Spring, Summer, Fall 2016
a journal of outstanding
first-year writing

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“Ultimately... creativity and originality lie not in the avoidance of established forms but in the imaginative use of them.”

–Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein
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fledge is both a showcase for outstanding student writing and a tool for teaching. The texts that follow have been presented in their original form*. This includes the original missteps in grammar, punctuation, spelling, logic, and other major pieces of writing.

We’ve done this to provide discussion points, illustrating that a text does not need to be “perfect” to be considered “outstanding.” Each of these texts exemplifies extraordinary qualities of writing in some capacity or another, and by studying both the perfect moments and the flawed ones, we have a better picture of the writing process.

Please, read, discuss, and enjoy.

*Some original images / formatting may have been altered / removed due to publication limitations.
Editing is rough. Writing, too. For some, both feel insurmountable.

This Spring 2017 semester, my WRIT 3233 students have done plenty of writing and editing. And, in my eyes, helping put together this volume of *fledge* was some of their best work. Here’s a sampling of their reactions to this assignment:

• “I enjoyed reading other students’ work and being able to get a look into the minds of the writers.”

• “Evaluating these essays was not an easy task. It required a lot of time and effort... I hope that the essays I think are deserving of publication will actually make it. These writers...are definitely talented.”

• “...reading the other students’ work was beneficial to me, as it is good to see how other students put together their work.”

• “I actually found this assignment fascinating... As a junior who has spent some time as an educator, I really liked the experience of editing these papers... I could see the potential for improvement in all of the papers, and that was a great feeling...”

Again, editing is rough. Writing, too. But that’s okay.

We can get better, grow more confident in how we stitch our sentences together, develop our personal voice as we develop our thoughts. We simply have to practice. And what better way to begin than by studying what others have done when they were in our shoes?
- Christopher Smith
fledge
Here in the United States of America, we, as a society in general, treat words and images that are sexually charged with greater disdain than more violent profanity and media. This can be seen in many examples, from the music that adolescents and teenagers choose to play, to the movies that people pay to go see and the TV shows that are put on in our homes. It is only recently that the American people are questioning this trend in absolution for violence above sex and emotions. Shows like *Game of Thrones* and movies like *Deadpool* have, at the very least, begun to blur the lines between the norm and a culture more approving of sex in media. However, the United States is much more sexually conservative than many European nations, despite our roots coming from Europe. How did the US get to this state where, frankly, we as a nation are almost scared of sex and sexual images?

It begins with the first Anglo-Saxon interaction with what was known as the New World in 1620. When the Puritan pilgrims from England arrived at Plymouth Rock in what would become Maryland, their strict religious practices began digging their way into American culture from the very beginning. In the 1800’s, historian Henry Adams remarked that Americans have “ostentatiously ignored” sex; this is a direct result of the culture of the Puritans (Morgan). Puritans view sex as a duty for a man and a woman to perform in marriage and marriage only; additionally, it was to never interfere with
man’s relationship with God (Morgan). Sexual activities and other sinful amenities were forbidden before marriage, and some forms of sex were banned even in marriage; specifically, oral and anal sex was unheard of in Puritan society, and laws on sodomy existed in certain states until 2003, when, in the case of Lawrence v. Texas, the Supreme Court of the United States struck down Texas’ sodomy laws, thereby striking down those same laws in all other states. Of course, these laws never more often than not failed to stop individuals from doing the dirty. Edmund Morgan talks in his article ‘The Puritans and Sex’ about how promiscuous household servants could be, sharing several shameful stories of servants’ sexual exploits. There were also cases of sexual abuse mixed in with the consensual ones; how prevalent these cases were is not shared, but it would imply a link between social laws that incriminate sex and sexual abuse or even rape.

