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## Voices of USU: A Publication of the Citizen Scholar Conference, 2016

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# Voices of USU

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a publication of the Citizen Scholar Conference

edited by Bonnie Moore and John Engler

# VOICES OF USU:

a publication of the  
Citizen Scholar Conference

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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 [csconf.usu@gmail.com](mailto:csconf.usu@gmail.com).

Regards,

Bonnie Moore  
John Engler

## BACKGROUND

America has a “current [ex-convict] re-offense rate of 76.6%” (qtd. in “You Raise Them, We’ll Cage Them”), a staggering number when compared to the 20% re-offense rate of ex-convicts in Norway. In her essay, “You Raise Them, We’ll Cage Them: America’s Prison Epidemic,” Katee Hansen proposes that the U.S. implement a restorative justice program, like the one in Norway, in an attempt to “lower prison overcrowding and recidivism” (1). By addressing the current issues of overcrowding and re-offending in America’s prison system, Hansen hopes to convince the American legal authorities to implement a more “rehabilitation friendly style of justice” (10).

## KATEE HANSEN



Katee Hansen is from Smithfield, Utah. She graduated with Honors from Sky View High School and is currently a sophomore at Utah State. She is a Family Consumer and Human Development major with an emphasis in Family Finance. In her spare time, Katee enjoys being with family and friends, reading, camping, and cooking. She loves music, and particular-

ly enjoys attending concerts. She also loves to travel, meet new people, and explore new places. Katee feels that one of the best things about college is that there is always something new to learn, and she is eager to seize every new opportunity that becomes available to her.



# YOU RAISE THEM, WE'LL CAGE THEM: AMERICA'S PRISON EPIDEMIC

Katee Hansen

Norway has one of the lowest incarceration rates in the world. On top of that, the re-offense rate of ex-convicts is 20 percent, shockingly low compared to America's current re-offense rate of 76.6 percent (Sterbenz). At Bastøy, a prison island several miles off the coast of Norway, the re-offense rate is just 16 percent, the lowest in all of Europe (Erwin). These criminals are not just minor-offense convicts; many are serving time for assault and murder. So how does Norway achieve their record low numbers of repeat offenders? That answer is easy, something the country calls "restorative justice." This particular brand of justice aims to fix the damage caused by a life of crime by rehabilitating the inmates and providing them with the tools for a successful life on the outside. Implementing restorative justice programs into the United States prison system would lower prison overcrowding and recidivism (re-offending) and bring more peace, not only inside the prisons, but also to the victims and survivors of criminal acts.

America's prison systems have reached overcrowding of epidemic proportions. This country holds more than 2.4 million people

"Norway is doing something right in the criminal justice department. Few people go to prison and fewer go back."

in a conglomeration of state, federal, and military prisons, juvenile correctional facilities, and local jails. That number, 2.4 million people, crowns America the winner with the highest incarceration rate in the world (Williams). Is that something to be proud of? Not by a long shot. This is where the principles of restorative justice come in with

## 8 *Hansen*

plans for cognitive restructuring, behavioral therapy, and the opportunity for inmates to learn the skills to be a constructive and contributing member of society. Over time, this will lead to a decrease in crime, incarceration, and recidivism rates. For example, just take another look at Norway. After more than three decades of implementing restorative justice programs in their prison systems, Norway boasts one of the lowest incarceration rates in the world: 75 per 100,000 people compared to 707 people in the United States. Clearly, Norway is doing something right in the criminal justice department. Few people go to prison, and even fewer go back. Less than one quarter of convicts are re-arrested within five years in Norway. In the United States prison system, this number is more than three-quarters—76.6 percent of criminals will be arrested and convicted again within five years of their release (Gilligan). If you ask me, this number is way too high. With more than 75 percent of released criminals coming back into the system within a few years, plus all the new offenders on top of that, it's no wonder we are suffering from congested and overflowing prisons!

The key to solving the overcrowding problem lies in solving the problem of recidivism; we can lower the rates of people coming back. If there was a way to help career criminals want to change and aid them in starting down the path to a better life, our incarceration rates would decrease. The good news is that there is a way to do this: cognitive and behavioral rehabilitation. An interesting study into recidivism, done by the US Department of Justice, shows that facilities with strict incarceration practices increase offender recidivism, while those with cognitive and behavioral rehabilitation programs are the most effective way to keep criminals from coming back for more (Sternbenz). So rather than harsh treatment, we need to provide ways for the inmates to choose to change and teach them skills that will help them not to reoffend. Only then can we start to lower the overall incarceration and relapse rates of our prisoners.

In terms of recidivism, America is doing everything wrong. Three of every four released inmates are back in the system only a few

years later. This is because the goal of our very single-minded justice system is punishment. Somehow our prisons have come to the conclusion that if you punish the inmates hard enough, they won't come back. If you make their prison stay as uncomfortable and demeaning as possible, it will somehow make them change their criminal ways (Hooley). This just isn't true. Incarceration without rehabilitation teaches them nothing and prepares them for nothing more than the same criminal life they have been living.

James Gilligan, a professor of psychiatry, has devoted his life to solving this problem. He states: "The only rational purpose for a

This sort of prison helps the convicts to 'practice' for life on the outside by giving them responsibilities and respect.

prison is to restrain those who are violent, while we help them to change their behavior from that pattern to one that is nonviolent and even constructive, so that they can return to the community" (Gilligan). Where in this statement does he tell us to make their stay unpleasant? Where does he promise lower crime and recidivism rates if we belittle and debase our inmates?

The fact of the matter is that hard punishment without anything else does next to nothing in persuading criminals to change.

Let's reflect on an age-old parenting secret: the more severely a child is punished, the more violent they become; so teach by love, not anger. Yes, this is very effective with children, but surprise! It is just as effective with adults. If you treat them like criminals, they will behave like criminals. If you treat them as adults that are deserving of responsibility and provide them with the skills to live a productive and constructive life, they will rise to the challenge. This is the goal of rehabilitation.

## 10 *Hansen*

A look at the groundbreaking Norwegian prison, Bastoy, confirms this. On Bastoy, home to 115 criminals, inmates live in a sort of self-contained city. They each have their own room in small, six person bungalows. Each person uses a small food allowance to purchase and prepare two meals a day, with the third being served in a group setting. The inmates all have jobs to do, starting at 8:30 a.m., and are allowed time to relax at the end of the work day. Bastoy provides workshops and vocational training for the inmates to help provide them with useful skills (Erwin). This sort of prison helps the convicts to “practice” for life on the outside by giving them responsibilities and respect. By giving them a sense of purpose, Bastoy and prisons like it, are giving inmates the ability to choose a better life, and in the process are actually lowering the country’s crime and prison reentry rates. This healthy approach to justice, with an eye aimed to fixing the problem, not just containing it, has proven much more effective than America’s current “punishment over rehabilitation” style.

Norway’s approach to incarceration aligns with the five goals a prison should have. According to criminologist Bob Cameron, prisons should be working toward five main things: retribution, incapacitation, deterrence, restoration, and rehabilitation (Sterbenz). In other words, punish the criminal for the crime, prevent them from committing other crimes, and teach them how to be better. The problem in America is that we base our prison stays on revenge first, and rehabilitation later, if at all. Somehow, as a country, we think that this revenge philosophy will give peace of mind to those who have been victimized.

We’ve all heard the age old adage “an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind,” and that’s exactly where America is headed. We use prison solely as punishment, as retribution for the crimes committed, but without the restoration and rehabilitation part, we aren’t really accomplishing anything. Sure, putting a criminal behind bars does a little to satisfy the needs of victims for justice, but there are other things we could be doing, in addition to prison time, that are more effective and prove better overall for both criminal and victim.

One groundbreaking new program, known as the Insight Prison Project (IPP), is aiming to prove that retribution and rehabilitation can go hand in hand. Jill Suttie spent time observing the IPP and came to the conclusion that there could be nothing more effective for prisoner rehabilitation than the opportunity to build bridges and form bonds with survivors of crimes similar to those they previously committed. The IPP brings inmates and survivors together in something called victim-offender mediation to help heal the damage that has been caused.

Dionne Wilson, widow of a murdered cop, can attest to the effectiveness of these programs on both herself, as a survivor, and on the inmate. Wilson regularly volunteers in this program, saying, “when you’re sitting across from a person who has pulled the trigger and ended another person’s life, and you are telling them about your child attending their father’s funeral, you see the impact on that man. That helps to heal me” (Suttie). With her husband’s killer behind bars, Dionne does feel a bit of peace, but through the efforts of programs such as this, she feels more at ease, knowing that there is help for his killer, knowing that there is a chance he can change for the better. That is the benefit of the IPP and programs like it. It helps not only the inmate, but also victims, to accept the past and to move on.

On the other side of the table sits Robert Frye, a man on year 26 of a 25 years-to-life sentence for armed robbery with homicide. He decided to participate in this Victim Offender Education Group (VOEG) after taking a trial meditation course offered at the San Quentin prison and felt interested in the introspective, self-confrontative idea of the project. It helped him, and many of his fellow inmates, to cope with and come to terms with the damage that they had done (Suttie). Just as it helped Dionne Wilson, a victim, this program has helped Frye, a perpetrator, and countless other inmates, to want to change and to start down a better path in their lives.

VOEG programs like the IPP put inmates through a year-

## 12 *Hansen*

long program to help them learn to open up to and trust one another, and to take responsibility for the harm they have caused. They look at crime's impact on the community, not just on the victims but on everyone around them as well. They participate in empathy training, anger and stress management, and emotional regulation. After completing this program, Frye was released, and still helps to facilitate in the mediation process. "I've seen guys that were coming with almost no insight into themselves... , but being able to share their story of victimization with the direct survivors of a similar crime... , you just see the positive change that happens, and it's reciprocal" (Suttie).

Studies into restorative justice projects like VOEG show that these programs are effective at not only lowering recidivism, but also in an increase of victim/survivor satisfaction. In other words, they help the inmates to become better people, and they also give more peace of mind to victims than the traditional incarceration approach. This program at San Quentin Federal Prison is one of the only restorative justice programs being readily implemented in our country, but seeing the progress it has made in this one facility is astounding, prompting the question, "why are we not doing this kind of thing more often?"

The real answer to the question of why we don't have more programs like this is money. Yes, a dramatic shift from our current prison system to ones like Bastoy and Halden would be expensive. If we are looking solely at cost efficiency, a type of restorative justice that is seeing great success in places like Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia may be exactly where the United States can start its rehabilitation journey. This six-part program is based off of basic human needs and the ability to change, and would not have near the dramatic cost of many rehabilitation programs. Though some of the steps may seem counter-intuitive to the purpose of incarceration, they align with the aforementioned five goals of a prison system.

This program starts off with a risk/needs assessment to determine the chance of reoffending and to assess the inmate's crimino-

genic needs. Criminogenic needs are the components of an offender's life that give to their criminal acts but aren't considered physiological needs. These are things like having a drug/alcohol abuse problem, a lack of self-control, or an antisocial peer group. These are elements that are not generally considered basic needs, but nonetheless contribute to a person's criminality. Once they have been assessed, the best course of treatment can then be decided. Knowing what will work best for each inmate is the key to helping them overcome their criminal tendencies.

The second step is to identify individual motivators, things that are specific to the person being helped. Some people may be intrinsically motivated and driven by a power within themselves. Most people that end up in our prisons are not going to be intrinsically motivated, but rather, extrinsically motivated. Offering them some form of motivation for good behavior and for making progress toward their goals is one of the most important steps in this process because it gives them something to look forward to and to work toward. They need to rely on things such as increased yard time or extra privileges to motivate them. This would be a relatively easy and inexpensive way to prompt personal change in the inmates, warranting only a few extra guard shifts to cover the additional yard time, or a small budget increase to cover the expense of external rewards.

Then we target an appropriate form of intervention. This means figuring out what will work for that specific person. While meditation might work for one person, another might turn to religion to help change their actions. It does more harm than good to put them in a treatment that they don't need, so this is very specific to the individual. If they have a drug abuse problem, put them in a rehabilitation group to help break that dependency. If they are prone to violent outbursts, help them channel and control their anger through meditation and anger management. Find what they need help with and allow them access to that help. Implementing this step would be more costly up front, with a need for trained professionals to lead these groups

and perhaps even individual counseling for some inmates. However, when we compare the initial medical costs for those with a drug habit to housing for extended/life term prisoners, the cost is very little.

Following intervention, we have the fourth step: to “rewire the brain.” Using cognitive and behavioral shaping strategies can be successful when skills are not only taught but are repeatedly practiced, ingraining them in the brain. This helps to break bad habits through repetition of a new, better one. Practice might not make perfect, but it does indeed make permanent, so through reiteration of better habits, the brain can form new neural pathways and be trained away from the ingrained criminal tendencies. This does, however require repetition. This step takes dedication both on the part of the inmate, who hopefully at this point has found a desire to change, but also on the part of the guards, warden, and whoever else is aiding in the rehabilitation process.

Step five is to increase positive reinforcement. While repeated punishments quickly become meaningless, the brain responds quickly and powerfully to positive reinforcement. For every one punishment, there should be four rewards. For an inmate, a reward can be as simple as a vocal appreciation of good behavior, or may be paired with the motivators from step two. The best option for implementation of this step is to use oral approval with an added benefit, such as extra yard time. Then the prisoner can learn to associate the good deed with not only good things, but also approval from others. This can help solidify the development of morals in inmates who may not have been raised to know right from wrong.

All of these steps must be followed up by the sixth and final step in the process: ongoing support upon the inmate’s release. This can take the form of a support group, religion, or even participation in this same program with other inmates upon release (Hooley). They need to keep up the habits that they have formed and continue to make good choices when they are living on their own again and not



within the confines of a prison. The best way to do this is to establish a system of support on the outside. These six steps, working with one another, have been proven successful at rehabilitating inmates and giving them a desire to live a healthy and constructive life upon completion of their sentence. Implementing this process would be relatively easy, cost efficient, and take moderately little time, all while putting in motion a program to limit recidivism and help criminals to get out and stay out. Really, when we weigh the benefits of these types of programs against the cost, it's not hard to see that perhaps spending a little bit up front to save a lot in the future is more than worth it.

As simple as the steps above are, the United States is still hesitant to implement them, mostly due to the fear of a bad reaction among civilians. With more prisons in America than universities, using Norway as an example may be a bit extreme, especially for the conservative side of the table. I'll admit letting prisoners all but roam free doesn't sit well with most people, but everyone can tell that our current prison situation isn't the best option either. Through incorporation of programs like VOEG's Insight Prison Project at San Quentin, meditation and mediation groups, victim outreach initiatives, and the simple six-step program, we can lower re-offense and re-entry rates in our prisons, and bring greater peace of mind and closure to victims and their families. These programs have been proven to work in countries around the world, so why not the United States? Why are we lagging behind in making our justice system a more humane and constructive place? Isn't it in everyone's best interest to work toward a lower recidivism rate, to help these criminals see the error of their ways and actually want to change? These are questions that I know the answer to and readers will have to decide for themselves. Whether we accept the ideas of restorative justice or not, something has to change because our current system is just not covering it anymore.

“People think there are circumstances where one may deal with human beings without love, but no such circumstances ever exist. Human beings cannot be handled without love. It

cannot be otherwise, because mutual love is the fundamental law of human life” (Tolstoy, 450). Our current criminal justice practices removing love and replacing it with punishment, prompting such phrases as “hardened criminal” to describe those who exit our justice system. When we appeal to our criminals with love and respect, we teach them that they are capable of leading productive lives. By giving them the means to do so while in prison, whether that be with tangible skills or through the process of cognitive and behavioral restructuring, we give them the confidence to make those same choices upon release and to become constructive and committed members of their communities. I am not proposing that we do away with prisons and give all of our criminals a life of luxury; I just ask that we shift to a more rehabilitation-friendly style of justice. Implementing restorative justice ideals into our prisons, on whatever scale, is proven to not only reduce recidivists, but also to bring satisfaction to the survivors of crimes committed. Let’s build a system of love and respect, not just punishment and rejection.

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways is this essay persuasive? What evidence did you feel was the most compelling to prove the point of the author?
2. What does Hansen say the “key to solving overcrowding” is? What reasons does she give as to why this is the key?
3. Hansen states that “in terms of recidivism, America is doing everything wrong.” Why does she say this? Provide examples from the essay.
4. What is the Insight Prison Project to which Hansen refers, and what is its purpose? Does this provide an adequate solution to the initial problem Hansen poses? Why or why not?
5. Evaluate Hansen’s conclusion to this essay. Where does she make reference to her thesis in this paragraph? How does she do at bringing her argument full circle and posing a solution?

## BACKGROUND

In this Rogerian style essay, Kaiden Billings requests that Iowa State Senator, Jerry Behn sponsor a bill giving voters in Iowa an equal voice in politics. With his use of fascinating statistics and specific facts, Billings demonstrates that the public vote is not as impactful as it appears to be on the surface. He proposes a bill similar to the American Anti Corruption Act that he feels will regulate the vote and “puts the power of campaign financing in the hands of the voters” (3).

By suggesting that the Anti American Corruption Act be molded to fit a state level, Billings hopes to restore Iowa’s government “to a government by the people, for the people and of the people” (qtd. In “Letter to Senator Behn”).

## KAIDEN BILLINGS



Kaiden Billings is from Ames, Iowa. In his spare time he enjoys a variety of outdoor activities such as trail running, hiking, snowboarding, and kayaking. He also enjoys watching superhero movies, and proudly claims the title of Star Wars nerd.

Kaiden is double majoring in Economics and International Business. He returns as a Junior to Utah State in Fall 2016.

# LETTER TO SENATOR BEHN

Kaiden Billings

Senator Jerry Behn,

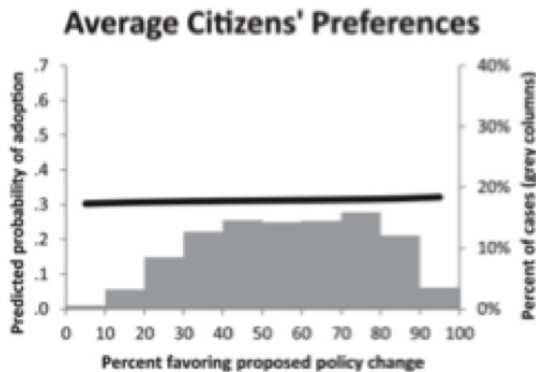
Greetings from one of your constituents! My name is Kaiden Billings, and I'm from Ames, Iowa. I appreciate you taking the time to consider my request. I, like you, am a small town Iowa boy who cares about this country. I wish every politician could learn the values, like honesty and integrity, taught in families' homes all around Iowa. I've looked at your work in the Iowa legislature, and I appreciate your efforts to keep our state's budget balanced, as well as your work on the ethics committee. It is because of these things that I'd like you to consider a movement that will prove to be the antidote for the poisonous corruption seeping into our government.

When the founding fathers of our great nation declared our independence from Great Britain, they stated the following: "governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed" (US 1776). These days, "the consent of the governed" appears to be of less concern to our representatives than campaign funds from special interest groups. Action must be taken to reverse this trend and return the power to us, the people.

