VOICES

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Edited by *Rachel Quistberg*

VOICES *of* usu

An Anthology of *Student Writing*, vol. 12

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

English Department

2019-2020

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VOICES *of* usu
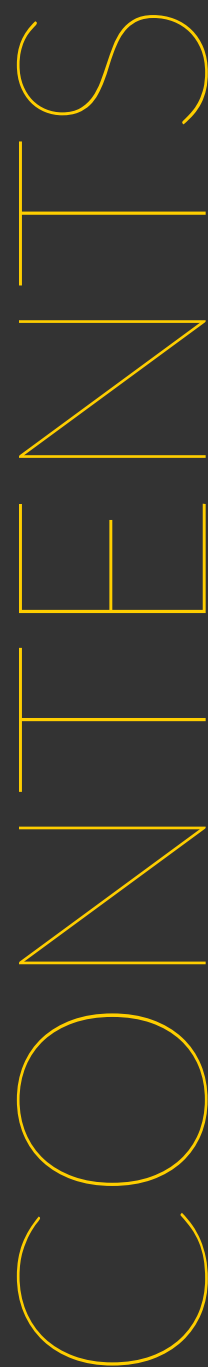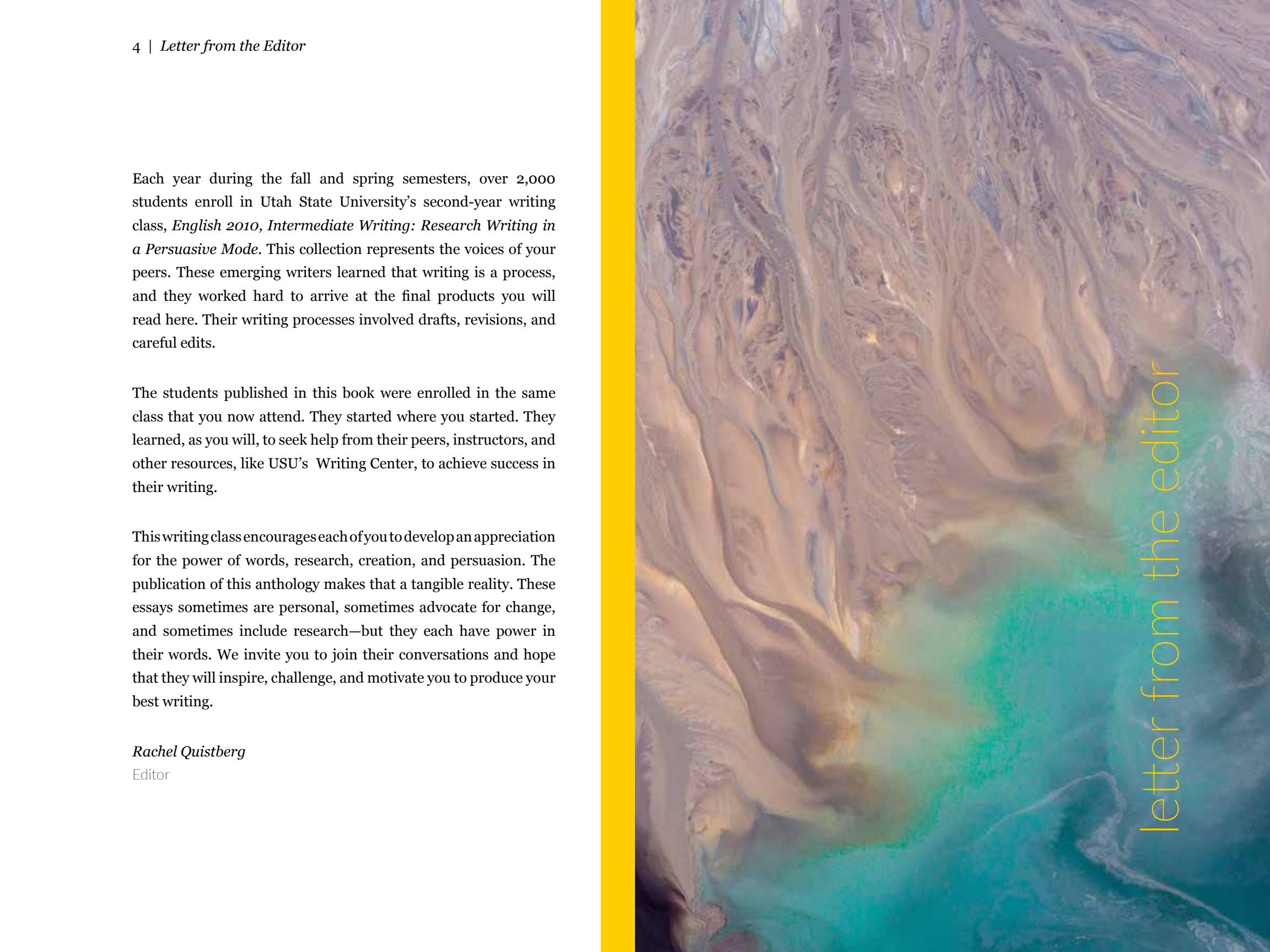
Each year during the fall and spring semesters, over 2,000 students enroll in Utah State University's second-year writing class, *English 2010, Intermediate Writing: Research Writing in a Persuasive Mode*. This collection represents the voices of your peers. These emerging writers learned that writing is a process, and they worked hard to arrive at the final products you will read here. Their writing processes involved drafts, revisions, and careful edits.

The students published in this book were enrolled in the same class that you now attend. They started where you started. They learned, as you will, to seek help from their peers, instructors, and other resources, like USU's Writing Center, to achieve success in their writing.

This writing class encourages each of you to develop an appreciation for the power of words, research, creation, and persuasion. The publication of this anthology makes that a tangible reality. These essays sometimes are personal, sometimes advocate for change, and sometimes include research—but they each have power in their words. We invite you to join their conversations and hope that they will inspire, challenge, and motivate you to produce your best writing.

Rachel Quistberg
Editor

letter from the editor

acknowledgments

Many people make *Voices* possible. We would first like to thank our student authors. We thank you for having the courage to submit your work, and we are honored to publish it.

This book is only possible through the efforts of our composition faculty. Thank you for supporting the program and encouraging your students to submit their writing.

Our deepest gratitude also goes to USU's English Department and Writing Center staff for their support of this publication.

Thanks especially goes to USU's Writing Center Director, Star Coulbrooke, Associate Director, Susan Andersen, and Assistant Director Jasilyn Heaps for facilitating the collaboration between the Voices of USU program and the Writing Center. This publication would not be possible without the tutors who assisted in selecting and editing these essays.

The previous directors of *Voices* also deserve a huge thanks for creating and continuing a program that offers students the opportunities to publish and to present their work.

> *Susan Andersen* (2008-09, 2011-13)
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> *John Engler* (2008-10, 2014-17)
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> *Bonnie Moore* (2011-17)
>
> *Susan Pesti-Strobel* (2009-10)

Five Reasons Why Clickbait Is Actually, Maybe, Not That Bad

You Won't Believe No. 2!

As consumers of online news, we have the power to change the media industry.

Here's the deal: commenting only the word "clickbait" on a news article doesn't make you clever or smart for realizing that yes, journalists do want you to read what they write, and yes, that does require clicking on the link. Clickbait, for all its faults, sticks around for one reason—it works. And it could even be the saving grace for news organizations that are trying to survive and succeed in an increasingly digital era.

1. Nobody agrees on what clickbait actually is.

Discussing the infamous online **media** trend is a challenge when everyone has different ideas of what actually constitutes clickbait. Those personal definitions play an enormous role in determining what individuals perceive as appropriate behavior from journalists and media organizations.

Take, for example, the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition, which calls clickbait "content whose main purpose is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular web page" ("Clickbait," def. N.). Under that definition, nearly any effective headline on the internet could be considered clickbait. Writers and bloggers create content with the intention that people will read it, and editors create headlines that will entice potential viewers. Even respected news organizations, like *The New York Times*, test headlines to see which ones will perform best online. In March 2016, the *Times* published an online article with the headline "$2 Billion Worth of Free Media for Trump" (Confessore and Yourish). That headline was a replacement for the original, which read, "Measuring Trump's Media Dominance." Rewriting the headline brought 297% more readers to the story, which detailed the logistics of Donald Trump's election campaign (Bulik). *The New York Times* wrote a headline specifically to "attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link" ("Clickbait," def. N.). That's clickbait, at least according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. But it's clickbait that provided readers with important political information in a dramatic election year.

Under other definitions, though, that very headline might not be considered clickbait at all. In an article discussing the psychology of clickbait, *Wired* writer Bryan Gardiner said clickbait tends to do at least one of three things: it manufactures emotion, it creates a curiosity gap, or it introduces a list (Gardiner). That same headline—"$2 Billion Worth of Free Media for Trump"—fails to meet any of those three criteria. The *Times's* headline doesn't include any inflammatory or emotional language, so we can cross off the first item. And one could say the headline does the exact opposite of creating a curiosity gap—it implies a question but

Hannah McDonald

answers it immediately. The headline asks, *What type of media is Donald Trump getting? Free media,* it answers right away. *How much free media?* Two billion dollars' worth. If anything, *The New York Times* tries to satisfy as much curiosity as possible in the headline alone. And while the headline does contain a number, it doesn't introduce a list. How can one headline that's so obviously clickbait by one dictionary's definition fail to meet the threshold defined by another organization? We can't begin to talk about improving or criticizing content loosely labeled as "clickbait" until we develop a common understanding of what it is.

2. Clickbait isn't new.

For that matter, the traits generally associated with clickbait—exaggerated, overblown headlines and sensationalized content—aren't newfangled phenomena. In fact, those trends began appearing in American media as early as the 1830s, around the same time newspapers started relying on advertisers for money.

America's first newspapers in the early 19th century were all highly partisan, according to the library at the University of Illinois ("American Newspapers, 1800-1860"). Each local political party subsidized its own newspaper, which consisted of opinions and news analysis rather than original reporting. In the early 1800s, the United States was still finding its ground as a brand-new country, and citizens wanted to believe their political leaders would be "called" to serve in government. Early Americans didn't trust anyone who seemed too eager to assume office. Political candidates, therefore, were expected to take a hands-off, disinterested approach to campaigning, and citizens instead turned to partisan newspapers to determine how they should vote. The modern notion of journalistic objectivity—the idea that reporters should try to remain neutral in their writing—was distasteful to most respected news publishers. In 1832, one publisher from upstate New York expressed his disgust for a

nonpartisan newspaper he was sent, saying it was "precisely what we most of all things abhor and detest, to wit, a neutral paper. It pretends to be all things to all men" (Baldasty 25).

In the mid-1800s, the political culture of the United States changed, and candidates in the 1850s and 1860s could start campaigning on their own behalf without the amount of damage they would have sustained before the 1830s (Bullock). Partisan newspapers, in turn, grew less important, and entrepreneurial publishers began exploring journalism as a moneymaker rather than a public service. In September 1833, publisher Benjamin Day introduced the *New York Sun,* the first of the "penny papers" (Baran 75). Publishers could sell penny papers so inexpensively as to develop a large mass-following that was attractive to advertisers. With Day's business model, news consumers became a captive audience, a product that publishers could turn around and sell to their true customers: the advertisers.

Lowering the cost of news came with a price. To maintain the type of audience that would justify advertisers' sponsorship, newspapers like Day's had to develop new ways to attract and retain attention. Reporters focused on writing entertainment news, crime stories, and human interest stories that were considered too unimportant for earlier newspapers, and they filled the front pages with headlines like "Crowd Tries to Kill Would-Be Murderer" and "'Oldest Crook' to End Days in the Prison He Loves" (Newitz). With the creation of the penny press, clickbait was born. Even news editors who still saw the value of public service journalism needed to adopt some of these audience-baiting tactics in order to survive in an increasingly competitive publishing world.

> Lowering the cost of news came with a price.

3. Journalism's survival might depend on clickbait—at least for now.

Just as Benjamin Day's penny paper in 1833 forever changed the business model of American journalism, modern journalism had to adapt when organizations like *BuzzFeed* and the *Huffington Post* began dominating the online media world (Wu).

Despite the introduction of new media delivery services—radio in the 1920s, television in the 1950s, the internet in the 1990s—journalism since the 1830s has remained largely reliant on advertising revenue. In 2014, the Pew Research Center released data that "69 percent of all domestic news revenue is derived from advertising" (Holcomb and Mitchell). And the price of digital advertising, while still relatively inexpensive compared to print and broadcast advertising, is rising as online platforms grow more and more popular (Standberry). Businesses have an incentive to make those dollars count by advertising only with websites and media organizations that can prove they have a dedicated online audience. Advertising money primarily goes to organizations with favorable web traffic, generated by—you guessed it—people who click on links. For journalism to survive, even reputable news organizations have to measure audience behavior and practice "click-baiting" tactics to maintain viewership.

In March 2018, the satirical website *The Onion* got a little too real when discussing the necessity of having readers click on links:

> Informing readers that it was one of the sole means for a digital publication to generate revenue, a report released Thursday indicated that *The Onion* doesn't make any money if you don't click the fucking link. …If you enjoy any of this content, any of it at all, it is highly recommended that you take one measly second out of your life to actually navigate to any of our many, many articles that grace your social media feed for free. Or, hell, you could even look

There's a reason why news organizations continue to publish content with headlines like "20 Reasons Why Millennials Are a Complete and Total Disgrace to the World" and "The 40 Most Insane Things That Happened in Florida in 2018"—they work.

> at our homepage once in a while. Because unless you actually visit the website, there eventually won't be one, you ungrateful pricks. ("Report")

Leave it to *The Onion* to neatly, if crassly, sum up one of the major issues facing modern journalism. If you care about journalism, yes, you do need to click on links, and you need to acknowledge there's a purpose for clickbait in the first place.

4. Clickbait works.

There's a reason why news organizations continue to publish content with headlines like "20 Reasons Why Millennials Are a Complete and Total Disgrace to the World" and "The 40 Most Insane Things That Happened in Florida in 2018"—they work. According to *Wired*, clickbait headlines are obvious bait, but they're still effective in their lack of subtlety (Gardiner). Polarizing headlines that convey either extremely negative or positive emotions actually work to manufacture emotion in readers, making them more likely to click (Reis et. al).

And then there's the idea that our brains are attracted to clickbait because they seek pleasure. Consider the following headline from an actual article *BuzzFeed* published in 2018: "21 Hedgehogs That Really Have No Idea How Damn Cute They Are." Reading the headline, the brain anticipates the reward of seeing 21 cute pictures of hedgehogs. That anticipation alone produces dopamine, the neurotransmitter involved in producing pleasure during behaviors like eating or having sex (Brookshire). Human behaviors can be manipulated by dopamine, and clickbait headlines are attractive and easily available bait (Harmon). As long as clickbait remains effective in manufacturing attention, organizations will continue using it. They have to, if they want to compete with websites that can consistently promise a clickbait-motivated dopamine rush.

5. Clickbait can be a powerful tool to direct readers to valuable content.

When used carefully, clickbait can expose readers to content they may not otherwise view. In 2013, *Guardian* columnist Steve Hind defended clickbait by pointing to a *BuzzFeed* article called "Can You Guess the Number of People Who Signed Up for Obamacare on Day One?" The answer (six)—given through a series of pictures of a six-stringed guitar, a six-sided die, and the six titular heroes of the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers—was, as Hind said, a cheeky but effective way of delivering an important point (Hind). And to provide even more context for the article, the story linked to an investigative piece about the issues with the Obamacare registration website. The purpose of clickbait is to attract attention, and responsible journalists and media organizations can use it to direct attention toward valuable public service and investigative reporting.

It's hard to argue, though, with the fact that clickbait can sometimes be misleading. Clickbait at its worst can feel cheap and deceptive, and it can direct readers to fabricated or sensationalized content. As consumers of online news, we have the power to change the media industry. Here are three ways we can improve digital journalism and reduce misleading clickbait.

1. Communicate one-on-one with journalists and editors.

Commenting only the word "clickbait" on a news article won't win any favors with journalists, and it certainly won't have any sort of meaningful impact on the quality of journalism itself. If you sincerely want to reduce the amount of clickbait produced by media organizations, draft a thoughtful critique and send it to your favorite writers. Journalism is intended to serve the public, and if good reporters learn their work isn't accomplishing that

goal, they can and should issue a public apology and create a plan for future improvement. Here's a tip: read through the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics when you're formulating your argument. Any media organization worth its weight will give your opinion even more credence if you can prove you've done your research.

2. Get your news directly from the source itself.

One of the major problems with clickbait is that much of it is created to be viral and shareable. The success of clickbait relies not necessarily on the quality of the content or the publisher itself, but on the sites where it's shared. Media consumers today are more likely to get their news from Facebook or Google than any individual news website, and that has consequences for the advertising revenue coming to news publishers. Starting in 2016, Facebook and Google benefited most from the growth of digital advertising (B. Thompson). Increasingly, businesses are advertising with these social media giants rather than with media publishers because they're more effective at targeting mass audiences. That leaves publishers with all the cost of creating shareable content but none of the revenue generated from sharing it (Oremus). If you want to support organizations who are consistently creating quality content, go directly to their websites and view their content there. That way, media publishers get both the clicks and the money that comes with them.

3. Be willing to pay for quality journalism.

As Columbia University professor Tim Wu said in an interview with *The Atlantic*, we need to "get over our addiction to free stuff" (D. Thompson). The trouble with the "free" journalism perpetuated by online media is that it comes with a price that's often invisible to news consumers. By consuming only free media,

you endorse the type of business model that necessitates the creation of clickbait. If you say you're tired of clickbait, then, as Wu says, put your money where your mouth is and start paying for your news. The money required to produce good content has to come from somewhere. If you start paying for news subscriptions or contribute even just $3 when reputable websites request it, you'll be playing a major role in helping news organizations turn away from their reliance on advertisers and thus, their reliance on clickbait. ❑

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Six is the New Four: Why Students Are Taking Longer to Graduate

Having to delay my graduation date would put me at a disadvantage when looking for acceptance into a graduate school or a job, wouldn't it?

Rebecca West

I planned to graduate just like everyone else. In the year 2020, an exact four years from my 2016 high school graduation date, I would walk across the stage and be handed the degree I had worked so anxiously to receive and stride home with my head held high. I met with my advisor and crafted a strictly structured four-year plan where all of my classes were specifically outlined. Every job interviewer had a clear answer when they asked where I would like to be in five years, and I thought I did too. Fall semester went very well. I received higher than adequate scores and worked hard to get them. But as spring rolled around the corner, I came down with mononucleosis. This sickness can be tame or severe, and with my luck, I became very ill. The major symptom that accompanies mono is fatigue, so I was advised to avoid overextending myself and remain in bed until I felt up to my everyday tasks. Even walking the mere twenty minutes to class became almost too much. I was not able to perform as well in my courses, and I watched my grades steadily drop. By the end of the semester, I had failed two classes and had mediocre scores in the ones remaining. Although I was feeling better health-wise, I felt exhausted from the stress that came out of underperforming in school. I decided that the best option for me at that point in life was to take a semester off to try and rejuvenate myself from the stress of the last few months. I moved home, got a high-paying job, and was able to pay off a lot of the debt I had accumulated my first year, but I was deflated. I knew that it was important for me to graduate within four years or I wouldn't be as successful as my peers. Having to delay my graduation date would put me at a disadvantage when looking for acceptance into a graduate school or a job, wouldn't it?

Many students are in the same boat as me, with the average student finishing their standard four-year degree in six years or longer. Since the 1960s, the rate of students graduating within

the standard four-year time frame has steadily dropped by 10% ("College Completion" 10). This percentage may not seem very high, but in reality, student graduation rates, whether completed in four years or longer, are not very high to begin with. Out of the 580 four-year institutions that span the United States, only 50 have a graduation rate that is over 50% (Anshuetz). But to look specifically at the number of students that are graduating in four years or less, it is currently 36.4%. Furthermore, when looking at non-flagship universities, which are more affordable, non-land-grant universities, this number falls to an alarming 19% (Anshuetz). However, when the number of students who instead graduate in six years, the percentage nearly doubles to 58.8%, and if all degree-completing students are included, no matter the time frame, 61.6% graduate college. This information highly suggests that most people, no matter the reason, are clearly finding higher education to be more difficult to complete in the socially expected time frame. And, as my continued research indicated, they are not placed at any disadvantage by doing so. We need to bring awareness to this increasingly common experience coming about in present times so that university students, as well society, can resolve to put less pressure on themselves and their peers to graduate within the four-year limit.