Possibly as a result of these social laws from eons past, Sex Education in public schools is a joke in the United States. In multiple states across the United States, an Abstinence-only program that only talks about not having sex until marriage is not just the norm, it’s the standard. At my high school, which is regarded as one of the best high schools in the state of Georgia, our Sex Ed program consisted of a week’s worth of talking about Sexually Transmitted Diseases, showing pictures of said diseases, and the teacher dutifully telling us to wait until marriage to punch the ticket to pound town. There was no mention of condoms, birth control, plan B, or abortions in that classroom. The scare tactics that they used instead still go on to this day, traumatizing kids into being afraid of natural and beautiful emotions that everyone feels. Birth control can also be very important to women, not just for having responsible sex, but also for just living a normal life. Speaking personally, I know that my sister, who is 29, gets sick when her period comes around unless she takes birth control pills. The hormones in birth control balance out the hormones in her body, and allow her to be ‘normal’, for lack of a better term, every day of the month instead of just 26 or 27. Additionally, when you look at the prevalence of pills and medication for males, like Viagra and Cialis, and compare them to medication for females, you can’t help but
notice that there’s a kind of negative stigma for women to take birth control pills. How many times have you seen a commercial on TV for a ‘male enhancement’ pill for people with erectile dysfunction? Compare that to how many times you’ve seen a TV commercial for female hormonal birth control or Plan B, and you can see my point. Hell, there are doctors that use their Catholic standing or other religiously conservative stance to refuse to prescribe birth control.

Since 1948, Sex Ed films have been used as a way to expedite and otherwise ease the process of teaching the topic to teenagers (Mirk). However, these films are never truly comprehensive enough, as kids seem to learn more from TV and movies, media that Mirk says ‘would never wind up on a teacher’s desk’ (Mirk). Despite polls claiming that 80 percent of Americans want better Sex Ed programs and films, religious conservative politicians steadfastly disagree, believing that it would lead to a decline economically and morally in our country (Mirk). To compare to our neighbors across the Atlantic Ocean, the Netherlands has a much more active, friendly disposition to the topic. Since 1970, Sex Education in the Netherlands has been mandatory for schoolchildren, and instead of mentally waterboarding them with pictures of diseased genitals while in our early teen years, the Danes put up pink heart balloons and streamers, and have a very public discussion about sexuality… with 4-year-olds (Melker). They never once say the word ‘sex’ but instead focus on ‘sexuality’ and emotions that individuals feel with one another; it’s a program that teaches kids from a young age that what they feel when they have a crush on a girl or boy is normal, helping them eliminate questions about their mental and sexual well-being from a young age (Melker). Once they graduate from elementary school, these kids will go on to continue to learn about sex in a positive manner later on, near their teen years (Melker).

It can be inferred that the sexually positive view of these heretical protestants is a result of the popularity of ‘De Wallen’, or Netherlands’ Red Light District, where you can legally purchase sexual favors from a prostitute in these buildings adorned with red lights. It’s not something that the Netherlands tries to hide either; the Red Light
District is one of the most popular tourism attractions in the country (Amsterdam.info). The Dutch government is also very progressive when it comes to the health of these ‘Ladies of the Night’. Dutch sex workers are required to regularly get checked up for sexually transmitted diseases and infections, and it is all covered and paid for by the Dutch government (Amsterdam.info). Meanwhile, in the United States, our political system has issues with funding basic healthcare, much less sexual treatment and care.

In general, western European countries, including the Netherlands, France, and Germany all demonstrate a higher knowledge of sexual health than the US, stemming from a better sense of media literacy and sex-positive culture (Bell). Specifically, Germany’s media is almost an antithesis of our own in the United States: the Germans despise violence and hateful obscenities in their culture, but, in a surprising twist, they are very accepting of sex in media and the strong positive emotions that come with it. Sex has become such a norm in German culture that, in the same sense that American movies will throw in violence or action scenes into movies where it’s not always appropriate, some German movies will put in a sex scene that does not always seem to fit in with the mood or the theme. To give a specific example, the movie Sophie Scholl: The Final Days, a movie about The White Rose, a resistance movement in Nazi Germany during World War Two, has a sex scene seemingly out of nowhere and, as an American, it seems jarring and unnecessary. When part of Sophie Scholl’s family is together in the German countryside, one of the male and female leads are together in a room, talking about recent events in the movie. Suddenly, the female lead takes her top off, moves towards the male lead, and then the movie changes scenes, insinuating that the two of them are having or have had sex. To me, that’s something that’s unnecessary and takes away from the movie, but to most, if not all Germans, it’s nothing new.

It’s the same when it comes to what’s almost a European speciality: nude beaches. One of my teachers from high school regularly takes groups of students 20 to 40 strong on trips across Europe and, until recently, North Africa. Some of his funniest stories are
about kids from America being flustered and embarrassed, turning red in the face when they go to one of the nude beaches in Europe. This cultural behavior isn’t exclusive to the warm and sunny parts of southern and western Europe, either. Finland has unisex saunas where Finns will just get naked and sit in a sauna for hours with strangers for leisure. In Japan, they have bathhouses for both sexes, but being nude isn’t just what most people do; if you try to cover yourself up in a Japanese bathhouse, people will assume you have some kind of deformity or another issue that would make you uncomfortable in that situation.