These special interest groups are working hard to influence our lawmakers. Over the last 15 years, the amount of money raised per election cycle by PACs has quintupled, going from 340 million dollars in 1990 to 1.7 billion in 2014 ("Political"). Candidates benefited directly from 469.9 million of those special interest dollars ("Political"). The absurd amount of money being raised to influence politics negatively affects what the average American thinks of Washington. A Pew Research Center poll showed that public trust in our government has been falling since the early 2000's. Currently, only 24% of people

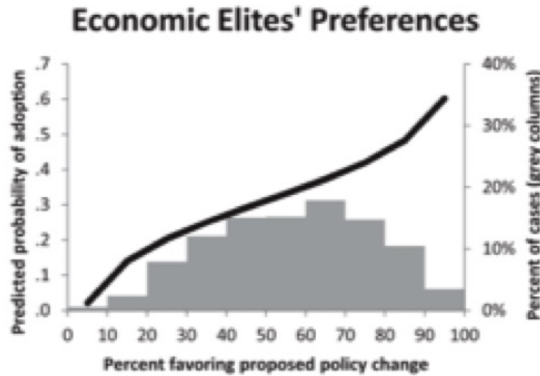
say they trust the federal government (“Public Trust”). It’s no wonder people feel their voices aren’t heard among the multi-million dollar organizations competing for a say on Capitol Hill. There is no way a grassroots movement supported by middle class people can keep up with the pocketbooks of major special interest groups.

To illustrate this point, Princeton University went through 20 years of voting data and public opinion polls to find out if the laws passed in Congress reflect what people support. Part of their findings are shown in the image to the right. In an ideal republic, the chances of a bill becoming a law should reflect its public support. However, as you can see, the line representing the relationship between public support of an issue and the likelihood of its becoming policy is almost flat. If almost no one supports a policy change, it has a 30% chance of becoming a law. On the other hand, if almost everyone supports a policy change, it still has about a 30% chance of becoming a law. It is interesting to note that the people in the top 10 percent of the income scale appear to have considerable influence in policy-making. Their representation is much closer to what an ideal republic should be. This means our Congress is voting in favor of only 10 percent of the population. The researchers at Princeton concluded that, “the preferences of the average American appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy” (Gilens and Page). One of the mottos of the American Revolution was “No taxation without representation.” Are we arriving at a



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similar point now? Something must be done to revolutionize the way the American people are represented.



There have been efforts to change the balance of influence in politics. Actions like the Lobbying Disclosure Act and the Honest Government and Open Leadership Act have taken steps to limit quid pro quo agreements between legislators and special interests. Although these laws have improved disclosure and limited the lobbyist wine-and-dine tactics, they do not get to the heart of the problem. Sweeping reforms must be made to put a stop to the corruption in our government. The solution is to pass the American Anti Corruption Act (AACA). This act puts a stop to legalized political bribery, ends secret money, and puts the power of campaign financing into the hands of the voters. Mr. Behn, I request that you sponsor a bill similar to the American Anti Corruption Act in Iowa. This act has been drafted by some of the great minds of anti-corruption reform. The lead author of this bill is former chair of the Federal Elections Commission, Trevor Potter. The think tank for this bill also includes corrupted lobbyist turned reformer, Jack Abramoff, and Harvard Law professor and campaign finance reform guru, Lawrence Lessig. Let me introduce the main parts of the act.

The first part of the bill aims to end political bribery. It prohibits members of Congress from receiving funds from interests



they regulate. It doesn't make sense for a lawmaker to participate in policymaking on issues connected with organizations that contribute financially to his / her campaign. Members would not be able to take political action that could benefit any group who has contributed more than \$50,000 to their campaign. This law also prohibits lobbyists from contributing money to, or fundraising for, candidates. Lobbyists form an important part of the lawmaking process. They provide ideas for lawmakers and represent the private sector in the lawmaking process. Even so, their financial contributions to campaigns should be limited. Once dollar bills are added to the equation, lawmaking decisions are made based on monetary interests instead of the merits of an issue. Not everyone agrees that campaign contributions translate to changing policy. However, in an interview with Bertram J. Levine for his book *The Art of Lobbying*, a congressman said "it is indisputable for a certain number of members—probably by far and away the majority of members—money translates into access. In some instances, it will get you more than access. It will get you some sort of support. The members actually do something for you" (Levine 75). Taking money out of the equation can assure average citizens that our laws will be made based on their merits and not which big-money donors support them.

Another problem addressed by this act is the revolving door between Capitol Hill and K Street. Under the current laws, a lawmaker can become a lobbyist immediately after leaving office. There are claims that the revolving door encourages people with important political experience to enter the lobbying world. It also provides employment for members who leave Congress and still need a job. However, the infamous Jack Abramoff pointed to the revolving door as one of his most effective tools for gaining influence in a congressman's office. Speaking of a senior member of a congressional staff he said, "his paycheck may have been signed by Congress, but he was already working for me, influencing his office for my client's best interest. It was a perfect and perfectly corrupt arrangement. Even

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though, no rules had been broken, at least not yet” (“Lawrence Lessig Interviews”). This is *not* what we want happening on Capitol Hill. The AACA prohibits members of Congress and their staffers from lobbying activities for five years after leaving Congress. It also prohibits members of Congress from arranging post-congressional employment while they are in office.

In another interview with Bertram Levine, one congressman said, “your book may not be about campaign money, but you have to at least acknowledge that it is almost always the 800-pound gorilla in the room” (68). So how do we take down the 800 pound gorilla? The AACA introduces a revolutionary way to finance campaigns. Each registered voter will receive a \$100 tax rebate which they can donate to any qualified candidate or PAC of their choice. Candidates qualify for these contributions if their campaign is funded exclusively by tax rebate contributions and donations of \$500 or less from any individual

These sweeping reforms will restore trust in our government, keeping special interest pocketbooks out of politics and will take us back to the government envisioned by our Founding Fathers when they declared our independence.

or a PAC that is also funded by tax rebates. This provision effectively takes special interests out of campaign financing and moves the focus to the individual voters. With this system, the candidates who go to office will truly be elected by the people and will, in turn, work for the people. This provision would also create more civically minded voters.

These tax rebate donations will create a sense of responsibility in voters to investigate more deeply the candidates as they consider to whom they will donate.

Disclosure is also greatly increased by this act. The act requires members of Congress to disclose all fundraising activities while Congress is in session and prohibits them from fundraising during congressional work hours. It also expands the definition of a

lobbyist. There are currently a lot of loopholes for people who work for lobbying firms but who are not the ones working directly with Congress. The new definition includes everyone who lobbies or organizes, leads, or advises lobbying. This forces anyone who helps in the lobbying process to let us know what they're doing. It also calls for increasing the enforcement of existing disclosure laws.

This movement is already gaining momentum. A version of this bill was passed in Tallahassee, Florida with support from a coalition of people from all walks of political life. That is the beauty of this movement. It is a grassroots effort that gets people together at the local level to make a difference in politics. I can personally attest to this. I had never felt like I could make a difference in politics until I started researching this act. That's why I joined the movement. I want to make my voice heard! The next step is to take this movement from local city elections to the state level. Representatives elected under the act will start to fill the seats of the House and Senate in Washington and it will eventually become federal law. We will build a Congress that is truly elected by and works for the people. Mr. Behn, I ask you to sponsor this bill and introduce it in the ethics committee of the Iowa State Legislature.

The key to this bill is its strong, sweeping reforms. Special interest groups will try to water down this bill as they have with others. We cannot allow the loopholes that perforate other anti-corruption laws to riddle this one. Public support for the bill is growing daily, which should help motivate lawmakers to adopt it. Special interests can still have their day but they'll just have to sort out how to argue the merits of their stance instead of its retail value. Some legislators may be worried about losing their seats in Congress. However, if they are not representing what the public wants, then it is time for someone else to take their place.

The American Anti-Corruption Act is the key to restoring our republic to a "government of the people, by the people and for

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the people” (The Gettysburg Address). These sweeping reforms will restore trust in our government, keep special interest pocketbooks out of politics, and will take us back to the government envisioned by our Founding Fathers when they declared our independence. So, Mr. Behn, I ask: Will you champion the movement to end government corruption in the state of Iowa?

Sincerely,

Kaiden Billings

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. Evaluate the topic of this Persuasive Research Essay. What are some things that make this a good topic choice? Is there any reason you wouldn't choose this particular topic for your own PRE?
2. This essay is set up in a Rogerian letter format. Discuss some of the elements of a good Rogerian Argument, and identify whether or not those elements exist in this essay. Explain your reasoning using a specific example from the essay.
3. What is the main point Billings is trying to make in this essay? Find an example in the essay to support your claim.
4. Consider Billings' use of graphs to emphasize some of the statistics he references. Do you think this is a helpful tool in supporting his argument? Why or why not? Refer to a specific point in the essay where a graph is used.
5. How does Billings do at stating what he wants from Senator Behn? Do you feel that he presents his request at an appropriate point in the essay? Explain using textual evidence.
6. By the end of the essay, do you think that Billings achieved his overall goal for the paper? Why or why not? Provide specific examples from the text to support your reasoning.

## BACKGROUND

Conflict can be a rather uncomfortable thing to deal with, and much of the time it seems that people simply choose not to deal with it at all. In her essay, Jamie Ryser hopes to convince her readers that “conflict is as normal as breathing” (1), and it can be a healthy part of human interaction if only dealt with properly. She explains the definition of conflict, the different ways of coping with it, and invites readers to “see conflict through different eyes” (1).

Coming to the conclusion of what she sees as the best coping mechanism, Ryser hopes that she can convince readers to love conflict as much as she does (8).

## JAMIE RYSER



Jamie was born and raised in South Jordan, Utah. She is currently a junior at Utah State, with a major in Communications and a minor in American Sign Language and Spanish. In Jamie’s spare time she sings, writes poetry, longboards, and does various outdoor activities. She is also very passionate about understanding people, learning why people are the way

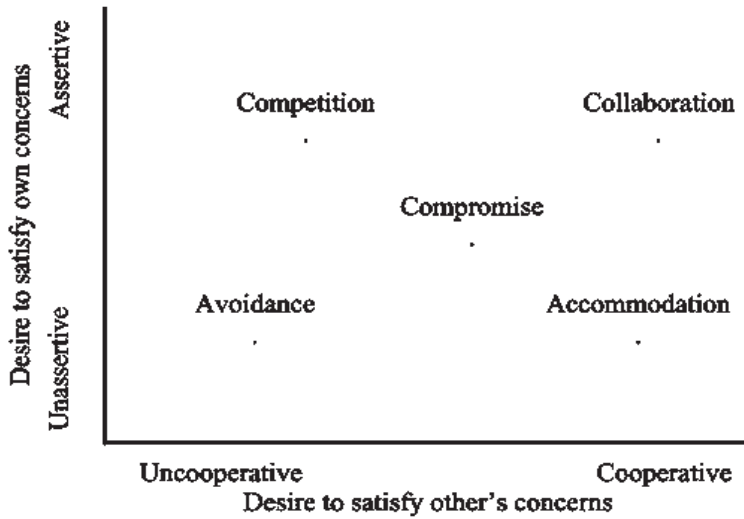
they are, and studying their different communication styles. She enjoys life, and strives to live each day to its fullest!

# I LOVE CONFLICT! ... SAID NO ONE EVER

Jamie Ryser

Conflict is as normal as breathing, but knowing how to approach conflict in order to obtain the best outcome doesn't come quite so easily. Have you ever caught yourself in the seemingly same conflict every time it arises? I know I have! That is because we are human and we like routines; we like what is comfortable and easy. The same applies to how we approach conflict when among one another. We use patterns, but in order to change the outcome of our actions we need to: 1) recognize what our patterns are, and 2) learn how to shift our mindset. The five main ways people handle conflict include: accommodating, competing, avoiding, compromising, and collaborating. Of course, that information can be found in any Interpersonal Conflict textbook, so I want to expand past the rote textbook answers in order to help you see conflict through different eyes. Allow this to be personal because the goal can be easily reached if you allow yourself to recognize that you can strengthen your relationships by changing your patterns.

Before trying to understand the different conflict styles, first you need to understand what conflict *is*. "Conflict occurs when parties have the perception of incompatible goals, regardless of the style they choose to use in responding to this perception" (Hocker and Wilmot 151). In simpler terms, being in conflict isn't just yelling or being violent. Conflict is when people are unable to successfully work together, or through, a particular issue. "In interpersonal conflicts, people react as though there are genuinely different goals, there is not enough of some resource, and the other person actually is getting in the way of something prized by the perceiver" (Hocker and Wilmot 13). People usually argue based on preference, and not the actual principle. *Do we have the same goal in mind and just a different way of achieving that goal?* Now that we know what conflict actually means, let's go ahead



Above is a diagram, created by Thomas and Kilmann, which displays the different conflict styles. As you can see, there are five main approaches to conflict. The Collaboration approach is where one has a high desire to satisfy other's needs as well as their own needs. This is the most important approach to conflict, and I hope that by the end of this essay you can determine your own patterns and are able to change them in a way that allows you to have stronger and more rewarding

relationships. Another approach is Accommodation, which is the desire to satisfy another's needs before meeting one's own. Next, the Competing approach is where one simply wants to satisfy their own needs and is not concerned about the needs of others. Avoidance includes not satisfying anyone's needs because, instead of approaching conflict, a person would rather pretend it isn't there.

Finally, Compromise is what many

people think is the right way, but using the Compromise approach means one still gives up some of their needs and so does the opposing

Conflict is when people are unable to successfully work together, or through, a particular issue.



party. Look at the graph and decide for yourself what approach best fits you and what patterns you fall into.

Conflict arises again and again, and we naturally fall into patterns of how we approach it. The main approach that results in the highest satisfaction is Collaboration. Key in our relationships, Collaboration focuses on the mutual growth of the relationship. Collaboration means you are striving to understand your own needs *and* the needs of those around you. All of the other styles that I will talk about focus only on the solution, a point on which Collaboration differs. You aren't necessarily focused on the outcome or solution of whatever the problem may be, but you are focused on a true understanding of one another's needs. "Wise agreements are fair and durable and take the interests of all parties into account" (Fisher and Ury 4). In my life, the hardest part of Collaboration was actually knowing *how* to collaborate.

How do you get to that point of trying to understand other people's needs? Getting from point A to point B is the hard part. A few months ago when I was taking an Interpersonal Conflict course with Clair Canfield, a USU lecturer, he asked the class gather in groups and meet outside the timeframe of class to discuss an issue each of us struggled with in our personal lives. One person at a time was to speak for between 45 and 60 minutes. Everyone else was allowed to ask only open-ended questions, and we were not allowed to give any kind of advice. This was extremely difficult because it forced those asking questions to dig deep and try to understand the person and where they were coming from. It also forced the person speaking to think about our question and maybe look at things with a different perspective. That is how we collaborate: using patience, understanding, and a willingness to learn. We must dig deep, ask open-ended questions to those we are in conflict with, and be vulnerable. By doing this we will have better relationships, and as we strive to understand each other's needs, our conflicts will become less of a hassle and more of a learning experience. There are patterns we often follow that keep us from being collaborative, so we are continuously stuck in a damaging conflict

style.

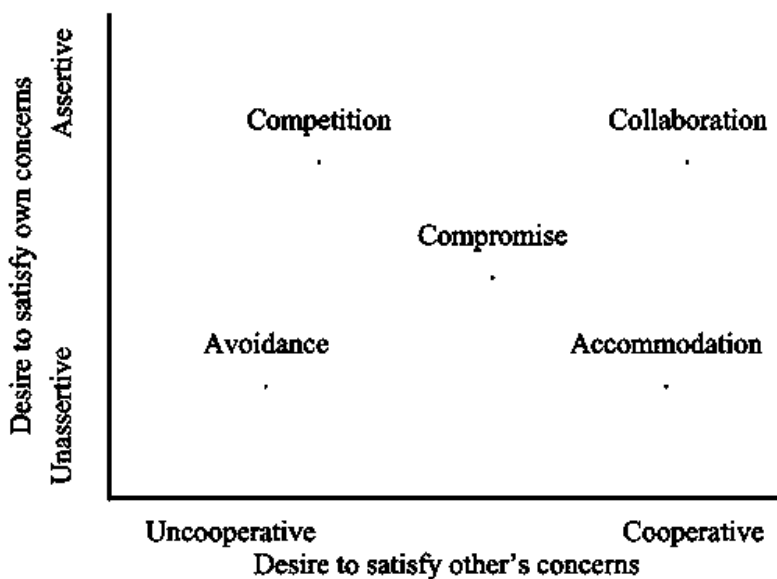
We all struggle with patterns, so in order to change those patterns we have to recognize what needs to be changed. The first conflict style I want to talk about is the Accommodation approach. Accommodating is a lose/win situation. “One who practices accommodating does not assert individual needs but prefers a cooperative and harmonizing approach” (Neff and Harter). What this means is that the accommodator is giving up their own personal needs in order to satisfy another person’s needs. Accommodating is more than giving in to the needs of others, it is the literal evacuation of your own needs, thoughts, and desires.

My best friend is a huge accommodator, and it has been very strenuous on our relationship. When my friend accommodates, she makes it so that her needs fit mine and is essentially saying that my needs are more important. Her needs don’t ever get addressed because she is adjusting to my wants and needs. I am a competitor (things have to be “my way or the highway”), so for her there is no fight—she just does it my way. She is going to do what I want in order to avoid conflict. For example, we both love to drive, but she can’t really drive my car because it is a manual; however, because her car is an automatic, I am able to drive hers. When we go places in her car, I usually drive even if she doesn’t want me to. Sometimes she says she wants to drive, but in the end she always passes me the keys because she wants to avoid conflict at all costs, even if it means letting me drive her baby. This hurts our relationship because she doesn’t focus on what she

“The difference between Compromising & Collaborating is that with compromise, people look for an easy middle ground that only somewhat satisfies both parties; with collaborating, people work together to come up with new solutions to each individual’s goals.”

needs, only what I need. Therefore, she literally allows her feelings to get ignored because my Competing style of conflict dominates.

It's that "my way or the highway" mentality that characterizes the Competing conflict approach. This means that *I* am right, and everything has to be just the way I want it. "A dominating, competitive, or 'power over' style is characterized by aggressive and uncooperative behavior-pursuing your own concerns at the expense of another"



(Hocker and Wilmot 156). Sometimes I have such a strong desire to be in control with absolutely everything that I get upset at the little things I can't control. I can't control my best friend's life, because that is not my job. Relationships aren't based on winning or control. "It isn't about who is right, but about what is right" (Weaver). As a competitor, that is an extremely difficult concept to grasp. Many people battle over the preference of how something is done, and not necessarily the principle. For example, my best friend and I are still going to get to the same place regardless of who is driving. The act that needs to be accomplished is still being completed, but our conflict approaches ignore this and push the focus to how it's completed or who completes it.

Preference versus principle is important to remember when approaching conflict, because things arise based on preference for the majority of the time. The Competing style is valuable for many other things, like when one desires to accomplish a personal goal or to succeed in school. But when approaching conflict, this style shuts out the needs of others and can easily make you a target of selfishness because you are focused solely on your own needs. This is why it was so harmful for my relationship with my best friend. I thought only about my needs, and she didn't think of her own needs, so our relationship was unbalanced and not growing.