It is a well-known truth that college education is beneficial to the average individual. People who earn a Bachelor's degree or higher are found to have significantly higher incomes than their high-school-graduate counterparts. The advantages to a higher degree reach beyond this main bonus, including generally increased happiness and a large number of health benefits ("The Happy State of College Graduates"). As skill level and talent increases, the graduate will have a better choice of where they desire to be, and because of their experience and knowledge, they will have a much greater advantage in career placement than the average non-graduating student. As a final benefit, job security

and satisfaction are likely to occur since the employee has chosen this area of study and has prepared to be there ("Benefits of Earning a College Degree").

Students could be delaying graduation for a multitude of reasons. For example, one could be in the same boat as myself and come down with a severe illness that requires them to take time off. They could become stressed or overworked from the course load that they attempted to take on. They could decide to take a gap year, where they could work to save up money or take an internship for résumé building. Financial instability could become a problem, where scholarships are lost, not earned, or simply run out. Additionally, many students decide later on that they are not happy in their major of choice and change it many times. In fact, 80% of college students will change their major at least once within their time at school (Anshuetz). Because of this constant indecision, students often end up taking courses that are not required for their eventual field of study and need to spend time in classes that are mandatory. This obviously takes time and delays graduation. Similarly, many students start college without a plan, deciding to take the "undeclared" route and finishing their general education before they get into major courses. Although this is a good idea short-term, if a major decision is postponed long enough, students could end up with courses that are not necessary for their eventual major of choice.

Transferring schools is also a major issue among students who plan on graduating in four years. About 37% of students will transfer to a different institution during college, and this can lead to problems, especially if the institution is located in a different state (Anshuetz). Generally, it is not likely that all of one's credits will transfer over smoothly. This causes students to retake courses in order to meet their new institution's requirements and continue to put off obtaining their degrees. Additionally, many states have different requirements for general education programs, so even

if an individual were to try and get their associate's degree in one state and transfer to finish their Bachelor's in another (ultimately trying to save time and money), they could still end up on the short end because some colleges require different general education courses for their Bachelor's degrees. In other words, an associate's degree in one state might not count as an associate's degree in another state, and one could still end up having to take extra courses in order to satisfy an institution's requirements. This leads to more money (and time) spent, therefore prolonging graduation often years ahead of schedule. Moreover, many students decide to retake a course or two, whether that be because of an inadequate grade or simply because the student is not satisfied with their score and wants to raise their GPA. Although students should be encouraged to take classes over in order to solidly learn course curriculum and be better prepared for the courses ahead of them, retaking courses obviously takes away time that could otherwise be spent furthering progress within the major. These delays only postpone graduation (Armstrong and Biktimirov 339-344).

About 37% of students will transfer to a different institution during college, and this can lead to problems, especially if the institution is located in a different state.

Any rational person would look at this plethora of problems that could arise at some point within one's college years and wonder how on Earth someone could prevent these things from happening. Surely there could be a way to stop these problems before they even begin.

Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. Out of the long list of issues, only about half of them are foreseeable, and in turn, fixed (e.g., gap years, lack of a plan, course do-overs, and major indecision). The others are simply predicaments that can arise seemingly out of nowhere, and students are often bombarded with multiple problems coming up at once. Due to these unplanned and nearly impossible to prepare for events, many students have no other choice but to prolong their time in school, if not to drop out completely. This is why it is so important for students to understand that it does not matter how long their college years take, so long as they have something to show for it in the end.

Like myself, many people are under the impression that if they were to take longer than the standard four years to graduate, they will be placed at a disadvantage when looking for jobs or acceptance into graduate institutions. Both of these assumptions are false. For employers, the main area of focus will be the applicant's ability to sell themselves as an asset to the company of interest. In addition, according to *HNNews*, many résumés do not need to show more than the year in which they completed their degree, not how long they spent obtaining it ("Ask HN"). The issue at hand will most likely not even come up in conversation. Lastly, most employers look at one's GPA as the only college factor, and if they do end up, in some rare chance, conditioning someone's hiring due to the completion rate of their degree, the job can easily be avoided and be sought elsewhere.

As for graduate institutions making admission decisions based on prolonged graduation, institutions haven't reported this as a major factor for their applicant choices. The main focus for a professional committee's applicant requirements is again, average grade point average and work/life experience. As for the latter, older students who took longer to graduate are actually at an advantage, considering that they've most likely had internships and jobs that will give them more skills and abilities to surpass their faster-completing competitors. Another statistic showed that the average graduate student is in their mid to late thirties, implying that people are clearly taking time off at some point during their college careers (Martin).

The last issue that many people are concerned with is finances. As a matter of fact, people who graduate in six years as opposed to four are likely to spend 40% more in annual tuition costs (Anshuetz). Although this statistic is worrisome, many people claim to have enjoyed taking their time to enjoy college and spend a bit more, rather than rushing through their degree that they may find to be unsatisfactory once obtained. Marlon Walker explains in his article, "Is Six the New Four Year Plan?," that one graduate who took two years longer than normal to walk across the graduation stage "finally accomplished one of his goals at this point" (Walker 28-31). The commonly used phrase "better late than never" rings true here.

As a final stressor, college students should take however long they need to complete their desired degree. Education is clearly important. It allows us to expand our knowledge and experience past the generic high school years. It broadens our horizons and brings loads of opportunity otherwise unfound. And, as Walker puts it, "education is the key to whatever we want to do in life" (Walker 28-31). Although many of us grasp this common truth, we continue to place pressure and tension on those who want these opportunities to complete it within a specific time frame. As the statistics plainly show, the expectations we have placed clearly cannot be lived up to by the vast majority of students today. Every student has vast differences when it comes to needs, areas of struggle or weakness, and general circumstance. Finally, it is impossible to foresee the problems that could arise, causing many to fall behind their peers. We need to abolish this bar that is set far too high and let our peers, as well as ourselves, know that it is perfectly acceptable, if not better, to take six years, four years, or however long it takes, to obtain their key to opportunity.

Older students who took longer to graduate are actually at an advantage.

The importance of education is what should be stressed, not the deadline for which to get there. ❏

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Asylum

While asylum may be granted to select people searching for safety, one cannot underestimate the difficulty of the life that lies ahead.

Hailey Larson

I t is April now, but the angry northern air still frosts up the small window in Loveth's apartment. The twins are throwing plastic toy cars that clack at the wall, and her little Hannah bounces in a creaky crib, yelping for attention. I turn my focus back to Loveth and notice the fatigue heavy in her eyes, an unwelcome souvenir from the previous nights' hospital visits. She heaves herself up from the couch with a sigh and pulls back the drapes to reveal a crumbling, dark-spotted wall.

"That is why the kids have been getting sick. It is the mold. I have spoken to the landlord, but he will do nothing about it."

My gaze meets hers again, and sadness bubbles up from my chest and into my own eyes. Two heavy tears roll down her cheeks as she sits herself back down and buries her head in her hands. I scoot closer to her on the couch and pull her braided hair away from her face.

The kids continue their games without the faintest idea of their mother's pain. She motions to her apartment with an upturned hand. Both the kitchen and the one small bedroom are visible from where we are sitting.

"I cannot keep my children in a place like this." I begin to say something but the two-year-olds are now standing on the kitchen table. "Isaiah, Isaac, down!"

Through the weeks, I have watched her adjustment from a distance. A new country with strange laws, a foreign language, different food, an extreme climate, and higher cost of living. Her new life has not been as she expected. Maybe the worst part about it all is that she is here completely alone. Her extended family and husband are still in Nigeria. Fleeing her country for her daughter's safety, she has been left to parent her three children, all under the age of five, alone and with virtually no resources.

"My sister...I do not know what I can do," she sighs, her Nigerian accent rhythmical in her tired voice. One of thousands of asylum-seekers, Loveth has been in Montreal for only a month. But her reality is less than a shelter, she has entered a new and frightening world, filled with emotional and social distress.

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The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word *asylum* as "a secure place of refuge, shelter, or retreat" ("Asylum," def. N.2). A claim to asylum is a search for safety, often used today to describe relief from political, religious, or social persecution. Asylum is the goal of refugees and internationally displaced persons worldwide. Each year around 1 million people seek asylum, joining the 3.1 million still waiting for their claim to asylum to be granted, and an additional 40 million internationally displaced persons worldwide ("Asylum-Seekers"). These are people forced to leave

their homes but are not officially classified as "refugee" because they have not crossed a state border ("What Is a Refugee?"). In the political sense of the word, asylum may be granted to those brave enough to cross borders illegally or lucky enough to be among the relative few relocated from their refugee camps—a feat considering that many will stay there for two decades ("What Is a Refugee Camp?"). However, political asylum is not always asylum in the word's fullest sense—it is often the mark of a new search for emotional and social asylum.

Asylum is the goal of refugees and internationally displaced persons worldwide.

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I unlock my phone and check the STM app one more time. "Still ten more minutes till the bus comes," I tell Munie. I vaguely realize it's ironic that the frigid air is burning my nose as we watch the people coming in and out of the metro station behind us. Getting to Imeh's house is always this way; it seems impossible there isn't a shorter route. Forty minutes later the stuffy bus has completely emptied to leave only us and one other woman.

"Faites attention, les filles," the driver calls out as the bus doors slam shut behind us. Luckily neither of us slipped on the ice this time. No words are exchanged between us, but the harsh crunching of snow, ice, and gravel beneath our feet fills any want for sound. I follow Munie up the three flights of stairs, conscious of the extra effort required to lift my heavy boots. She turns around and inhales sharply before opening the old green door to Imeh's hallway. My glasses immediately fog up and the thick smell of cannabis fights its way up our nostrils, latching onto our clothes. We have almost grown accustomed to it by now; the high cost of living here forces many refugee families to endure less-than-ideal housing conditions. My socks stick to the dirty floor as we walk in. She is laying down on the couch and mutters a faint hello as we come and sit down across from her. Her eyes are closed again. She is wearing a fleece sweatshirt and warm socks.

"How are you doing, Imeh?" The kids shriek and her eyes jolt open. She is yelling at her two-year-old who just plopped himself on the ground in hysterical laughter. The kids empty out in the hallway to play with Isis, the neighbor-girl, and we are left alone with Imeh. Munie and I make eye contact; Imeh seems even worse than before. The apartment is silent, but we can still hear the kids playing through her thin walls. She sits up and looks out her window—the view covered by condensation and dirty handprints. We ask her questions about her week, looking for something to spark the light in her eyes, but we are unsuccessful. My mind flashes to the day we first met. Since then, her apartment had been filled with toys, couches, pots, food, and even an old TV, but she is not happy.

"It is not easy," she says, and I am back in the present. "I have not even left the apartment in the last week." The depression lays on her eyelids and flattens her body. Last week she shared a Facebook photo from last year; the affluent, businesswoman pictured has gone missing. Imeh lies there weak, an untrained athlete stranded mid-race. I know she misses her car, her maid, her house, her friends, but this is more than nostalgia; her refuge has stranded her. Unable to find any employers besides factory work, which is out of the question given her physical state, she remains jobless and distraught.

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Among the many challenges presented to those granted political asylum is the task of finding employment. Initially, placed refugees

may not work at all. For U.S. refugees to receive a work permit, they must either be granted asylum by the state, a process that takes years on average, or have been living in the states for at least six months (Bray). During this time, their only source of income is the small stipend granted by the government. While the amount given to each asylee family in the United States varies from state to state, an analysis of monies granted to families in Canada is telling (Howlett). A liberal country known for its extensive welfare system, the maximum amount of money granted to asylee families even in Canada is $50,000 CAD per year (CBC News). Though this amount might seem high at first glance, in 2016, *Statistics Canada* reports that the average household with children spent $88,273 CAD annually on goods and services. While there is already a huge gap between the amount granted to refugees and the amount spent by the average Canadian family, one must also consider that the amount given to a refugee also must be used to pay legal fees, rent a new apartment, purchase all clothing, all furniture, and all cleaning and other supplies necessary with starting a home from scratch, as well as the usual, ongoing food and utilities costs. In my volunteer work with refugees, I have seen consistently that these families often have at least five people in a household—even up to nine children in a single home. Additionally, asylum-seekers must begin to pay off the airline ticket as soon as they are granted

We have almost grown accustomed to it by now, the high cost of living here forces many refugee families to endure less-than-ideal housing conditions.
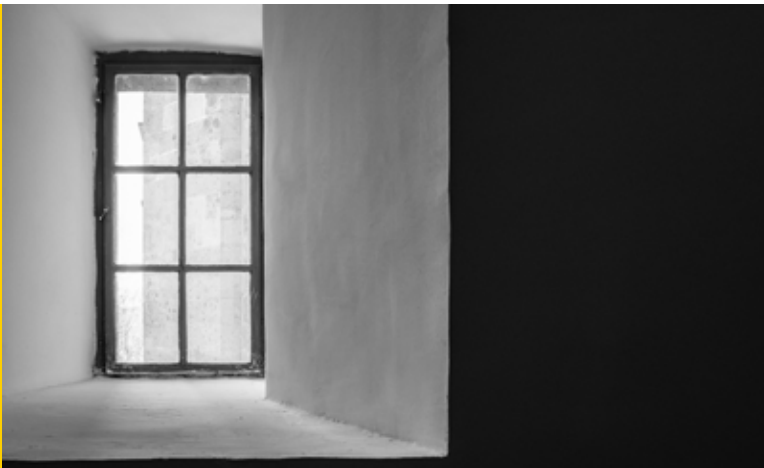
entrance. Considering the cost of each ticket usually exceeds $1,000, this can be a large debt for an already destitute family to begin to pay off (Wadekar).

Unfortunately, even when asylees receive their work permits, they are often underemployed. A study conducted in Canada showed that "76% of the former managers and professionals were not employed in such occupations... even though many had been in Canada for several years or more" (Krahn et al. 68). I have observed from my years of experience that for those unable to speak the new language of the country of asylum or are just beginning to learn it, jobs are scarce and limited, requiring them to take exhausting factory jobs where they must stand for hours on end, or take janitorial jobs with odd hours.

Her young children are reacting to their mother's despondency. A few days ago, Kayla lied to her teacher, and a few hours later a school counselor called to question Imeh about her alleged partying habits. Her four-year-old pulled the fire alarm while she was out running errands the other day. The little two-year-old is still not speaking or learning words. These children are the center of her world, and like everything else, they too seem to be slipping out of control, further and further from her reach. Munie strokes her arm and the air is still.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory created to identify basic human needs and their priority. The base level of needs must first be satisfied to achieve the next level of a different kind of need and so on, with the goal of the individual reaching the top level. The different levels are as follows: physiological, safety,

love and belonging, esteem, self-actualization (McLeod). Taking a closer look into the life of a newly placed asylee, many elements are often missing from the most basic of their needs. Coming into a completely new culture with different social systems, currency, budget, language, and income system, means finding food to put on the table can prove difficult without extreme care. Often these newcomers are confused about how much money they are receiving or how to use the government and non-profit programs available to them, leaving them bewildered and underprivileged. The impacts on any woman of unmet basic needs are extreme, not to mention the weight a mother carries to provide these needs for her family. Without the basic physiological needs, esteem and self-actualization suffer, hurting other aspects of mental health.

$$\smile$$

It's nearing time for us to leave. Little Zion is tapping his foot on my leg and giggles before quickly hopping up running away, wanting to play another game of chase. My heart flip- flops with guilt again, as I look up and see Helen sitting in her camp chair and the three other kids sitting on the floor. They always insist that we take the couch. It still amazes me that Irene is only 16-years-old, she seems more present than her mother most visits, hushing the kids and tending to her 8-year-old brother who has Down syndrome. We have to get going to our next appointment, but Helen is quiet. Something inside me holds me back, I want to spend more time with this family. I just cannot shake the feeling that we have not yet done what was needed; something in Helen's eyes is pulling at my heartstrings. The logic in my head argues back, *its only your second time here. Remember, you can't fix everything for them. Remember your purpose.* I start to pack up my bag, ignoring the tugging in my chest.

"Is there anything else we can do for you?" my colleague poses the routine question asked at the end of every home visit. I've started to hate it; it opens no real discussions about what is actually happening in the families' lives. I can't be sure, but I notice the slightest raise in Irene's eyebrows, her head bows ever-so-slightly to intensify the stare her deep brown eyes have fixed on her mother. If Helen is ignoring it or has completely missed it, I do not know.

"We are fine, thank you," Helen says in her shy voice.

We walk to the door and start lacing up our snow boots, Helen and Irene still in the living room. Helen wanders in and opens the front door for us and follows us out, shutting the door behind her.

"Do you know," she starts, looking down at her fingers. We stop walking and my heart starts to sink. She looks up, "if there is a place we can go for food? I do not know what I am going to feed my family tomorrow." In a flurry of hugs and reassurances we promise our research and time to figure something out, taking every ounce of my will to remember our boundaries as legal volunteers. We are not to promise anything we cannot guarantee. I look into her eyes and smile before descending the three flights of stairs. The bitter cold tickles and freezes the tears on my cheeks as we stare at the gray, bird-less sky. We again wait for the bus to arrive.

$$\smile$$

While asylum may be granted to select people searching for safety, one cannot underestimate the difficulty of the life that lies ahead. Although politically safe, their new home presents challenges, heartaches, and struggles unlike any previous as they battle to assimilate into their new home—a migration that was not realized by a dream of new opportunity or lifestyle—but one done out of necessity of and perhaps even preservation of life.

The despondency of Imeh, Loveth's housing crisis, and Helen's humble question are unfortunately not sensational stories. They are representative of the thousands that live Tuesday to Tuesday awaiting their weekly food bank visit, the sidewalk-quarter-collectors scrounging whatever available to pay the $2.75 bus fare—members of the society of single moms who can but sit back and watch their children's academic frustrations because of their own lack of literacy or language fluency. These major life changes presented to asylees will have a lasting effect on their well-being, facing such intense emotional trauma in such a short period of time. Asylum may have been granted them, but often their quest for real, deep, personal asylum will only continue. ❑

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Renewing Hope through the Destruction of Stigmas

When I came back into society in 2003, I was defined by the last 15 years of my incarceration.

Esther Calvert

Up until June of 2008, I was among the millions of Americans whose past mistakes impacted my life in ways I did not consider when I was younger. I was raised by the Department of Youth Corrections from the age of 13 until the adult correctional system took over the organization of my life when I was 18. I was convicted of a felony at age 20. When I came back into society in 2003, I was defined by the last 15 years of my incarceration. I had no hope, no job skills, an inadequate education, and a criminal record where all the mistakes I had made since I was a child were recorded. The stigma others have of "criminals," my negative perception of who I was as a result of my actions, and the time I spent incarcerated directly affected my opportunity to be employed. I applied for several jobs, yet I was denied each time. Eventually, I stopped trying to find work, and I began to volunteer at Bridgerland Literacy to teach a man how to better his English comprehension skills. I also cleaned cat kennels for a non-profit animal rescue. Regardless of my volunteer work, I was turned down for employment by PetSmart, North Logan Library, and Convergys—though Convergys is one company that admittedly hires people convicted of misdemeanors but not felonies. During my first year living life "outside" of institutions, I had no social skills, and I did not know how to communicate with the people I labeled as "normal." Even though I had no idea what "normal" meant, I believed I was not amongst them. In my perception, having friends, maintaining a job, and having life experiences opposite to mine were what constituted "normal" to me. Becoming "normal," at the time, seemed equivalent to climbing Mount Everest.

My capacity to feel empathy began to return when I started to foster sick and abandoned kittens in my home for a non-profit animal rescue. I adopted a beautiful kitten I named Buddy. He helped me change my life in many ways. My devotion to giving him a better life than what he started out with helped me to believe I had something to offer. For the first year of being "outside," I did not want to be in the community because I lacked the self-confidence to succeed. I believed I would return to institutions as I had done before. Yet, while I realized that I could deal with living my life inside of a cage, I did not want Buddy to have to live that way, which was what would have happened if I would have been incarcerated again.

In January of 2005, I began attending Utah State University. During my first semester, I was unaccustomed to school, and since my education was based on the Youth in Custody program, I did not have experience with exams or homework assignments because they were excluded from the curriculum. I had read as

many books as I could while I was incarcerated, which was the overall foundation of my education. Reading served as a release that helped me to cope with my experiences, and it enhanced my desire to learn. The sixth grade was the last grade I completed in the public school system. Because I lacked a formal education, I questioned whether I could succeed in my college courses. I had been out of school for almost 20 years, so I only took two classes my first semester; I received A's in both. Up until that time I had not experienced a more joyful moment. I applied for a job as a housekeeper at the University Inn and was hired. I worked at the Inn for one and a half years before I transferred to the Taggart Student Center, where I was employed for another year and a half. Because of the kindness of employers who took the risk of hiring me, and my positive interactions with professors on campus, I began to believe in myself. I was given another chance at the age of 31 when my criminal record was expunged.