In conclusion, America is simply afraid of sex, sexual body parts, sexual imagery, and, most importantly, discussing, teaching, and learning about sex. Our bodies are natural objects of beauty, something that other countries around the world have already come to terms with centuries ago. Yet we continue to block and censor this aspect of our biology that made us in the first place: procreation! It’s not just about having sex responsibly and safely, it’s about teaching how your body works and that the feelings and aspects of you that you think are abnormal are, in fact, completely normal. Scaring children into not having sex is not the answer. What better way to teach about body positivity than teaching kids that what they are is natural?
Works Cited


Pulling the Strings:
How Valdimir Putin Makes Himself Heard in America
By John Bard

America, the greatest country on earth. Okay, that might be a little bold, but when there is a champion, someone always wants to see them lose. In America’s infancy, nobody wanted to see thirteen British colonies take down arguably the largest army in the world to become independent. And ever since then, the enemies have been one after the other. For the last century, Russia has been one of America’s largest opponents; not particularly in war, but in diplomacy and scare tactics. The two nations “fought” in the Cold War in simply a smack-talking duel to try and see who had the biggest nuclear bomb. Now that it is over, the power houses still have not been on great terms, but Russia’s President Vladimir Putin decided he was going to take it upon himself to share some things with the American public. In September 2013, Putin wrote “A plea for caution from Russia” for The New York Times. Putin uses his authoritative tone in direct confrontation in a topic of interest, U.S. involvement in Syria, and uses the date of publication to evoke the emotions of the American people and get them to listen to the things he specifically wanted to tell the American public.

The United States and Russia’s international instances of major interaction have been few and far between. The two countries’ first big interaction came in the nineteenth century when the U.S. government purchased the Alaskan territory from Russia. Major interactions stopped until World War II when we were allies in defeating the Nazis (U.S. Department of State, 2007). Between these two major moments in history, America helped during a famine in Russia from 1921-1923. These few moments of intense collaboration were all thrown aside
when America and Russia had a long and difficult arms race in which animosity was being just as massed produced as the weapons were. The great teamwork and friendship were immediately thrown away just in each country’s greed and hunger for dominance.

The first outstanding pull of America’s emotional strings was the publication date of Putin’s article. It was published on September 11, 2013. Now of all the 365 days in a year, he just so happened to choose the twelve-year anniversary of one of the most violent domestic terrorist attacks on American soil – the day 2,096 innocent lives were taken from this life by radical jihadists simply to cause a panic in America and send fear down our red, white, and blue necks (Statistic Brain, 2016). That chilling day reminds us all of the innocent lives we lost, and Putin, president of one of our nation’s biggest rival countries, gives America a clear message.

Vladimir’s goal was not necessarily to get the American public to agree with him, but just to get people to listen to him. All he needed was the stage to discuss things in his personal agenda and he used America’s patriotism on that day of remembrance against them in order to say what he wanted to say. But even more than the date the article was published, the tone that Putin uses shows that he’s trying to get under the American skin.

Nobody likes condescension or to feel inferior. That is exactly what Putin uses in his article to extract more emotion in the American people. He says, “millions around the world increasingly see America not as a model of democracy but as relying solely in brute force, cobbling coalitions together under the slogan ‘You’re either with us or against us’” (Putin, 2013). While his analysis is in part correct, he is in no place of authority to show America what it’s doing wrong. Americans don’t answer to him nor do they care much about any advice he can give on how to run a country. This tone shows the reader that Putin is content with making the reader uncomfortable. Already emotional thinking about the context of the day and then to see an article saying “speak(ing) directly to the American people” (Putin, 2013) is quite the eventful morning.

This plays straight into Putin’s hand. He wants to manipulate the emotions of the reader to fit his purpose. He also takes a right jab
to our government by not taking this letter straight to them, but rather to a newspaper. He is putting up an image of not trusting the government to deliver the exact message he wanted to send to the American people. But if there is going to be something as serious as he’s written, I’m sure our government would have appreciated fair warning. Other quotes from the piece such as, “It is dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional” and “force has proved ineffective and pointless” show that he wants America to change its way of thinking in terms of how the citizens live their lives. Telling Americans that they cannot be exceptional limits their ability as a human and makes reaching any goal they set for themselves nearly impossible. Putin not only questions our legitimacy in personal life, but also in our military actions in Syria as well.