The needs of relationships can be ignored completely. This is the approach of Avoidance, meaning that the avoider isn't taking into account their own needs, or the needs of those around them. They would simply pretend like it isn't there. "Avoidance is a style characterized by denial of the conflict, changing, and avoiding topics, being noncommittal, and joking rather than dealing with conflict at hand" (Hocker and Wilmot 151). Unless I confront my best friend about a conflict, she likes to avoid it. When dealing with conflict, we can use more than one style. Avoiding and Accommodating are similar because they don't focus on one's individual needs. People tend to think just because they avoid a conflict it means it is not there, but that is 100% not true. "Avoiding a conflict however, does not prevent it" (Hocker and Wilmot 151). Conflict arises whether we choose to recognize it or not. However, ignoring conflict won't solve any problems; that strategy only causes more problems. Avoiding is not the key style we should rely on.

Compromising is not the key style everyone should be turning to either, even though that is what most people think. "Compromise is frequently confused with integrating, which requires creative solutions and flexibility. Compromise differs, however, in that it requires trade-offs and exchanges" (Hocker and Wilmot 161). In other words, you win a little and you lose a little. Compromisers don't allow people's personal thoughts and feelings to get in the way of accom-

plishing the goal and obtaining a solution. The difference between Compromising and Collaborating is that with compromise, people look for an easy middle ground that only somewhat satisfies both parties; with collaborating, people work together to come up with new solutions to each individual's goals. When compromising, people have a medium desire to serve their own needs and a medium desire to serve other's needs. Now I don't know about you, but in my personal relationships, I want more than medium, and I want more than just some needs being met.

All of the styles except for Collaboration fulfill only *some* needs. They focus on goals, but the outcome is the essential key. Many relationships struggle because we fail to really understand each other, and we are pushing to understand our needs. Collaboration is key.

Returning to the graph, you will notice on the Y-axis label: unassertiveness and assertiveness. A question I have been asked is, "What does that mean?" When you are being competitive, you assert your thoughts and opinions in everything. You don't hold back. But when you are avoiding, that assertiveness is non-existent, and you have no desire or drive to push what you want. On the X-axis is listed uncooperative and cooperative. The Avoidance approach will not allow cooperation with the person who is trying to speak to you, and if one tries to have a conversation, they will dodge it and ignore it. Accommodators, on the other hand, cooperate too much, and if something is asked of them, it is given. See how all of these are lose/lose situations? No one is really having their needs fulfilled until Collaboration. Collaboration is assertive in satisfying one's own needs, and is cooperative in serving others' needs. Collaboration is key!

Really look at the graph and think to yourself about what you have learned over the past 10 minutes while reading this paper. Where do you stand with your conflicts? What can you change to make them better? None of this really matters unless you ask yourself what Collaborating could really do for you. Unless you try being vulnerable and

asking open-ended questions, you will never really know that your relationships can, and will, be better. I invite you to try collaborating in the next day or two in your relationships when a conflict arises (because conflict is as common as breathing, and will happen soon) and to try looking at your conflicts with different eyes. Try changing your patterns one time and see if that makes a difference in the outcome of your conflicts. What are you waiting for? And then maybe, just maybe, you will love conflict as much as I do!

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. Titles are very important in cluing readers in on what an essay is about, as well as enticing the audience to read the essay. Look at the title of this essay, for example. Do you think it is both catchy and informative?
2. What are some things Ryser does well in her introductory paragraph? Provide a specific example to support your answer. Do you like the way she hooks the audience? Think about how you will hook the audience in your own essay.
3. Note the way that Ryser's personal voice really emerges throughout her essay, and identify a place in the essay where this is particularly evident. As a reader, do you like this style of writing, specifically in the context of a Persuasive Research Essay? Why or why not?
4. Find a place in the essay where Ryser uses personal experiences to demonstrate a point. Do you think the use of personal experiences is a good way to support a point of argument? Can it be a good strategy to incorporate personal experiences into a research paper? Evaluate how you might use personal experiences in your own essay, or if it may not be appropriate for the topic on which you are writing.
5. Read through the essay, and identify what you believe to be the key points of Ryser's argument. Overall, how do you think Ryser did at getting her main point across? What are some things you can think of that would strengthen her main argument?

## BACKGROUND

In her essay, “Understanding the World Around Us Through Fantasy,” Ashkeya Hokanson expresses her passion for fiction and argues that fantasy enables us to obtain a different view of the world in which we live. She argues that fantasy is slowly losing its place in our technology-centered world, and she writes to persuade readers that “the blurring of reality via fantasy is beneficial to our lives” (9). By using a variety of scholarly sources, Hokanson attempts to prove that fiction actually plays a key role in our understanding of the world.

## ASHKEYA HOKANSON



Ashkeya Hokanson was raised in Kaysville, Utah where she graduated from Davis High School with High Honors. She is a writer, an ice skater, and an avid reader. She loves dancing in the rain, helping people smile, and watching miracles occur.

Ashkeya plans to major in Business Administration and Marketing following her return from serving an LDS mission in Lima, Perú. She is currently a Junior at Utah State.



# UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD THROUGH FANTASY: LIKENING THE IMAGINED TOWARDS REALITY

Ashkeya Hokanson

There comes a time in everyone's life where the line between pretend and reality blurs. Whether the blurring happens only once or multiple times, at a young age or throughout the years, this connecting point where fantasy and reality combines can be the place where we obtain comprehension and understanding. Unfortunately, fast-paced, first-world society and its unspoken rules in regards to how adults should spend their time threatens comprehension through fantasy.

It is through fantasy that understanding a different view of the world is obtained. Tim O'Brien once said "that's what fiction is for. It's for getting at the truth when the truth isn't sufficient for the truth." In this case, "truth" is referring to the reality of our everyday lives. It's the things we do not question: the reality that clouds our assumptions when a decision is necessary. This is due to the fact that we have no alternative views to rely upon except that which society has decided is correct for our world. Through fantasy, alternative views, clarification, and new understandings are possible to obtain if one is willing to do the work of connection and interpretation. As Ayn Rand proclaimed in the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of her novella, *Anthem*, "they must face it, then decide whether this is what they want or not" (16). Ayn Rand gives us the opportunity to take our world as it is and have the choice to maintain our world or change it due to the knowledge we have gained via the intense, dystopian fantasy world she has created. In Susan Cornell Poskanzer's essay, *A Case for Fantasy*, she states that "fantasy increases the awareness of reality and teaches adaptability

to real life situations” (473). Because of this ability to see the world differently, we, as a society, must find how to involve fantasy into our lives once again. Each person must find his or her own way to incorporate fantasy in their lives to increase in the ability to adapt to real life situations. There are many ways of achieving this task, but some of the easiest ways to include the fictitious world into daily life are to delve into the written, spoken, and played out versions of fantasy common within our culture today and by allowing oneself to develop her or his own personal interpretations.

Throughout literature, many of the greatest stories within the genre of fantasy have literary merit. One such novel is Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. Robert Crossley once said that this fantasy world was “fabricated out of shattered myths...” (281). Because this fabrication is firmly ingrained into the society which first-world students are accustomed to, it is understandable that many lessons that students relate to may be derived from the book’s pages. Examples of these lessons might be Frodo’s and Sam’s friendship and undergoing the trials together that they faced, buoying each other up, providing comfort when there was none, and traveling to far off places while having adventures filled with danger. The lessons taught and experiences gained, via Frodo’s and Sam’s journey within the imagined and fabricated world of Tolkien’s great novel, can help students broaden their horizons in regards to their responses to the trials that they face and be exposed to the world from the safety of their reality. While some students may not be able to actually travel the world, through books and other mediums of fantasy, this same student can be exposed to thousands of places all within the safety of their own home.

Within the article, *Children’s Responses to Fantasy in Literature*, Jeanne McLain Harms presents the concept that “fantasy literature can extend experiences beyond the horizons of everyday living” (942). This claim that fantasy allows experiences to exist “outside the page” is proven within the reader’s world. When committed, imaginative people read and truly connect with a fantasy literature novel,

they often take those characters into their daily lives and relate to their experience, such as with Tolkien's iconic characters. Another appropriate example of this is the *Harry Potter* fandom, which exemplifies how a group of people can intensely connect with a story. They do this through identifying with the story for the rest of their lives, always relating back to it to help solve problems they face and help them continue through each day because of the connections they have made to the series via the characters' actions and experiences. In 2006, it was said that J.K. Rowling's "first four books... [had] sold more than 200 million copies worldwide." With those books "available in 200 countries and in 55 different languages and Braille..., nearly two thirds of children in the U.S. have read [them]" (Witschonke 4). The amount of people that this series has reached since the first book's publication in 1997 and the lessons they have learned from it is just another example of how literature can help influence people's understanding. This is accomplished by identifying with the story and connecting with the fantasy- rich culture that surrounds them. These connections allow students and participants of fantasy to find new meanings in the ordinary cultural products of our day and age.

Clifford Geertz said that "our ideas, our values, our acts, even our emotions are... cultural products" (Farrell 213). This is evident within one recent study of the *Harry Potter* series' influence on the cultural ideals of its young readers. One article stated that "the magical world created by Rowling draws young readers into the books by connecting aspects of the world in which they live with a world that transcends reality" (Beach and Willner 103).

A similar way people transcend reality is through dystopian novels. In Ayn Rand's dystopian novella *Anthem*, Geertz's point is made clearer still by the influence that the society Rand has created has on its members, where the very thought of identity is shunned and lost from the world's vocabulary. The main character, Equality 7-2521, starts off the novella demonstrating this cultural dictation by stating that "it is a sin to write this. It is a sin to think words no others think"

(Rand 17). Similarly, in society today, children are often taught not to think for themselves. The very thought of individualism is shunned because of how assignments are structured in their grading. In the es-

As an adult, due in part to our education and in part to the culture surrounding us, we are “too busy” to fantasize about life, much less live in the moment.

say, *A Case for Fantasy*, author Susan Cornell Poskanzer found with her school class of ten-year-olds that, when faced with the task of writing their “first series of stories,” although their spelling had increased, “there was distinct similarity in their ideas. Only one student dared venture to the absurd” (472). We teach children to conform to the shackles that bind them due to society’s view on how

they should grow and learn within the educational system, thus causing a similarity between their ideas. Children experience constraints to write a certain way, to solve math a certain way, to participate in class a certain way, etc. We allow no room for creativity, for fantasy, for imagination, and most likely there won’t be any room for fantasy in their future either, unless they take the time to find other sources of information and experiences within the imagined world.

The point could be made then that people cannot make a distinction between fantasy and reality because of the constraints they undergo at a young age. In Majorie Taylor’s article, *The Role of Creative Control and Culture in Children’s Fantasy/Reality Judgments*, she states that “even very young children are able to understand that [fantasy] belongs to the realm of pretense” and that “children’s [distinction between reality and fantasy] does not differ in any fundamental way from that of adults,” thus showing that a distinction between fantasy and reality is not only possible, but plausible, as well (Taylor 1015). This distinction can then lead to identify with fantasy and reality.

Children can identify with both fantasy and reality to a certain degree. As they grow older, the depth of their understanding increases,

but at the same time, society suffocates their ability to imagine and be creative by telling them that “they are not free to keep their sense of wonder alive” (Harms 942). Therefore, children understand more, but are unable to create their own dreams of a better world where fantasy plays a part. Because of the foundation that the child’s culture places before them, one that has no space for fantasy, these same children grow up to be adults who cannot comprehend the unthinkable or the uncommon. They cannot fathom the benefit fantasy can give their lives if they but took time to delve into the fictitious realm once again. The benefit of fantasy is given only to those who take the time to seek out the fictitious world. This benefit is fantasy’s ability to bring new light to the items (elements?) which people find themselves most familiar with. Tolkien wrote in his article, *On Fairy-Stories*, that “fantasy does not explore primarily the strange and unknown but the familiar, because the things we understand least are the things which have become trite through familiarity” (Crossley 285).

One of these familiar, trite things is our ability to understand our world. Our world is all around us. Because of its constant presence before us, we have become familiar with our world and, as Tolkien has beautifully stated, many of us have lost understanding of it. As a child, we dream about our reality, pretending to be a princess, a firefighter, whomever we desire to be. This allows our minds to comprehend the world to a different degree than we would have if we were stuck within the constraints of our own situations. As an adult, due in part to our education and in part to the culture surrounding us, we are “too busy” to fantasize about life, much less live in the moment. There’s education and jobs, family and friends, and many other factors pushing down on us, including the

We teach children to conform to the shackles that bind them due to society’s view on how they should grow & learn within the education system, thus causing a similarity between their ideas ... We allow no room for creativity, for fantasy, for imagination.

“call” of our cell phones. With all these factors in place, it can seem impossible to bring fantasy back into our lives.

The constant call we receive in this fast-paced society to be something we are not can either drown us and make us conform into a mindless creature, or give us the ability to rebel against the ordinary. The constant stream of data all around us can act as a generator for the imagination or as a block to creative aspirations within us. More often than not, our own lives turn into the barrier between us and the fictitious world. This happens because we do not take time for fantasy to be a part of our lives, albeit for the occasional two-plus hour movie or audio book. We don't see fantasy as something of value. But having fantasy in our lives again could become a beneficial tool for each of us because it allows us to see our world as it should be, instead of what we see it as, due to our close familiarity with it. “Fantasy restores a clear view of the familiar by making us ‘clean our windows’” (Crossley 285). Fantasy also helps “us find the power to live in [our world]” because “the places and characters we imagine [within fantasy] sustain us as we struggle with [our world]” (Black 541). Through the lives of the characters we read of or listen about, we can gain access to a plethora of knowledge that is available for us. This knowledge can accumulate into a new view point of the world around us. We must then decide for ourselves if fantasy is worth saving in our lives. As one reader said, “I have to rescue my imagination” to face the reality she is now forced to live in (Black 541). The problem becomes relating what we have learned—from fantasy and the new viewpoint we have gained from our experience within the fictitious sphere—to our daily lives.

Tolkien states that fantasy is simply “the transference or displacement of familiar human situation and psychology to an unfamiliar, exotic, or bizarre setting” (Crossley 285). Fantasy, in essence, is attributes of our daily lives thrown into an imagined world. Fantasy plays out daily experiences a person may have in a world they seemingly have little control over. “Just as in real life, relationships [in fantasy] change and may follow a bumpy path, events don't always turn

out the way we like, and the characters make choices that may not turn out to be the best” (Beach and Willner 104). It is through characters’ lives that we find answers to our own problems, simply because they have lived out our problems already. In J. K. Rowling’s popular *Harry Potter* series, “Harry’s moments of uncertainty make him attractive to adolescents who themselves are continually facing crises of self-confidence” as the character himself faced and, through Rowling’s books, readers are invited to be creative in their thinking. They can do this by embellishing the world the author has created or by solving the problems they face through the lessons they have learned in the book (Beach and Willner 105).

In Robert Crossley’s essay, *Education and Fantasy*, he points out that:

Readers of fantasy are like Frodo in Lothlorien, looking into an alien world but seeing little that has not been seen before....What keeps successful fantasy from self-indulgence or the decadence of mere novelty is that a writer like Tolkien... directs the eye back to the richness of ordinary things. With access of knowledge and power the reader may return to his own world, his consciousness of self, others and environment refreshed and cleansed. (286)

Fantasy is a tool viewers can use to change their perspectives. They see the world as it could be because of the familiarity found within the fictitious universe they submerge themselves into. They learn from the lessons taught within the stories that they relate to. “Readers choose to take a particular ‘lesson’ from their reading...while being allowed the freedom to make literary and moral decisions” based upon what they have learned (Beach and Willner 106). Reading, watching, or participating in fantasy can allow people to re-experience the “richness of ordinary things” (???), as Crossley has stated. This re-experience can lead to new understanding and a novel perspective of the world surrounding each of us. Fantasy can even lead to a development of culture

in which different perspectives are accepted and glorified.

In Hope E. Allen's article, she states that "Americans are mesmerized by fantasy. We pledge ourselves to fantastic ideals...[and fantasy has] become so much a part of the American way of life that reality seems to imply un-Americanism" (Allen 356). But, could it be that Americans and people in general have put too much faith in their fantastic ideals? Author Jack Zipes argues that:

It is through fantasy that we have always sought to make sense of the world, not through reason. Reason matters, but fantasy matters more. Perhaps it has mattered too much, and our reliance on fantasy may wear thin and betray us even while it nourishes us and gives us hope that the world can be a better place. (79)

Although fantasy can be misleading at points, so can science, politics, and many other reason-enriched ways of thinking, due to our interpretation of them. While sometimes the distinction between reality and fantasy can blur, and the amount to which we depend upon fantasy can be inappropriate for the situation we find ourselves in, relying on fantasy to help expand our view of the world around us and increase our understanding is not something to fear or belittle. Fantasy can help us find a new side to the ordinary that we have never seen before. It can help us discover parts of ourselves that we have never had access to. It can even become a way that we relax. Fantasy is here for our benefit. That is why stories have been told for generations, why people keep reading, and why movies are so popular. People love a good story they can relate to. It is in this relating that we need to take more time to develop so that our understanding can increase. We must realize that the blurring of reality via fantasy benefits our lives, and that delving into fantasy must become a higher priority in our fast-paced lives if we are to gain an edge, find new ways to look outside the box, become more versed in different interpretations of things, and



allow our imaginations to soar so that creativity can once again thrive in everyday people.

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the main argument Hokanson is trying to make in this essay? Provide an example from the text of where you see the main argument stated, and explain your reasoning.
2. Quote the reference to the number of Harry Potter books sold. In the context of this argument, why would this information be important to include?
3. Choose one direct quotation that you found particularly interesting in this essay. Explain how the particular quotation you chose supports the main argument.
4. Identify a place in the essay where there is a smooth transition from one paragraph to the next. Using the transition sentence you choose, explain why it worked well.
5. Find the Robert Crossley quote Hokanson used in the essay. Determine how you think this quote supports her claim.

What started out as a study-help site has turned into a nightmare in many schools. Teachers are struggling to find a cure for the SparkNotes epidemic that seems to be prevalent in many classroom settings. Megan Monson hopes to assist teachers in fighting what she calls a “War in the Classroom” by providing them with potential causes and solutions to this problem. Her hope is that teachers will be able to win the battle and “bring students to an understanding of the power of literature” (8).

## MEGAN MONSON



Megan Monson is a sophomore and an English Teaching major here at USU. She has a passion for snow skiing and wakeboarding, and loves reading, writing, and knitting. In fact, she reads so much that she had to get a job at a bookstore to pay for her addiction to books. She wholly believes that *I Love Lucy* holds the title for the best television series ever made. She spends most of the

winter wishing she could be on her skis flying down the slopes, and would rather sing in the rain than wait for the sun. While Megan is usually very busy, the precious time she does have is spent with friends and family or reading sappy romance novels.