Unfortunately, my story is not unusual. There are currently 2.2 million people who are incarcerated within America's prisons, many of whom will be released someday and will be in the same situation I was where employment opportunities were next to non-existent (Katel 2). One of the main problems associated with having a felony conviction is recidivism. The definition of "recidivism" is "relapsing into a previous type of undesirable behavior, especially crime" (Stetler). Serving repeated terms of incarceration and probation or parole violations are examples of "recidivism" because many people are sent back to prison for violating their parole. Some of the violations that people return to prison for include the following: curfew violations, lack of employment, testing positive for alcohol or other drugs, associating with other probation or parolees, or additional conditions defined by their parole officers.

Unfortunately, my story is not unusual.

People who are released from prison or another long-term institution are not receiving adequate assistance from society to help them with a successful transition. Prison "transforms" an individual into a survival machine because that is precisely the sort of environment prison is: one in which from one day to the next prisoners do not know if they will survive. Many prisoners serve years inside of this environment, and they are forced to adapt to looking over their shoulder and being suspicious of others because prisoners never know if or when they will be betrayed by someone they trusted. In prison, trusting another human being is potentially life-threatening. The psychological damage prison has on inmates, known as prison re-indoctrination, and the lack of opportunities available for ex-prisoners returning to the community significantly reduces their chances of acquiring skills that are socially acceptable, skills that are crucial for ex-prisoners to internalize so they can continue to live in society.

Negative attitudes and perceptions that prisoners are "unworthy" of opportunities contribute to recidivism, and are rampant in American society. Some common perceptions of prisoners are that they are "lazy," "lack intelligence," and "complain" about their living conditions, or that they want to be "coddled," by mainstream society. An article printed in *The Economist* reports attitudes many Americans have who believe in "popular" forms of humiliation: "The reintroduction of chain-gangs, or dressing inmates in pink uniforms and giving them mind-numbing work" are embraced by Americans "because of their punitive effect" ("Coming to a Neighbourhood" par 16). Nothing beneficial occurs in communities or in prisoners' lives by degrading others. This degradation will only further promote people to demand retribution, thus contributing to the cycle of prisoners being released and re-incarcerated.

These attitudes are not exempt from Cache Valley, Utah where the crime rates are significantly lower than in many parts

In the past, people usually have blamed ex-prisoners for their lack of employment or their return to prison without considering the nature of our justice system or the policies which are in place that prevent people from being productive.

of the United States. Some Logan residents display similar disrespect towards prisoners. An inmate at the Cache County Jail wrote a letter to the editor that was printed in the *Herald Journal* in October of 2008. In response to "Inmate Dunbar's" article, Daryl Forinash, a Logan City resident, addressed the 54-year-old inmate, comparing him to a "recalcitrant child" who has been sent to "timeout" (par 7). Forinash continues by adding, "And like the child, when you have spent some time considering your actions, you will be allowed to once again socialize with the rest of us" (par 7). My belief is that the words Forinash chose to use were intended to shame Mr. Dunbar publicly and to imply to "the rest of us" that inmates are second-class citizens and that treating them as such is acceptable. Regardless of what a person has been convicted of, they do not deserve to be treated disrespectfully. Every one of us has made our fair share of mistakes; inmates are just more aware of this fact because of their surroundings. Yet, instead of remembering that we have each made our own mistakes, many people seem to have "forgotten" this fact.

In recent years, prominent scholars and researchers have outspokenly criticized the recidivism rates, yet what has been different in their recent criticism is that it has been directed towards the structure of the criminal justice system. In the past, people usually have blamed ex-prisoners for their lack of employment or their return to prison without considering the nature of our justice system or the policies which are in place that prevent people from being productive. The most detrimental of the current policies, which was addressed in an article by criminologists Jessica S. Henry and James B. Jacobs, is de facto discrimination from hiring ex-prisoners who are seeking employment. As many people are aware, on almost every job application there is a question which asks whether the prospective employee has ever been convicted of a crime, more so of a felony.

Felons are required to disclose this information, and many

employers conduct background checks on their employees where a felony conviction is bound to be discovered. As a felon, I was required to disclose this information, regardless of the time elapsed since my convictions. Each time I filled out an application and turned it in for consideration, I knew I would not be asked to return for an interview based on my past convictions. None of the employers knew who I was except for what they read on a piece of paper, and I was not given an opportunity to personally meet them to discuss the ten years that had passed since I was convicted; their decision was already made.

As Henry and Jacobs have pointed out, the question on job applications that asks applicants about their prior criminal convictions is de facto discrimination. They explain that this type of discrimination has created "a permanent underclass of ex-offenders who are excluded from the legitimate economy and are funneled into a cycle of additional criminality and imprisonment" (Henry and Jacobs 756). Because of the rejection of an application based upon an applicant's answer to this question, there is not much hope of an ex-prisoner receiving employment, even in menial labor jobs. The result is, in fact, discrimination based upon life experiences and previous situations.

Bruce Western, a Professor of Sociology at Harvard, reinforces this fact by stating that "the key to the successful reintegration of ex-offenders into society is their ability to secure legitimate employment," and when this opportunity is unavailable for people who have served their time in an institution, banishment from the job market will only increase recidivism. According to an article printed in *The Economist*, America's population is growing in the numbers of ex-prisoners returning to society. We are witnessing in this "army of ex-cons...the final, perhaps unforeseen, stage of the country's 'love affair'" with incarcerating individuals (par 6). The current "permanent underclass of ex-offenders" will only continue to rise when more prisoners are released into society.

There is significant evidence proving that when ex-offenders have stability in their lives, the chance that they will remain in the community is dramatically increased.

Criminologists Robert Sampson and John Laub have described the significant "turning points" in an offender's life that can prevent recidivism. These community supports involve "school, family and employment, that alter life trajectories and redirect paths" to those which are more beneficial for the whole of society (Western 413). When an ex-offender has already experienced years of "prison re-indoctrination," they have little chance of succeeding in their communities without societal supports. Western concludes his article by discussing where society's "real investments" can be made, ones "that build skills and improve health and well-being more directly" in people's lives who are among the most "socially marginal in American society" (418). Each member in our society whether "free" or imprisoned has the potential to contribute to our communities in a positive way when given an opportunity to do so. Solutions that can help bring us as a human race together will in turn help us to value ourselves more and place a higher value upon life in general.

Recent improvements for helping ex-prisoners receive meaningful employment are being implemented in several major cities in America. According to Henry and Jacobs's article, an ex-offender group in San Francisco, "All of Us or None," has advocated for a bill to "end discrimination against ex-offenders applying for city and county jobs" under the campaign entitled "Ban the Box." The "box" they are referring to is the question on a job application that asks whether the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime. Under new laws, which have resulted from the "Ban the Box" campaign, employers disclose which jobs will require a background check, yet in order for them to ask for an applicant's criminal record, the potential employee will have to be a "finalist" in the hiring process, which means a completed

interview and the decision to hire them has been made. When the department for which an ex-offender will be working discloses the potential employees' name to Human Resources, they conduct a background check, and "if a disqualifying conviction is revealed, the applicant has an opportunity to meet with the Human Resources Department to discuss any mitigating circumstances" (Henry and Jacobs 757). Banning the box will be effective in benefiting ex-offenders who have shown improvement in adapting to life outside of prison, and this policy "filters" out those who have not made necessary changes that are needed in order to remain in the community.

> **During the last five years, I have progressed more than I had at any time in my life.**

In Boston City, 5,000 private contractors have also adopted the policy which greatly "enhances the employment prospects of thousands of ex-offender job seekers" (Henry and Jacobs 758). There are several steps that have been implemented to ensure equality between ex-offenders and non-offenders. In cities that have adopted "Ban the Box," the question of whether an individual has been convicted of a crime is no longer on job applications. Ex-offenders who are "job ready" have the opportunity to be evaluated and considered solely on qualifications that are relevant to employment while excluding criminal convictions that have resulted in past discrimination. And

> under new guidelines, even when a criminal record might be relevant to a particular job; before making a final hiring decision, city agencies must take into account the time elapsed since a conviction occurred...and evidence of rehabilitation. (Henry and Jacobs 758)

It is my belief that this new proposal ought to be accepted as a common practice in the United States.

During the last five years, I have progressed more than I had at any other time in my life. Many people have helped me achieve the goals I once believed were unreachable. My previous employers wrote a letter to the judge on my behalf so I could get my record expunged, and one of my professors in the Sociology Department also wrote the judge a letter. They were not obligated to do this for me, yet I will always remember their kindness.

I am still amazed by the grades I have received throughout the three-and-a-half years I have attended Utah State University. Whereas I once doubted my intelligence, I have surpassed the expectations I once had of myself: I am majoring in Sociology with a G.P.A. of 3.9; I am an Undergraduate Teaching Fellow in the Sociology Department; I plan to attend graduate school in the next few years.

The place where these solutions need to start is within members of our communities. If people continue to harbor negative beliefs about "criminals," this will do nothing to help the problem of discrimination; this negativity will only exacerbate it more and thus promote further marginalization. Valuing and respecting others are what will create a more cohesive society and will have more positive results than the overall current mindset of "disposable" individuals. Helping others to realize that their contributions are valuable through reintegration instead of through shaming and humiliation will be more beneficial to everyone in the long-term. ❑

This essay was first published in vol. 2 of *Voices* in 2009.

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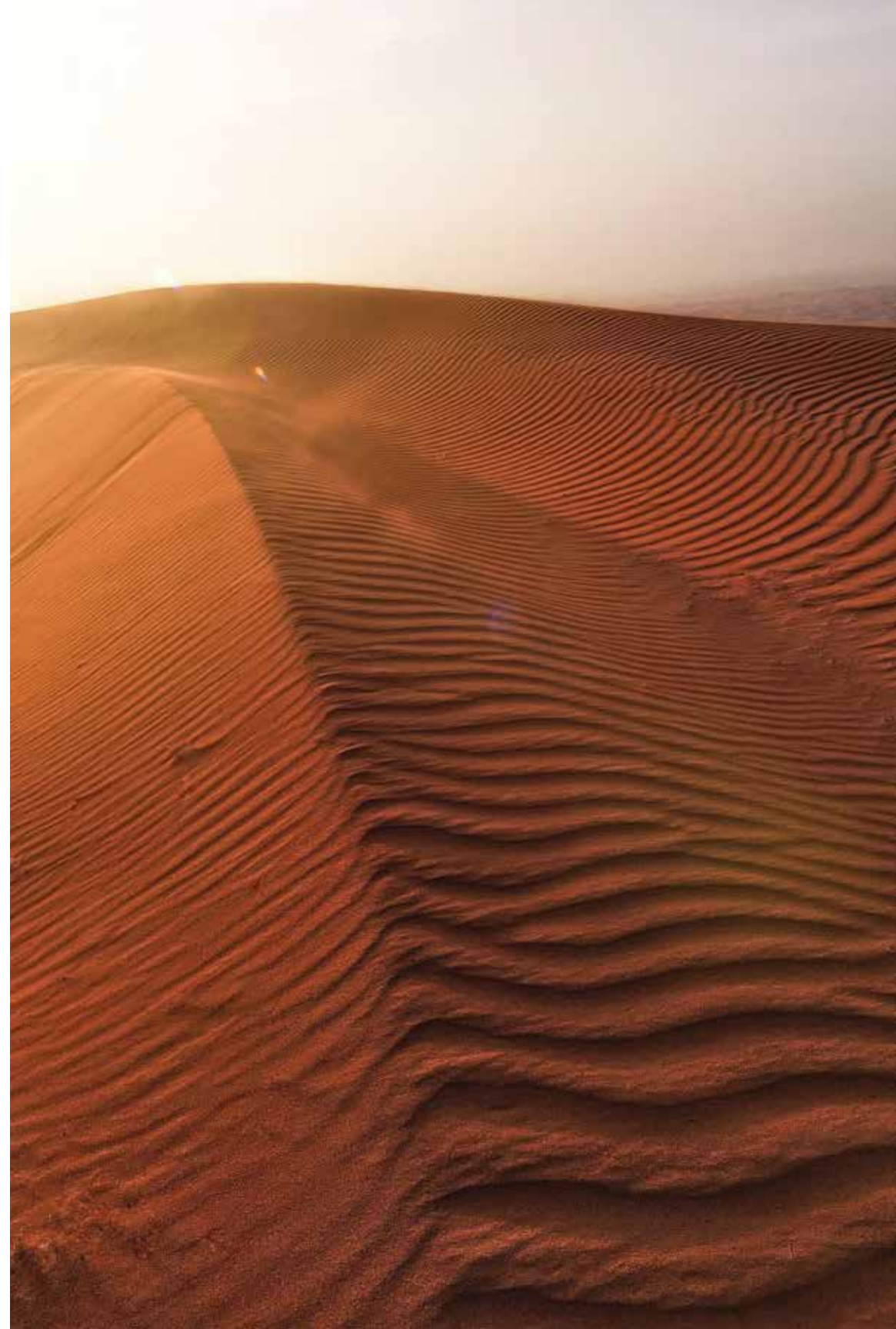
The Battle for Mauna Kea

Mauna Kea is not just any piece of land, and it is not just any mountain.

Pono Suganuma

With an uninterrupted view of the clouds floating above the volcanic land and 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 second is that Mauna Kea is an extremely sacred and cultural site to native Hawaiians. 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 such 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 for 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). 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). These telescopes contributed to the work of local and international astronomers and resulted in unequaled scientific discovery. If Mauna Kea is so valuable to science, why is there a debate between culture and science? It would be absurd to think that not 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. The center or *piko* of our culture is symbolically represented by Mauna Kea, which 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, is centered around 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. Scattered along the mountainside are

250 burial sites and altars, which have been discovered and deemed culturally significant by professional archaeologists (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 its summit (Kaplan). As the source of our genealogical story, Mauna Kea is undoubtedly a highly sacred place. So why is there a debate for science's involvement on the mountain? 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 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, called 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). 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). 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. TMT would be operated by the TMT Observatory Corporation, which is based in Pasadena, California. Though construction has halted, it is expected to be completed in 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 has science, has astronomers, debating against protesters, or protectors as they liked to be called, of the mountain. It has left

So, what does this battle come down to? It is a battle between culture and science.

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 aren't worth the costs TMT would have on our cultural heritage. I will not conceal that TMT could bring highly valuable benefits to Hawai'i's 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's 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). 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). Furthermore, 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 TMT is backed by universities and astronomy institutions in countries like the United States, Canada, China, India, and Japan. 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). These various discoveries of these heavens would not have been accomplished if it hadn't 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 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 thirteen large telescopes already reside on the mountain. After I presented this paper at the Citizen Scholar Conference at Utah State University, 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? Why does it matter?" His question brought up a strong, accurate,

and harsh point that the land has already been desecrated and our cultural identity affected. In my response, I echoed the words of Richard Naiwieha Wurdeman when he addressed Hawai'i's Supreme Court in 2015: "Mauna Kea is more than a mountain [and]... is the embodiment of the Hawaiian people" (qtd. in

> **Other economic benefits brought by TMT include the creation of 130 permanent jobs in science and technology.**

Bussewitz). 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 that impedes 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). 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 were 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). 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 main leader for the *Ku Kiʻai 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 was 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 *Hawaiʻi Tribune Herald,* science reserves have taken over and now own over 263 historic sites, including 141 ancient shrines (Callis). If we 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 Hawaiʻi 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 why she supports TMT in a personal interview, she said, "[Because of] the strong astronomical aspects of Hawaiian culture, ʻimi ʻike (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 construction of TMT is not generally supported by the Hawaiian community, one must realize the very definition of

what is sacred and what is Hawaiian is unique for every person. "I've had the chance to meet astronomers from around the world. They hold Mauna Kea in their utmost respect, reverence, and believe it sacred for their reasons too," Neal said (Neal). If we are to understand why the astronomers have been so tireless in their pursuit of the mountain,

> So much land was lost when Hawaiʻi was overthrown illegally by the American troops in 1893 and the crown lands were annexed to the U.S. in 1898.

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 regards. 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 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)

Residents of Hawaiʻi are having to make this same decision as Piscotta and discover what side of the battle they truly identify with.

As the residents of Hawaiʻi, we must each make our own informed and independent decisions about what we believe is right for Mauna Kea. How can we do that? I urge the residents of Hawaiʻi 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). 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 confirm that the advancement of astronomy is crucial, but I do not believe that Mauna Kea is the right location to do so. The protests lead by protectors of Mauna Kea have caused TMT officials to investigate alternative locations, like Canary Islands, Chile, or India for its construction (Epping). I think that this a logical move on behalf of the TMT officials because the battle has reached a kind of stalemate. Therefore, I urge the residents of Hawaiʻi to research and discover their beliefs surrounding the battle for Mauna Kea.

I confirm that the advancement of astronomy is crucial, but I do not believe that Mauna Kea is the right location to do so.

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

He aliʻi ka ʻāina; 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. ❑

On October 30, 2018, Hawaiʻi's Supreme Court ruled to uphold the construction of TMT on Mauna Kea. This ruling came two years after Suganuma composed this essay in favor of blocking its construction.

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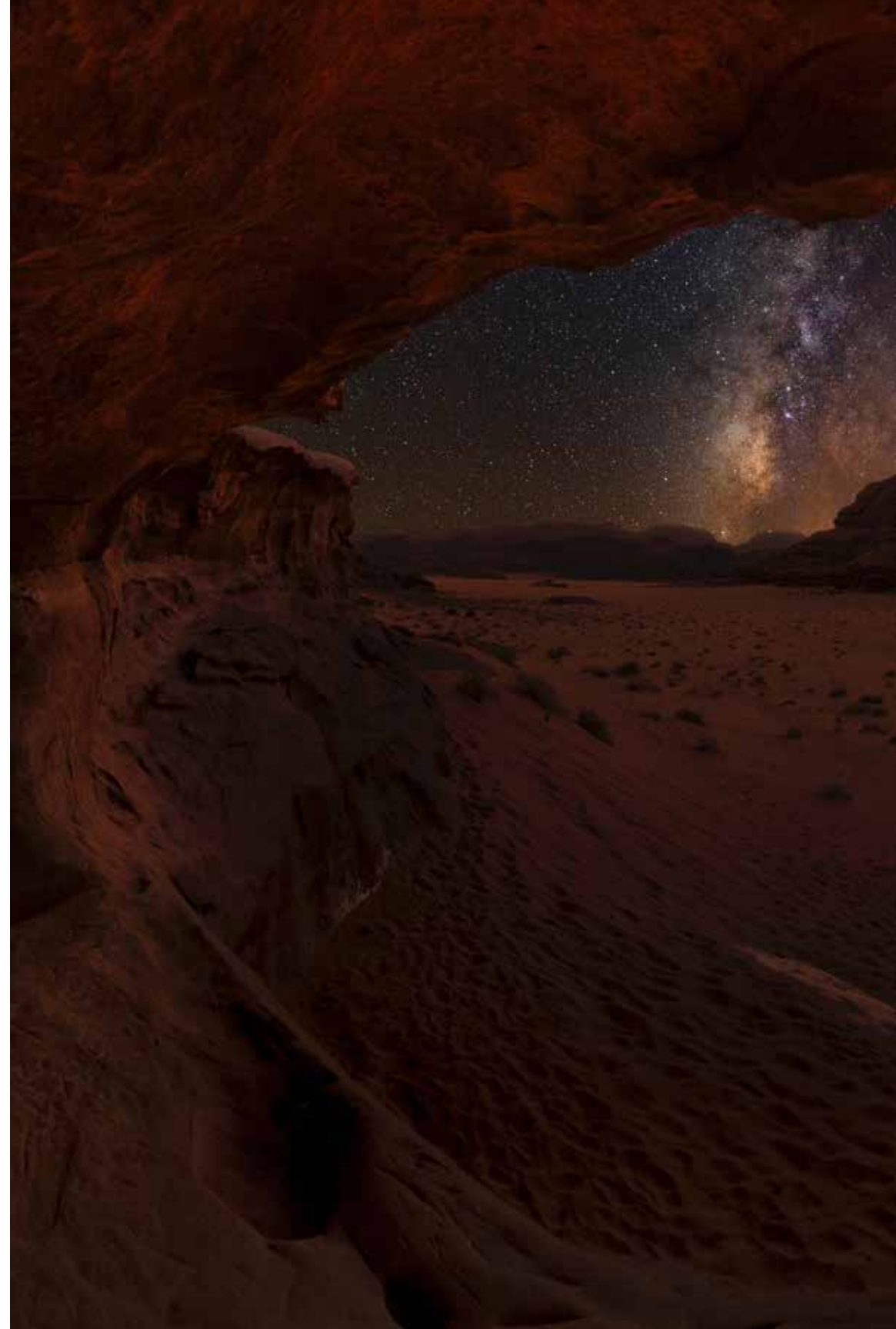
Lacuna, An Empty Space

Space has infinite potential.