Putin may have more issues with America than he said in the article, but his major point of emphasis is America’s military involvement in Syria. Putin alludes to us being the world police, saying it is becoming a regular thing for us to get involved in other countries’ affairs (Putin, 2013). U.S. involvement in Syria is because of the War on Terrorism that the we have pledged to, and they are in pursuit of the radical Islamic group ISIS. While the fight might not be America’s to pick, ISIS and groups similar to it have brought significant damage and hysteria to the world and someone will have to stand up and do something about it. Putin warns against getting too heavily involved in Syrian affairs, saying that it might cause the fire to spread to neighboring countries, take more innocent lives from earth than has already been taken, and make leaders of different countries and religious on our opposing side. Putin also discusses possible governmental chaos in the Middle East and North Africa due to relying too heavily on American influence, but that is the reason America intervened in the first place. In going to those places, the mission was to destroy the terrorist groups in the areas and set up a normal and steady diplomatic system. Putin sees that involvement as America overstretching its arms to cover every nation on earth, when his flaw is that America is reaching there to help the people of those areas not face the heartbrokenness and destruction that they have seen domestically.

Through everything our country has seen, faced, and accom-
plished, the war on terror has taken a huge chunk out of American’s physically, emotionally, financially, and diplomatically. Putin believes it is his place to remind American citizens that they cannot do the things they set their minds to – that America might scare people and run them into the hands of the enemy or just make a reminder of that one sad day that domestic security and peace disappeared, never to return. He strikes emotionally in order to force a response. He goes straight past talking to the American government to call on the people to speak out against U.S. involvement in Syria. After all, it is the citizens who put officials in office with votes.

Putin does effectively support the claim that America is quick to get involved in foreign countries issues, and that Americans are quick to assert themselves forcefully when necessary. He also states that while Russia and the United States used to be archrivals, we also have fought together. He uses this appeal to build common ground and say how friends can fight on the same team no matter what past conflicts have entailed. While these things are all correct, he fails to see that the U.S. cannot accept the advice of another world power without reciprocity. America also cannot change the diplomatic strategy on attacking terrorism head on and cannot back down from the ongoing global conflict. Terrorism has no place on earth, and Putin argues that the fight is not ours and to limit interaction, which almost makes it sound like he does not care if terrorism exists.

Putin uses his authoritative tone in direct confrontation in a topic of interest, U.S. involvement in Syria, and uses the date of publication of his article to evoke the emotions of the American people and get them to listen to the things he specifically wanted to tell the American public. Through all of Putin’s emotional appeals to the American public, he is not persuasive in convincing America that it needs to be less involved in Syria. In recent years, the U.S. has begun the process of bringing troops home, but recent conflicts in and around Syria have caused increasing military involvement. Since the article was published, Russia has been on the offensive in taking over nearby countries, such as Ukraine, and their involvement in the Middle East has also involved, hinting that Putin ultimately wants America to leave the area so Russia can take control.
References


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Pokémon Go: Social phenomenon or distraction?
By Marnus Coetzee

As my wife goes into the kitchen I quickly grab her iPhone and run outside before she sees me. Down the stairs, out the yard, across the parking lot, through the gate, over the hill, passed the Krispy Kreme. I pull out her iPhone and open Pokémon Go. I walk around for a bit, following the secret footprints on the tiny screen and catch myself a nice Bulbasaur. When I see another young adult walking in my direction, weaving back and forth as she tries to locate her own Pokémon, I quickly hide my phone and sit down on the nearest bench. Heaven forbid we make I eye contact, and she assumes that we are co-hunters in this Pokémon Go craziness. I am 33 years old anyway. I should probably be at home with my wife, watching the kids color on our walls.

So, what is the deal with Pokémon Go? It was released in June in the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand. Digital Vision tracked the traffic to a apk mirror site, where people across the world could download the app outside of the traditional app stores, and they reported that in the month of June alone, the website was visited over 12 million times (Schwartz). 12 Million times?! That is not including apple and android store downloads. How many more millions of times has this app been downloaded? It is safe to say this game is a social trend for people of all ages. However, some realists are concerned about the dangers connected with this type of mobile game. Fox News reported that the game leads to “fears over distracted pedestrians, dangerous trespassing, and criminals preying on unsuspecting gamers” (Rogers). So, crazy fun social phenomenon, or dangerous, potentially life ending, distraction?