WAR IN THE  
CLASSROOM:  
BATTLING THE  
SPARKNOTES  
PREDICAMENT  
IN HIGH SCHOOL  
ENGLISH CLASSES

Megan Monson

*Fifth time teaching (insert book title here): 1...2...3...4...* You count silently in your head as you pass out books to the class. It's fourth quarter, you're tired, your students are tired, and it is certainly past time for summer to come. Judging by the looks on your students' faces, they're also growing tired of the constant flow of dull days. You watch them inspect the books you've just handed them. You know they aren't excited about reading it, and you know that many of them will skip reading it altogether, but what more can you do for a group of unwilling students?

This is a dilemma that English teachers face constantly. How are they supposed to help the students actually read the book without getting put on the "teachers everyone hates" list? Students wonder how can they get away with not reading in the first place? And why does it seem like there's no solution to this problem?

*Sophomore year, English class:* your teacher circulates the room handing out your next reading assignment, ugh. You've *heard* about this one. The teacher drones on and on about the reading assignments you'll have to do, when they need to be done...*blah, blah, blah*. You listen half-heartedly. You know the book likely won't even make it out of your backpack until it's time to turn it back in.

What's the point in actually reading a book when you can just read the SparkNotes online?

This is, unfortunately, a nearly universal experience for high school students. If they don't want to read a book, they don't have to. There are plenty of ways for them to get the information they need elsewhere.

English teachers know that students are not always happy about reading books and that they are perfectly willing to find their own "study-helps" to forgo actually picking up a book. These "study-helps" have become much more than just a helpful guide to reading the assigned novel. They have become the means by which students gain *all* of their knowledge of plots, characters, quotes, and rhetorical devices. Teachers often convince themselves that it's not as bad as it seems, and that as long as students still get the general idea of the book, that's as much as they can ask from students. But the lessons learned and the skills taught by reading are irreplaceable. This is why we need capable, knowledgeable English teachers, and that's why they need to encourage students to read. Teachers must stop being passive about the use of SparkNotes and start taking more action to encourage reading and learning in their classrooms.

Listening to an eighteen-year-old college freshman about how you should run your classroom may seem illogical. I am clearly no expert on teaching English. However, I am a student, and I consider myself to be an expert in the field of being a student. I understand why students choose not to read the novels given to them, and I understand why they choose to read study-helps instead. My goal is not at all to make you think that you are doing something wrong. What I do want you to gain is an insight into the minds of your students and an idea of how to help them.

The very root of the problem is in what SparkNotes is, or rather, what they claim to be. *SparkNotes* is the study-help site used most commonly by high school English students; it claims to be "a

A student who has read the book will often miss the detail oriented questions, but he or she will know the characters more deeply, and will understand the language better, rather than just knowing the gist of the story.

resource you can turn to when you're confuzzled," because, "sometimes you don't understand your teacher, your textbooks make no sense, and you have to read sixteen chapters by tomorrow." They continue, "We help you understand books, write papers, and study for tests. We're clear and concise, but we never leave out important info," (SparkNotes). SparkNotes may have begun as just another resource, but it has become so much more than that.

SparkNotes began much in the same way a small company begins, with a few contributors, and just a few products, or study guides.

SparkNotes was started in 1999 by four Harvard students who figured that the web was a wonderful medium for lazy, procrastinating students. The site began with 40 homemade guides; there are now more than 250 literature guides, still written mostly by Harvard students and grads. (O'Leary)

The writers for SparkNotes study the books thoroughly. They know the main characters and the plots, but they also know the side characters and the subplots.

A SparkNotes Study Guide has everything you need to appear learned: detailed plot summary and analysis, principal character analysis, explanation of themes and symbols, and even a sample test. There's a Study Guide for almost any title you're likely to be assigned, from Homer (not Simpson) to Morrison (Toni, not Jim). (O'Leary)

From *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to *Wuthering Heights*, and everything in between, there's a study guide for that, and reading it will take less than a quarter of the time it takes to read the book.

There is no end to the amount of details you can find in a SparkNotes study guide, and if there is one thing that most English teachers think will trick the students who don't read the book, it's testing on the details. As Allison Bach, author of *The Right Understanding: Teaching Literature in the Age of SparkNotes*, asked, "The question, then, becomes not, 'Why do students use SparkNotes,' but rather 'Why wouldn't they?'" (Abstract). If students can get all of the answers in a fraction of the time, they don't usually see the reason in reading the book.

A student who has read the SparkNotes will often be able to regurgitate the details and the key plot elements. However, a student who has read the book will often miss the detail oriented questions, but he or she will know the characters more deeply, and will understand the language better, rather than just knowing the gist of the story.

In my junior AP Language class, we read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and I did not understand a word of it. I was spend-

The books students are assigned to read are chosen for very specific reasons, such as, to help them understand and gain values and morals that are necessary in society.

ing hours reading the sections, but I still failed the quizzes. After a particularly difficult quiz, I asked my friend, Zach, for help. Zach had been acing the quizzes. His advice was simple, "I stopped reading the book after the first section," he said, "I just read the SparkNotes, they make *way* more sense." I had two options: read the book or read the SparkNotes. The first seemed the morally

right thing to do, but the second was more likely to help my grade. The solution was simple, I read the SparkNotes in advance to give me a synopsis of the text. Then I would read the book, looking more for rhetorical devices and language use than for content.

You, as an English teacher, know the books inside and out. You've read and analyzed them every year. You have nothing to gain for your own learning from reading a synopsis, except for one thing: a way to help your students. You could write all of your own synopses or you could use the ones that are already written for you. If a student is struggling, these study-helpers can be just that. When teaching a particularly difficult text, try assigning the SparkNotes to your students as a side reading. This will help them to understand what they are reading, without having to wade through the text unarmed.

One thing books have always been is a catalyst for change. The United States would likely not even be a country if Thomas Paine hadn't written *Common Sense*. Harriet Beecher Stowe wouldn't have ever been "the little woman who started [the Civil] war," as President Lincoln allegedly called her, if she hadn't written *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Hedrick). In an episode of *Doctor Who*, Russell T. Davies wrote, "You want weapons? We're in a library. Books are the best weapon in the world. This room's the greatest arsenal we could have." (Davies).

By choosing to skip reading assigned texts, students miss out on more than just fantastic literature. Books have the ability to change lives. The books students are assigned to read are chosen for very specific reasons, such as, to help them understand and gain values and morals that are necessary in society. Harper Lee used Atticus Finch, the hero of her main characters, to teach life lessons to her readers. After Jem was required to read to Mrs. Dubose, Atticus told him, "I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's knowing you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do" (Lee 116).



The power of this statement could potentially change lives. If students choose to forgo reading the book and go straight to SparkNotes they would read that “Mrs. Dubose dies a little more than a month after Jem’s punishment ends. Atticus reveals to Jem that she was addicted to morphine and that the reading was part of her successful effort to combat this addiction” (SparkNotes). The difference in the lesson is incredible, one teaches a powerful lesson of courage and strength, the second merely informs the reader of Mrs. Dubose’s winning her battle with addiction. Discussing stories is rarely helpful to students, but discussing concepts and lessons that can be learned from books brings more depth to class discussions.

As an English teacher, you know that students are required to read for experience, life lessons, critical thinking skills, comprehension, cultural awareness, and so much more. These are all things that are lost when students don’t actually pick up the books assigned to them.

Changing this situation is your responsibility; if you want your students to learn anything at all, you’re going to have to be the one to teach it to them. The first hurdle you will have to face is students and their expectations of you. Timothy Slater, an associate professor of Astronomy at the University of Arizona, explains what is called “The Hidden Contract.” Students are expected to come to class and learn, but teachers have much more required of them:

The Hidden Contract clearly stipulates that teachers who provide avenues for extra credit, who tell humorous anecdotes in class, hold detailed exam review sessions that further delineate the possible test questions from a wealth of possible questions, and are flexible on assignment due dates are held in the highest regard. Teachers who break this Hidden Contract by writing test questions that are either ambiguous or go beyond the examples presented in class are labeled as being unfair, unresponsive, or simply just bad teachers.

It seems impossible for teachers to do their job correctly, including giving homework, and still be liked by the students. How can this be accomplished?

To start with, if you have any possible way to allow them to read a something they want to read for credit, allow them to. One of the English classes at my high school was teaching books like *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Great Gatsby*, but alongside great American classics, the teacher chose to also teach *The Fault in our Stars* by John Green. The teacher chose to use it as a vehicle for teaching the concept of allusion. She was able to teach a bit of Shakespeare by pointing out that the title of the book is an allusion to *Julius Caesar*, “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / but in ourselves, that we are underlings” (I, ii). She was also able to teach a little about poetry from the allusion to William Carlos Williams’ “The Red Wheelbarrow.” This obviously does not apply to every book that your students might enjoy reading, but if you can find one that might really speak to them *and* help them learn a little about literature in the process, you will be able to better get through to them, and they would be significantly more willing to read other texts that you assign them if they are able to grasp the excitement that comes from reading.

Another way to encourage students to read is to give them responsibility inside the classroom that requires them to do work outside the classroom. One idea that I particularly liked occurred in my senior year AP Literature class. When we first would receive a book, we would get into groups and choose a day to lead the class discussion. The groups were relatively small, usually three or four people, and the discussions were to take forty-five minutes of class. This required each student to come out of their shell and talk to their peers. It also required the students to know their section particularly well, so as not to be surprised by questions that might be posed by the teacher or members of the class. As my group and I would prepare for our discussions, we would often use the SparkNotes to assure us that we were understanding the reading correctly. Using SparkNotes after

reading the section, to be sure the material was understood properly, is another good use of this resource. The SparkNotes were particularly helpful when reading texts such as *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, which challenged students with its complex use of language.

Tests do not have to be about the storyline, or on the tiniest of details within the book. After all, the reason tests are given is not to find out who got what details from the book; it is to gauge comprehension. The most effective tests I took in any English class were the ones that asked me to explain concepts from the book. Focusing on questions that allow students to write out the ideas they understood from the text helps their writing and comprehension skills to be heightened. For written exams, the questions do not have to be overly difficult to understand or too easy to answer. Allowing students to freely express ideas gives you, as the teacher, a good way to gauge who is understanding and who is falling behind. This also gives you more insight into the books you are teaching, because different people see things different ways. Along with that, answers to questions provide more avenues for class discussion.

As an English teacher, you need to be the one to help compel your students to read the books as they are and to avoid using SparkNotes as their primary text. Encouraging students to read the texts assigned to them can have vast impacts on their lives, teach them life lessons, and help them learn about society. SparkNotes may be a good source for a synopsis, but it is *not* a good way to learn everything about a book. Using SparkNotes as a resource can bring new meaning to novels for many students, and can help them enjoy reading, rather than being frustrated with their lack of understanding. Do not be afraid to fight back against SparkNotes; fighting it is the only way to bring students to an understanding of the power of literature.

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. Identify a place where Monson references her own personal experience within an English classroom. Is this helpful in the overall persuasiveness of the essay?
2. Locate one paragraph that references potential solutions for English teachers. Explain how this particular paragraph helps strengthen the argument.
3. What is the overall message that Monson is trying to get across in this essay? Find a specific example from the essay that makes the overall message clear.
4. Who is the audience? Why is it important to have a specific audience when writing a persuasive research essay? Provide at least one textual example that helps us as readers know who Monson's main audience is.

## BACKGROUND

Hawaii's majestic Mauna Kea, or white mountain, is "the premier site in the world to study astronomy" (Suganuma 1). There's just one problem...Mauna Kea also happens to be one of the most sacred locations in native Hawaiian culture. As a native Hawaiian herself, Pono Suganuma appreciates the cultural significance of this majestic landmark. In her essay, "The Battle of Mauna Kea," Suganuma argues against the installation of the Thirty Meter Telescope on the peak of the mountain in the hope that Hawaii will preserve this hallowed ground.

## PONO SUGANUMA



Pono Suganuma was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawai'i. She is an Honors student and is majoring in Journalism with an emphasis in Public Relations, and she is minoring in International Studies. Pono is honored to be an ambassador for Utah State University and enjoys sharing her aloha spirit with prospective students. Some of her favorite activities include reading, drinking milkshakes, swimming, and taking long naps. She will be a sophomore in Fall 2016.

# THE BATTLE FOR MAUNA KEA

Pono Sugauma

With an uninterrupted view of the clouds floating above the volcanic land and the deep blue Pacific Ocean, the mountain stands firm. Its name is Mauna Kea, which means *white mountain*. Native Hawaiians gave the dormant volcano its descriptive name for the beauty found in its snow-capped peaks. Reaching high above the Big Island of Hawai'i, Mauna Kea stands at an astonishing 33,500 feet tall when measured from its base in the ocean depths to its tallest peak. This measurement from base to peak makes Mauna Kea the tallest mountain in the world.

To understand the battle for the mountain, one must understand two main ideas that encompass Mauna Kea. The first is that Mauna Kea is the premier site in the world to study astronomy. The latter is the ideal among native Hawaiians that Mauna Kea is an extremely sacred and cultural site. Why is Mauna Kea so valuable to these two groups of people? Furthermore, why is there an ongoing battle between these two groups for the rights to Mauna Kea?

Many factors contribute to Mauna Kea's distinction as an ideal location for astronomical research. The mountain's high elevation raises the telescopes' views above the murky clouds, giving researchers an uninterrupted view of the night sky. The darkness that surrounds Mauna Kea's peaks eradicates research complications brought on by light pollution. Furthermore, the mountain's location in the middle of the Pacific Ocean ensures clear weather nearly 300 days a year. Together these qualities certify the belief that Mauna Kea is "one of the best places on Earth to study the stars" (Selingo 1). It is no surprise then that Mauna Kea is already home to thirteen telescopes, located within 11,288 acres of the Mauna Kea Science Reserve, which is managed by the University of Hawai'i (Callis 1). These telescopes contribute to the

work of local and international astronomers and result in unequalled scientific discovery. If Mauna Kea is so valuable to science, why is there a debate between culture and science? It would be absurd to

Our beginnings and creation  
or the birth of the Hawaiian  
islands and the native Hawai-  
ian people, center on the  
mountain.

think that everyone prioritizes academic idealism above cultural importance. Astronomers assert the faulty belief that “all people share astronomy’s noble quest – to discover our origins and place in the universe” (Ciotti 154).

While native Hawaiians may share astronomy’s noble quest in theory, we do not believe that this quest should be finished atop our sacred Mauna Kea. Mauna Kea symbolically represents the center, or *piko*, of our culture. It serves as “the umbilical cord connecting earth and sky” (Ciotti 148). Our beginnings and creation, or the birth of the Hawaiian Islands and the native Hawaiian people, center on the mountain. The mountain is the altar of Wākea, who is “the celestial father [and] sire of the indigenous Hawaiian race,” (Ciotti 148). Mauna Kea protects the sacred burial grounds of some of the most powerful chiefs in Hawaiian history. Professional archaeologists discovered two hundred-fifty burial sites and altars scattered along the mountainside and deemed them culturally significant (Ciotti 156). The sacredness of the mountain was so highly respected by the native Hawaiian people that only the most powerful and revered chiefs were allowed to ascend to its summit (Kaplan 2015). As the source of our genealogical story, Mauna Kea is undoubtedly a highly sacred place. So why is there a debate about science’s involvement on the mountain? Clearly, these astronomers like “all people are mindful of [our] traditions—to preserve our origins and genealogical connections with the sky” (Ciotti 155). While a good portion of astronomers believe in Mauna Kea’s sacredness and treat the mountain with respect, they also believe that science comes *first*. As native Hawaiians, we would be wise to remember that.



So what does this battle come down to essentially? It is a battle between culture and science. Why has this battle reawakened, and why are these two groups fighting today? In 2009, the proposal for the construction of a new telescope, the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT), arose. This “next generation optical/infrared observatory” would be able to see thirteen billion light years away and 100 times farther than any other telescope in the world (Callis 1). Astronomers believe that this \$1.4 billion project will enable them to “find planets that can sustain life forms and allow them to peer farther back into the history of the universe,” (Terrell 4). With nine times the light gathering capacity of any other telescope, TMT would rise 18 stories (180 feet) above the summit and encompass 57,000 square feet. The TMT Observatory Corporation based in Pasadena, California would operate the TMT. Though construction has halted, the expected completion date of the telescope is 2022, and the observatory would see its first light in 2024. The proposed construction of TMT is the spark that lit the fire for the battle for Mauna Kea. This battle between culture and science has astronomers debating against protestors or protectors of the mountain and has left the residents of Hawai‘i in the middle. I argue that the residents of Hawai‘i should not support the construction of TMT on Mauna Kea because the benefits brought by the project do not outweigh the costs to our cultural heritage.

One must understand the benefits of TMT in order to understand why they are not worth the costs TMT would have on our cultural heritage. I will not dispute that TMT could bring highly valuable benefits to the Hawai‘i economy and education system. TMT’s primary form of contribution to the economy comes from the lease it will pay to the State of Hawai‘i for the land and its operation. Currently, TMT pays \$300,000 a year for the space, and once it is in operation, TMT will pay \$1.08 million a year. These funds will be distributed between the Office of Mauna Kea Management (80%) and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (20%) (Callis 1). The TMT Observatory Corporation will also create a THINK Fund, which will provide \$1

million in scholarships every year to local Big Island students. The Hawai'i Community Foundation will receive \$750,000 a year for these scholarships, while the Pauahi Foundation will receive \$250,000 a year in scholarships (Callis 1). Furthermore, it has been found that the current telescopes pump around \$142 million into Hawai'i's economy every year, and TMT is anticipated to do the same. Other economic benefits brought by TMT include the creation of 130 permanent jobs in science and technology and an increase in tourism to the mountain. Astronomers from around the world will travel to Mauna Kea because universities and astronomy institutions in countries like the United States, Canada, China, India, and Japan back TMT. This international tourism and support stems from the excitement and expectation that TMT will contribute to great astronomical discoveries.

The observatory would broaden and heighten the level of research that the astronomers could conduct. In December of 2014, using current Mauna Kea telescopes, R. Brent Tully (University of Hawai'i) and Helene Courtois (University of Lyon) discovered that our galaxy resides on the edge of a super cluster galaxy, which they named *Laniakea*, meaning immeasurable heaven. The Mauna Kea Science Reserve telescopes "have made some of the most important recent discoveries in astronomy, such as planets orbiting other stars and distant supernovae, which surprised scientists" (Selingo 2). These various discoveries of the heavens would not have been accomplished if it had not been through the work of these astronomers and the operation of the existing Mauna Kea telescopes. Astronomers argue that if these telescopes could discover things, like *Laniakea*, imagine what TMT could do. All of these powerful benefits substantiate the argument for TMT's construction.

If the benefits of TMT are so great, some may ask why native Hawaiians are against it, wasting and throwing away the opportunity for its development. They also say that it is difficult to see the point in fighting this battle, when there are already thirteen large telescopes on the mountain. After I presented this paper at the Citizen Schol-

ar Conference, an audience member asked me, “If you already lost thirteen times in trying to protect the mountain, why do you think you’re going to win this time?

As native Hawaiians  
we are the descendents  
of amazing astronomers,  
who relied on the stars  
and sky to cross the Pacific  
Ocean.

Why does it matter?” His question brought up a strong, accurate, and harsh point: the land has already been desecrated, and our cultural identity affected thirteen times.