My eight-year-old legs rush over the wood chips and then hang in the air as I jump over the enclosure around the school playground. A short, scrawny boy named Christian with a passion for sports larger than his stature chases after me. He thrusts his arm forward with an imagined sword. I jump to the side, avoiding the pantomimed jab. Our chase continues for another moment, ending with a deep lean back as he finishes me off, the last of an imagined invading, evil force.

"Ha! I win!" proclaims Christian.

Shortly thereafter, we are called from our space between the woods and the playground, a place with potential as infinite and vast as the universe, to return to the school for lunch. This wasn't the first episode of our adventure, nor was it the last time that Christian would find victory over me. Our adventures had continued for as long as our unlikely friendship, with Christian playing the protagonist, and all while I played the supporting characters on his adventure.

Hunter Henrichsen

Every friend, every foe, every merchant along the road played by me. Each one drawn from the books that inspired me. We run inside, already looking forward to the next recess, the next part of the adventure.

⌄

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines a lacuna as "a gap or blank space in something" ("Lacuna," def. English Language Learners, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). Lacuna can be used to describe a lack of guidance in leadership. A space between stars in the night sky can be a lacuna. *Merriam-Webster* denotes *space* as "a boundless three-dimensional extent in which objects and events occur and have relative position and direction" ("Space," def. N.4.a). Space is as boundless as a child's imagination, a neutral place where events can occur free from "good" or "evil" biases.

Space, left on its own, is neutral. It is shaped and used in the manner that the actors within it decide. Space is shaped by outside forces and moves toward different states by those forces. The direction of shaping and whether it is deemed good or bad is determined by those in and around the space. Space has infinite potential.

⌄

My ten-year-old legs skid over the grass, fingers reaching as far as I can as I come to rest. The ball rolls past my fingers without a care for my vain efforts at stopping it. Most of my fellow fourth graders run back to retrieve the ball and get the next round started, but two decide to stop. One is Alex, the goalie from my extracurricular soccer team, a large and intimidating boy. The other is Christian, my still-small best friend. I pick myself up.

"You are the worst goalie ever. Leave," commands Alex.

I look to Christian, hoping for an offer of a second chance, some kind of redemption, or at least some defense in the matter. The only thing I hear is an empty silence from both of my peers. My shoulders sag as I leave and return the neon jersey marking my team to the crate. I hide myself in the space beneath the stairs of a portable classroom, a dirty hideaway far from where I want to be. The teacher monitoring sends the next child into the game without a glance my way.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a lacuna as "a gap, and empty space, spot, or cavity" ("Lacuna," def. N.2). *Empty* is a key part of lacuna's definition, since this emptiness offers the potential for creation. *Emptiness* is defined as "[t]he condition of being without contents; (with reference to a room, place, etc.) the condition of being uninhabited or unfurnished; (in religious contexts) the condition of being without divine influence" ("Emptiness," def. N.2.a). The state of being empty is not a good thing in many contexts. *Empty* can describe something that is "lacking reality, substance, meaning, or value; hollow" ("Empty," def. A.2.a). In literature, when a person is described as empty, they are often either in a state of alienation or depression, devoid of drive or motivation. They are hollow. Empty means devoid of human activity, and takes on a sad meaning when applied to a human. Someone who is empty is reacting to an event in such a way that they are no longer responding or coping as a human would.

My eleven-year-old legs stand in a circle of the roots of a tree next to my best friend, Kallie. We play our own game, away from the

drama of the other children at recess. The space has given us time to create something interesting, both of us playing a character in a story together. In our space, we are children with powers, conquering each challenge we encounter.

"Come on! If we don't catch them soon, they'll get away into the desert," Kallie advises as we pursue imagined foes.

The space gives us time to learn and create, but it also makes us outsiders, makes us different. A posse of boys finds me odd for being friends with the new girl. What they think is mild teasing impacts me more than they know. I learn to find safety in space from others, and safety in space from my feelings—a moat to keep me safe from what I think is dangerous.

Printing presses revolutionized communication. They allowed for rapid, accurate duplication of the same piece of text. Printing presses made large impacts on culture, trade, and clarity in communication due to their accuracy and replicability (Grafton 84-86). However, before the printing press, transcriptions and copies were made by hand, called manuscripts.

When writing manuscripts, a lacuna was "a hiatus, blank, missing portion" ("Lacuna," def. N.1, *Oxford English Dictionary*). If a thought was missed, a paragraph skipped, a page turned too quickly, pieces would be left out. This would be the fault of the one copying, and that manuscript would be passed to others to copy, where that missing portion would propagate to other manuscripts. To the reader, this would cause a space in understanding between what was intended and what was written.

This kind of lacuna has not disappeared. Generally, miscommunication stems from one saying something that does

not fully translate to the other's understanding, and the other acting on that understanding to accomplish something separate from the first's desire or intention. In addition, with the advent of digitized communication, miscommunication is more common (Kelly and Miller-Ott). The meaning of communication often takes facial expressions and verbal intonation to convey its full intention, which means lacunas still appear in our digital discourse today.

My thirteen-year-old legs stand in a space between fire doors in a hallway as a group of boys pass by. I see Christian standing at the back of the group. He's taller now. They laugh without him. They want nothing to do with me, and the boy at the head of the group lets me know as much. I stay in my small, safe space beside the fire door, ignoring them and the still-growing lacuna between me and my once-best friend.

"What happened?" I naïvely wonder to myself. I find myself as a small character in the background of someone else's story.

Seeing the doorway clear, I walk the rest of the way to class, hugging my stack of novels and textbooks to my chest. I sit down in my seat next to Alex as we lament the boredom of this class and the tardiness of the teacher. A space lies unfilled between us.

Lacuna is defined as "an empty space," but perhaps both it, and emptiness, don't deserve the negative connotations they have ("Lacuna," def. N.2, *Oxford English Dictionary*). A lacuna in conversation between friends is more likely than a lacuna in a relationship, in understanding. It means space. That space can be used to think, to develop, to grow. It has potential as infinite and vast as the universe.

Hollow, too, is influenced by unjust connotations. Hollow means that an emptiness can be filled with something, or someone. The hollow stump of a tree can just as easily become a perfect place for a tea party as it can a home to a colony of fungus or a gravesite for a lost pet.

Unjust connotations surround words that at first glance seem dark and gloomy but can at the same time describe infinite potential to become as full of good as they were void of the same. An empty vessel has the potential to be filled with anything. The lack of filling is not a just excuse for a dark connotation, but rather, it should be celebrated for the potential that it has. One who is empty is one who has a safe place for another.

My fourteen-year-old legs sit in the back of a black Suburban, my head under a blanket. I let the monotonous plains of Kansas lull me to sleep. The once-close space between my few friends and me is growing exponentially as I move to Utah. A few phone numbers written in the back of a yearbook—with more signatures than I think I deserve—is all I have to show for what were once friendships. I again open my yearbook, and names stare back at me: Alex, Leah, Sarah, Lindsey, Gabe, each with a message about their impressions of me when I had thought that I was alone. Christian's—Chris's, I correct myself—name is on the back page of the book with no message.

"I'm going to miss them," sobs my younger brother Denver in front of me.

I concede that I won't be able to sleep as Kansas slips by, and I look back out the window at the fields rolling past me. The flat, empty space provides food for people near and far. What was once

a lacuna now provides life for many. I sit up and realize that this move may not be for the worst, as Denver thinks. This is just the next recess, the next part of the adventure. ❏

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Impostor Phenomenon: When Self Doubt Goes Too Far

Katie Cronin

Impostor phenomenon is a relatively new player on the psychology scene, so outside of what it is and who it generally affects, there is not much known about it.

I stared at my friend Emily, more than a little confused.

"What do you mean, you're not smart?" I asked.

Emily just looked at me and shrugged, "Well, yeah, I do well in school but school just measures how well I can take a test. I put in the time and study, but I don't get good grades because I'm smart. Teachers generally like me, which always helps. I have smart friends, and I pick up a lot of things they say. If anything, I'm just average."

"Emily, come on. You have a 4.0, you're in college classes in high school, and you're a part of National Honor Society and a Sterling Scholar," I pause for a moment to gauge her reaction. "You have to be kidding when you say you're just average."

It was obvious at this point that she was uncomfortable. "Those things aren't really hard. Anyone can do all those things if they put in the time, and lucky me, I have no life so I've had a lot of time. It's that simple."

She tried to play it off and joke about it, but I knew nothing I had said really struck her.

⌄

Does this interaction sound familiar at all? Maybe you have friends like this that can't seem to internalize their success, or maybe *you* are that person. If this resonates with you, you might be experiencing something known as impostor phenomenon. Impostor phenomenon was first studied in 1978 after Dr. Suzanne Imes and Dr. Pauline Clance noticed a trend in a group of highly achieving women who attended the college where they taught. Even though these individuals had years of previous success and numerous academic achievements, Imes and Clance observed that the group still felt like they weren't qualified for their positions. Despite accomplishments, colleagues' opinions, or any evidence that would prove otherwise, they saw themselves as inadequate. Dr. Clance explains, "They had excellent standardized test scores, good grades, and recommendations...[but they] felt like an impostor [at the college] with all these really bright people" (Clance, "Impostor Phenomenon"). Dr. Clance relates that when she was in graduate school, she had similar feelings of acute self-doubt and began to wonder if these women's experiences followed a pattern similar to her own. She and Dr. Imes began to interview these women and published their findings in the paper titled "The Impostor Phenomenon in Highly Achieving Women" (Clance,

"Impostor Phenomenon"). Since then, impostor phenomenon has become better known, better researched, and is now more commonly known as impostor syndrome.

⌄

> *I sat at my desk and had just finished* **reading through a report.** *It had taken many long years of schooling to get me where I was, but in my mind, it was worth it. It was my first science-writing job and I loved being able to combine my interests of science and literature. But I couldn't shake the feeling that it was only a matter of time before my supervisors would walk in, tap me on the shoulder, apologize, and tell me that they'd made a mistake in hiring me. Looking at the evidence of my work, I knew I was doing fine, better than fine—I was turning in my work on time and my supervisors liked the material that I was turning in, but I just couldn't get past the feeling of being a fraud.* (Ravindran)

⌄

Self-doubt isn't an uncommon thing, so what makes impostor phenomenon different? Impostor phenomenon is not classified as a mental disorder by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). However, researchers and psychologists note that even though it's not considered a mental disorder, it is a very specific and potent form of self-doubt (Weir). Furthermore, The American Psychological Association recognizes that impostor phenomenon does have the possibility of being linked to other mental disorders, such as anxiety and depression (Weir). One of the key characteristics of someone who has impostor phenomenon is that they experience something called the impostor cycle. During this cycle, they are presented with a task or a project. They will feel

anxious about the project, and this anxiety generally leads to one of two responses: they either over-prepare or they procrastinate until the last minute. They feel relieved after the task is completed. However, they don't recognize any role they had in the success of the project and won't accept positive feedback. Instead, they attribute their success to luck or they believe that they just worked really hard without actually having skill. They don't feel like they deserve the success, which can create more anxiety, and the cycle will repeat itself (Stempien).

To better define impostor phenomenon in a research setting, Dr. Clance created the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale. This scale poses statements to an individual, such as "when people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future" and "I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am" (Clance, *When Success* 20-

One of the key characteristics of someone who has imposter phenomenon is that they experience something called the imposter cycle.

22). A person takes this survey and rates themselves on a scale of 1-5, depending on how much they agree with each statement then tally their score. The total score helps them determine how much they identify with impostor phenomenon (Clance, *When Success* 20-22). Marsha Simon and Youn-Jeng Choi of The University of Alabama identified three factors that the scale tests for: "fear of failure, discounted recognition from others, and feared evaluation or were worried that previous success could not be repeated," or to sum it up faster, "luck, fate, and discount" (Simon and Choi 173).

⌄

Hard work and dedication **have always been a part of my character and from a young age my parents always put an emphasis on school. I studied hard through college and always got good grades, but I always found something to give credit to besides myself. As an African-American student, I always felt like much of my progression came from sympathy from others and not my own qualifications. I was taught that "I would need to work twice as hard to be half as good." This idea has always made me very goal oriented, but now that I look back, it also made me feel like all my efforts would never really be enough.** (Hives qtd. in Weir)

Who can impostor phenomenon affect? **A survey conducted in the 1980s that found that about 70% of people experience impostor phenomenon (Gravosis). Since then, researchers have focused on if impostor phenomenon impacts one group above another. Clance and Imes first predicted that women were more affected than men; however, new studies show different results. The exact ratio can vary from study to study, but overall, it seems that when it comes to self-reported feelings of impostor phenomenon, there is little difference between genders (Anderson). Something significant to note is that if there are stigmas surrounding a person's gender or ethnicity, then they are more likely to experience feelings of impostor phenomenon (Cokley et al. 9-10). This means stigmatized groups are more likely to credit their successes to programs, mentors, circumstances, or pure luck than they are to accept and internalize their successes. Impostor phenomenon has been researched more among those who are considered high achieving (CEOs, actors, college students, etc.) because these demographics are easier to objectively test; however, impostor phenomenon is** not limited to those groups.

My life became completely consumed **by...[my YouTube career]. I got caught up in playing a version of myself on camera. People can argue all they want, but no one is really themselves on camera; it's a personality that you adapt to and you might not even realize it. For any type of role a person can play they can become so immersed in it that they start to wonder, what is real of my personality? Is any of it real at all? You can say that all these problems are not real, that they're just in someone's head and made up, but what I've gone through, that wasn't made up.** (Smith)

How long has impostor phenomenon **been around? It's a hard question to answer because it's only been studied for about 40 years, but some researchers posit that the number of people that experience impostor phenomenon is increasing due to the popularity of social media (Eschenroeder). People tend to only post pictures that make them look beautiful or glamorous and tell stories that make their lives seem adventurous while cutting out most of the more common but monotonous parts of their day. This pattern we see in social media is completely natural; however, this kind of selective posting can lead to people feeling like if their followers knew them in real life, they wouldn't be as impressive or admirable as people online perceive them to be.**

However, impostor phenomenon is much older than social media. Another factor that could cause impostor phenomenon is personal or cultural expectations. People often have a preconceived notion of what it means to be a college student, an adult, a

professional, etc. They might have a list of attributes, background knowledge, and experiences that they feel that someone in those positions should have. When that person becomes a college student, adult, professional, etc., they might feel like they don't belong because their experience pales in comparison to what they think someone in that position should have. Yet another possible factor of impostor phenomenon is family dynamics. Some research has focused on how growing up in a family that largely emphasizes and praises achievements and goals yet also offers strong criticism when those goals are not met can be linked with impostor phenomenon (Stempien). *SciShow Psych*, a company that creates informative podcasts about psychology probably said it best about what causes the phenomenon: "The impostor phenomenon is probably caused by a lot of things" (Stempien).

Personally, I question whether impostor **phenomenon is useful. By giving a name to a set of emotions that are common in any self-reflecting human we are just reifying this questionable concept and pathologizing normal emotions. Instead, we need to do a better job of letting people know when their work is outstanding or when they show particular strengths.** (Lloyd qtd. in Ravindran)

When I tell people about impostor **phenomenon for the first time, I usually hear something that describes four types of people: 1) People who identify with impostor phenomenon and are surprised that they are not the only one that have felt this way. 2) People who know the feelings of impostor phenomenon but have never heard of a name for it 3) People who have never experienced it but**

believe that it exists. 4) People that have never experienced it and doubt that it is anything more than regular self-doubt. Impostor phenomenon's effects can be difficult to fully describe for the same reasons that depression or anxiety are hard to fully describe; emotions are easy to feel but not easy to explain. I can provide facts, professional opinions, graphs, data,

Imposter phenomenon's effects can be difficult to fully describe for the same reasons that depression or anxiety are hard to fully describe.

etc., but some will still have a hard time seeing the validity and point of spending time talking about and researching impostor phenomenon. Part of this could be because it can be hard to notice and sympathize with something that you have never experienced. Sociologist Jessica Collett of the University of Notre Dame experienced this while she researched impostor phenomenon. She explains, "It was very interesting to sit down with people who were like, 'I have no idea what you're talking about.' For people who have felt that impostorism, it's so palpable" (qtd. in Ravindran).

Impostor phenomenon is a relatively new player on the psychology scene, so outside of what it is and who it generally affects, there is not much known about it. I can't tell you about impostor phenomenon in third-world countries; I can't tell you how much impostor phenomenon varies from generation to generation; I can't tell you if people who identified with impostor phenomenon existed during the Renaissance or if it is new because of more recent cultural values. I can't answer these questions because, at least in my research, these questions have not been studied in a scientific setting. However, just because it's difficult to argue emotions with numbers does not make the acute and potent feelings that are unique to impostor phenomenon any less real for those who have experienced it. For anyone who doubts

the existence of impostor phenomenon and that it varies from regular self-doubt, I would direct them to the many studies that have shown that even though there is overlap with anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression, impostor phenomenon is a separate and unique occurrence (Raindran).

As we accept the existence of impostor phenomenon, we will better understand it and how it affects the many people that identify with it. Impostor phenomenon can help us better understand how we see ourselves, what we value, and how those two factors shape our behavior, our actions, our achievements, and our society as a whole. ❏

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Child's Play

I slowly creep into the gigantic building that looms over me, all the while compiling the enormous list of sins I have piled up in ten years.

" *ios está muerto,"* screams **D** David, pounding his angry seven-year-old fist against the desk. Every one of us in the room turns towards him, our faces pale, our eyes wide open. How dare he speak such heresy? Angelica bolts out of the room, yelling for *Doña* Mercedes to come in and punish David for his dreadful accusation.

I turn to my neighbor, chubby, curly-haired Diego, and ask, "How can he think God is dead?"

"I don't know…but I bet you anything *la Doña* isn't gonna like it—remember when she caught Walter chewing gum? He told me the welts on his ass bled for days."

Diego fails to answer my question. But he brings up a good point: poor David will definitely get a proper whipping; to top it off, I bet he will have to go to the chapel and pray a while.

Alexei Bastidas

Seen as the greatest crime against the Roman Catholic Church, heresy was originally punishable by a torturous death. Over time, as the Church lost political and judicial power amidst the growing secular nations, the penalty lessened, becoming more an act of ostracism rather than physical punishment. Nonetheless, the ideological response has not changed greatly from early writers such as Augustine, who viewed the rejection of faith as the most diabolical of actions. It should be noted that the sin of heresy is made even worse when one has been exposed to doctrine yet consciously refutes it (Levy).

1998. Aside from the upcoming World Cup in France, this is also the year I will finally take communion. I can't lie; I'm mildly excited about the ordeal. One thing does bother me though, and I guess I have my brother to blame for that. I know it's wrong to question Sister Maria, but I can't help it. On Thursday's Catechism, I finally bring it up.

"Sister…I was wondering. Well, you know how the Incas worshipped the sun? Well…I was wondering. Doesn't that make sense in a way? I mean, the sun gave them crops, it showed itself each day, it even warmed them up." Partly stuttering, I manage to get the sentence out, not without inspiring laughter and finger pointing from my classmates.

"Did ya hear him! He thinks the sun is God," exclaims Nacho, his glasses falling off as he struggles to contain his almost epileptic fit of hilarity. I decide to join in on the laughter, letting them know I was just kidding.

Sister Maria simply looks at me, "God might not be physically

present in the sky, but all you have to know is he is always watching, taking care of you and making sure you're a good boy," she says calmly with a smile on her face. I'm suddenly reminded of my old friend Diego.

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One of the principal rites of Roman Catholicism, the First Communion is usually arranged when children are in the age range of eight to twelve, an age seen as old enough to reason. As deemed by Pope Pious X in 1910, the ceremony requires a great amount of preparation as the child should be spiritually nourished and versed in the scriptures so they can comprehend the significance of the rite itself ("First Communion").

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That afternoon when I get back from school, I storm to my brother's room and pound on the locked door. He opens the door slowly, surprised to see me. I furiously kick him in the shin.

"What the hell?" he asks as he punches me in the chest, "What'd I do to you, man?"

"You told me the sun was a better god, asshole," I respond, bent over as I try to catch my breath.

"Well, it is. Never said it was a god. Just said it'd make more sense to believe in something tangible, not that make-believe shit the nuns teach you in school."

"How can you say that! God is everywhere. He's here now. Probably thinking of how he's gonna punish your ass when it's sent to hell." As I finish the sentence, I feel empowered; a burgeoning zeal roars within me. Suddenly, Andres, my wise, fourteen-year-

old-former-altar-boy brother, punches me again. Losing my missionary fervor, I opt to get out of the room as quick as possible.