I personally enjoyed playing Pokémon Go. It got my dog and
me, outside, walking, and talking with random strangers of all ages about the ins and outs of this new mobile game. My wife was not too impressed that I was using her iPhone and draining her battery at the same time, but you know, she liked that I was outside having fun and meeting people. The same can be said for parents all over the world. As kids, we were always told to “get outside,” and “go make some friends.” And now kids are. They are getting exercise while playing video games. It is the best of both worlds! SensorTower reported that from their calculations, “the average iPhone user spent 33 minutes in Pokémon GO on Monday, July 11th” (Nelson). That is 33 minutes of walking, talking, and exploring. You would think parents would be excited! But not all are...

On July 21, 2016, in Guatemala, South America, just days after Pokémon Go’s initial release, Jerson Lopez de Leon, 18 years old, was “ambushed and died after being shot” (Associated Press). Fox News also reported that “four teenagers in the U.K. had to be rescued this week after they entered caves searching for Pokémon characters” (Rogers). If you have played this game you know how easy it is to lose yourself in that little screen in the palm of your hand. It is easy to forget to watch your surroundings and end up in trouble. These are real dangers, not unheard of, but since so many people are playing this game and ending up in these situations, it has now made major news headlines around the world.

Now we are faced with the question, do we stop playing this dangerous game, or should we educate this gaming generation on safety? One mom, Tawnya, wrote an article on how she has taken the time to teach her daughter some “common sense” while playing Pokémon Go. “Do not play alone; stay away from sketchy parts of town; be aware of your surroundings; stay off of people’s personal property.” These are fairly simple to remember and easy to teach. It is a great way to get people outside, and keep them safe.

Ultimately, there are many dangers we will face when we choose to go outside, whether from other individuals, or from exploring some unknown terrain. When you add Pokémon Go gamers to the mix, there are simply just more people outside. Millions more. We should celebrate that, because for many kids, this is the first good reason to
get outside. It is a great reason for parents to get outside, too, to go on some memorable adventures as a family. Basically, it is a great reason for anyone of any age to get outside, maybe to catch Pokémon, maybe just to hang out with friends. Pokémon Go is a mobile game, but it is also a valuable tool many can use. I believe the positives that can come from using this tool far outweigh the negatives. So, in the end, be safe and go have some crazy amounts of fun with this social phenomenon.
Works Cited


The Confessions of a Certified Nerd

Winner of the First-Year Writing Award for Personal Narrative.
By Gabrielle Darr

It was my early elementary school years in which I dreaded standard reading and writing tests the most, and I would exaggerate the length of books I’d never even read to meet reading requirements. It was one of the few things for which I never received praise from my teacher, where a page of words would easily become alphabet soup, scrambled and incomprehensible to me. That always left me tucking books under shelves, behind furniture, and under my bed in hopes that no one would force me to read a lost book. Of course, my view on books shifted as I grew older. It wasn’t a single evangelical experience with one book or story in particular that converted me, but rather it was the accumulation of respect for many different ones that my mother introduced me to and that I wound up reading of my own initiative. I would lay awake reading far past “lights out,” adventuring with Lief through the fantastical lands of Deltora, cracking the secrets of modern mythical society with Artemis Fowl, and discovering the wondrous Fablehaven with Kendra and Seth. I remember once reading a famous scholar named Charles Elliot saying, “Books are the quietest and most constant of friends” (37). I probably would’ve scoffed at the sentiment before my conversion, but after growing up a little and many failed friendships, my world slowly became enclosed in paper and ink. After all, there was little point in playing with other kids, who would almost never bother to recognize me once the school year ended, during recess when there were characters to meet and worlds to explore in the pages of a book. My reading level was still abnormal, with my below average speed and above average comprehension bringing up talk of getting me tested for a learning disorder, but I developed a deep obsession with...
stories.

To give credit where its due, this conversion I went through was largely thanks to my mom, who had bookshelves stocked to the brim and knew that I was the kind of person that needed reading—needed stories, really. It might have had something to do with the twenty or thirty pounds she lost after her parents got divorced her senior year of high school, or maybe it was because no matter what new place her family moved every year, the same books and familiar atmosphere always rested in the library. Either way, books were always her light in dark places, her friend in solitude, and her home when she had none. They do the same for me, and I want to maintain at least a facade of good childhood memories of her. I’d like to think she knew how much converting me would benefit me in the long run. Regardless, she took many long-term measures to ensure that my hatred of the written word wouldn’t follow me into my adolescence. She always stacked my dresser with books that wouldn’t make my head swim, always read to me and my sister at night before bed, and always went out of her way to take us to bookstores and libraries when toy stores were off limits. She never lost patience with me, even when I was the slowest, most frustrated reader in the room. It worked, and now I characterize my elementary school years almost exclusively by the memories of all the books I read.