In my response, I asserted, “Mauna Kea is more than a mountain [and] it is the embodiment of the Hawaiian people” (Bussewitz 1).

This embodiment refers to the ideology that Mauna Kea is at the very center of native Hawaiian culture. The mountain is forever linked to native Hawaiians’ sense of self and identity. Some people believe that this cultural significance is just rubbish in the way of scientific discovery. George Johnson of the *New York Times* referred to the native Hawaiian protectors of Mauna Kea as “religious fundamentalists,” who are causing “a turn back to the dark ages” (Johnson 1). He argues that this battle is more political than religious, a result of native Hawaiian hostility against the U.S. government.

This hostility stems from the many terrible atrocities the U.S. government has committed against the *kānaka maoli* (the Hawaiian people) and our *āina* (land). So much land was lost when Hawai‘i was overthrown illegally by American troops in 1893, and the crown lands annexed to the U.S. in 1898. However, many native Hawaiians still believe that Mauna Kea is our land. This belief is especially strong because the science reserve that encompasses Mauna Kea “is among 1.8 million acres that belonged to Hawai‘i’s queen before the United States deposed the monarchy in 1893” (Selingo 2). Joseph E. Ciotti, an astronomy professor and director of the Center for Aerospace Education at the University of Hawai‘i, argues that “the battle over telescopes has become a chance to reclaim, symbolically and practically, ground

that their people [native Hawaiian people] lost long ago” (Ciotti 153). I affirm that Mauna Kea is not just any piece of land, and it is not just any mountain. According to Lanakila Mangauil, a prominent leader for the *Ku Kī'ai Mauna* (Guardians of the Mountain) movement and protector of the mountain, Mauna Kea watches over all of us and gives us life (Witze 25). This belief that Mauna Kea symbolically gives life supports the protectors’ commitment to the mountain. If TMT is constructed, it would result in the further desecration of sacred land and dispossession of cultural identity and heritage.

Ultimately, I believe that culture and science simply cannot coexist in this place. The proposed construction of TMT is not the first, nor will it be the last, instance of conflict between culture and science. According to a report by Tom Callis of the *Hawai'i Tribune Herald*, science reserves have taken over and now own over 263 historic sites, including 141 ancient shrines (Callis 1). If we Hawaiians do not band together to protect what is sacred to us, Mauna Kea could easily become the site of another long lost battle for culture against science.

I think it is crucial to note that there are native Hawaiians on both sides of the TMT battle. Future astronomer-in-the-making and native Hawaiian, Mailani Neal, a graduate of Hawai'i Preparatory Academy, has risen to the forefront of the Mauna Kea debate with her petition in favor of TMT. On May 3, 2015, Neal presented her petition, which garnered over 6,300 signatures, to the governor's chief of staff, Mr. Mike McCartney. When asked in a personal interview why she supports TMT, she said, “[because of] the strong astronomical aspects of Hawaiian culture, *cause of* (knowledge), and that TMT is an opportunity to work with a very understanding telescope organization that could help raise the Hawaiian culture in a way that we can share it to the world” (Neal). Though the Hawaiian community does not generally support the TMT's construction, one must realize that the very definition of what is sacred and Hawaiian is unique for every person. “I've had the chance to meet are the astronomers from around the world. They hold Mauna Kea in their utmost respect,

reverence, and believe it sacred for their reasons too,” Neal said. If we are to understand why the astronomers have been so tireless in their pursuit of the mountain, we must understand why Mauna Kea is so sacred to them. These astronomers, like us, are protecting, and hoping to invest in something they hold in high regard. To them, Mauna Kea is “a jewel...[and is] probably the best site in the world,” for astronomy (Ciotti 150). By constructing TMT, the astronomers and Neal believe that they will discover things about our universe and sky that match the discoveries our ancestors made in their voyaging explorations of Polynesia.

A major proponent of astronomy and a native Hawaiian activist, Kealoha Piscotta, understands both sides of the TMT battle, since she has been involved with both Mauna Kea’s telescopes and cultural management. While working as a telescope technician, she also led a group focused on the cultural heritage of the mountain called Mauna Kea Anaina Hou. Along with this group, Piscotta maintained a family shrine near Mauna Kea’s summit. Her dual appreciation for the mountain’s sacredness and scientific value has started to dim with the debate over TMT. She believes that Mauna Kea’s natural beauty and spiritual significance will be destroyed if TMT is constructed. Piscotta said, “I have always supported astronomy. However, I do not believe it is of so much importance that it should be allowed to overtake and destroy everything else in its wake” (Kaplan 4). Residents of Hawai‘i have to make this same decision as Piscotta and discover what side of the battle they truly identify with.

As the residents of Hawai‘i, we must each make our own informed and independent decision about what we believe is right for Mauna Kea. How can we do that? I urge the residents of Hawai‘i to look to their ancestors for guidance. As native Hawaiians, we are the descendants of amazing astronomers, who relied on the stars and sky to cross the Pacific Ocean. Our culture is steeped in natural knowledge, and our ancestors studied the stars “to guide them and give them a greater understanding of the universe that surrounded them”

(Johnson 1). I am proud that our ancestors did not need technology to acquire this knowledge. However, astronomers today utilize technology like TMT to elevate and broaden their horizon for academic discovery. I affirm that the advancement of astronomy is crucial, but I do not believe that Mauna Kea is the right location to do so. The protests led by protectors of Mauna Kea have caused TMT officials to investigate alternative locations like Canary Islands, Chile, or India for its construction (Epping 1). I think that this is a logical move on behalf of the TMT officials because the battle has reached a kind of stalemate. Therefore, I urge the residents of Hawai'i to do their own research and discover a belief surrounding the battle for Mauna Kea.

Lastly, I leave you with my opinion. I honestly believe that the construction of TMT will further our knowledge of the universe. It will also destroy our relationship with the *āina* and sever our connection to a place that is central and crucial to our cultural identity. We must protect our land, we must foster a deep connection and *aloha* (love) for the *āina*, and we must never forget the *ōlelo noeau* (Hawaiian proverb) about our relationship with the land.

*He ali'i ka āina; he kauwā ke kanaka.*

The land is the chief; man is its servant.

I urge you to be servants of the land, to protect what is most important to you, and to protect Mauna Kea.

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. After reading Pono Suganuma's bio, we learn that Mauna Kea is something that is very important to her culturally. How does this fact appeal to readers and help strengthen her essay overall? Provide examples of Hawaiian cultural traditions from her essay that are particularly appealing to Suganuma's argument.
2. How does Suganuma persuade her audience to care about an issue that is seemingly specific to Hawaii and the Hawaiian people? Give at least two examples.
3. Identify where Suganuma presents her main argument in her essay. Do you feel like this is a good place to introduce her argument? Why or why not?
4. Do each of the paragraphs in this essay connect back to the thesis in a relevant way? Defend your answer using examples from the text.
5. Does Suganuma effectively state both sides of the argument throughout her essay? If so, where do you specifically see this happening. Do you think it is important to argue for both sides? Why or why not?
6. Identify and evaluate the transitions from paragraph to paragraph. Do you feel that there is fluency throughout the essay? How can you make transitions in your essays smooth and connected?



## BACKGROUND

The topic of terrorism is exactly what the term entails: terrifying. Yet, some organizations have been incorrectly affiliated with various terrorist groups. In his essay, Jacob Hayden attempts to clarify the difference between Muslims and “radical Islamic terrorists.” He argues that “to label terrorists as “radical Muslims” only serves to suggest an improper view of Muslims in the minds of non-Muslims. . .” (1). Using research from the Qur’an and several scholarly sources, Hayden points out that just because a radical group may associate with a specific religion does not mean that they are one in the same.

### JACOB D HAYDEN



Jacob Hayden is from a small community called Penrose in Box Elder County, Utah. He considers himself an avid reader and an amateur writer. He is quite heavily involved with some groups on campus. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the USU Interfaith Student Association, and he sings tenor in the USU Chorus. During the Fall 2016 semester, Jacob

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Jacob returns to Utah State in Fall 2016 as a sophomore majoring in Religious Studies and minoring in Classics.

E N T E R  
W H O L E H E A R T E D L Y  
I N T O P E A C E :  
R E J E C T I N G T H E  
T E R M “ R A D I C A L  
I S L A M I C  
T E R R O R I S M ”

Jacob D Hayden

In the debate over how to respond to global terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the group called ISIS, several conservative candidates in the 2016 United States presidential election have claimed that terrorism cannot be defeated until you “call it what it is.” Such candidates erroneously state that the term “radical Islamic terrorism” is the most appropriate term to describe these extremists. This is incorrect. The term “radical Islamic terrorism” should not be used by American politicians, media outlets, or the public, because it is inflammatory, Islamophobic, and simply incorrect. To label terrorists as “radical Muslims” only serves to suggest an improper view of Muslims in the minds of non-Muslims, and such labels also play into false claims made by terrorists that western nations have declared war on Islam. Because of the strong focus on peace in Islam, it would be more appropriate to describe terrorists as political radicals who use religion as justification, or even as apostates from the religion of Islam, than to describe terrorists as simply ultra-conservative Muslims. It is in the nature of the term to be inflammatory; however, many people in the West do not understand why this is. Imagine if the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), the infamous American hate group, was referred to as a “radical Baptist extremist” group. Would such a term not be inflammatory? Wouldn’t the term suggest, if only by context, that the Baptist faith is a violent religion, or that Baptists were violent people? Wouldn’t it

constantly force Baptists to argue in defense of their personal faith? Couldn't such a term even alienate Baptists? By looking at a similar term in a more familiar context, it is easier to see how the term "radical Islamic terrorism" can be inflammatory.

Former US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, said it best when she said that the term in question "sounds like we are declaring war against a religion" (qtd. in Greenberg). By using this term, American politicians risk alienating American Muslims, as well as America's predominantly Muslim allies (Greenberg). They also risk justifying claims made by terrorist organizations that the West is inherently anti-Islamic, a common piece of rhetoric used in terrorist recruitment. References to "radical Islam" and sister terms such as "political Islam" are taken by many Muslims as a condemnation of their religion. Khaled Abou Eld Fadl, a law professor at UCLA, in an interview with Haroon Siddiqui, says that such terms suggest that Islam is fine as a "completely private creed....But the moment it wants to engage with the world, it is dangerous" (qtd. in Siddiqui 25). In other words, some Muslims feel that such terms insist that they should not practice their faith as openly as others. Whereas Christian politicians may appeal to their religious convictions to explain why they feel a certain way about social issues, Muslims may feel that they cannot do that same thing. The use of this term, in effect, approaches a call for inequality based on religion.

The inflammatory nature of the term is not easily apparent, however, because of wide-spread Islamophobia in the United States. Islamophobia is the fear or hatred of Muslims and Islam, and it is "not confined to overt bigots" (Siddiqui 24). Islamophobia begins with a lack of understanding of the religion by non-Muslims, and this term contributes greatly to a broader lack of understanding. Debra Baldwin, Professor of Islamic Studies and Gender Issues at Utah State University worries that the term "radical Islamic terrorism" "causes a negative stereotype to be created in the minds of non-Muslims towards [Muslims]." Because of the nature of the human brain to find

meaning in context, situating the word “Islam” in a phrase denoting violence leads many people to associate Islam unequivocally with violence. In an article written for *The Washington Post*, Fareed Zakaria agrees that this term “blurs the line” between Islam and violent terrorism. This improper view of Muslims is reinforced in many Americans’ minds by the mainstream media, whose portrayals of Muslims are largely hostile. Unless an American frequently associates with

Muslims on a personal level, the majority of images one sees will be of terrorists who identify as Muslims. Most Americans equate Muslims with Arab terrorists and are surprised to learn that the countries with the highest population of Muslims are in Southeast Asia, (Gupta), and that only 280 million Muslims are of Arabian descent, out of 1.3 billion Muslims worldwide (Siddiqui 8).

This lack of understanding often boils over into outright bigotry. In 2004, a Cornell University survey suggested that 44 percent of Americans “believed in restricting the civil rights of Muslim Americans” (Siddiqui 17). In other words, 44 percent of Americans were so scared of terrorists and so confused about the relationship between terror and Islam that they were willing to abandon constitutional principles. More recently, in a video posted to *Youtube*, the Ted Cruz presidential campaign railed against “radical Muslims” and attacked President Obama for his refusal to use the term “radical Islamic terrorism.” Comments on the video clip called for the outlaw of Muslims from the United States and the “eradication” of Islam, demonstrating the violent bigotry that this term can fuel (Cruz). This bigotry is

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understanding.

un-American, as it calls for everything that the concept of freedom of religion is against.

Before moving on to describe how this term is incorrect, it must be noted that in the field of Religious Studies, it is inappropriate to declare that any religious belief is invalid, or that any sect of any faith is more or less valid than any other. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that no one person speaks for every person within a religious tradition: each person can speak only to their experiences. No one can speak for every person in an entire faith, though often religious communities will have religious leaders who are able to speak in general about their faith. Certain terrorists do claim to be Muslims, and in the field of Religious Studies, one cannot simply dismiss this. This all being said, the point being made here is that terrorists do not represent the vast majority of Muslims, and many within the Islamic tradition do not regard terrorists as Muslims. This suggests that the term “radical Islamic terrorism” is simply incorrect.

This is due in large part to the *Qurʾān*, the holy book and source of the Muslim faith. It is believed that the *Qurʾān* is the Word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad as the final in a series of revelations to mankind that includes the Torah, Psalms, and the Gospel (*Qurʾān* 4:163; 5:44 – 46). In the religion of Islam, there is no hierarchy or “church” structure. There is no one person who leads the Muslim people, such as the Roman Catholic Pope leads Catholics. Instead, the faith of Islam is based on its sacred writings, of which the *Qurʾān* is the most important and authoritative. The *Qurʾān* was in large part ahead of its time when it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Compiled during the Middle Ages, this holy book calls for peace and just actions. The word *islam* itself is translated as “peace.” *Qurʾān* 2:208 famously calls for believers to “enter into Islam [i.e. peace] wholeheartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Evil One.” In the *Qurʾān*, 160 verses explicitly call for peace; only two verses call outright for violence, and in both cases, the verse is situated in the context of a war already started by non-Muslims. These verses, often

quoted by terrorist groups, do not give Muslims a reason to go kill indiscriminately; they simply give Muslims permission to fight if it is necessary to protect their homes and families (Gupta).

Some people might be confused by this, as they feel that the notion of *jihad* as introduced in the *Qurʾān* means that the holy text supports violence. This arises from a lack of understanding about the concept of *jihad*. The topic is a complex one. The word means “struggle,” and in the *Qurʾān* and the later Muslim writings, the word primarily

refers to the struggle of each individual to choose God and good over the forces of evil. *Jihad* is often described as fourfold: one can perform *jihad* with his heart, his mouth, his hands, or, lastly and least importantly, his sword. *Jihad* of the heart is personal struggle; *jihad* of the mouth and hands is the responsibility to support what is right and act to change what is wrong. One saying from the Prophet Muhammad reads, “The most excellent *jihad* is the uttering of truth in the presence of an unjust ruler” (Ali, *A Manual of Hadith* 398). The last *jihad*, by the sword, is considered the least important, and is often thought of as “just war,” that is, war fought for a just reason, following strict rules such as those recorded above, (Khadduri 56 – 57). *Jihad* does not mean murdering Muslims and non-Muslims alike simply for not agreeing with the ideas that one holds.

Additionally, the *Qurʾān* sets forth many rules about how war ought to be waged in order to maintain human dignity. One such rule commands that if an enemy wishes for peace, the Muslim community ought to comply: “But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline toward peace” (*Qurʾān* 8: 61). Additional rules are included in the collection of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad

For the sake of clarity, and out of respect to the worldwide Muslim community, American politicians, media outlets, and the public ought to stop using the term ‘radical Islamic terrorism.’

known as the *Hadith*. The *Hadith* are second only to the *Qurʾān* in terms of authoritativeness. Multiple sayings command Muslims not to harm non-combatants such as a famous command from the *Hadith* collection known as *Sahih al-Bukhari*, “so the Messenger of Allah [i.e. “God”], peace and blessings of Allah be on him, forbade the killing of women and children” (Ali, *A Manual of Hadith* 264). Later Muslim legal theory expanded on these rules, and current law collections include such mandates as getting one’s parents’ permission before going off to war, not instigating war but only responding to it, and not to mutilate an enemy or “kill treacherously” (Khadduri 86; 104 – 107).

Because terrorists do not follow rules of combat as set out in the *Qurʾān* and later tradition, and because of the sheer inhumanity of their actions, Muslim scholars universally denounce terrorism (Gupta). A number of people doubt both of these statements: terrorists do not follow Islamic law, and leading Muslims denounce terrorism. Many people believe that since terrorists are thought to follow *sharia* law, these terrorists should be called “Islamic terrorists.” But many scholars would argue that these groups are not, in fact, practicing *sharia* or Islamic law properly. First, it must be remembered that while these terms have negative connotations in the West, they are not inherently evil concepts. Just as the law codes of the Torah in the Hebrew Bible are not evil, neither is the law set out in the *Qurʾān*. And for the most part, to the shock of many non-Muslims, the laws of the *Qurʾān* were actually very progressive for its time, and the majority of the law is based off of the peaceful statements of the *Qurʾān* and *Hadith*. The Islamic system of religious law is not a monolithic concept and has many interpretations. There is no singular collection of laws. While there are some medieval concepts and opinions left in the law collections, most Muslims find these outdated and either say that they are not relevant or else seek to find a metaphorical meaning in them (Gupta). It should also be remembered that *sharia* is not the same as the civil laws of predominantly Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia or Iran. Neither are religion and culture the same thing: one will find

that a certain culture's treatment of women, for example, is not the same as the religious ideals of that culture.

Others doubt that Muslim leaders have sufficiently spoken out against terrorists. A wide array of *fatwas* has been produced denouncing terrorism. *Fatwas* are religious opinions handed down by Muslim leaders on matters of faith. Since there is no hierarchy or church structure in Islam, a *fatwa* derives its authority from the consent of the Muslim community: thus *fatwas* from widely accepted Muslim leaders have stronger authority. In a monumental, 600-page *fatwa*, a leading Canadian Muslim scholar began his argument against terrorism by stating that "Muslims oppose and condemn terrorism in unequivocal terms and are not ready to accept it as even remotely related to Islam in any manner" (Tahir-al-Qadri 25). Qadri goes on to describe how Islamic teaching and legal tradition do not defend terrorist actions and even goes so far as to state that acts of terror are acts of "unbelief." Qadri provides several prominent examples of why this term is simply not a correct term, the clearest of which is that terrorists are not universally recognized as Muslims. High profile *fatwas* can also be found issued in 2007 by the Fiqh Council of North America ("North American Muslims"), in 2008 by the Deoband religious seminary in India, the second most prestigious Muslim institution of its kind (Sardar), and as recently as 2015, when 70,000 Muslim leaders denounced members of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the group called ISIS, and declared that members of such organizations are not considered Muslims (Frej).

