster subculture embraces the trend as well. Consequently, more individuals are exposed to smoking. Furthermore, beyond social influence, companies are tailoring their products to appeal to this particular subculture, placing a specific aim on young adults with a high interest in social status and modernity, things which the hipster movement embodies. Beyond showing recent increases in smoking, these findings convey an important message: social trends have a high influence on our current opinions and preferences. They establish a format upon which we decide what is acceptable—a powerful effect which is not to be taken lightly. Ultimately, whether it's an eccentric new fad, an unfamiliar bizarre ideology, or anything between, we should pay attention to the subcultures around us because they have an effect far greater than what is obvious.



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## FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does Campbell provide points of argument from both sides to strengthen the stance being taken in his essay? Provide specific examples. How does this contribute to an argument? When would it be unnecessary?
2. Does Campbell use credible sources and arguments? How do you know? Provide textual examples.
3. Read through the essay and find a strong, solid paragraph. What elements of the paragraph make it strong in comparison to some others that may be weaker? How does organization of ideas contribute to an argument?
4. Does Campbell have a clear thesis and transition sentences to guide you through his essay? Provide specific examples of where this is done well and where it could be improved.
5. There are several places throughout this essay where dashes and colons are used within sentences. These punctuation marks are often tricky to use appropriately. Evaluate if the author has used these punctuations correctly. If not, discuss what punctuation might have been better to use in the place of the dashes and colons.



# RESOURCES INDEX

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*As you consider employing different rhetorical tools, here are essays you may consider studying as models. Naturally, you may find favorites that are not listed under every tool they employ, but consider these a starting point as you develop and hone your skills.*

## Audience Awareness

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Keep Calm and Stress On

What the [Censored]?!?

Curfews

The War Against Mormons

Don't Nerf the Zombies

## Conclusion

---

Social Trust: A Touchy Subject

Print Is Not Dead

The Power of Willpower

Not Normal

## Critical Thinking

---

Binding Our Feet the American Way

The War Against Mormons

Come On! Five More Minutes!

Enough about You, Let's Talk about Me!

## Diction

---

Binding Our Feet the American Way

Not Normal

Print Is Not Dead

## Evidence

---

Social Trust: A Touchy Subject

The World Cup in Qatar

Feds vs. Utah

Keep Calm and Stress On

Don't Nerf the Zombies

## Grammar

---

The World Cup in Qatar

Let the Players Play

Print Is Not Dead

## Paragraph Unity & Development

---

Social Trust: A Touchy Subject

Come On! Five More Minutes!

Print Is Not Dead

Binding Our Feet the American Way

## Parenthetical Citation

---

The World Cup in Qatar

Come On! Five More Minutes!

The Power of Willpower

## Persuasiveness

---

Enough about You, Let's Talk about Me!

Social Trust

Binding Our Feet the American Way

The War Against Mormons

Not Normal

Purpose

Tested and True  
Curfews  
Enough about You, Let's Talk about Me!  
Don't Nerf the Zombies  
Not Normal

Rogierian

Let the Players Play  
The War Against Mormons  
Don't Nerf the Zombies

Sentences

What the [Censored]?!?  
Not Normal  
The Power of Willpower

Source Credibility

Keep Calm and Stress On  
Tested and True  
Curfews  
Hipsters and Hookahs

Source Information

The Power of Willpower  
The World Cup in Qatar  
Feds vs. Utah  
Social Trust

Source Integration

The Power of Willpower  
The World Cup in Qatar  
The War Against Mormons

Structure

The World Cup in Qatar  
What the [Censored]?!  
The War Against Mormons

Thesis Clarity

Tested and True  
Let the Players Play  
Not Normal  
Hipsters and Hookahs  
Curfews

Thesis Quality

Print Is Not Dead  
Let the Players Play  
Binding Our Feet the American Way  
Keep Calm and Stress On

Title & Intro Paragraphs

The World Cup in Qatar  
Binding Our Feet the American Way  
Don't Nerf the Zombies  
The War Against Mormons

Transitions

Social Trust  
Tested and True  
Print Is Not Dead  
Don't Nerf the Zombies

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The Power of Willpower  
Hipsters and Hookahs  
Keep Calm and Stress On  
Enough about You, Let's Talk about Me!

# VOICES OF USU

The student writing featured in this anthology was chosen from among the best work produced by students enrolled in English 2010, a course in persuasive research writing. Many of these authors were also featured presenters at USU's Citizen Scholar Conference.

Voices of USU celebrates excellence in writing by providing students of all backgrounds and disciplines the opportunity to have their work published as undergraduates. The writing in this anthology covers a variety of topics and interests, capturing the unique 'voices' of USU.



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