My obsession with the written word, being the fickle person I am, did not last through middle school. My father had, years before my graduation from elementary school, introduced me to something called anime and manga, or Japanese animation and comics, but surprisingly enough I never preferred them over reading until after I started middle school. It was around the same time as the aftermath of the divorce, when my mom was too busy yelling and throwing paint cans down the stairs to introduce me to new books, that I started to spend more time watching anime with my dad. We got disks from Netflix, before instant streaming took over, and he would make sure to time the mail so that every Wednesday, when it was his turn to take care of my sister and me, there would be more episodes of our favorite shows for the three of us to watch together. I fell in love with the medium as a whole, but I was particularly drawn to the whacky and quirky characters that tended to get portrayed. The boys could be feminine without
being made fun of, and the girls could fight their own battles. The characters’ independence and differences were celebrated, and many of the themes revolved around friendships destroying social barriers. As a girl who read books instead of playing, preferred sword fights and rough housing to talks of clothes or boys, and was never able to keep the same friends for more than a year or two at a time, seeing characters that didn’t fit into nice little social boxes and, despite the odds, formed strong bonds with friends was comforting and encouraging.

I’m a bit disappointed in my past self to admit that I almost never touched the actual literature of the medium: the manga or comic aspect of which most of the works start out as. I first came to read one largely because anime, or the TV show adaptions, seemed to be allergic to actually finishing the plot of a given series, and would effectively conclude with an end that said, “Go read the manga.” So, I did. I read a series called D.Gray-man for the first time. I found it tucked in the back corner of the library in a section that I never even knew existed until I accidentally stumbled into it. I was a bit of a snob about my interests back then, so the fact that I even recognized a title in the adult comic book section threw me, let alone that it was a title I recognized from a TV show I adored. At the time, I didn't know much about the industry I liked so much, so I hadn't realized that the show was actually based on a comic. I picked it off the shelf, tucked it behind the “real” books I had already in my hands, and went to check out. This turned monthly trips to the library into bi-weekly ones, and it gave me a new found respect for all mediums of story telling, not just the more universal or “intelligent” ones.

As much as I obsessed over the show, the original comic had so many more little details about the world and characters that it was hard not be drawn further into its story. For the first time, I started to get a real grasp on what the comic was actually trying to say. Not just the whole “good guys want to save the world vs. bad guys want to destroy it” conflict on the surface, but the characters struggling with their world and their inner demons. The good guys are often no better than the bad guys, employing terrible means to see a good end. I can watch the characters hurt, grieve, and fall into despair, but I can also watch them pull together and love one another no matter how hard that may
be. It was impossible to walk away from the series not knowing who these characters are, what they’ve been through, and what they stand for, which made the characters feel somehow more real than they were. The heroine once asked, “When you close your eyes and think of the world, what do you see?” (54). For her answer, her entire world was her friends, so even if they won this war they were fighting and saved the physical world, it wouldn’t mean anything to her if everyone she knew died in the process. It was the little details like this that made this fictional battle feel as though it mattered, that it wasn’t just happening on the pages of a comic, and I can’t help but think of these characters as something undeniably like me. If they can win their fights against terrifying demons and internal strife, then I can win my fights against school, depression, and the anxieties of life.

As much as I used to hide the fact that I liked this kind of thing, it stuck with me as I grew up more than anything else I’d read. In middle school, I finally started to accept that saying “I like anime” wasn’t a nail in the coffin of my social life, and I made friends who would freak out about new releases along with me or who would at least listen without judging. Heck, D.Gray-man actually became an integral part of the little group of friends I had. I introduced it to one of them, Olivia, who I’m still quite good friends with today, and then she went and made everyone else we knew experience it. From that point on, even through high school, every time someone new started spending a lot of time with us, they were essentially inducted into the group through D.Gray-man. I don’t think a single one of them wound up not owning a poster or two, though.