This has caused additional confusion. Why is it that a group that calls itself the "Islamic State" should not be called a "radical Islamic terrorist" organization? By calling itself the Islamic State, this particular group is claiming that it has established a *caliphate*, a Muslim nation whose leader, the *caliph*, in this case Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ought to be considered the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad. The group ISIS has declared through their name that they are the rightful, worldwide *caliphate*. Their claim has less to do with their



insistence on a Muslim identity than it has to do with their dreams of world domination. The last thing that the United States should do is justify such claims by referring to them as “Islamic terrorists.” Other nations agree with this policy: for example, both the French foreign minister and prime minister refrain from using the names “ISIS,” “ISIL,” or the “Islamic State” to describe this group (Zakaria).

Returning to the denunciation of terrorists by Muslim leaders, Qadri, in his 2010 *fatwa*, similarly declared them to be in a state of “unbelief,” that they have rejected the teachings of the *Qurʾān*. This leads to the suggestion that terrorists be labelled “apostates” from mainstream Islam. Both the terms “unbelief” and “apostasy” have to do with the denial of certain aspects of Islam. To be specific, an apostate is “a Muslim who rejects Islam, and/or converts to another religion” (Saeed 36). Different Muslim scholars have different opinions about what actions qualify a person as an apostate. Abu Bark al-Jazaʾiri maintains that “belief that an unlawful act such as... theft [or] murder... is lawful” (qtd. in Saeed 45). Certainly, terrorists who indiscriminately kill and attempt to justify their actions with the *Qurʾān* can be considered apostates using this definition. Suicide bombers are especially targeted as people who have rejected Islam, as both the *Qurʾān* and *Hadith* forbid suicide. The reasoning here is that “only God has the right to take a life” (Siddiqui 133). By this logic, both murder and suicide are forbidden in Muslim tradition, and thus, it is argued by many Muslim scholars that terrorists are not representative of the majority of Muslims, and their ideology does not represent either mainstream thought from any major sect of Islam.

Terrorists commit horrible actions, usually for political and economic reasons, and attempt to justify their actions through religion (Baldwin). Greed hides behind disfigured dogma. America should not unknowingly justify terrorist actions by referring to them as “radical Muslims.” For the sake of clarity, and out of respect to the worldwide Muslim community, American politicians, media outlets, and the public ought to stop using the term “radical Islamic terrorism.” Whether

terrorists are called simply “terrorists” or called by the popular name of each group, Americans ought to stop associating Islam with such violent acts of terror.

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. Identify the thesis statement in this essay and explain why you believe it is the thesis. Can you identify what the main topic of the essay is based on this thesis?
2. Identify three key pieces of information that support Hayden's argument. Why do you think these pieces of information are valid to the argument he is making?
3. Did Hayden's use of direct quotations from the Quran add credibility to his argument? Find a place in his essay where he quotes the Quran to support your reasoning.
4. Did you find a proper balance between information from outside sources and the author's own opinion? Pick one of the paragraphs in the text where there is a good balance. How will you use sources in your own essay to help support your claims?
5. Provide specific examples from the text of things that were done well? Is there anything you would do differently in your own essay?

## BACKGROUND

In his essay, “Drugs in the USA,” Nathan Lamb embarks on uncovering the mystery behind why incarcerated drug-users rarely overcome their addictions. He points out the staggering statistic that of the “1.5 million who suffer from addiction while in custody, only 11.2% of them receive any real specialized drug treatment” (Lamb 2). In other words, the environment in which these addicts are held provides little to no help in the addiction recovery process. Through his use of detailed research, Lamb is able to support his claim that the best way for addicts to overcome their addictions is not through incarceration, but through decriminalization.

## NATHAN LAMB

Nathan Lamb is from Syracuse, Utah. In his spare time, he enjoys listening to music, reading, and going on hikes. He is a junior at Utah State majoring in Statistics.

## DRUGS IN THE USA: INCARCERATION VS DECRIMINALIZATION

Nathan Lamb

Imagine suffering from addiction to an illegal drug. You feel completely helpless in the face of your addiction, yet fearful to seek help due to the possible legal ramifications. You've seen countless others like you go to prison for their addictions and watched as they come back a few months or years later, only to return to the exact same lifestyle that they had before. Sadly, this is the reality for millions in the United States. Substance abuse is an enormously prevalent problem in the United States. There are over 23.5 million people in the United States addicted to drugs (Feliz), and many of these drugs are illicit, controlled substances that could land the user in prison if he or she is caught with possession of them. The United States has a long track record of incarcerating its drug-users and addicts, but in recent years many people have started to question whether incarceration is an effective method for ending addiction and preventing future drug-use. The incarceration of addicts and drug-users is not only unethical and ineffective, it has also been a key-player in perpetuating addictions. The decriminalization of drugs, along with the expansion of drug-education and addiction-treatment, is a much more effective, as well as cheaper, deterrent for drug-use than incarceration. These strategies will also help to better assist current addicts in overcoming their addictions and reintegrating back into society.

Over 1.5 million prison inmates, which is just over 65% of all prison inmates, suffer from addictive personality disorder (Califano), and one of the main reasons incarceration has failed to be effective in deterring drug-use is because of how the addictions of these inmates persist during their sentences. Of the 1.5 million who suffer from addiction while in custody, only 11.2% of them receive any real special-

ized drug treatment, and drug use for some addicts often continues even while *in custody* (Rodenberg). This environment leads to the inability of addicts to break the cycle of addiction because all of the risk factors that existed for them outside of prison still existed inside prison as well.

Prison systems have failed drug addicts because the way they run is based on a fundamental lack of understanding of addiction and how it should be treated. The hope is that incarcerating an addict will scare him/her out of doing drugs in the future, but this simply is not how addiction works. Addiction is a complex mental disorder that manifests itself over a period of time and is often very difficult to treat effectively. Addiction changes the way the brain works, and prisons are not able to effectively address this in a manner that is helpful to addicts. I have known several people who have struggled with drug addiction, some have struggled with it their whole lives, and not a single one of them would ever say that incarceration is helpful in solving their problems. Addiction needs to be treated with care, but prisons function based on neglect. Throwing an addict in prison for possession or distribution of drugs is the moral equivalent of throwing someone with depression in prison for trying to commit suicide. It is inhumane and severely dehumanizes the person with the disorder. The fact that drugs are still available in some prisons is reason alone to suspect the effectiveness of incarcerating drug-users. In one study, researchers even found that 1 in 6 prison inmates developed an addiction to an illicit substance *while* serving their sentence (Whitehead). This is especially disturbing, because it shows that prisons can, in some cases, actually cause the number of drug-users to grow. When one of the main functions of prison is supposed to be rehabilitation, how can we rationalize sending those convicted of drug crimes to a place where the risk for addiction is still profound?

Perhaps the largest reason for the ineffectiveness of incarceration when it comes to drug-use is the high recidivism rates that exist with drug-criminals. Recidivism rates measure the propor-

tion of convicts who are released from prison and then re-arrested for another crime over a period of time. In other words, constantly have drug-offenders coming in and out of the revolving door. This is not helpful for anyone—it's simply a waste of money and resources, but sadly, it happens all too often. A government report from 2014 showed that of those who were released from incarceration for drug offenses in 2005, 76.9% of them were re-arrested for another crime (often times committed while under the influence of drugs), and 38.8% of them were re-arrested for drug-crimes within five years of their release (Cooper). This study indicates something that is essential for understanding why incarceration is ineffective in deterring drug use: it shows that a significant proportion of drug-users are simply unaffected by the period they spent incarcerated, and that they continue to be apathetic towards their own drug use even when they find themselves in the situation of potentially being incarcerated again.

Because spending time in prison seems to have very little effect when it comes to deterring criminal behavior, many mental health experts have begun to theorize what it is about prisons exactly that is so ineffective. One psychopharmacologist in particular, Murray Jarvik, argued that “curtailing the supply of demanded drugs has been compared to squeezing a balloon: constrict it in one place and it expands somewhere else,” and that “a greater proportion of federal resources should be devoted to reduction of [drug] demand” (Jarvik 389, 391). This observation reveals one of the most important reasons that incarceration fails to deter drug-use: incarceration only addresses the supply side of the supply-demand dynamic between drugs and drug-users. If a demand exists for something, then there will be a way for that demand to be met, no matter how hard someone tries to curtail the supply. If we want to effectively address our nation's substance abuse problems, then we must take Jarvik's advice and move on to utilizing methods that help to curb the *demand* for drugs rather than the supply chain. Jarvik also argues that the most effective methods in fighting the demand for drugs include implementation of drug edu-



cation programs as preventative measures and expanding drug-treatment availability (Jarvik 390). Jarvik is correct in his assumption that these two methods will help to fight the demand and overall usage of drugs effectively.

Jarvik's assumptions have been validated by several encouraging studies that show the effectiveness of drug-treatment as a deterrent for drug-use, including a study that split 396 drug-dependent prisoners into two groups: one that received drug treatment and one that did not. The study showed that the members of the group who received drug-treatment were ten percent less likely to be re-arrested during the 13-23 month follow up period compared to those who did not receive any drug treatment (Hiller). This shows that drug-treatment

Prison systems have failed drug addicts because the way they run is based on a fundamental lack of understanding of addiction and how it should be treated.

actively works to reduce recidivism rates amongst drug-offenders. Stand-alone drug treatment outside of prisons has also shown to be much more cost-effective than methods of drug-deterrence that involve incarceration. A study found that for every one dollar

put towards therapeutic community drug-treatment that occurs outside of prison, there is \$8.87 worth of benefits compared to the \$1.91 to \$2.69 of benefits that are generated by similar programs inside of prisons (Aos 30).

Although it is good that drug-treatment is being currently implemented in some U.S. prisons, and that it is effectively helping to stop drug-use, it is still being utilized along with incarceration, which we've shown puts drug-users and addicts at greater risk for recidivism, as well as future-drug use. Also, we established earlier that barely 1 in 10 addicts in prison receive treatment for addiction during

their sentence, so the programs currently in place help only a very small minority of addicts in prisons. Incarcerating drug-addicts also carries heavy social implications that make it very difficult for former felons to ever fully rehabilitate and reintegrate back into society. For example, former drug felons struggle to find high-end employment opportunities for the rest of their life, and several of them will also never be allowed to vote, or will even have their families taken away from them. These more social, often times forgotten and overlooked, punishments are unwarranted for drug-addicts because the difficulties that they face with addiction are the results of a mental disorder, not from chronic bad behavior. We don't legally punish those who have depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or even those who struggle with addiction to legal drugs like alcohol, so why should we punish those who struggle with other kinds of drug addiction? How can the United States provide drug-treatment for its addicts while avoiding these critical downfalls that are associated with incarceration?

Oftentimes looking to other countries or cultures can help reveal how to solve different problems by watching the way that other societies have handled them; such is true when it comes to drug-policy and the country of Portugal. Portugal decriminalized the use of drugs in 2001 amidst an HIV/AIDS epidemic as a sort of political experiment to see how it would affect drug-use, and along with it they started a comprehensive drug-treatment program that helps to serve addicts overcome their addictions rather than throw them in prison. The way the system works in Portugal is if someone is found guilty of having a small amount of drugs on their person, they are then sent to be evaluated for treatment (which can be refused) by a group of individuals including doctors and social workers. The government pays for all of these services.

The results these policies have had on drug use in Portugal have been nothing short of astounding. Since decriminalization policies have been set in place, Portugal has seen over a 100% rise in the amount of people who actively seek drug treatment. Portugal now

has a smaller proportion of people using marijuana (an objectively harmless drug) than the proportion of people in the United States that use cocaine (an objectively harmful drug), and drug deaths related to hard opiates like heroin have decreased by almost 50%. Not only did Portugal's decriminalization of drugs result in decreasing rates of drug-use all across the board, but it also saved the country billions of dollars and allowed for drug-treatment programs to be even further expanded (Szalavitz). Essentially, Portugal found out that the correct way to handle and prevent addiction is through treating addiction like a disease rather than like a crime. This sets an incredible precedence for the future of drug-policy in America and other countries around the world, and it also provides solid evidence that replacing criminal sentences with widely available drug-treatment is an effective method for reducing drug use and treating addiction. Portugal can be seen as the prime example for why decriminalization should be a choice worth considering when it comes to tackling the United States' problems with substance abuse.

The best place that the United States could start when it comes to implementing drug decriminalization would be to repeal the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, which is the piece of legislation that essentially created the current system of drug illegalization in America today. Repealing this act would completely get rid of the drug scheduling system, as well as assist in breaking down manda-

Incarcerating drug-addicts also carries heavy social implications that make it very difficult for former felons to ever fully rehabilitate and reintegrate back into society.

tory minimum sentence laws which are another massive contributor to the incarceration of drug-users and addicts. Along with this, it would be smart to release all current prison inmates who are incarcerated for drug offenses (unless they are serving time for other violent offenses of

course), and immediately assist them in getting the drug-treatment that they need.

Opponents of drug decriminalization may argue that we do not have the funding for this kind of widely available drug-treatment, but this is not true. The money the state and federal governments save from not incarcerating drug-users could be immediately put towards establishing drug treatment centers and hiring social workers. Also, we already established the fact that monetary benefits of treating drug-users far outweigh those of incarcerating them, so there really is no significant fiscal risk when it comes to implementing this kind of a system.

There is no reason for the United States to continue to waste billions of dollars on the long-tried method of incarceration when we know that there are such beneficial alternatives not only for drug-users, but also for society as a whole. The United States should strive to implement a system similar to that of Portugal's because it has shown to be effective in solving substance abuse problems, and it puts the best qualities of human empathy on display by treating addicts like actual humans with a mental disorder rather than treating them like subhuman criminals.

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the thesis statement in this essay? After reading through the essay, explain whether or not you feel this thesis is appropriate in establishing the essay's main argument.
2. How effective is the conclusion? Provide a specific part of the conclusion that you feel does a good job at bringing the argument to a close.
3. Provide a specific example from this essay that describes a solution to the problem posed. What makes this an effective solution?
4. Identify the topic sentences of each of the body paragraphs. From the topic sentences can you tell if the essay is organized in an effective way? Why or why not?

In today's world, continual advances in technology are making it easier and faster to obtain answers to questions than ever before. It seems that problem solving with a pencil and paper has become almost entirely obsolete. It is this very problem that Collin Butterfield addresses in his research essay, "The Calculator Crutch." Using personal experiences and interviews with several different public school teachers to support his argument, Butterfield determines that calculators should be banned from the elementary school curriculum.

## COLLIN BUTTERFIELD



Collin Butterfield is from West Jordan, Utah. He will be going into his junior year of college, and he is currently studying Economics and Finance. When he is not studying and cramming for tests, he loves to hit the Fun Park for some good country swing dancing. The outdoors are his playing field. He loves to ski, camp, and ride four wheelers. When he is stressed and just needs a break, he likes to go out and give his javelin a toss.

## THE CALCULATOR CRUTCH

Collin Butterfield

“What is 6 divided by 1,” I ask my energetic 6<sup>th</sup> grader with hope that this will help him progress on the current problem. Moments go by, him fidgeting with his fingers and counting the imaginary floating numbers, and then with confidence and excitement he shouts, “2!” I stop him and ask him to try again. Looking discouraged he finds his way back to his desk and uses the “cheat sheet” taped to the top-left corner. With enthusiasm he runs back yelling, “6!”

As a senior in high school, I had the wonderful opportunity to volunteer as a 6<sup>th</sup> grade math tutor at the local elementary school; I helped the kids finish their homework and run-through problems to help them grasp new concepts. After the first couple of visits, I was astonished and disappointed to see the countless students that had to use the so-called “cheat sheet” taped on their desk or the calculator sitting in their tote to solve very basic math problems. As the years go by, the technology improves and the age at which we are exposed to technology becomes much younger. For this reason, many argue that kids should know how to use a calculator in the elementary setting, while others say that calculators are destroying the very skills needed for their future. Who is right and what should be done? We should not allow calculators to be a part of the elementary school curriculum because children are under-developing their mental ability, being limited to pattern discovery, and are losing the gift of perseverance.

The philosophical war rages. On one side: the accused “kill and drillers,” dedicated to times tables and long division, preaching the gospel of repetition and memorization. On the other side: alleged “fuzzy math” reformers preaching concept over content, insight over “right.” Between them: the most visible symbol of the continuing conflict—the classroom calculator. (Starr)



Calculators harm the development of students' mental ability because mathematical talent is greatly impacted by having the intellectual capacities necessary to solve and reason what concepts are and why they work. According to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, reasoning stands at the center of mathematical learning. "Mathematics is a discipline that deals with abstract entities, and reasoning is the tool for understanding abstraction" (Shulte 1). To make sense of this the National Council of Mathematics gives an example using the idea of "fiveness" (Shulte 1) It is not just five fingers or five apples, but the concept of "5" itself. A student at some point makes the conscious connection between what "5" really means and what it is used for. This can be said for most any concept: the idea of a square, not just a box, the idea of sharp, not just a knife. This basic idea of concepts is very important to learning, specifically when taking into consideration that concepts build on one another and need to be retained, especially in the world of mathematics. With this in mind, our children's mental ability to comprehend the mathematical theories in the classroom are very important. This raises the question: do calculators permit for this type of comprehension in the classroom?

Ms. Juliana Seaman, an educator for the last 15 years in the Jordan School District and my own 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, articulates that calculators can be very useful to higher level students, preparing them for more advanced classes. Seaman also clarifies, "dependence on a tool without knowing the why is a deterrent to learning." As a student learns theories and applies them in practice, it is very important that the student understands why the 5 is subtracted or why all the numbers must be added first and then divided. Writing down numbers on a piece of paper just because that is how it is supposed to be done can cause frustration, especially when the problem has been switched around or the concept is needed as a part of another solution. David Forbush, a Doctor in Behavioral Analysis with an emphasis on children, agrees with Seaman and states that many children have disabilities and that a calculator can be a way for those kids to solve problems,

understanding that it is a tool. However, Forbush also explains that there is value in solving a problem by long-hand and being able to see that problem on paper. When students write down the problem statement, all the given information, and the variable in question, it allows them to develop a sense of procedure and helps them to make logical sense of what is being asked and what steps are necessary to answer the question. Students' reasoning is enhanced and their mental ability strengthened every time they complete a problem the long way. If schoolboys or girls simply push buttons on a calculator and copy the answer that appears at the bottom of the screen, they limit themselves in the cognition of reasoning and therefore restrict their mental capacity. Calculators do help children obtain correct answers; however, the calculator does the "reasoning" for them, creating a dependency.

Depending on a calculator limits children's ability to discover and retain patterns. Some may say that there are many advantages to the promotion of a classroom calculator. It allows students to have better number sense and solve more problems in a shorter amount of time to understand the concept. Calculators also allow for simplification of tasks and determining

When student write down the problem statement, all the given information, and the variable in question, it allows them to develop a sense of procedure and helps them to make logical sense of what is being asked and what steps are necessary to answer the question.

the best method of procedure. Nevertheless, on the other side of the coin, "calculators...keep students from benefiting from one of the most important reasons for learning math—to train and discipline the mind" (Starr). When students use the calculator to perform tasks and operations, they miss out on the opportunity to discover underlying math concepts. There is no critical thinking; there is only input and answer when using a

device. It is hard to discipline the mind when the mind is the computer sitting on the desk. Mastery over the key-stroke does not allow for reason to be retained. When an athlete trains for a competition, they spend countless hours on the court practicing their shot, pushing up the barbell in the weight room, and running sprints on the field, practicing and learning the patterns to success. They do not watch someone else do it on the television or on a YouTube clip in hopes that the skill will magically appear. The same can be applied for a student and the “sport” of mathematics. Children need to spend time writing equations down, thinking of the “why,” and making eraser-smudges in order to find and comprehend the patterns of success.