That night, I take my little handless Jesus—a gift from my grandmother that had unluckily been dismembered following the receiving of what were deemed inadequate Christmas gifts—and pray, asking him to assure me of his existence. After a few seconds of silence, little Jesus is in the air. The unfortunate trajectory of his fight sends him head-on towards my door. The crash breaks the silence. I make sure there aren't scratches on the door, set him on the counter, and prepare myself for a lonely night of dreaming.

Mom hovers over, shaking me. It would seem I have to wake up. I crawl out of bed and make my way to the shower. Andres is leaning against the wall in front of the bathroom.

"Good morning, little Inca," he says, beaming with arrogance.

"Go to hell," I mutter.

"Seriously though, man. Take the sun god thing out of the picture, you still have a ridiculous number of holes with the whole God thing. Just start asking questions to your nun," he says, barely containing the laughter.

"Like what?" I ask, not at all amused.

"Evolution," he says, bursting into laughter.

"Go to hell."

Sister Maria walks into the classroom. She sets down her Bible on the desk and asks how her little angels are. In unison, we cheerfully answer that we're doing well. It has been two weeks since the sun incident, but with confession this Friday and then communion on Sunday, I feel the sudden urge to reassure my faith. I raise my hand.

"Evolution," I announce. The giggles are hard to ignore, but I

can't stop at this point. "My brother said that the Bible doesn't talk about evolution."

"Umm, that's right. Why would the Bible talk about science fiction?" asks Sister Maria, the class cheering her on.

"Well, if God created man, how does evolution fit into the picture? How do Darwin's discoveries work into God's plan? I think you have to admit there's a ridiculous number of holes with the whole God thing." I try to picture Andres by my side, his arrogant smile trouncing the other kids' laughs.

"Do you want to go to hell?" asks Sister Maria.

I stare at her. Andres disappears, and I recall Diego telling me of David's bleeding ass welts.

—

It's Friday afternoon. With mom at work, it falls upon my aunt Gardenia to take me to my first confession. We arrive at the church, and she gestures for me to go in—saying she'll be back in half an hour. I slowly creep into the gigantic building that looms over me, all the while compiling the enormous list of sins I have piled up in ten years. Sister Maria greets me inside, and points me towards the priest's chambers. Father Martinez is calmly sitting on a plain wooden chair. He smiles at me warmly; I feel uneasy.

"Tell me, son—" Before he finishes, I start crying and list off my crimes against God. I rant for a few minutes, not able to hold anything back. How could I? By age ten, I had deprived Jesus of his hands, swore, envied, missed Mass, seen nudity, drank, blasphemed, and questioned my religious instructor. I was a pawn of Lucifer.

"Can God forgive me? No, why would he?" I let out an agonizing plea.

"Don't worry, child. God opens his door to everyone. Now go to the altar, and pray fifteen Hail Marys and two Blessed Fathers."

Relieved, I skip to the altar. Mateo is kneeling there, praying away. I ask him what he has to do for penance. He tells me he has to pray twenty Hail Marys and five Blessed Fathers. I'm ecstatic.

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The sacrament of confession, or reconciliation, allows for the sinner to purge his soul of the ailments of their crimes against God. A requirement for partaking in Communion, wherein one welcomes Christ's actual transubstantiated body and blood, the rite involves one admitting to all committed sins while also displaying sorrow and remorse. The priest, seen as a healer, prescribes a particular penance through which one shows the desire to change and receives God's forgiveness ("Roman Catholicism").

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Our families look upon us with pride in their eyes. We start making our way to the altar in our practiced formation. The girl in front of me gets up and moves to the side. I step up to the altar and smile at Father Martinez while I kneel. I open my mouth. He dips the wafer in the wine, says a short prayer, and places it on my tongue. I stand up and look to the crucifix. An amazing tranquility takes over me: I cross myself, and follow the others. ❑

This essay was first published in vol. 1 of *Voices* in 2008.

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Pregnant Inmates: The Forgotten Victims

Many prison policies were put into place with good intentions but had unintended consequences when it comes to women, pregnant women specifically.

I n the infamous Eighth Circuit case *Case Pool vs. Sebastian County*, a woman who was entering a county jail informed the staff that she was pregnant and hemorrhaging. The prison nurse did not believe her, and she was ordered to stay in bed. Later, she was transferred to an observation room where she screamed and cried and yet never had the opportunity to see a doctor. Five days after entering the jail, she miscarried alone (Luhlik 524). A deputy who was involved in the incident said that "her supervisors had refused to respond to Pool's medical needs, even though it was obvious that she was bleeding heavily" (Luhlik 524). Unfortunately, cases like this occur too often.

Since the war on drugs started in the

Cheyenne Inman

1980s, the rate of prisoners has skyrocketed, especially for women, in which it increased by 646% (Kelsey 1260). This reaffirms that most women are incarcerated for non-violent and often drug-related crimes. Women in prison bring a unique challenge to the prison system in reproductive healthcare, specifically when it comes to pregnancy. It is estimated that between 6-10% of women sent to prison are pregnant at the time of arrival (Kelsey 1261). Unfortunately, many of them will leave without a child due to the high rate of miscarriage in prison and the frequent termination of parental rights. Prisons for female inmates need to be reformed so they can properly provide care to pregnant women. We need to understand how the prison environment can hurt pregnant inmates and implement changes in prison policies that will prevent that harm. These changes in policies should address the following concerns. First, prisons need to increase the amount of reproductive healthcare that women in prison have access to. Second, inmates who give birth while incarcerated need the opportunity to foster a relationship with their child. And third, prisons need to outlaw the shackling of pregnant women. When these things are accomplished, we will see a greater rehabilitation success rate for these prisons.

> It is estimated that between 6–10% of women sent to prison are pregnant at the time of arrival.

Many prison policies were put into place with good intentions but had unintended consequences when it comes to women, specifically pregnant women. One thing that affects nearly all female inmates is the methods of birth control available in prisons. Because prison guards are worried about inmates selling pills, many prisons only offer the depo-shot as an option, even though it has more severe side effects than the pill and can cause women to be sterile for up to 10 months after they stop using it (Kuhlik 512).

Women should not have to deal with extra side-effects because of the prison's fear of selling pills, which could be controlled by having inmates take the pill in front of guards. Reproductive healthcare is not something that should be compromised.

Another policy that hurts female inmates regarding their pregnancies is that women who give birth naturally are allowed less time with their children than women who give birth through a cesarean section (Kuhlik 512). Some women will request a caesarian section even if they do not need one because they want more time with their children. These requests put them at unnecessary risk. This policy should be eliminated and replaced with a policy that gives all women adequate and equal time to recover and bond with their babies. This will help protect women from unnecessary complications during labor.

Many women are incarcerated for drug-related crimes. Therefore, addiction and withdrawal protocols are very important. Many prison policies require prisoners to stop drugs immediately, which results in prisoners entering the phase of withdrawal. Withdrawal can be a dangerous process, and for pregnant women, it has another serious possible side-effect, miscarriage. Medications can help control the symptoms of withdrawal and reduce the risk of miscarriage, yet many prisons do not offer them because these side-effect blockers contain trace amounts of opioids. While these medications are controversial, it would be safer for pregnant women than going through withdrawal without this treatment (Sufrin 213). Putting pregnant inmates at risk could easily be avoided if people informed themselves more about the benefits of this side-effect blocker so that it would become less controversial and more widely accessible.

Several women have ended up giving birth in their cells after going into pre-term labor and not being believed by guards. Guards do not trust prisoners and are often skeptical of their actions. While

the guards' caution is warranted, women who say they are in labor should always be evaluated by a medical professional because of the profound consequences that can occur from waiting too long to get medical help, especially in the case of pre-term labor. According to the article "Reproductive Justice, Health Disparities and Incarcerated Women in the United States" by Carolyn Sufrin, in one recent case, a Texas woman went into pre-term labor and screamed for 12 hours for somebody to help her. Despite her pleas for help, she ended up giving birth alone in her cell. The baby was born with the umbilical cord wrapped around its neck and unfortunately passed away before the paramedics arrived. Another case, *Goebert vs. Lee County*, made it all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In this case, a woman arrived in prison and explained that she was leaking amniotic fluid. The prison doctor did not believe her and sent her back to her cell. Several hours later she miscarried alone in her cell at five months pregnant. Luckily, the Supreme Court held the prison accountable (Luhlik 523). While these policies that allowed the negligence seen in so many cases may have had good intentions, the people who created them may not have thought about the unintended consequences. These policies need to be changed so that these consequences do not occur.

The environment of prison itself is worse for pregnant women than being in the outside world. Women in prison experience much higher rates of abuse, including verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, both from other inmates and prison guards. The STD rates in women's prisons are also much higher than the overall STD rate of the general population and higher even than the rate in facilities for incarcerated males (Sufrin 214). Finally, just being in prison can trigger the onset of depression, which can harm a pregnancy. It is said that "these health disparities can lead to serious pregnancy and delivery complications" (Kelsey 1261). Despite these complications, some studies have collected

data that indicates that the prison environment is best for the unborn child. They found that some birth weights of a children went up the longer the women were in prison in relation to the birthweights of their siblings that were not developed in prison. The study claimed that "each day of a woman's incarceration was associated with an increase of approximately 1.5g in her baby's weight" (Hollander 199). While this data may be accurate, it does not consider the dangerous issues that both the mother and the unborn child face while in prison. Ultimately, having the birth mother be in a physically *and* mentally healthy environment is what is going to influence the unborn child the most. Prisons need to create an environment that accommodates their pregnant inmates and keeps them safe.

The lack of prenatal care available for inmates is also harmful. "Many state correctional facilities do not require medical examinations as part of prenatal care" (Kelsey 1261). Prenatal care without medical examinations is not effective prenatal care. One phone survey done of U.S. female correction facilities found that "fewer than half of the jails reported that they give pregnancy tests to all women" (Kelsey 1263). Additionally, less than three-fourths of all prisons provide testing for sexually transmitted diseases. This lack of testing is very dangerous because pregnant women who are exposed to STDs and do not receive medical care can pass that STD onto their unborn child. While most women will receive several ultrasounds before they give birth, most pregnant inmates will not receive one. Most prisons have not invested in an ultrasound machine and would have to transport women to an off-site facility. This would cost the prison both money and resources that they do not have and do not want to spend. The same excuse is used when

> **Cost-effectiveness cannot continue to be the only concern when it comes to the standard of care for inmates.**

it comes to providing healthier food for women in prison. Only 51% of prisons provide healthier diets for pregnant women. One prison administrator went as far to say, "[W]e don't alter it for diabetics, let alone pregnant women" (Kelsey 1263). Incarcerated pregnant women are not even given proper maternity clothing. Instead, they are often given prison garbs that are a few sizes too big. These oversized garments can create a falling hazard that is very dangerous for pregnant women (Luhlik 517). Cost-effectiveness cannot continue to be the only concern when it comes to the standard of care for inmates.

One form of reproductive healthcare that is often forgotten or ignored in prison is a woman's legal right to an abortion. Many women in prison do not even realize that this is an option for them. A telephone survey of U.S. female correctional facilities stated, "[F]ewer than 30% of the surveyed facilities informed women of options" (Kelsey 1263). Even when a woman asks for an abortion, different prisons have varying policies for this situation. Some of these policies do not remain constant within the same facilities. In one prison, the following confusion was reported: "Anne reported that the inmates were able to receive the abortion, but in one case, the institution paid for the procedure and in the other, it refused to do so" (Luhlik 515). These inconsistencies make access to abortion unpredictable for women. Some prisons go so far as to make women obtain court orders before they can go to an off-site facility to receive an abortion. Women who were considered high-security prisoners often had a challenging time obtaining these court orders. Despite this, in the fifth circuit court case *Victoria W. vs. Larpenter*, the court upheld the prison's right to force the women to request court orders. The consequences of the court's decision were described as the following: "[I]n practice the requirement had the effect of preventing the plaintiff from accessing abortion" (Luhlik 528). While women do technically have the right to an abortion, prisons and courts can have the

women go through many barriers before they are able to access one.

There are many ways to help create a relationship between a mother and her child while she is in prison. One method that has become rather popular in other developed countries is prison nurseries. Despite the numerous advantages to prison nurseries, most prison administrators do not want to implement one because of the costs associated and the environment where the children would be develop (Campbell and Carlson1071-72). Most prisons would need to undergo huge changes to maintain a safe space for the children, and even then, there are risks. While prison nurseries might not be the answer, half of all mothers in prison never receive a single visit from their children. In many cases, they do not have anyone to bring their child to see them. Additionally, phone calls can cost up to a dollar a minute. Children that are born in prison and do not have relatives to go to are placed into foster care. After fifteen months, they are eligible for adoption (Sufrin 214). If a woman's prison term is longer than fifteen months, she will most likely have her parental rights terminated. To help women become rehabilitated, prisons need to help them bond with their children so that inmates have something to fight for.

One of the most talked about topics when it comes to pregnant inmates is the shackling of pregnant women during and after labor. Unfortunately, the use of these restraints during labor is quite common. One published study found "that approximately a third of prisons...use chains" (Ocen 1256). Currently, 29 states have no laws outlawing the use of shackles during labor, and the 21 states that do have laws against them rarely enforce them because many people are misinformed about the law (Sufrin 216). The misunderstanding comes from the question of which parts of pregnancy women are allowed or are not allowed to be shackled. A study of women's jails in Massachusetts discovered that "[in] jails, many employees mistakenly believe that handcuffing is permissible up until the point at which a patient is in active labor" (Luhlik 517). Women must endure being shackled by their arms, legs, and sometimes even their stomachs both when they are in labor and later when they are trying to bond with the baby. This interferes with mother/child bonding after birth (Kelsey et al. 1261). In addition to shackling being extremely uncomfortable for pregnant women, it can also be dangerous as it can make it hard for doctors to medically intervene in the case of an emergency. Labor and delivery should be a time of triumph for women, not a time where they feel dehumanized. Prisons that shackle women during pregnancy, including labor and delivery, use this method because they claim that it is the only way to keep prison guards safe. However, pregnant inmates have rarely, if ever, attacked prison guards, and shackling women while they are in labor should not be allowed just because there is a remote possibility of violence.

While many people may care about this issue, most people probably don't know how they can even start to solve it. This is especially true if people are not associated with the prison system at all. The first and most important thing people can do is care about this issue and want to help change it. Sometimes, it might be hard to be sympathetic towards a prisoner, a person who has done something wrong. When people think that, they should also think about the fact that everyone makes mistakes in their lives and that does not necessarily mean they are bad people. It just means they did a bad thing. Fiscally, it is the responsible thing to do. At the end of a study done on the treatment of pregnant inmates, it was stated that "improving the well-being and health of pregnant, incarcerated women and their unborn children

> **If women don't have basic rights in the general population, then the women in prison really do not stand a chance.**

will reduce birth and other long-term complications" (Kelsey et al. 1266). These complications can be costly and avoiding them will help save the prisons money. The next thing that people can do about this issue is vote. Vote for people who care about the prison system and reproductive healthcare and wants to reform both. This way, prisons will be reformed in ways that will change harmful policies, improving the prison environment, creating effective reproductive healthcare, fostering the relationship of inmates and their children, and finally outlawing the shackling of pregnant women. Additionally, support women's rights outside of prison because if women don't have basic rights in the general population, then the women in prison really do not stand a chance. ❑

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Not Normal

Normal, normal, normal. My life became one lacking in normalcy, so much so that I began to think of and view myself as not normal, basing my identity around this belief.

Normal. *Webster's* defines normal as, "usual or ordinary: not strange" ("Normal," def. N.1). Normal, such a simple term, nonchalantly uttered so often in everyday conversation, making it nondescript. Your blood pressure is normal. That's a normal thing. He led a normal life. Test results exhibited normal distribution. It's normal for kids to do that. Normally our office hours are from nine to five. After five days, all side effects will dissipate and normality will resume. Normal. Normally. Normality. So monotonously commonplace. Yet, for an extensive period of my life, normal appeared to be something that one was either born with, taught, or achieved. It took a run-in with a bubbly, fun-loving, square-shaped sponge who lives in a pineapple under the sea, to alter my views on what it means to be normal.

As a small child, I was slightly different. With two older sisters having set a precedent, my parents knew what to expect from a normal pregnancy, child development, and child behavior. Two pregnancies behind her, Mom foresaw no issues and felt that all would progress normally. As is usually the case with me, prior expectations were not to be followed. Six weeks prior to delivery, test results indicated white blood cell levels were far below normal, making it an awfully real possibility that either Mom or I could bleed to death. Fortunately, with regular assessments by excellent medical professionals, all progressed normally, resulting in a delightfully adorable and normal daughter.

Summers came and winters faded as time perpetually marches forward. Mom, comfortably situated in a chair stitching away on her handicraft, enjoys time to herself as Heidi and Nikki are out frolicking with friends. Next to her sits her little lamb, perfectly content to play quietly with herself. This was a typical scene from my early childhood. While my sisters spent time running with friends, laughing loudly with juvenile innocence as any normal child would, I was at home within an arm's reach of Mom, playing discreetly like my namesake. Besides remaining quietly unsociable and declining to walk of my own accord until the age of fourteen months, there was nothing to indicate that I was anything but normal. Yet with each passing year, small idiosyncrasies began to surface.

First, it was an extreme aversion to loud sounds. Crying would ensue as I covered my ears, exclaiming it was too loud. Fireworks, airplanes, rodeos, and similar venues or events were out of the question. To combat this and make it possible to attend such events, it was of paramount importance to have earplugs. After loud noises, it was water—which was so akin to evil one would have thought I was a wicked witch for how much I dreaded getting wet. Bath time meant desperately running around and hiding to evade it. By this I earned myself the nickname "Tigger" as he, too, despised baths. What had previously been an endearing

Gemma Koontz

attachment to Mom and disinterest in socializing soon became a pressing concern on the part of my parents and a stumbling block in my life. Obsession with stuffed animals and stickers soon took over any remaining desire for friendship. Tantrums exploded as a result of seemingly small issues, such as the tightness of my shoe laces or the brushing of my hair. However, all of this was simply chalked up to being the sensitive baby of the family.

This all changed when we moved to Germany. As a six-year-old, I was enrolled in first grade, a time for normal kids to be excited, yet slightly nervous that they are attending big kid school. Not in my case. It was a living nightmare for me and, subsequently, for my parents. Extreme crying and desperate tantrums ensued as I pleaded with my parents not to force me to go. For a time, Mom was able to coax me to go to class. However, this behavior quickly escalated in severity, resulting in me running away from school, sometimes into the surrounding forest, in an attempt to evade capture and return. The resemblance to a terrified rabbit, sheer panic and fear visible in its eyes as it realizes a fox has cornered it, was frightfully uncanny. A flashbulb memory, painfully searing across my mind is that of an awfully pathetic child. She is dreadfully small and alone, desperately trying to navigate a strange and terrifying world. No respite to be found except in the warm embrace of her mother's arms--unable to explain why it was so. From here it only grew worse. My parents helplessly stood by watching as their sweet, beautiful, normal lamb steeply spiraled down further and further into the darkness of frightful abnormality.

Much energy and TLC was invested in me by my family in an attempt to return me to normality. Mom discussed my issues with the school administration, who were more than unwilling to help, resulting in Mom pulling me from public school and beginning homeschool where I could fill out workbooks under her constantly watchful eye. My ever-loving sisters unceasingly took me under

their wings, playing lots of animal memory and wondrous games in the woods with me and doing everything in their power to cheer me up. After work, Dad treated me as any normal child, playing with me and reading stories, which filled my mind with fantastical worlds into which I longed to step and leave my fears behind. He also fostered my desire for knowledge by providing challenges for me to solve, engaging my mind and turning my focus elsewhere. While all of this helped tremendously, it was still apparent that professional aid was required.

Dr. Hardaway, a child physiatrist, was the first of many. After some observation of clinical signs and learning my case history, he offered the diagnosis of generalized depression and anxiety. While this gave my parents something to work with, it didn't seem to fill the missing piece they were looking for. Some of his suggestions to combat my fears and anxieties were ridiculous—such as having my parents physically restrain me until I calmed down. My parents flat out refused, the thought bringing to mind an image of a lion gripping the throat of a wildebeest as it strives to evade the death grip until it slowly suffocates and stops struggling. Despite these sometimes peculiar suggestions, he did offer a lot of help, such as prescription medication and enrollment in a new school. However, much of the help I received and benefited from came as a result of my parents following their gut instincts and trying everything they could to help control the fears and idiosyncrasies that held me back from normality. Thus began the arduous journey on the "fix-it" highway, the way replete with potholes, mile markers of success, and signposts pointing to normality and giving warnings as to its passing.