As I grew up and graduated on to high school, the slow burn that was my relationship with my mother erupted and smoldered. Up until the end of my sophomore year, I spent half the week with my mom and half with my dad, but I elected to start spending all my time at my dad’s. Predictably, my mom was... not happy about this, to say the least, especially when my younger sister decided to do the same. I fell away from my best friend due to our mutual insecurities and paranoia, there was dating drama which I was, sadly, a part of, and all of my friends seemed to be dealing with some form of depression, anxiety, or self loathing. One thing that kept me getting out of bed, if only once
or twice, was when I thought of the main character getting up after having his arm ripped off. Well, if he could do that, fictional or not, while still being allowed to cry about it, then I certainly could, too. So I went to school, tear tracks on my face and all, but I did it.

As time went on, I had repeatedly found myself wandering back to D.Gray-man every so often, and surprisingly every re-read was just as enjoyable, if not more so, as my first shot at the series. Though, the more time I’ve spent following the series online, the more I’ve only come to think about the author. As with many authors of comics in Japan, public information on Katsura Hoshino is almost nonexistent, but still I find her passion for what she does, despite the challenges she faces, inspiring. She’s had many difficulties with her health, including a neck injury, Norovirus, and wrist surgery (1). This lead to many hiatuses on D.Gray-man, with a massive one starting in 2013 where the comic was out of serialization for nearly three years, and Hoshino almost lost the rights to her comic. At one point a few months before she resumed her work on it in 2015, she shared a story with her small following. She was looking at random knick knacks at the store and a thought struck her of Allen, the main character she created, and all of the fan mail she’d received thanking her for writing the comics. It came to her that D.Gray-man was something she felt “needed to be around.” Of course, in the Hoshino way, this story was incredibly vague, but despite that, or maybe because of it, I resonated with it. I’ve met a lot of people through D.Gray-man, and it’s made me get up and just “keep on walking” a lot, too. It’s been a permanent fixation in my life and the lives of many other people. It may not have “saved me” or anything like that, but it certainly felt like it was a cheerleader on the sidelines for much of my life. I think having D.Gray-man around, or even media similar to it, encourages and pushes me forward as a person. Even if it is fiction, it reflects me, and it helps me to love and learn.
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Social Movements and Symbolism: 
An Analysis of That 70s Show
By Megan Farmer

Radical. Groovy. Revolutionary. These are just three words often used to describe the whirlwind that was the 1970s. These years were teeming with socio-political movements, including ones regarding Civil Rights, feminism, immigration, technology and more. In the late 1990s, a television series titled That 70s Show premiered, showcasing a comedic, yet poignant narrative of adolescence during the 1970s. That 70s Show’s iconic portrayal of adolescent life in the 1970s depicts the wildness of young adulthood, juxtaposed with the unruliness and uncertainty of the current social climate. This contributed to the wild upheaval and lasting impression of the 1970s on world history, as seen in the articles “America in the 1970s” by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and “13 Times That 70s Show Tackled History” by Bruce Cherry. Upon close analysis of the millennial sitcom That 70s Show, there are apparent historical and literary ties between the central characters and respective movements in which they symbolize.

The most prominent example of this seen through the character of Donna Pinciotti, a clear representation of the feminist movement. The movement began in 1971, when the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the National Women’s Political Caucus launched. In the following year, the Equal Rights Act was passed, stating that “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex” (Harcourt, 2). This translates effectively into Donna’s character, a dynamic, passionate, strong-willed teenage girl, who frequently reminds her male friends of her strength, confidence and ability to be “one of the
guys.” Donna is primarily raised by her father, as her mother left when she was young. Because of this, Donna becomes both a “daddy’s girl” and a tomboy, learning to fill traditionally accepted male roles from her father. In turn, she acquires special insight into the spectrum of female ability and empowerment. Throughout the show, Donna becomes a locally recognized radio personality known as “Hot Donna,” which she often acknowledges as being sexist, as it objectifies her as a woman, a concept she is openly against. However, she also enjoys the attention she earns because of it, showing her frequent duality with feminism. Furthermore, according to the article by Bruce Cherry, Donna challenges gender roles when she exhibits superior athletic talent in the episode “Battle of the Sexes” (Cherry, 3). In another episode, Donna explains her belief that college is an opportunity for young women to discover oneself and the new possibilities of life, rather than to be a woman who, in the words of Donna, “marry the first idiot they meet and squeeze out his bastard, moron children.” Not only does Donna break the stigma of female inferiority in sports and education, but she emphasizes the divide between her and Jackie, her girly, egocentric counterpart.