A student’s achievements in learning is greatly attributed to a teacher’s ability to teach. “Tough to teach” topics, according to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, become easier to teach when using a calculator, because of the many ways a calculator can be used (Schulte 169). However, the council cautions that teachers need to know how to connect the calculator with the diagrammatic models (Schulte 277). Calculators offer many different functions, some of which can be very complex. Though calculators can cause thought provoking questions, they can also act as a distraction. Many students try to use functions higher than their ability, such as cosine and logarithms, resulting in unnecessary struggles that leave them confused and frustrated. Helping students walk through a problem on paper, explaining the necessary steps and why they must be taken, greatly benefits pattern discovery. Allowing children to see what can be accomplished by hand allows for a deeper comprehension and a more profound self-confidence.

Can a calculator provide a greater grasp of the topic at hand? Kelly Haramoto, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher from Sunrise Elementary, explains the importance of calculators. He mentions that a calculator is essential for students, that it helps them to be “more accurate and efficient”. However, Haramoto also points out that students need to know their “math facts [i.e. basic math operations such as multiplication] and

strategies” before they can move on to using a calculator for multi-step problems. Why would a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher make the claim that “math facts” need to come first? Without the basic knowledge of operations and sequences, students will not understand why systems are necessary or how to plug the numbers into the calculator. Order of operations is critical in calculator mechanics. Push one wrong button and the solution could be drastically off. But how would student know this if they solely depended on the calculator answer, not understanding the underlying concepts? “Memorization is a brain function that needs to be exercised and used throughout our life. Our brain is a muscle that can be strengthened or atrophy, similar to other muscles in our body” (Seaman). The human body always wants to do that which is easier, whether that be physical or mental. When we give permission to use calculators at such a young age, our children do not actively use their wonderful minds for processing. The brain and neuron pathways are not built, and pattern discovery stays buried in the sands of time.

Pattern discovery is an important element when mastering mathematics, and will be used over and over again as students progresses through high school and on to college. If children do not develop the ability to realize and retain underlying chains of concepts, they will not be able to keep up with the quick pace of the world. Patterns do not just apply to math; they apply to everyday scenarios and adventures. Many arguments claim that calculators do allow for efficiency and accuracy, but for what? If students do not understand the meaning behind the numbers, what is the justification of even progressing onto another concept that builds on the last? We live in a “button-pushing” generation; we like the easy path, avoiding the “hard” route. Undertaking the “hard” things allows for growth and

If children do not develop the ability to realize and retain underlying chains of concepts, they will not be able to keep up with the quick pace of the world.

progression. This can only be realized if one has the desire and ability to press forward.

Shenel Downard, a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher from Sunrise Elementary, explains that calculators help increase the desire to solve problems. Calculators may allow for easy simplifications and shortcuts, but cheating can arise from them (Concordia). Do we want our young students to give up so easily? What happens when they have a test or are without the right program for the problem at hand? Our children need to know what the gift of perseverance is. They need to know that it is okay to write down the extra steps and use their eraser to fix their errors. While I was a 6<sup>th</sup> grade tutor, there were many times when I asked the student to write down all the steps to help them solve and understand the concept, but the only reply I would receive were cries and questions about why they had to do it the “hard way.” Writing out all the steps allows a student to recognize errors and learn to be meticulous. There were many moments when I would think to myself, “Is this acceptable? Why are they being taught this way?”

In an interview with Dr. David Forbush, he observed that for some children it does not matter the method or tool, as long as the student obtains the right answer. While Elizabeth Berezay, an enthusiastic mom of young children from Cache Valley, thinks that the children of today depend on calculators too much. She believes a big part of this dependency is caused because students see their moms and dads using calculators and their phones for all “basic” math tasks. The kids of today have a plethora of tools, but the greatest tool of all, *the mind*, is often underused and set aside to collect dust. Haramoto, as mentioned earlier, states that students need to be responsible for their math facts. How are we supposed to encourage our students to be responsible for their math facts if they give up trying within seconds of starting? Elementary school has the calculator, high school has spell-check, and college has the answers in the back-of-the-book. Perseverance develops over time, and the route can be found in elementary experiences.

A few questions have been posed: why do we teach our kids spelling and grammar? Why do those subjects still exist if all typing programs have a spell-check? It does not matter if you know how to spell a word or not, the smart-phone will auto-correct, or the computer will underline it with red squiggles. The same analogy can be drawn for mathematics. The more we rely on calculators to give us the correct answers, the more our basic math skills dwindle. All assignments nowadays are completed on Word or Notepad; for high school, college and graduate school. Why learn how to spell words when the time could more effectively be used to learn a more beneficial subject like programming or economics? The operation of is just as important as learning how to spell and interpret *there*, *their* and *they're*. We want our kids to see the patterns in spelling, training their minds to recognize the word immediately, thus allowing them to become bright, intelligent people. Is math so different?

“The calculator should facilitate math, not math facilitating the calculator” (Hill). From my own experience, I consider myself to be an extreme case. Through my years of school, my dad never allowed me to use a calculator until I had passed geometry and algebra II. I remember countless nights whining and begging my dad to let me use a calculator, but every response I received corresponded to writing it all down and *not* skipping any steps. Progressing in my educational career has taken me down a series of math courses: calculus, linear algebra, and differential equations. All of these classes did not allow a calculator. However, because of my dad’s strict counsel, I was able to pass the classes with great grades. Math is all around: every tick on the clock and every penny that slips into our pockets gives us the reality of math at its most basic. Math is a world of discovery that unlocks and builds the mind to be a creative and effective tool. Math at times may be difficult, concepts may be hard to grasp, and other times erasing a hole in the paper is the only option. Mathematics is a learned discipline, a method of speech and expression. For decades the expression “mind over matter: has brought the human

race through wars, disasters, and agony. But I ask: in society today is it scientist or super-computer, student or calculator, man or machine?

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. Where is the thesis statement in this essay? Quote from the text and explain what things make this a thesis statement.
2. Discuss the difference between a primary source and a secondary source. Find an example of each in this essay.
3. Identify all of the places where Lamb quotes teachers he personally interviewed. What is the benefit of doing personal interviews with professionals?
4. Look for an example of where Lamb describes a personal experience to emphasize the point he is trying to make. Is this an effective strategy? Explain your answer.
5. Evaluate the sources listed on the Works Cited page, then search for the place where each of these sources was used in the essay. Were each of these sources used in a meaningful way to support the overall argument? Provide at least one example and explain.



## BACKGROUND

In her persuasive research essay, Jessica Harrison provides evidence from the history of America to prove that the Civil Rights Movement still lives on today. From slavery, to the time of Martin Luther King, Jr., all the way up to today, Harrison argues that racism has been, and still is a prevalent issue in the U.S. She goes on to pose a variety of solutions for change that different groups are trying and says that, though there is no one right solution to end racism, "change IS possible" (8).

### JESSICA HAHN



Jessica Hahn was born and raised in Centerville, Utah. In her spare time she enjoys being outdoors participating in activities such as hiking, camping, hanging out next to a lake, or even just tossing a frisbee around with her husband and friends. She also enjoys reading (especially Harry Potter) and watching movies/shows on Netflix while consuming a

seemingly unhealthy amount of popcorn. She loves spending time just goofing off or playing card games with family and friends. Jessica is a History Teaching Major with an English Teaching Minor and will be a sophomore during the 2016-2017 school year at Utah State.

## “I HAVE A DREAM TODAY!” HOW THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT LIVES ON

Jessica Hahn

On August 28, 1963, thousands gathered at the steps of the Lincoln Monument in Washington D.C. to hear the words of Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King’s, “I Have a Dream” speech entered into the hearts and minds of millions that day and continues to stand as a beacon of hope to Americans today. King’s dream relied on equality, justice, and brotherly love. Defiant to the status quo, King served unyieldingly as the leader of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). His goal, and the goal of many, was to desegregate America, combat racism, and diminish poverty in order to create “a nation where they [our children] will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character” (King). This noble cry for justice and equality for all inspired a nation and a world. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech created a crowning moment in the CRM. The movement began in the 1950s, concentrated mostly in the South, where black citizens began to organize into groups with the goal of creating an environment where social change was possible. The CRM was centered on non-violent protests with the purpose of drawing attention to the goals of integrating the nation, providing equality for all Americans regardless of race, and doing away with racist thought that had long plagued our nation’s history. King eloquently outlines these goals in his speech, thereby making these aims of the CRM his personal dream for our nation.

Americans everywhere adopted this dream and worked through blood and tears to see legislation passed which provided them basic rights as citizens. They had previously been denied these rights through clauses like “separate but equal” and loopholes such as literacy tests. Politically, the CRM achieved a great number of these goals that have brought glorious opportunities to African Americans. Kenneth Andrews and Sarah Gaby explain in a study that the CRM

was highly effective with its strategy for social change that caused federal legislation to be passed. Their analysis showed that the work done by civil rights activists was influential to say the least (Andrews and Gaby 510). Without the influence protestors made on the local level, laws that allowed for so many benefits would never have been passed. The effects of the CRM are still felt today as more black Americans make new advances in society. Educational opportunities have opened to black Americans, and we've even come so far as to elect and re-elect a black president. The progress made in the last fifty years is exceptional. However, we would be a blind nation if we were to believe that Dr. King's dream has been completely fulfilled. In regard to the end of legal segregation, America has seen King's dream come to fruition. However, King's dream has not been fully realized and we must continue to progress toward the final level of inequality that remains: we must end racist thought.

There's no doubt that the CRM left a positive impact for black Americans, but it was by no means the end-all. In his speech, Dr. King explains, "There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until

The problem  
America has with  
racial thought  
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do with how  
ideals are  
rooted in society  
and culture.

justice emerges." Our nation continues to "shake" because the criteria outlined throughout his speech has yet to be fulfilled. Gary Younge, in an article for *The Nation* magazine, presents a statistic that proves racism still dictates much in the lives of black Americans. "Conversely, over half of whites believe that civil rights for blacks has 'greatly improved' in their lifetime, compared to just 29 percent of blacks," as well as, "whites are four times as likely as blacks to believe that America has achieved racial equal-

ity” (17). These figures express an idea that the problems America has with race remain below the surface. While de jure discrimination is outlawed, the de facto consequences ail black Americans now.

Our current comprehension of racism is the result of an evolution of discrimination. To understand racism in America, it's important to know where it came from and how it expanded. When European colonies began importing Africans to serve as slaves in the Americas it was more for economic reasons than for racial reasons. Africans were sold by other Africans to Europeans because it was convenient trade and because tribes had a long history of enslaving individuals from other tribes. Racism began as a result of the slave trade, not the other way around. Over decades, slave owners found ways to dehumanize black slaves in order to maintain control over slave populations that greatly outnumbered the white masters and overseers. Dehumanizing techniques soon became commonplace, and before long, white was superior to black, at least in the minds of oppressors. Shackles, beatings, and brutalization were the lives of black slaves. Despite the American ideal that all men are created equal, black slaves were *not* equal. For decades after the beginning years of the United States of America, black Americans were considered only three-fifths of a person. The Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments allocated blacks' rights that they had been deprived of for centuries. But this victory also gave rise to lynch mobs and the Ku Klux Klan. Blacks weren't enslaved, but they were segregated. Racism embedded deeply into American culture. While most black citizens had the right to vote, Southern blacks were prevented from voting due to unfair tests and laws, such as Jim Crow laws, that hindered voter registration. Meanwhile, Northern blacks refrained from voting simply because they felt their vote would never matter. Luckily, the CRM provided the backdrop for change that the nation so desperately needed.

Today we see racism in ways that are comparably subtle. Racism is found in our educational system, our criminal justice/pris-

on system, and our police system. Tahseen Shams, a researcher in the humanities department at UCLA, researched racism in America, and in regards to education she explains,

Teachers, unaware of acting in racist ways, unintentionally perpetrate existing inequalities by awarding the already privileged (wealthy White students) and penalize the already oppressed (poor Black students) because of schools' meritocratic structure. Racialized moments in classrooms accumulate to produce racist patterns of unequal treatment. (286)

Pre-existing, unconscious racial thought prevents black and minority students from reaching the same potential that white students are afforded.

Regarding our criminal justice system, Shams explains that while the ratios of drug dealers and users between races is fairly even, the number of black men jailed is 20-50 times higher than that of white men. Also, "by disproportionately incarcerating Blacks in prisons, the government is systematically locking away a huge proportion of Blacks from mainstream society and economy, consequently gridlocking them into permanent second-class citizen status" (Shams 286). Whether or not the number of blacks in our prison system is a conscious form of racism is difficult to measure and decide definitively, yet the fact remains that when so much of a population is seen as criminal, it's no wonder people find it easy to stereotype black citizens as dangerous.

This stereotype feeds directly into the racial problems we face today with police and police brutality. Police brutality has been a hot topic in America over the past few years. In 2013, a young unarmed black man, Michael Brown, was shot by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. His death sparked an unprecedented reaction from around the nation. This event of police brutality pushed the organization of what is now known as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

Other acts of police brutality toward black citizens have fueled this movement as they draw attention to racial inequality at the hands of discriminatory police officers. These are not unlike the CRM's tactics, which used newspapers and cameras to publicize the cruelty they faced. Police brutality may not be unlike the evidence portrayed regarding teachers.

Officers may have preconceived ideas from societal norms, thus causing police to perceive a black man as a threat before rationally determining the potential dangers

Whether it be nationwide movements that draw attention to discrimination until minds are changed or through teaching young minds more completely, change is possible.

that may or may not be present. The problem America has with racial thought has nothing to do with assigning individual blame, and more to do with how ideals are rooted in society and culture.

The racial problems we face today are incredibly complex and no one solution can fix the vast number of issues before us. Race issues now occur in spheres that can't be controlled by government as effectively as we've experienced in the past. One example is social mobility. In 1980, Stuart A. Gabriel and Gary D. Painter began a 20-year study on how socioeconomic levels in black and other minority groups affected where they chose to live. At the beginning of their study, they estimated that residential segregation would diminish as the socioeconomic levels increased. However, when they returned in 2000, they found that the numbers were staggeringly different than anticipated. According to Gabriel and Painter, "while black location choice in 2000 was relatively more dispersed than in 1980, it remained remarkably concentrated" (809). The dispersal rate was nothing like they had believed it would be, showing that residential segregation was still prevalent. Despite climbing the socioeconomic ladder, Black, Latino, and immigrant populations remained in the same geographic

area. By not dispersing to new areas, they still attend the same low budget schools that are unable to provide great opportunities for social improvement.

Gabriel and Painter's study also points out that people don't move out of what are considered "rougher neighborhoods" because as families live in circumstances comparable with people similar to them, they feel more comfortable. Commonly, the desire for comfort isn't frowned upon, especially in social situations. Peter Grier and James N. Thurman wrote an article for the *Christian Science Monitor* after interviewing teenagers who were mostly white but included several minority groups in Denver and who shockingly aren't appalled by the notion of "separate but equal," a phrase that justified segregation. In fact, many of these youth supported the idea that as long as all were given an equal opportunity, there's no reason not to allow more segregation between different ethnicities. In exploring these surprising opinions, the authors explain, "Sticking with your own doesn't necessarily equal animosity toward others," (Grier and Thurman) a thought shared by the students. This idea, the students would explain, comes from education about race. With this education they believe they are able to look beyond prejudice, yet still believe that a separate but equal environment would not be toxic to social integration. Statistics from a poll the interviewers conducted show that 60 percent think that racial integration helps black students to do better, but 68 percent believe that more funding to minority schools would better serve black students' educations. Their reasoning is that students will learn better when they are with people similar to them culturally (Grier and Thurman). It isn't a horrible argument, but an argument that has proved false in the past. Dr. King's hope was to integrate America, that "one day... little black boys and girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and girls as sisters and brothers" (King). Living apart from one another isn't fulfilling the potential America has to use its diversity of human thought and experience to its best advantage. We need to change our thinking from racial thought to productive thought. The CRM laid the

groundwork for us to step out of our comfort zones and build a more accepting future.

Even with these modern examples, we see that the lives of blacks in America have improved overall. Going from persecution with slavery, to just persecution, to segregation, to quieter discrimination, we now find ourselves on the precipice of another CRM, this time setting forth to achieve the rest of Dr. King's dream.

As previously mentioned, there's no one perfect way to defeat racial thought, but that hasn't stopped groups from trying. Fredrick C. Harris dubbed the BLM movement the next CRM (34). The BLM movement is taking hold in the country as they, "demand that American society reconsider[s] how it values black lives" (Harris 34). With social media as a microphone, BLM participants seek to encourage Americans to understand black humanity. They put a heavy emphasis on humanity and beg people to understand that, "black lives matter because they are lives" (Harris 37) not because they want to place a greater value on black lives than on white lives. The resounding message of the BLM movement is equality: equality for blacks, women, homosexuals, and other oppressed minorities. Harris quotes Malcolm X when saying they wanted to "come up with a program that would make the world see that our problem was no longer a Negro problem or an American problem but a human problem" (qtd. in Harris 39). The Black Lives Matter movement has a foothold for change, and with their success, America might see less racist thought and more acceptance. However, this movement isn't perfect and there's heavy debate about whether the BLM movement is something the American public should be concerned about. But beyond the debate, the movement's ideals are important to American development and shouldn't be ignored. Whether someone joins this group or other groups like it is up to him or her as an individual. But all Americans need to adopt the attitude of standing up for life and equality of life. Personal initiative is the first step in the process of change.



Initiative can also be taken beginning with childhood education. In a study done by John H. Bickford III, he assesses how children's literature misrepresents historical figures and events of the CRM. He discusses how the books that portray an integral part of our nation's history often water-down the content to be less expressive of violent events and lack explanation of many significant events before, during, and after the CRM of the 1960s. He expresses, "if the story is to be told, the literature should not leave young readers with only half-truths to grasp," (Bickford 702). By further explaining the importance and significance of the CRM beginning at a young age, children could be more likely to grow up to enact further policy that allows for equality to continue. They will also be more accepting and tolerant of people who look and act differently, thereby increasing the gap between the American public and racist thought.

Using children's literature and education to better prepare children for society would result in students unlike the group in Denver. Students educated to seek diversity wouldn't see the merit in separating ethnic groups to acquire social comfort. The goal isn't just to end racist thought—though that is an essential and monumental step—the goal is to go beyond tolerance and hopefully create a nation that invites differences and uses that variety to enrich the country.