Normal kids don't take antidepressants from the age of six. *How about some Zoloft with that chocolate milk?* Normal kids have real friends. *This is my friend Sarah. Well, this is my friend Bunny. Um, you do realize he's a green stuffed rabbit? And your point is?* Normal ten-year-olds don't read at a post-graduate level.

History of the Vikings*, anyone?* Eye contact is a normal social gesture. *I will now stare into the depths of your soul in a friendly, non-creepy fashion as a way to connect with you.* Normally, kids have already outgrown school separation anxiety by now. *You are fifteen, now get out of the car and go to class.* Normal kids aren't so sensitive and quick to cry from offense as a result of comments from adult authorities. *Where have you been? Whaaaaa!* It's normal for kids to participate and enjoy extracurricular activities. *Dance, soccer, cheer, swimming? No thanks, I'll pass.* Reading so much instead of socializing is not normal. *Books don't judge, and they're portable.* Normal kids actually have hand-eye coordination and reflexes. *Hit in the face by another ball, what a surprise?!* Normal teens don't need to have a free pass to the guidance counselor because they are anxious. *May I be please be excused? I am having a slightly major freak out.* Teenagers normally want to date before they reach the age of sixteen. *Get in the car and chat with a real boy, like as in a human—does my horse count instead?* Normal kids watch who knows what. *After* Jeopardy! *I think I will watch a documentary on the building of the Roman Empire followed by some cartoons.* A high attachment to mother is not normal for one of her age. *What apron strings? Oh, you mean the ones that I am tightly grasping?* Seeing so many different counselors is not normal. *Hi, my name is Dr. Jones…, Yeah, Yeah, just to get to the part where you fix me.* It is not normal to be referred to as an enigma by my counselor of two years. *Do you think you could have told me this like, umm, I don't know, twenty-three months ago?* Obsessive behavior over certain aspects of life, such as clothing, food, and hand-washing is not normal. *This shirt is .3333 cm too short and the fabric is scratchy. I can't eat this! It's been contaminated by garlic! Sterile hands are happy hands.* Being anxious over little things is not normal. *I have to go to the store and buy socks. Ok, inhale for four, exhale for six and repeat.* Normal, normal, normal.

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

> I felt insecure and ashamed of my quirks and foibles, trying to hide them from others and assume the guise of normalcy, but like a leopard pretending to be a tiger, it never worked.

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

My ears perked up; there was that word that had haunted me since childhood.

comfortable with the label of my diagnosis, but it was more to work with than had previously been available. Nevertheless, a niggling belief that surely now normality was in my grasp, still germinated below the surface.

Flopped out in my reserved spot on the pluffy couch, gooey doughnut in hand, and surrounded by three small dogs, I grabbed and aimed the TV remote, the screen blinking to life. Flicking through channels, I stumbled across *SpongeBob SquarePants*, a show I invariably loved despite the nonsense of it all. Taking a bite of doughnut, I lackadaisically settled back to engage in some mindless entertainment before pursuing normal activities. The episode started out with the usual silly antics of SpongeBob driving sarcastic, intellectual Squidward to the brink, causing him to accuse SpongeBob of not being normal. My ears perked up— there was that word that had haunted me since childhood. More attentive now, I sat up, doughnut forgotten in hand as I watched the episode unfold. Upset by this accusation, SpongeBob procured a self-help guide entitled *A Journey into Normality*. He followed the advice and over time became a dull version of his previously boisterous self. Physically, he transformed into a round, smooth version with proportional facial features along with thick straight appendages; nothing like the wavy, porous, big eyed, nosed,

and toothed sponge with wiggly arms and legs. No jelly-fishing, bubble-blowing, making of Krabby Patties, or any other nonsense. Just plain normality working behind a computer with absolutely no personality. Soon, everyone around him, even Squidward, became annoyed with new normal SpongeBob, driving his attempt to regain what he had lost. With the aid of Patrick the starfish and some very strange activities, it appeared as though he would return to his former bubbly self, but alas, he was to be doomed to a normal life. That is until the astonishment of seeing normal Squidward shocked him back to his prior, not-normal self. Tropical music then ensued, signaling the end of the episode.

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

Some six months have passed since that spongy day. Through a large mental shift, I have come to embrace myself, all the quirks and insecurities, and I love it so! Just the other day my sister inquired as to why I did something a certain quirky way. The explanation I provided caused her to laugh as she thought it was kind of silly. In retort, I told her that if I didn't have these sorts of eccentricities then what would my family have to chuckle at? What would life be like without silly Gemma to cheer them up? Normal? No, I am not normal, but that is how I like it. ❏

This essay was first published in vol. 7 of *Voices* in 2014.

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Transportation and Mental Health: How Perception Modifies Well-Being

Personal perception of the quality of modes of transportation has a significant impact on the mental health of individual commuters, whether it is realized or not.

Matt Armbrust

Back to the Future Part II (1989) predicted people would be soaring through the sky in state-of-the-art flying cars by 2015, but a quick glance outside reveals the disappointing reality of modern transport. Even though flying cars and hoverboards may be unrealistic, progress in the way we travel has become relatively stagnant. Quality of public transportation is the part of society that is commonly overlooked, not only by everyday citizens, but policymakers as well. Commuting is as much a part of our daily routine as brushing our teeth or taking a shower in the morning. We do not think

twice about how we travel to school or to work, which contributes to the overall lack of awareness concerning our transportation system. However, personal perception of the quality of modes of transportation has a significant impact on the mental health of individual commuters, whether it is realized or not. These implications are not observed consciously; they instead lie within an intricate relationship between public transportation and mental health that involves an array of factors. Researching these factors may reveal possible solutions that could be adopted by policymakers to improve the commuting experience of citizens. In turn, a more satisfied population could promote engagement and productivity in society and the workplace.

Perceptions of Public Transport

Interestingly, the perception of the quality of localized transportation alone is enough to elicit a psychological response in frequent commuters. A study conducted in the United Kingdom found that "frequent users of public transport would be more likely to have better mental health" (Feng et al.). A prerequisite for being a recurring customer of public transportation is for such commuters to have a positive perception of transportation quality. Today, the notion that public transport modes are deplorable, inconvenient, or unsafe has become an archetype of our society. The stigma associated with those people who rely on public transport, such as buses or trains, is often enough to deter distinct demographics from engaging in public transport as well. Yet, the United Kingdom study still found that commuters who frequent public transport have better mental health states when compared to those who do not. This claim was corroborated by three distinct mental health scales where participants with varying PPTI (perceptions of public transport infrastructure) were analyzed. The study found that "those who felt [PPTI] was excellent were 1.29 times more likely to be frequent users of public transport…

and found to be consistently associated with better mental health" (Feng et al.). Hence, the quality of public transportation is a large determining factor on its usage and can even negatively impact the mental state of its constituents. If participants are willing to continuously utilize public transport, they must be experiencing positive feedback in some form that improves their overall mental health simply from the experience. This phenomenon can be attributed to the stigma associated with people reliant on public transport. Transportation quality is often not sufficient to warrant use by middle- and upper-class demographics. Of course, demographics not influenced by this finding include commuters who prefer to travel by car or simply alone. If someone had just purchased a brand-new Tesla, for example, they will not likely stop using it in exchange for the local bus.

However, a significant percentage of the United States' population relies on public transportation to carry out daily tasks. According to the APTA (American Public Transportation Association), "people board public transportation 35 million times each weekday" ("Facts"). If we assume that each commuter boarding is a unique person, this accounts for about 11% of the United States' population. APTA also states that "since 1995, public transit ridership is up 34 percent, outpacing population growth, which is up 21 percent, and vehicle miles traveled, which is up 33 percent" ("Facts"). This growth in usage of public transportation stems from two possibilities: The United States' population is increasing so rapidly that people are forced to find alternative modes of travel, or there is motivation for commuters to use public transportation explicitly. In either case, society would benefit if the mental health impacts of quality transportation were maximized, resulting in a more productive workforce. For every $1 invested in public transportation, $4 are generated in economic returns ("Facts"). Private businesses and the workforce are responsive to such investments by returning money spent in

the form of economic profit:

> Infrastructure is understood to be a critical factor in the health and wealth of a country, enabling private businesses and individuals to produce goods and services more efficiently. With respect to overall economic output, increased infrastructure spending by the government is generally expected to result in higher economic output in the short term by stimulating demand and in the long term by increasing overall productivity. (Stupak)

Investing in transportation development has implications that go beyond a superficial level by means of mental health improvement. If the workforce, namely private businesses and the people they employ, are more receptive to traveling via public transport, then their mental states and general productivity at work would improve. Investments like this one are one potential solution to the worsening state of our infrastructure.

Mental Health Modifiers that Impact Perceptions of Transportation: Environmental Influences

The relationship between transportation and mental health is a multi-faceted issue and does not simply end at public perception of local modes of traveling. Environmental factors also have a critical impact on commuter comfort, notably the outside landscape in which transportation takes place. The state of mind of commuters traveling along the coast of California, for example, will be drastically different than if they were traveling across the desert of Nevada. In a study conducted by McCay et al., participants

Transportation quality is often not sufficient to warrant use by middle- and upper-class demographics.

were asked to identify "as many transport-related factors as possible that they considered might influence people's mental health" (McCay et al.). Many of the recorded responses included the encouragement of "green pedestrianization," which promotes nature development around hubs of public transportation utilities. Even though the infrastructure and landscape of large areas cannot be drastically altered to benefit commuters, the transportation environment surrounding bus stops or train stations, for example, can be improved. Traveling, especially over long distances, can be stressful and taxing on commuters. A simple way to combat this negative mental state is to better incorporate "green spaces," which are known to improve mental health.

In addition to tangible environmental stressors, neighborhood poverty is known to negatively impact the mental health of inhabitants. Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2003) reveal that "during the past few decades...policymakers' concerns have focused on large urban centers where high concentrations of poor families reside; [and] many of these families dwell in public housing. In addition to poverty, these neighborhoods have been marked by high unemployment rates, large numbers of families receiving welfare, and pervasive crime and violence" (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 1576). Even though place of residence is ultimately a choice made by citizens, some people are unable to escape their poor living situations for a variety of reasons. Considering this apparent residential immobility, mental health concerns for residents arise, including those prompted by transportation. The stress of living in a high poverty area is compounded when there is little access to public transportation, especially when families cannot afford to own a car and must rely on public transit to get to work. This is consistent with the finding that "[people] who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods reported significantly less distress than [people] who remained in high-poverty neighborhoods" (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 1576).

Encouraging transit availability in high-poverty areas would not only help inhabitants become more mobile but also improve their mental health states by providing a sense of freedom. Consistent with the results from Feng et al., commuters who have a positive perception of public transit quality reap mental health benefits. Increasing mobility and facilitating freedom would both contribute to a better perception of transport infrastructure. Again, transportation is a commodity that most take for granted; we do not often consider what life would be like if we did not have the ability to travel independently.

Mental Health Modifiers that Impact Perceptions of Transportation: Time Spent Commuting

Even when transportation is readily available to communities, many stressors associated with frequent traveling still exist that can negatively impact mental health. Time spent traveling is an obvious example, as most people have likely experienced a trip that spanned more than a few hours. The more time a person spends awake or performing the same task for an extended period, like commuting, the more fatigued and mentally distressed they become. Dr. Ranjana Mehta notes this phenomenon in a 2015 *ScienceDaily* article, stating that "there were lower blood oxygen levels in the [prefrontal cortex of the brain] following combined physical and mental fatigue compared to that of just physical fatigue conditions" (qtd. in Mitchell). Therefore, sustained exposure to high-stress environments such as long-distance commuting may have lasting complications on one's overall physical condition, most notably brain health, which could result in mental health ramifications throughout the day. Work quality and productivity are impacted detrimentally when the brain is in a worsened mental state. These weakened mental states can be especially dangerous for high-risk professions, such as surgeons or construction workers, in which fatal, irreversible mistakes can

be made due to a distressed mind. Neuroscientist David Dinges states in a 2010 *New Scientist* article that "vigilance is one of the areas most sensitive to fatigue" (Wilson). Compromising vigilance, one of the most important biological responses, due to commute time is a dangerous practice that can be averted by employing infrastructure improvement strategies. Even though time spent commuting may have only a small impact on mental health when compared to other influences, it is still significant and can be deterred by innovating transportation infrastructure. For example, if high speed rail lines were implemented in densely populated areas, time spent commuting to and from work could be fractionized and its effect on mental health mitigated. Also, travel time will only become worse in the future because traffic increases as the population increases.

Mental Health Modifiers that Impact Perceptions of Transportation: Social Interactions

Perhaps the most obvious, yet still overlooked, aspect of transportation that contributes to mental health is social interaction with other people. Actively participating in social environments can reduce stress levels and improve overall well-being. A study conducted by Ono et al. found that "the amount of

Even when transportation is readily available to communities, many stressors associated with frequent traveling still exist that can negatively impact mental health.

social interaction is correlated to individual mental health…[and] that people who interact with others relatively tended to have less stress" (Ono et al. 249). Certain modes of transportation will cater to more social interaction between the passengers than others will. For example, driving in a car alone will not have the same effect on mental health as riding in a bus with strangers. Nevertheless, behavior and the quality of interactions must be considered in order for this to be an effective accessory to the relationship between transportation and mental health. In general, increased social activity during a commute can lower mental stress levels significantly. It can then be deduced that modes of transport with a large volume of passengers should be the most beneficial way to travel from a mental health standpoint. This, however, is inconsistent with a recent study which found that "bus and train riders experience the most negative emotions" (Morris and Guerra). The most likely cause of this contradiction is, again, commuter behavior and interaction quality with other passengers. People possess an intrinsic happiness (or sadness) and may not be significantly affected by simple social interactions with strangers on their way to work. However, the mental state associated with a commuter's destination may override the mental health benefits reaped from social interactions during travel. For example, a person on their way to a job they loathe will be less inclined to interact with other passengers during transit. Even though transit users have the most negative emotions relative to other modes of transportation, Morris and Guerra, professors at Clemson and the University of Pennsylvania, respectively, noted that "this can be attributed to the fact that transit is disproportionately used for the unloved work trip" (Morris and Guerra). Therefore, social interaction during transport will have less of an impact on people who are already occupied with a negative mental state.

How the Modifiers Can Be Used to Improve Mental Health

Perception of public transport quality, environmental influences, time spent commuting, and social interaction are a few examples of mental health modifiers that pose a significant threat to the well-being of our society. Left untreated, bad traveling experiences can cause serious damage to both the mental health of frequent commuters and the lives of the people around them. One way to incorporate all these factors into a solution is to simply increase the budget for transportation infrastructure. By improving the quality and efficiency of existing transportation systems, the perception of public transport modes would improve. This would then encourage more commuters to utilize public transport and allow them to experience improved mental states. Investing in higher quality furnishings within vehicles would make passengers feel more comfortable and could even encourage social interaction. Cleaning up environmental spaces around transport stations would also improve PPTI. Adopting emerging technologies such as high-speed railways would reduce travel time. These methods, when combined, are an effective way to minimize the negative mental effects of transportation. An example of these designs being integrated successfully can be seen in the economic hubs along China's coast, which continues to invest in facilities that support trade, resulting in significant GDP growth as high as 12% increases relative to 2010 (Chen et al.). By mirroring the efforts put forth by China in infrastructure, the United States would not only yield economic growth, but it would also gain a healthier society.

Conclusion

Henry Ford believed that "our modern industrialism, changed to motives of public service, will provide means to remove every injustice that gives soil for prejudice." While great strides in social equality have been made to confirm Ford's prophetic words, United States' infrastructure, namely the transportation system, seems to be stuck in the past. Advancement always comes with a price, however, and these implementations would not be cheap for United States' taxpayers. The benefits of adopting such solutions must then outweigh the supplemental economic cost. Based on the presented research, transportation poses an issue to public health that cannot be ignored. In an evolving and increasingly competitive society, it is important to eliminate stressors whenever possible to foster a healthy community. ❑

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Borgs and Breasts: The Evolution of the Women of *Star Trek*

Fiona Van Leeuwen

The women of *Star Trek* were inspirations to many—not just as mothers or caretakers but as leaders and diplomats.

Star Trek, the pop culture phenomenon that began with Captain Kirk beating up aliens and getting his shirt ripped, influenced changing ideas about gender roles. While the crew of the starship *Enterprise* explored strange new worlds and sought out new life and new civilizations on the final frontier, the *Star Trek* franchise provided a guiding light to a more equal and inclusive world. Through the turbulence of the 1960s to the turn of the century, women have become more prominent in society. Through leadership, sexuality and sexual situations, and real-life impacts, the women of *Star Trek* were inspirations to many—not just as mothers or caretakers but as leaders and diplomats. Through the evolution of the series and its spin-offs, the visions of women making an impact in society have taken humanity where it hadn't gone before.

The 1960s were a time of turmoil for the United States: a president was assassinated, the civil rights movement was in full swing, and the Cold War had heated up into a frantic space race. Social issues—such as a push for greater acceptance of minorities and homosexuality, the sexual revolution, and the rights of women—became prominent at this time. This was a decade of momentous change, especially for women and minorities. Women were beginning to find independence for themselves from society's standards, despite limitations. Rita Kaszás explains,

> In the second half of the twentieth century in America, a woman's world was confined to her own body and beauty, the charming of man, the bearing of babies, and the physical care and serving of husband, children, and home. (Kaszás)

But even with these expectations, the recognition that this was not the way of the future was gradually becoming apparent with the changing face of media.

Gene Roddenberry was part of this wave of change in media, coming out with a show about humanity exploring the stars and the mysteries they hold: *Star Trek*. Out in the final frontier, it was safe to experiment with new ideas, but the risks the show could take were often limited. For example, the chief science officer and second-in-command, a role eventually filled by the character Spock, was originally supposed to be a woman, but the creators were told that having a woman in a position of power was unbelievable. In the end, *Star Trek: The Original Series* "ultimately reflected the values of the larger culture," and women were given subordinate roles (Wilcox 88). Even with these challenges, Roddenberry created a diverse, multiethnic crew that

showed off a united Earth. This integrated crew worked together, despite their differences, and created an accepting environment. There is a lot of diversity in the crew, but one character seems to really stand out.

Lieutenant Nyota Uhura was a unique character. She was an African American woman working on the bridge of a primarily white, male crew. She was the communications officer on the bridge and was visible in almost every episode of the original series. Even her name was impactful: Nyota means "Star Freedom" in Swahili. Her power was shown by her bravery and intuition. In the episode "Mirror, Mirror," the characters Scotty, Captain Kirk, Uhura, and Doctor McCoy are all stranded in an alternate universe. To get back to their own universe undetected, Uhura must get the attention of Lt. Sulu, the ship's navigator, away from his control board. Distracting Sulu might not seem like much, but her charm completely captivates him as she puts herself in an undesirable situation. When he begins to grab her waist and gets a little too comfortable, she slaps him and later pulls a knife on him. Her ingenuity and bravery helped to get the crew back to their universe.

Women were beginning to find independence for themselves from society's standards, despite limitations.

While this one character does not seem to be the face of a movement, she did influence one. When Nichelle Nichols, the actress who plays Uhura, was thinking of quitting the show, Martin Luther King Jr. told her,

> You can't do that!....Your character is the first nonstereotypical role on television, and is in a position of authority. People who don't look like us see us for the first time as we should be seen. As equals. Don't you see? *Star Trek* has changed the face of television. (qtd. in Kaszás)

After this, Nichelle Nichols decided to continue the role and Uhura went on to further influence television and the future of American freedom. In the episode "Plato's Stepchildren," Uhura and Kirk are forced by aliens to kiss. While she tells Captain Kirk she is afraid, she stays strong and doesn't get upset. This monumental episode showed the first interracial kiss on television between the fourth in command, Uhura, and the captain, Kirk. This may be written off as an insignificant event, but a huge controversy emerged, and some southern TV stations refused to air the episode (Kaszás). The simple act of two people kissing showed how the world could change.

This is not Uhura's only contribution to transforming the world as we see it. In the 1960s, the space race with the Russians was extremely competitive. Oddly enough, even with all these challenges, NASA discriminated against women becoming astronauts. Even women like Jerrie Cobb, who was the first woman to successfully pass all the required tests in 1959 to become an astronaut, never made it to space (Kaszás). By the time *Star Trek: The Original Series* was canceled in 1969, NASA was beginning to change its tune. NASA later recruited Nichelle Nichols to get minorities and women interested in the space program after years of shutting them out. Guion Bluford, the first African American astronaut, Sally Ride, the first American female astronaut, and Mae Jemison, the first African American female astronaut, all attribute part of their inspiration to becoming astronauts to Uhura (Kaszás). Proving that representation matters, Uhura showed people that they could pursue their dreams and escape from stereotypes. From this diversity, the United States became stronger as a society, and Uhura proved to be a guiding star for many.