The change we seek will happen on a large scale, as well as on a small scale. Whether it be nationwide movements that draw attention to discrimination until minds are changed or through teaching young minds more completely, change *is* possible. In his speech, Dr. King acknowledges this possibility, which is why his words have remained in the hearts of Americans long after he stepped down from the podium. Change is possible because it is necessary. But it will never happen unless we accept that we still have a problem, seek to understand the issue, and change ourselves as individuals first and then as a society to encourage real equality for all Americans despite color or creed. The Civil Rights Movement did not end fifty years ago, it continues to struggle and will continue to struggle until we will do

as Dr. King prophesied and “join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you see a clear thesis statement in this essay? If so, what is it and do you feel like it fulfills its purpose for a Persuasive Research Essay?
2. Look at the transitions from paragraph to paragraph. Are these transitions effective in keeping the flow of the paper smooth and organized? Defend your answer using textual evidence.
3. In order to avoid plagiarism, it is very important to cite any sources used within an essay. In this essay, Hahn writes: "For decades after the beginning years of the United States of America, black Americans were considered only three-fifths of a person." Is this quote common knowledge, or do you think it needs a citation? Find this specific citation in the essay and defend your answer.
4. Find a place in Hahn's essay where you think she does a good job using a direct quote to back up a claim. Explain your reasoning.
5. Identify specific examples of ethos, pathos, and logos in this essay. How does the author do at balancing the rhetorical triangle? What things could she do to balance these elements more evenly in her essay?

After several years of grueling medical school and residency, it should come as no surprise that doctors are paid a hefty sum for their services. . . or are they? That is the questions Brian Moose addresses in his essay. Using a variety of compensation models, Moose reveals that physicians may not be getting compensated nearly enough for the quality of care they provide. With the help of detailed research, Moose pleads with the rising generation to take an interest in this issue today to avoid further issues tomorrow.

## BRIAN MOOSE



Brian Moose is from Bettendorf, Iowa. In his spare time he enjoys slacklining or training in Krav Maga, a self-defense form developed by the Israeli army in the 1940s. He likes to study a variety of different subjects such as shorthand and oncolytic virology.

Brian is a Pre-Med and Oboe Performance Major. He is a sophomore at USU.

# THE REAL COST OF QUALITY

Brian Moose

In the United States, the rising cost of health care is becoming a greater and greater issue. Many ideas have been considered and implemented in order to fight these rising costs. However, lowering costs often comes at the expense of decreases in quality of care. As medicine becomes more advanced, we hear greater cries for high quality care, especially in family practice or primary-care physicians. In addition to this, the dynamic of medicine is changing as physicians move from self-employment to working for larger health care organizations. This shift creates a unique opportunity that did not exist even 20 years ago—to fundamentally change physician compensation in a way that will reduce costs while increasing quality of care.

Throughout this paper, four compensation methods will be explained and evaluated in detail. These evaluations will start with the most common model, fee-for-service, followed by pay-for-performance, then capitation, and finally, salaries. The aspects considered will include the current usage of these models and their motivating factors, as well as the virtues and pitfalls of each. Through these evaluations it will become clear that the United States should move towards salaried work for physicians on the basis of reducing costs and achieving higher quality of care at all levels. The standard usage of fee-for-service has become unsustainable and pay-for-performance and capitation are insufficient for our needs. Moving towards salaried physician models, in addition to using a strict hospital budget, will greatly reduce the problem of health care costs and improve the quality of care for patients in all fields of medicine.

It is time to consider prospective compensation models, where compensation of the doctor is not linked to the services they provide.

The most commonly used compensation model today is the fee-for-service model. This relatively simple model calls for compensation that is directly proportional to the services rendered by the physician. Every procedure and diagnosis that a doctor performs or treats incurs its own billing value. Then the quantity of services provided is multiplied by the value assigned to those services (by the patient's insurance company) and a portion of that total is paid to the physician. Historically, independently practicing physicians have required this model. But as physicians transition from private practice to employed work, this compensation model is retained mostly out of ease and familiarity. Now it is creating a great drain on the health care system.

The fee-for-service system has its merits. This system directly compensates physicians for the work done and promotes volume of patients. Promoting volume is important in the primary-care setting where there is a very real shortage of physicians (Olson 492). This system is also valuable in that the cost of each service is well-established and accounted for by each insurance company. For privately practicing physicians, fee-for-service provides the most direct and understandable form of income. You are paid for what you do and not one penny more. From the economic standpoint, this makes a great deal of sense, which is why it has been the most enduring model of compensation. But as society advances, the purely economic standpoint is no longer sufficient for our needs and expectations.

Along with the many virtues of this system, there are many drawbacks as well. Fee-for-service does nothing to address or insure quality of care. There is a fundamental assumption that doctors will make decisions based entirely on the needs of patients and not consider their own needs. Joseph Bernstein asserts, "in fact, given the perverse incentives in physician payments, sometimes 'professionalism' has become almost synonymous with acting to protect one's patients at financial cost to oneself...It is an incomplete, and disheartening, view of professionalism that boils down simply to self-sacrifice" (884). To echo Bernstein's sentiment, research shows that this model does not

allow for physician altruism. Fee-for-service encourages unnecessary services and wastes time as physicians try to squeeze as much out of insurance companies as they can (Green). In response, insurance reduces the value of the services provided, and doctors encourage unnecessary tests with greater exuberance to make up for the reduction. This is a vicious cycle which drives up the costs of health care and decreases quality. Under the fee-for-service system, physicians lose virtually all control over the value of their work. When physicians work for a given health care organization, their compensation is determined by the centers for Medicare and Medicaid as well as the American Medical Association (491 Olsen). This leads to under-compensation and the exploitation of physicians, both perceived and literal, by the health care organization. Now over-treatment abounds and no thought is given to the quality of care that is being provided. Fee-for-service is flawed and too costly for the society of today.

Due to the lack of focus on quality, some have tried to create a system in which compensation is determined by the quality of a physician's work. This system is most commonly known as Pay-for-Performance, or P4P. The main goal of the P4P system is to meld the volume-based standard of fee-for-service and the practice of altruistic medicine to insure quality (Wynia 884). This system utilizes 'performance metrics' by which the physician is compared and then compensated, generally with the potential of bonuses, depending on how well the physician performs. This method has many virtues in theory and on paper, and is rather optimistic; however, this system presents more flaws than any other model conceived.

In order to demonstrate the flaws in pay-for-performance, let us first consider a study that compared the two P4P models between the UK and California as performed by McDonald, et al. This article's satirical tone demonstrates that even 'successes' are failures with P4P. In California, P4P completely broke down and was quickly replaced due to its failure in application. Physicians reported a 'lack of clarity' in the performance metrics, producing wide-spread dissatisfaction

with the system while distracting physicians from their patients. This lack of clarity stems from discrepancies in schools of thought, some of which advocate that value is determined by comparison to national averages, while others advocate value based on access to health care. Yet more argue that increased expense outweighs the cost. In the UK, this system showed wild amounts of success—so much success, in fact, that the UK’s healthcare system faced serious financial crisis when more money was needed for performance bonuses than had been allocated (766). The confusion was so great in the UK that “the government was also not exactly sure...as to what the system was supposed to achieve” (766). This is important because it demonstrates the lack of clarity of P4P, as well as a lack of knowledge within the policymakers. Both fee-for-service and P4P have proven ineffective at keeping costs low for patients while keeping treatment options open. With both of these models, all parties lose.

Fee-for-service and P4P fall into a class of models called retrospective compensation, where the physician is paid for services performed. This paper has provided ample evidence as to why this does not work well. It is time to consider prospective compensation models, where compensation of the doctor is *not* linked to the services they provide. The goal of prospective payment removes the need for

The state of Maryland has changed every hospital to a global budget and every physician to salaried work, which has saved the state 100 million dollars over a two year period.

physicians to force as many treatments onto patients as they can stand. These models, such as capitation and salaried work, depend on the intrinsic motivation of the doctors to treat their patients adequately—in other words, prospective compensation assumes that physicians want to help their patients. Prospective



payment also frees doctors of concerns about their paycheck at the end of the week. However, these models can lose the push for patient volume that is a fundamental feature of the retrospective models—a push that is needed in many practices to turn a profit.

The first of these models is capitation, or ‘pay per head.’ The physician in this model is simply paid a fixed unit price per patient as determined by the patient’s insurance. This model provides for relief within the administration, as it is easy to calculate, while maintaining the benefits outlined above. This system is also good because it maintains the need for a healthy patient volume on the side of the physician—one would not want to pay physicians to do nothing. However, this system has its own bevy of flaws to consider.

The first of the drawbacks of this system is a study completed in Canada in the mid 90’s. This study showed “that primary health care provided on a capitation basis, with an incentive to physicians to substitute ambulatory for hospital care, did not reduce rates of hospital utilization among patients vis-à-vis rates among patients attending comparable fee-for-service practices” (Hutchinson 660). This study aimed to measure the frequency with which physicians used hospital services—as compared to the fee-for-service system—when they are receiving incentives to not use the hospital. The results were obviously not promising. There are a few flaws with this study, including its age and the aspects that were measured. However, this does dismiss the black mark that now rests on capitation. In addition, empowering physicians to determine the value of their work is still not addressed. The physician would not be at liberty to negotiate the value of the services provided per patient because that decision would remain with insurance companies. Capitation would also promote passive exclusion of high-expense patients, as they would result in a net-loss. Excluding the people who need the most from healthcare would be counter-productive.

The last system of compensation is that of the salaried phy-

sician. This system retains all of the desirable qualities of prospective payments, including financial security, while eliminating the drive to push procedure volume. The potentially problematic lack of motivation for volume can be easily addressed by requiring quotas. Note that quota usage is already in place within fee-for-service. In a study that compared the way that physicians reacted to different models, researchers found that salaried work almost completely eliminated unnecessary care. The reduction of unnecessary care alone lowered predicted cost by 60% while maintaining or improving quality of care (Green). The reason why salaried physicians do not decrease quality of care is attributed to the altruism of physicians. Physicians do what they do primarily because they enjoy helping people and improving the lives of their patients. This intrinsic motivation improves quality more than external motivators like monetary compensation or performance targets. In fact, “a great deal of experimental evidence from both social psychology and econometrics suggests that when an activity is largely driven by internal motivations—such as professionalism or pride in the quality of work one achieves—adding an external (e.g., financial) motivator can actually backfire, often dramatically” (Wynia 886). The salaried system for physicians allows for these intrinsic motivators to come to the forefront and assist caring physicians in eliminating overtreatment and unnecessary follow-ups.

The benefits of salaried physician work can be compounded by the use of global budgeting. Global budgeting is described as “an overall spending target or limit that constrains the price and the quality of the services provided” (Dredge 5). In other words, a spending cap for health care organizations is set, and exceeding the limit is *not* an option. This, along with salaried work, promotes efficiency on the sides of both physicians and health-care administrators, whereas a fee-for-service system ultimately punishes physicians for efficiency. A global budget switches the perspective of healthcare. Hospitals save money when patients don’t need to return to the clinic or have extra tests done. The state of Maryland has changed every hospital to

a global budget and every physician to salaried work, which has saved the state 100 million dollars over a two year period. The hospital will suffer no ill-effects in a community that is healthy enough to not utilize the hospital's services. The remaining 100 million dollars is saved by hospitals, spent on research, or used for internal improvements of the system ("In Maryland"). The global budget, in combination with salaried physicians, provides the greatest reduction in cost while freeing the intrinsic motivations of physicians to increase quality of care.

In the United States, we face a crisis of healthcare quality and cost. The answer to these problems lies in the way we compensate our physicians. Fee-for-service will no longer suffice in a country where most doctors are employed. Pay-for-performance only exacerbates the problems of cost (as shown by the UK), while still failing to empower physicians (not dissimilar to the problems of capitation). These decisions, while not in your control now, will be your responsibility in less than 10 years as you become the next generation of doctors who cannot decide their pay, the healthcare administrators who cannot interpret unintelligible policy, or policymakers who have inherited this most imperfect system.

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FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you think Moose's introductory paragraph does a good job at introducing the rest of his essay? Why or why not? Explain using specific examples from the intro.
2. Discuss the proper way to use in-text citations. How does Moose succeed in using in-text citations throughout the essay to support his argument? Pick two places in the essay where he does this.
3. Notice the way Moose explains and defines the issues with each different compensation model. How is this effective in proving his main argument that salaried physician models are best?
4. How does Moose's specificity in his argument benefit the overall essay? Provide an example to support your answer.
5. Think about what elements make a well developed, complete paragraph. Do each of Moose's paragraphs fit the criteria you came up with? Provide an example from Moose's essay. What will you do in your own essay to make sure your paragraphs are well developed?
6. Look at the sources on Moose's Works Cited page then evaluate how each of these sources was used in the content of his essay. Was each source cited and utilized in a meaningful way at some point in the essay? Provide at least one example to support your answer.



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 where 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. Said Charles Edmondson, president of Alfred University, "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).

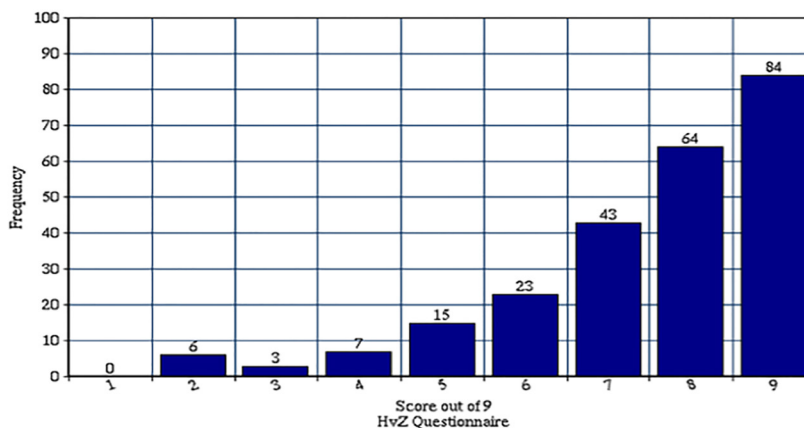
Clearly, the school has major concerns, all of which are perfectly reasonable and valid. However, Mr. Olsen, as a two-time player and avid fan of the game, I have some alternative perspectives I would like you to look at. While I understand all of yours and the university's concerns, I was disappointed 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 not 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 removing Nerf blasters from the game entirely 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 below.

These numbers are remarkable. 78% 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.

\*Based on your experience, how much of an impact did the game have on you and your experience at Utah State?\*



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 considered 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 tran-

scends 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 my 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, 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 smart phones 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 for 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. While 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).

President Unger was right. What happened at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University, while both 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). 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 securi-

ty, 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 to class, 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.

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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?

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" (119).

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 *Chinese Eroticism* and the “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” (Wang 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 crossfire, 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 (Evolution). 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.

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



Natural feet. (Radiopaedia)

Bound feet. (Library of Congress)

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.



Natural model, photographed model, and Photoshopped model.  
(Evolution).

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 100 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 described 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” (117). 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.

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.

## 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 perception 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 not a title coined by Darwin, but by Herbert Spencer to justify a desired recognition of class superiority. In a comprehensive view of Darwin's writings 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 question arises: why are Americans so resistant 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 to 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 to instantly connect 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% 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 even a vocal reconciliation can fall short, as Dacher Keltner, Ph.D., founder of the Greater Good Science Center, discovered that compassion is correctly 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 on-line 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 fin-

gertips (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 other 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 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, Brené). 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. To avoid plagiarism, a writer must cite sources for any information that is not common knowledge. In his essay, Partridge says, “We can share our experiences and memories with family and friends instantly, across the world (White).” Do you think this qualifies as common knowledge or do you believe the parenthetical citation is necessary? Why?
5. The author bio expresses Partridge’s passion for what he learned while composing this essay. How can you see this passion in his essay? Did it change the way you read his argument?
6. 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?

# 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

War in the Classroom  
The Battle for Mauna Kea  
The Calculator Crutch  
Letter to Senator Behn

## Conclusion

Social Trust: A Touchy Subject  
You Raise Them, We'll Cage Them  
War in the Classroom  
"I Have A Dream Today!"

## Critical Thinking

Binding Our Feet the American Way  
The Real Cost of Quality  
Enter Wholeheartedly into Peace

## Diction

Binding Our Feet the American Way  
Enter Wholeheartedly Into Peace  
You Raise Them, We'll Cage Them

## Evidence

Social Trust: A Touchy Subject  
Drugs in the USA  
"I Have A Dream Today!"  
You Raise Them, We'll Cage Them

## Grammar

Binding Our Feet the American Way  
Enter Wholeheartedly Into Peace  
You Raise Them, We'll Cage Them

## Paragraph Unity & Development

Social Trust: A Touchy Subject  
Drugs in the USA  
The Calculator Crutch  
Binding Our Feet the American Way

## Parenthetical Citation

Binding Our Feet the American Way  
Drugs in the USA  
Understanding the World through  
Fantasy

## Persuasiveness

The Real Cost of Quality  
Social Trust  
Binding Our Feet the American Way  
The Battle for Mauna Kea

## Purpose

Don't Nerf the Zombies  
I Love Conflict!

Letter to Senator Behn  
Drugs in the USA  
The Calculator Crutch  
Binding Our Feet the American Way

R o g e r i a n

Letter to Senator Behn  
Don't Nerf the Zombies

S e n t e n c e s

The Calculator Crutch  
Enter Wholeheartedly Into Peace  
You Raise Them, We'll Cage Them

S o u r c e C r e d i b i l i t y

"I Have A Dream Today!"  
The Battle for Mauna Kea  
You Raise Them, We'll Cage Them  
Binding Our Feet the American Way

S o u r c e I n f o r m a t i o n

Understanding the World through  
Fantasy  
The Battle for Mauna Kea  
Social Trust

S o u r c e I n t e g r a t i o n

Social Trust: A Touchy Subject  
The Calculator Crutch

S t r u c t u r e

You Raise Them, We'll Cage Them

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T h e s i s C l a r i t y

War in the Classroom  
Drugs in the USA

T h e s i s Q u a l i t y

Binding Our Feet the American Way  
You Raise Them, We'll Cage Them

T i t l e &

I n t r o P a r a g r a p h s

The Real Cost of Quality  
I Love Conflict!  
You Raise Them, We'll Cage Them  
Binding Our Feet the American Way  
Don't Nerf the Zombies

T r a n s i t i o n s

Social Trust: A Touchy Subject

W o r k s C i t e d P a g e

Drugs in the USA  
The Battle for Mauna Kea  
Enter Wholeheartedly Into Peace  
Binding Our Feet the American Way

The authors published in this anthology examine conflicts over mountains and classrooms, prisons, politics, and conflict itself. And don't miss the past favorites about foot binding and zombies.

## *Praise from students about Voices of USU*

"Such amazing essays! They inspired me to use the same techniques in my own writing."  
-Lauren

"I was impressed with the selflessness of the writers, particularly those who see the plight of those in need around the world and do what they can to help."  
-Jay

"One of my favorite textbooks required by any school!"  
-Natasha

"After reading Voices of USU, for the first time I understood the meaning behind persuasive argument."  
-Ryan

The writing featured in this anthology was chosen from among the best work produced by USU students enrolled in English 2010, a course in persuasive research writing. Many of these authors were also featured presenters at the 2015-16 sessions of the 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, capturing the unique 'voices' of USU.



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