The Original Series was not the end of *Star Trek* pushing society's bounds. With the following series, which started in 1987, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the characters developed into

a more diverse crew with unique talents. The show became less violent and more about diplomacy. From the decline of the Cold War, the increased care for the Prime Directive rose in the Star Trek universe. Another substantial change occurred from one small alteration; "while the original series mission was to 'boldly go where no man has gone before,' the new *Star Trek* is gender neutral: it seeks to go 'where no one has gone before'" (Wilcox 89). From that one word change in the opening credits, *Star Trek* became more inclusive and meaningful by using a gender-neutral tone for the exploration of space, which had been a primarily male domain until then.

In 1993, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, the next chapter in the *Star Trek* saga, was released. The creators and writers of this series took an even darker twist of the issues at the time, including war, terrorism, and political corruption. Characters that emerge from these backgrounds begin to take on a unique view, like the character Major Kira Nerys, who was a freedom fighter, or a terrorist, depending on the perspective. The show presented a species, the Bajorans, that is deeply religious in a primarily secular society (Oglesbee 263). Through changing times, the issues changed, too. The year 1995 marked the beginning of another new journey, this time with a unique situation to solve.

Star Trek: Voyager marked an unmatched journey for a crew stranded across the galaxy and making the return journey home. Led by the intrepid Captain Katherine Janeway, the crew encounters unfamiliar problems and species never seen before in the *Star Trek* universe. The show has a profound sense of family and togetherness, with characters that must adapt and grow because of the extreme circumstances. The unique hybridity of the cast makes the story special. This was a new final frontier, even more bizarre and out there than the original. Even with these challenges, the crew has a great leader to help guide them home. Captain Janeway is a scientist, calm in high-stress situations.

She is both a mother and a father figure, feminine as well as a feminist. Most importantly, the captain is a powerful leader and one that makes a lasting impression. This combo of characteristics sparked controversy and caused "scrutiny from fans and critics alike" (Dove-Viebahn 597). Of course, not everyone felt this way. Fans often write their own stories depicting characters in various situations, whether it be a great battle or a more romantic story. As with any fandom, the fan fiction can range from G-rated to explicit. Oddly enough, it is these explicit encounters that often spark the most interest. *Academically*, of course!

Captain Janeway is often romantically paired up with her first officer, Commander Chakotay. While this doesn't seem important, the way the fan fiction was written about them was vastly different than the other fan fictions (e.g., Kirk and Spock). The women writers behind these fan fictions are important to give credit to. Going out on a limb, these women put forward what they wanted to get out of a relationship and that how they felt about intimacy. The women who typically write these fictions like the pairing because Janeway and Chakotay are an equal couple. Neither of them is a passive character, and both are in assertive leadership roles. The fan fiction is written about emotions and feelings rather than

From that one word change in the opening credits, *Star Trek* became more inclusive and meaningful…

physical action. Some attribute this to the character's androgyny. With this androgyny, Janeway is mostly cast in a role traditionally filled by men. She is obsessed with her work and out of touch with her emotions. In contrast, Chakotay is spiritual and interested in settling down (Somogyi 399). This contrast makes the dynamics of the relationships presented unique and unlike other *Star Trek* fan fiction written.

Sexuality and *Star Trek* is not a new combination. Often pushing bounds, the writers wrote scenes that were risqué for the times. In *The Next Generation*, Commander Riker falls in love with an asexual alien ("The Outcast"), and Lieutenant Commander Data, an android, is seduced by Lieutenant Yar ("The Naked Now"). In *Deep Space Nine*, Jadzia Dax, who appears to be a young woman but has a genderless symbiont being within her that has lived through many lifetimes, sees a wife from a previous life and is still in love with her ("Rejoined"). The Doctor, a hologram who is essentially a computer program in *Voyager*, falls in love ("Lifesigns"). The snapshots that *Star Trek* provides give a different perspective to love and life. These unique characters seem to push boundaries, but what really makes these characters special is that they do not seem to have a problem with their gender or sexuality. They simply are. Some other characters also have these traits but they come off as vastly different than these lovable characters.

The Borg are some of the most infamous villains in the *Star Trek* universe. Half machine, half living being, the Borg drones live as a collective entity set on assimilating all within their path, and they obliterate any sense of individuality in the process. With the blur of machine and organic, these beings are not defined by gender. When the crew of *Voyager* encounters the Borg, they liberate one of the drones, Seven of Nine. Seven of Nine, born a human, was assimilated by the Borg at a young age, "assimilation" meaning that her body was infused with cybernetic implants and

her individualism was wiped away. Once the crew severs her connection with the Borg, she begins to become an individual again. Seven is resistant to reclaiming her humanity, and much of her tenure on the series is about her struggle to be more than a cybernetic being. Despite Seven's resistance to being more than an automaton, her appearance is distinctly sexual. Ensign Harry Kim, the operations officer on *Voyager*, took an interest in Seven from the beginning. Honestly, it is almost impossible not to. She is stunning with a curvaceous body showcased in a skintight uniform. When Harry invites her to a late-night

Sexuality and *Star Trek* are not a new combination.

meeting in the episode "Revulsion" to discuss "an inspiration about the sensors" (Scheck 103), Seven begins to analyze him, trying to figure out what he really wants. When she finally concludes that it's sex, she tells him to "take [his] clothes off" (Scheck 103). Terrified by Seven of Nine's directness, Ensign Kim backs off. Seven's lack of understanding makes this episode particularly hilarious. The fact that this Playmate-resembling Borg wants nothing to do with sex shows that it is not outward appearance that matters, but how someone feels about the sexual relations.

A similar character in *Star Trek: Enterprise*, T'Pol, who is an emotion-suppressing Vulcan, is like Seven in a lot of ways. One significant difference is that T'Pol decides to explore her sexuality with the help of medications. Still, with her Vulcan sensibility, in the episode "Harbinger," the man she approaches for the sexual encounter is unsure, even though it is only logical "that the contrast between her decisiveness and the hesitant stance of the male creates a humorous effect" (Scheck 110). Through the humor, the idea that women are also safe to explore their sexuality becomes an important theme. *Star Trek* created a safe environment for exploration on all fronts of life, not only for its characters, but for

the viewers as well.

The sense of exploration that I have gotten from *Star Trek* has inspired me a lot. When I was in seventh grade, I saw my first episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In the episode, called "Inner Light," Captain Picard lives an entire life on a planet in a couple of hours. It was so powerful for me, and from that one episode, I was hooked. I would get home from school and watch these characters explore the galaxy, doing things that a girl who dreams of becoming an astrophysicist has wanted to do all her life. It helped me bond with people and connect with others I might not normally talk to. For a show about acceptance and diversity, the fans have a surprisingly negative stigma around them. A small group of people who watch the show judge fellow fans based on their gender and race, deciding who the "real fans" are. I have dealt with the people who think this show is stupid, the people that feel like everything is a competition, and insinuate that my "nerd" show couldn't have had as big of an impact on my life as I claim. They're wrong, of course, and I have decided to take a piece of advice from Uhura and "have learned not to fear words" (Kaszás). This is part of my identity and has showed me that pushing bounds and getting out of my comfort zone is part of growing. It has given me my own chance to explore the world, and I am not giving that up for anything.

For some reason, society thinks we need to fall into boxes, whether conscious of it or not. At our own university, only 14% of the College of Engineering is female while the College of Education is 78% female ("Office"). These staggering statistics at our own university seem to reflect society's ideas about gender roles and the need to encourage men to be teachers just as much as women to be engineers. I know there have been a few times when I have felt discouraged for being a female engineering student, but coming from someone who has a stay-at-home dad who is an artist and a mom who is an engineering manager, I have always been told to

break bounds. Representation in the media of all genders breaking stereotypes is needed if we want an accepting and inclusive future. So, perhaps a better title for my paper would be "The Evolution of the *People* of *Star Trek*" because the beautiful thing about *Star Trek* is that they didn't care about gender, sexuality, race, or even species. They didn't care what someone looked like, or talked like, or even their spiritual beliefs. They defined us as human; everything else was just a description. This future is a future that we can all aspire to: getting to that final frontier where everyone can boldly go forward, no matter what. ❏

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Can You Trust Your Own Mind? False Memories, Placebos, and the Mandela Effect

While it may seem dubious to contemplate that the majority of people should be weary of what they think they know, it is a necessity for the betterment of society.

Matt Burnham

On August 1, 1984, Ronald Cotton was shocked to hear that the police were looking for him for the rape of a woman he didn't know. He went to the police station to clear his name and never left. During the trial, the victim, Jennifer Thompson, was asked to identify her rapist, and she pointed at Cotton and identified him by name. The jury decided in 40 minutes that he was guilty on all accounts, and he was sentenced to life plus fifty years in prison. It wasn't until almost eleven years later that he was released due to DNA evidence

(Stahl). Ronald Cotton's story is an unfortunate circumstance of mistaken identity, which is a type of eyewitness misidentification. Eyewitness misidentification is responsible for 70% of false convictions that are later exonerated due to DNA evidence ("DNA Exonerations"). Many eyewitness misidentifications are due to a phenomenon in psychology called false memories. A false memory is where someone holds a memory they believe to be true but is actually false. In normal day-to-day activities, it is usually harmless, but in a situation like Jennifer Thompson's, it can be devastating.

How can we prevent problems like eyewitness misidentification from arising in the future? It is not a question meant for a select few; anyone's brain can be the one that misfires. We must all take responsibility for our effect on people and look thoroughly at the faults of our cognitive faculties. The problem is that the majority of people trust their memories and minds, and some even believe their minds are impeccable. While it may seem dubious to contemplate that the majority of people should be weary of what they think they know, it is a necessity for the betterment of society.

> It is understandable for anyone to be skeptical that their brain is subject to fault, especially when it has provided guidance in day–to–day life at an extremely proficient level.

It is understandable for anyone to be skeptical that their brain is subject to faults, especially when it has provided guidance in daily life at an extremely proficient level. That is why this argument is directed toward those who are not yet set in their beliefs or are open to changing how they perceive the world. As is shown in psychology, "people's minds may be closed to information that is inconsistent with their prior beliefs" (Kruglaski and Boyatzi 217). There are many reasons why people can't trust their own minds, but to list them all would be impossible and inefficient

for explaining how the mind goes wrong. Instead, my goals are to provide common examples of where people's brains go wrong, explain why the brain goes wrong, and offer some solutions for how we can be better equipped to handle the brain's faults.

The series of popular children's books about a family of anthropomorphic grizzly bears that teach valuable lessons to kids is often rememberd as *The Berenstein Bears*, but that is not the name of the series. The actual name is *The Berenstain Bears*. While this is a small misconception, some have a hard time believing it (Devoe). This kind of phenomenon where many people hold the same false memory is known as the Mandela Effect. It gets its name from many people claiming they remember the death of South African leader Nelson Mandela occurring in the 1980s rather than in 2013 when he actually passed away (Broome).

The Mandela Effect is widespread through pop culture's memories of movies. For example, "Luke, I am your father," was never a line said in the sci-fi franchise *Star Wars*. The commonly confused line is in fact, "No, I am your father." The voice actor of Darth Vader, James Earl Jones, and the actor of Luke Skywalker, Mark Hamill, both quoted the wrong line later on video (Edge of Wonder). Another example is from the 1937 Disney movie *Snow White*, in which the Evil Queen says a phrase to her mirror. The common misunderstanding is that she says, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?" What she actually says in *Snow White* is, "Magic Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?" ("[Top 10] Proofs"). What does a large mass of the population all having the same false memories say about people in general? Our minds are not always the best resource for the recollection of history. Once a memory is stored, it can be altered. Any part of the entire set of memories in our heads can be confabulated (Coan 271). The Mandela Effect is an eerie example of how false memories can affect the minds of masses of people, which makes conferring with others on the truth complicated.

The placebo effect is another reason to not trust the mind. A placebo is a substance or treatment that produces no results from the actual substance itself. Instead, any effects from the placebo are related to the expectations of the user. For example, one study found that colors of drugs changed the effectiveness of them. The authors of the study concluded that "red, yellow, and orange [pills] are associated with a stimulant effect, while blue and green are related to a tranquilizing effect" (Craen et al. 1624). Placebos are not only contrived by doctors for their patients in medical experiments, but they also are commonly used by everyday people. Airborne, a popular vitamin C supplement, once claimed it helped to fight off the common cold. Many people used it to treat their colds, but nobody experienced any real effects from it. In 2008, Airborne was sued for $23.3 million dollars for false advertisement because there was no evidence that taking more vitamin C than needed helped to fight off a cold ("Airborne"). Any results people experienced from using Airborne to fight off the cold were all placebo effects. An example of another placebo product is Sketcher's Shape-Up shoes. The shoes were supposed to "help customers lose weight and tone their abs, legs and buttocks" (Murray). Given that Sketcher's made an estimated $1 billion from the shoe, and each pair cost between $60 and $100 (Sperry), millions of people were tricked by the placebo effect. Since scientific research didn't support Sketcher's claim, like Airborne, they had to pay a fine of $40 million for false advertising (Murray).

Placebos are powerful, and they can modify the brain and trick it into thinking the placebo has given the effect the user expected it to give. Placebos do not help with physical symptoms; instead, they change the symptoms that are moderated in the brain, like pain (Harvard Health). That means that placebos are all in the head. The fact that brains are so powerful that they can completely lie to us about what's actually going on in our bodies is alarming.

How does this all work and how can we better understand what is going on in our brains? Cognitive theory might have the answer.

Cognitive theory is a branch of psychology that looks specifically into thought processes to explain human behavior; however, our thought processes can be biased. Human behavior is intertwined with what's going on in our heads and what's going on in the outside world. Of course, the only part we have any semblance of control over is what's going on in our heads. We need to be aware of how our minds can deceive us so we can better control ourselves and our actions. When our minds deceive us, it is called a cognitive bias. Buster Benson, a writer and psychology enthusiast, went through 175 recognized biases and wanted to narrow them down into a simple format of how our brains work and where they go wrong. He grouped the 175 different biases into 20 distinct groups and then explained the causes for cognitive biases based on 4 different ways our brains work. First, the brain must filter and limit information because there is too much information to just store it all. Second, it takes what information it has gathered and tries to make sense of it. It makes sense of it by connecting the dots and filling in the gaps. Third, when we make decisions, we need to make them quickly. Making quick decisions means that we tend to jump to conclusions. Fourth, we need to sort through what we already know and only keep what is important. These four traits of how our brains work are necessary, but they aren't without their downsides. Since we filter information, we

Human behavior is intertwined with what's going on in our heads and what's going on in the outside world.

don't see everything, then our brains must sometimes conjure up details to fill it in. Because our brains make decisions quickly, they'll prioritize speed over accuracy and those decisions can be flawed. Lastly, our minds reinforce errors by taking in and storing errored thoughts,

ideas, and memories (Benson). Knowing about cognitive biases is useful for understanding how we perceive the world, but what about our memory?

Daniel Schacter, a professor of psychology at Harvard University, wrote the book *The Seven Sins of Memory*, which is an homage to the "Seven Deadly Sins," such that if people do not commit these "sins of memory" they will have a better memory. Schacter explains that "memory's malfunctions can be divided into seven fundamental transgressions or 'sins'" (Schacter)—the sins being transience, absent-mindedness, blocking, misattribution, suggestibility, bias, and persistence. Transience is the general deterioration of memory over time. Absent-mindedness is the inability to pay attention, which affects recollection. Blocking is memory interference, such as the tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon. Misattribution is recalling a memory but not correctly remembering the source of the memory. It is the reason Ronald Cotton was sentenced to life in prison for an atrocity someone else committed. Suggestibility is acceptance of a false suggestion made by others. Bias is the distortion of memory due to current world views and beliefs. Finally, persistence is the unwanted recall of memory that is distressing. These memory malfunctions give us insight into how our memory works so well most of the time, but they still cause problems in everyday life (Schacter 4-6).

Some would argue still that their memories and minds are fine and that they don't need to take caution with the processes of their mind. In their mind, they have perfect mental health and capabilities, so naturally none of this applies to them. This attitude is a cognitive bias called the overconfidence effect. The average person will believe that they are better than every other average person, which is simply impossible (Ghose). One study even found that on some questions, the answers to which the subjects said they were 90% confident on, were wrong up to 50% of the time (Alpert and Raiffa 294-305). There's nothing uncommon here.

In fact, 18.3% of U.S. adults have some form of mental illness ("Mental Illness"). We must begin to accept our faults and take them as they are.

Our minds aren't perfect machines, and we cannot always rely on them when we think we can. There are cognitive biases, memory malfunctions, and mental trickeries that are so common in people that everyone needs to be aware of them and try to minimize their effects. We are what makes up society, so we are the determining factors of the quality of it. Don't believe that you are the exception to the rule. You're not. Don't believe your mind is impeccable. It isn't. Be aware of yourself and the effect you have on others. ❏

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Only 7% of the World Can Read This

Currently, over 7,000 official languages are spread over 195 countries.

Language is the foundation of civilization. It is the glue that holds a people together. It is the first weapon drawn in a conflict and is what is used to end it. We live in the world of globalization and opportunity. Never before have we been able to reach out, touch, and influence the lives of millions as we can in this day and age. For a world of peace and cooperation in which communication and the interchange of ideas will have their fullest development, we need the ability to communicate with each other. By itself, the world with its many languages will never bring about such an existence.

As time and technology have progressed, humans and our communications between each other have done the opposite. The Congress of Vienna was convened in 1815 by the four European powers that had defeated Napoleon, and French was the sole language used at that Congress. This use of a single language set the tone for all foreign diplomats across the world to learn French so that international policies and laws could be discussed and implemented without confusion. Jump forward 100 years to the Paris Peace Conference in Versailles in 1919; both French and English were used. Another 100 years puts us in our modern world where currently at United Nations meetings five languages are in official use: English, French, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese. Mario Pei explains why this use of five languages is still problematic, "Progression from one to five languages is a symbol not of progress, but of intellectual retrogression and growing ignorance" (Pei). We are jumping forward in ways that our ancestors could barely dream of, yet we are becoming more arrogant and going backwards in our effort to understand of one another.

Currently, over 7,000 official languages are spread over 195 countries. If all of those languages were split across each country evenly, that would equate to each country containing over 35 languages. Language barriers are a constant problem. There is a 99.9% chance that an individual will run into someone and have a language barrier. Despite how educated or skilled one might be, language barriers are often the leading causes of not being hired by a company, not receiving proper services such as health care, getting lost, getting scammed, and much more. Language barriers also prevent proper reporting of rape, abuse, fraud, and theft (Armas). However, there is a solution. What can be done to lower, and ultimately eliminate, language barriers is the creation and use of an international

Carson Gibbs

Despite how educated or skilled one might be, language barriers are often the leading causes of not being hired by a company, not receiving services, such as health care, getting lost, getting scammed, and much more.

language. Implementing an international auxiliary language will not only simplify our lives, but it also will bring us closer together as a human race as we will have a greater understanding of each other.

Many readers are probably wondering, "Well, isn't English already the international language of the world?" When looking at sheer numbers, Mandarin is the most spoken language today. Spanish is the second most widely spoken language, and English is barely third with French and Hindi following closely behind. However, it takes more than raw numbers to make a *lingua franca*. Thanks to the British Empire, native English speakers are sprinkled across the globe with roots in some of the most influential regions in our current global climate. As the world grew with the rise of technology, English became more and more important because it was one of the leaders in economic growth during the time of the industrial revolution (Pei). That trend has continued to the present day, where English is the language of the technologies that connect us together. Most languages have merely adopted terms such as "the Internet," "text," or "hashtag" instead of creating a new word for them in their own tongue. English is also an important language of pop culture, such as movies, music, and sport. It is easy to assume that such a prominent cultural and technological language has cemented its importance in the international community (Castaldo).

However, a quick look at history will show how fallible English is as an international bridge. By 1818, it was a requirement for all international diplomats to speak French so that meetings could be conducted in an easily recognized and mutual language. Nearly a century later, the rise of German power led schools and universities in the U.S. to drop many of their French classes and make German mandatory. However, German soon dropped from schools after World War I, which quickly prompted those educational institutions to burn their German grammar and vocabulary books

in an act of defiance against the German machine. In modern times, the news has sparked talk about whether China's economic rise would mean that Mandarin could rival English as a global language. Such fluidity in major global correspondence leads to problems for a number of reasons (Shenton, Sapir, and Jespersen).

Tsedal Neeley, an assistant professor of organizational behavior at Harvard Business School, conducted multiple studies on the effects of languages in a work environment. Neeley interviewed several of these businesses with the hopes of gaining more insight to language barriers in those settings. She found that during meetings, employees with limited background in the language that the meeting was conducted in hesitated to speak up, even if they had legitimate insights to share. "I become red, and I sweat, and I think to myself, *Wow, everybody is looking at me, so I should not make any mistakes*," said one employee. "If you cannot express your ideas because you lack language skills, the collaboration becomes a nightmare. You lose interest to continue," said another. Even worse, they began to distrust the native speakers within their own company. "We need to be extra cautious, because the Americans' mastery of the language may lead them to take advantage of us and try to fool us," said one worker about colleagues in a U.S. branch where English was not their first language (Castaldo).

Experiences like these are becoming more commonplace as the ability to develop businesses on a global scale is easier than ever. Global operations force different countries, cultures, and backgrounds to communicate across all forms of platforms, ranging from texts to video chat. If the two cannot evoke understanding between each other, then it will be difficult to accomplish even the most rudimentary of goals. Another study in Germany also came to the conclusion that language barriers are causing problems. After interviewing German employees on their feelings on having their meetings in English, the group came to

a simple conclusion: "The German employee felt uncomfortable speaking in a large group, and found it difficult to interject. By the time she had formulated her point, the conversation had moved on" (Peterson).

The answer to these problems is one that has been debated for years, but the solution is simple. Countries, capitals, and leaders of the world need to come together to choose and/or create an international language. Such a meeting would have a significant historical impact. Anciently, international languages were imposed when armies of opposing nations took over and forced their beliefs, laws, and languages upon the defeated people, and the conqueror's language became the one of trade in that empire. However, in our modern age, such barbaric means are unnecessary, though it will be just as effective when it increases trade, friendship, and understanding between nations on an individual level.

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An international auxiliary language would most likely be more effective as a constructed language, and not a natural one such as English or Spanish. Humans have proven time and time again that national and personal pride will lead to disagreement and protest. The likelihood of a combined consensus of the world nations on a natural language being chosen is laughable (Pei). Inconsistencies, irregular structure patterns, and exceptions to rules in natural languages could also form significant problems. For an international language to be taken seriously and implemented around the world, it will need to be simple to learn for everyone and not be surrounded with national pride. According to the Foreign Service Institute, studies have shown that many students choose not to take a foreign language

if the required proficiency of learning takes more than 44 weeks (1,100 hours) before achieving a level of proficiency for speaking (Peterson).

The foundation of the entire system would be by immersing students by natural speaking processes to the world's generations from kindergarten on to high school graduation or the country's equivalent. No one beyond that age will be forced to learn the international tongue. At that age, it would be up to the student to decide if they want to continue that education. Those who have already graduated at the time of implementation will probably ask, "Is the international language not for us?" To answer that, it is if an individual wants it, it is not if they don't. The international language should be viewed primarily as something of the world of the future, for those children and their children's children from whom so many fine words flow, but on behalf of whom so little is ever done. Because the children will be taught at a younger age, retaining the information will be much easier, and if they decide to continue into the international scene, they can easily become masters of it. Otherwise, it will simply be a useful tool to be used should any language barriers arise in their future, which is highly likely given they have a 99.9% chance of it happening.

It would be unfair, and even bordering on the edge of unethical, to try to force this world tongue upon all the adult generations of today. In addition, it would be impractical and nearly impossible. Let the adults of today do as they please, whether they choose to learn it or not, and spark endless possibilities for the children of tomorrow.

Writers across the world might prefer the new medium, which would give them access to world markets without needing dozens of difficult and expensive translations that would only be understood to a piece of the world. Not only could their books be loved by the author's neighbors, but the entire world population would be

given access to something that they would have had to wait years for otherwise. This idea is an old one. In 1320 CE, Dante wrote *The Divine Comedy* in Italian because he felt that it would reach more people and is today considered one of the greatest literary pieces of all time ("The Divine Comedy"). Advertisers might prefer an international language for the same reasons. The Tobler Swiss Milk Chocolate company has advertised extensively in Ido, a constructed international language, providing evidence that an international language is not only effective for advertising but is also an excellent source of profit (Shenton, Sapir, and Jespersen).

Despite all the benefits associated with such a generous gift, many may not wish for such an idea to become reality. The use of an international language is not to replace natural tongues, such as Tagalog, Vietnamese, or Japanese, but to be used as a tool on the international market. Realistically, looking ahead, national languages will live on for centuries, but their use will tend to be more and more restricted. Ultimately, they will turn into cultural artifacts of a more primeval and violent world, like the ancient Egyptian and Old Norse of today. Should this frighten us? Consider that languages are forever changing and that the English of 700 years ago would strike the more present-day speaker dumbfounded and lost in its translation. Languages are fluid in nature as they traverse time. In five centuries, the languages of today will be unrecognizable.

Let us do a favor for the upcoming generations so that strife caused by miscommunications does not happen to them. Give them a gift that will aid in the bonding of friendships that are transcontinental for millennia. We live in a world that is constantly evolving for the better. There are machines that can send the ideas of anyone across the globe at the click of a button. We have come together in science by standardizing measurement for time, weight, and mass. Let us now prepare to take the next step to sharing ideas in a new kind of way and see how far our

language will take us. ❏

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Snip Snip: The American Eugenics Movement

The American Eugenics movement festered below the surface for many years prior to its breakthrough in 1924.

Tiffany Maughan

In May of 2002, Virginia became the first state to formally apologize for sterilizing thousands of people. Virginia's governor, Mark Warner, said, "In 1924, Virginia, like many states, passed a law permitting involuntary sterilization. Today, I offer the Commonwealth's sincere apology for Virginia's participation in eugenics. We must remember...past mistakes in order to prevent them from reoccurring" (qtd. in Reynolds). Eugenics is "the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding. It is the effort to improve the inborn characteristics of man by the study of human heredity and the application of those studies to human propagation" (Haller 3). The U.S. practiced two forms of controlled breeding, positive and negative eugenics. Positive eugenics suggests that families with "desirable" characteristics should reproduce as much as possible in order to strengthen America's "germ plasm." Theodore Roosevelt, an ardent eugenicist, frequently warned the people of race-suicide and advised his fellow "fit" citizens to produce large families (Reilly 43). Conversely, negative eugenics promotes the restriction of reproduction of the "unfit" by surgical means. The movement in the U.S. began in the beginning of the 20th century and hit its climax in the 1920s and '30s. The eugenics movement dramatically changed when the United States Supreme Court declared sterilization constitutional and fell within the police power of the state; the verdict proved a landmark case that swept up the nation in the eugenics movement (Reilly 87). The Supreme Court's decision required several factors be brought to fruition: the scientific background needed to be established, technology needed to progress, and Americans had to be convinced of the value of human sterilization.

Considered the father of eugenics, Francis Galton coined the term in 1883 (Galton 24). Literally interpreted, eugenics means "well born." Galton, a wealthy English gentleman, possessed a great love of statistics (Haller 8). He belonged to the elite portion of the group of men self-referred to as Anglo-Saxons. These men became the main proprietors of the eugenics movement. In the late nineteenth-century, it was already a common belief among members of this class that anyone outside their circle was of lower intelligence and worth. This superiority complex made the transition to eugenics easy. Francis Galton observed that the "leaders of British society were more likely to be related than chance alone might allow" (Selden 2). To him, nature far outweighed nurture. Discounting other possibilities, such as influence and wealth, he decided on a hereditary interpretation of

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why people with connected family backgrounds ruled his country. This thought led him to propose a program of selective breeding that would shape the eugenics movement.

Francis Galton borrowed many ideas from his cousin Charles Darwin. Phrases such as "survival of the fittest" and "struggle for existence" originated in Darwin's research, and with these thoughts came a new scientific mindset. Darwin pointed out,

> [W]e civilized men, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick...our medical men do their utmost to save the life of everyone. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man. (Darwin 136)

Perhaps even more important to the American Eugenics movement than Darwin's contributions was the rediscovery of Gregor Mendel's pea plant research in 1900. The first to find that when plants were cross-pollinated, particular traits were transmitted to future generations in predictable mathematical ratios, Mendel revolutionized the way the scientific community viewed reproduction. Mendel explained that what he termed

"elements," modernly referred to as alleles, controlled what characteristics would be expressed in an organism's progeny. Though this application of Medelian genetics lacked scientific justification, "American Mendelian eugenicists naively applied Mendel's notions to all complex human traits" (Selden 2). This over application of Mendel's discovery, combined with Galton's and Darwin's work provided a scientific background for the movement.

In 1895, the eugenics movement sported a large support group. For supporters, lack of technology arrested progression in their movement. Many states passed a law to regulate marriage for breeding purposes in 1896. The law stated that "no man and woman either of whom is epileptic, or imbecile, or feeble-minded" shall marry or have extra-marital relations "when the woman is under forty-five years of age" (Haller 47). Although violation of the law was punishable by a minimum of three years' imprisonment, many supporters of eugenics felt this law was not strict enough and would be broken. "The waifs and strays, the vicious and lawless, and above all the unrecognized, unsuspected defectives in all ranks of society it [marriage restriction law] is powerless to reach," was a common judgment (Haller 48). Most eugenics activists strove to enforce sterilization laws. However, no safe and fast method of sterilization existed. Castration and ovariectomy, the complete removal of male and female reproductive organs, was the only sterilization option available. These methods led to a dramatic change in hormonal balance. Dr. Hoyt Pilcher, a leading eugenicist and superintendent of Kansas State Home for the Feeble-Minded during this time period, stated that castration resulted in "a most excellent soprano voice in the men, indeed a castrated man resembles a large woman" (Haller 48). These results caused unrest in the minds of the general public and were

regarded as a mutilation of the human body. However, with the technology of salpingectomy, the cutting and tying of the fallopian tubes, and vasectomy, the cutting and tying of vas deferens, a method supporters deemed acceptable was introduced (Goddard 108). Sterilization in this manner did not destroy the enjoyment of sex or alter the internal hormonal balance. These methods soothed the publics' fears and paved the way to legalized sterilization.

In a democratic land, it is important for the public to support a law. In order for the eugenics movement to move forward, the approval of the United States' people was a necessity. Regardless of whether it was correctly applied or not, there existed some scientific evidence supporting the case that aided the credibility of the eugenics idea. Many people believed the application of Mendelian genetics to be correct. The American Breeder Association (ABA) purported many ideas to the public.

> With a committee focusing on the presumed hereditary differences between human races, the ABA popularized the themes of selective breeding of superior stock, the biological threat of inferior types, and the need for recording and controlling human heredity. (*Eugenics Archive*)

Another group, the American Eugenics Society (AES) also organized committees to convince the public. Cooperation with Clergymen, Religious Sermon Contests, Crime Prevention, Formal Education, and Selective Immigration were some of the AES's most successful organizations devoted to popularizing eugenics.

Perhaps the most influential propaganda tool, Fitter Family Contests, dominated the stage at State Fairs across the country. Just as a farmer would bring his finest pigs to be judged, mothers and fathers lined up their children in hopes of winning a gold medal inscribed with the words, "I Have a Goodly Heritage." A comprehensive IQ test for each member of the family, a medical examination, and a pedigree study contributed to the decision of who would receive the gold medal. Alongside the booth for Fitter Family Contests typically stood a display which proclaimed such facts as, "Every 15 seconds $100 of your money goes for the care of persons with bad heredity" and, "Every

In order for the eugenics movement to move forward, the approval of the United States' people was a necessity.

50 seconds a person is committed to jail in the United States. Very few normal persons ever go to jail" (Bruinius 237). On weekdays, high school students studied eugenics as a legitimate science, and on weekends, sermons were given, hailing the genius of eugenics and urging members to follow the movement. In the cinema, *The Black Stork* was a popular movie that supported eugenic sterilization. By 1928, eugenics was a topic in 376 separate college courses. Bombarded from all sides, Americans came to support the movement and view those around them as lesser beings, unfit to procreate (*Eugenics Archive*).

Legally mandated sterilization was the most radical policy supported by the American Eugenics movement. In some cases, action preceded legislation. Even before states began enacting preliminary laws allowing sterilization, many physicians were performing them. Despite these rulings, sterilization did not gain widespread approval until the late 1920s. The case of Carrie Buck was like a heavy rock dogmatically pushed uphill on the backs of eugenic activists to finally reach the zenith and careen downward to widespread sterilization. The law authorized sterilization of the

"socially inadequate," which encompassed the "feebleminded, insane, criminalistic, epileptic, diseased, blind, deaf, deformed, and the dependent," including "orphans, ne'er-do-wells, tramps, the homeless and paupers" (*Eugenics Archive*). At just seventeen-years-old, Carrie Buck was the first person to be legally sterilized. She had a child, but was not married, and her mother Emma was already a resident at an asylum. A Red Cross nurse examined Carrie's baby and concluded she was below average. To those who believed that supposed feeblemindedness and sexual promiscuity were inherited traits, Carrie fit the law's description as a "probable potential parent of the socially inadequate offspring" (Reilly 68). Dr. Albert Priddy provided expert testimony, stating, "These people belong to the shiftless, ignorant, and worthless class of anti-social whites of the South" (Rilly 69). Relying on these comments, the judge concluded that Carrie should be sterilized in order to prevent any more defective children from being born.

The decision was appealed to the United States Supreme Court. Justice Oliver Wendell Holms composed the formal opinion for the Court in the case of *Buck vs. Bell* where he wrote the now infamous words:

> It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind....Three generations of imbeciles are enough. (*Eugenics Archive*)

This ruling condemned over 60,000 United States citizens to be forcibly sterilized.

The American Eugenics movement festered below the surface for many years prior to its breakthrough in 1924. The success of this case was realized only because judges were convinced of the scientific background supporting eugenics and of the advantages in sterilization through "humane" techniques. Propaganda and repeated exposure to the virtues of eugenics slowly and deliberately bound the American people to the idea of a betterment of society through the suppression of those individuals deemed as lower and unfit. Carrie Buck's case allowed legalized sterilization to take place in the United States until 1976. The Nazi government adopted a law in 1933 based off of this case that provided the legal basis for sterilizing more than 350,000 people. In recent years, investigation has shown that Carrie Buck's sterilization was based on a false diagnosis, and her defense lawyer was corrupt. Carrie's child resulted from a rape by a foster family's son, not promiscuity. Her "feebleminded" daughter was on the honor roll in high school (*Eugenics Archive*). As Governor Warner stated in his apology to the victims of eugenics, we must remember the past. We must learn from the past, and we must prevent these mistakes from reoccurring. ❑

This essay was first published in vol. 4 of *Voices* in 2011.

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Mental Health Resources

Utah State University has several on-campus services for students. In addition, Cache Valley has two main mental health care providers.

- **Counseling and Psychological Services:** TSC 306, 435.797.1012, counseling.usu.edu

- **Psychology Department Community Clinic:** EDUC 413, 435.797.3401, psychology.usu.edu/community-clinic

- **Clinic Services at the Family Life Center:** 493 N 700 E, 435.797.7430, fchd.usu.edu/services/mftc/mft_clinic

- **Bear River Mental Health:** 90 E 200 N, 435.752.0760, brmh.com

- **Cache County Community Health Center:** 1515 N 400 E, 435.755.6061, blchc.org/cache-valley-community-health-center-north-logan-utah

- **UNI Crisis Line:** 801.587.3000

- **UNI Warm Line:** (not in crisis, but seeking support, engagement, or encouragement) 801.587.1055

- **List of other community resources:** counseling.usu.edu/othr_resources/community
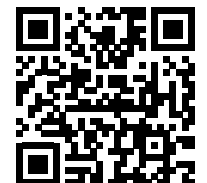
resources

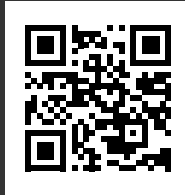**Sexual Assault Resources**

Assists with reporting, medical care, and counseling.
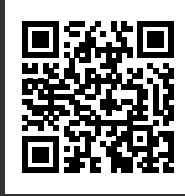
Inclusion Center

Organizes LGBTQA, multi-cultural, and non-traditional student resources, events, and clubs.
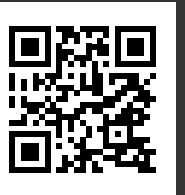
International Student Groups

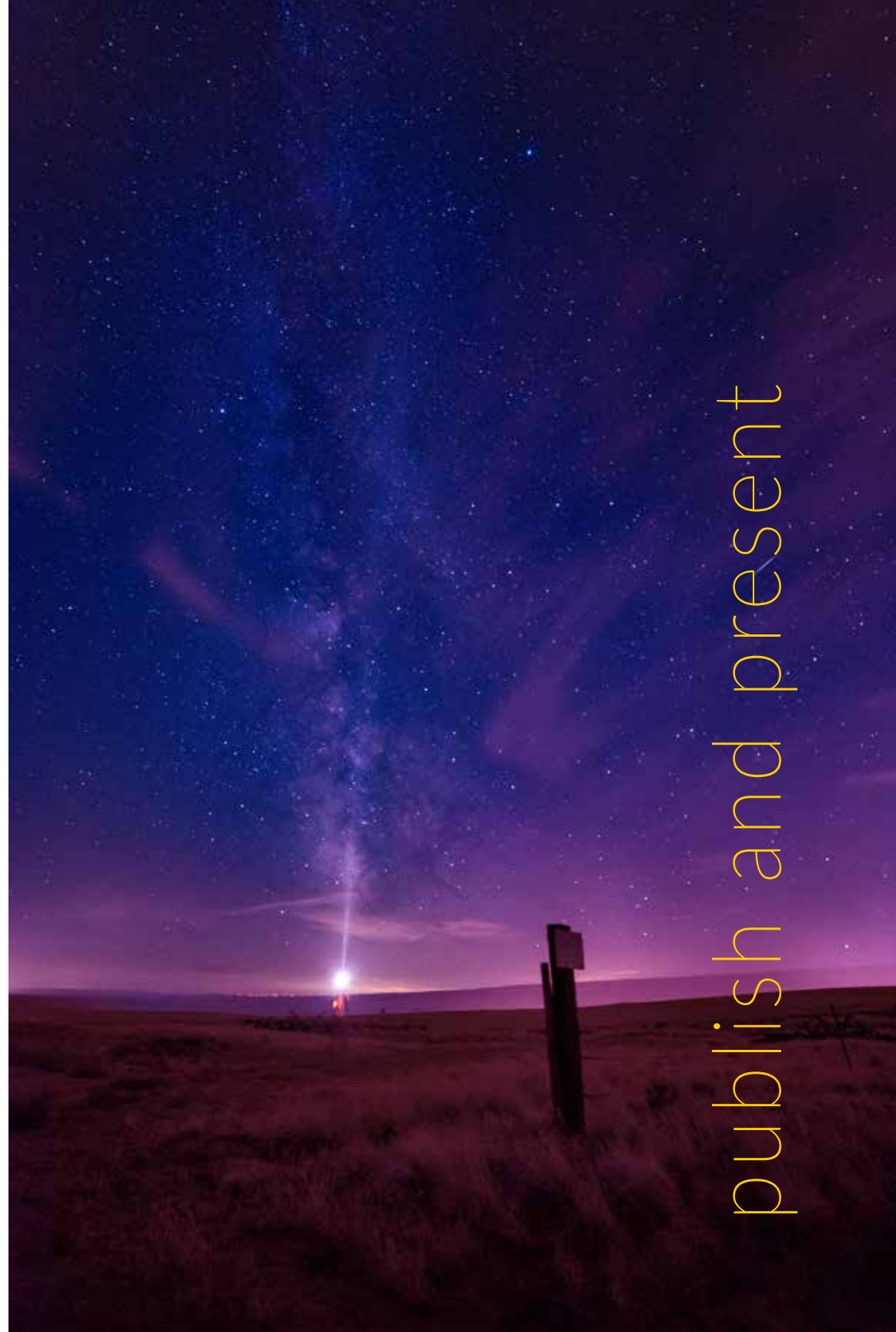Helps students away from home meet others in similar circumstances.

Disability Resource Center

Assists students at all campuses with academic accommodations.

additional resources

publish and present

Present at the Citizen Scholar Conference

The Citizen Scholar Conference is held each semester and is an opportunity for English 2010 students to present the essays they are working on in the class. Check out more information on our website: english.usu.edu/voicesofusu.

How to participate:

- Watch for the Call for Abstracts midway through the semester and submit a 200-word abstract about your presentation

- If you're invited to present, attend the presenter preparation meeting the week before the conference

- Put together an eight-minute presentation about your research

- Come to the conference and present

NOTE: You may also prepare a poster to present.

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- Submit your work by the end of the semester at our website, english.usu.edu/voicesofusu

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