In contrast with Donna, Jackie Burkhardt represents the iconic Disco Era, as they are both bubbly, trendy and lighthearted. Amidst the socio-political upheaval of the Vietnam War and Civil Rights Movement, disco music became a pop culture distraction to refocus public opinion towards a more aesthetically appealing medium. Similarly, Jackie’s character can be considered a distraction, as most of the male characters in the show have fallen in love with her during the series. Furthermore, as the decade and show progressed, both disco and Jackie gradually become less appealing. In the eighth season of the show, which took place in 1979, Jackie’s character became highly disliked and irrelevant, as her past lovers had established independent lives away from her, leaving her lonely and bitter. Historically speaking, disco became highly disliked and irrelevant at this time, as well. This connection is summarized by Cherry when he explains “by Season Eight — and by 1979 in real life — anti-disco backlash had led to public burnings of disco records, lending the phrase ‘Disco Inferno’ a
literal meaning” (Cherry, 4). Nevertheless, the audience and characters grow to love and respect Jackie, despite her tiring attitude and overplayed egocentrism. Complementing the backlash of pop culture disco, political rioting and rebellion was prevalent during the early 1970s Anti-War movement, represented by the character of Steven Hyde, a sarcastic, detached loner who successfully ingratiates himself into the group with his dry humor and relentless wit.

Ironically, Hyde and Jackie, who had a love affair throughout the series, equally contrast and complement one another, as they and their respective social movements are symbolic of the sporadic, sometimes toxic, relationship between Hyde’s anti-war activism and Jackie’s rose tinted delusion of disco. While the Anti War movement can be characterized as revolutionary, angstful and passionate, it is constructed on a foundation of peace and harmony. Hyde, a symbolic representation of both, is a passionate, rebellious, yet distant and indifferent teenager, fascinated by classic rock music, recreational marijuana usage and government conspiracy theories (Cherry, 13). Beyond so, Hyde often exhibits paranoia related tendencies, conveying Hyde’s character as the epitome of the classic “hippie,” who promotes free love, passive non-violence and anti-government anarchy. Harcourt explains that this depiction is reminiscent of the true 1970s, when the adolescent culture “faced much mainstream opposition from middle-class Americans, uncomfortable with the youth culture of the period-long hair, casual drug use, promiscuity” (Harcourt, 6). Overall, Hyde’s character not only conveys a historically accurate attitude, but also embodies the most well-known subculture of the decade, the hippies.

Moreover, with the rising popularity of the “make love, not war” mantra, there was an unprecedented rise in teenage pregnancy, which subsequently resulted in a sharp, 20 percent decrease in the national birth rate, from 70 percent in 1970 to 50 percent in 1979 (Boonstra, 2). During the 1970s, science was evolving dramatically, leading to medical breakthroughs, including the first oral contraceptive. However, this was during the early drug trials, which proved that the pills were not always effective (Harcourt, 7). Because of this, the abortion rate also peaked during the 1970s. At the start of the decade,
the abortion rate was a mere 5 percent; however, the abortion rate reached 43 percent by 1979 (Boonstra, 2). Because of this, it is arguable that the character of Michael Kelso, a dopey, naive boy with an overactive sex drive, symbolizes the spike in teen pregnancy and sexual experimentation. During the series, Kelso and his girlfriend Brooke get pregnant while still in high school. Upon discovering this news, he and Brooke weigh their options, including a brief contemplation with abortion, which ultimately results in their decision to keep the baby. This was an unpopular decision to make at the time, especially amongst unmarried couples (Cherry, 6). Despite their choice to keep the baby, Brooke moves to live with her family in Chicago, and she and Kelso part. True to form, Kelso continues to partake in his promiscuous ways, proving he represents this era of sexual endeavours.

In addition to scientific advances in medicine, the 1970s cultivated various technological advances, as well. A time of innovation and resurgence of intelligence, the 1970s promoted new thinking and an emphasis on efficiency (Harcourt, 4). The most popular references to “modern” technology That 70s Show makes include Pong, Star Wars, pinball, cable TV, CB radio and polaroid and digital cameras. With the advent of Pong and Atari came a surge in the popularity of video games (Cherry, 7). At this time, computers also became increasingly popular, as features such as word processing and email were invented. Another notable invention was the first digital camera, which was released by Kodak in 1975. Alongside these groundbreaking inventions was a rise in science fiction, which was sparked primarily by the Star Wars saga, premiering for the first time in 1977. Eric Foreman, the series’ main character, is an openly nerdy intellectual who frequently references his love for Star Wars and science fiction comic books, as well as the other aforementioned inventions. Throughout the series, Foreman makes jokes and references that surpass the comprehension of his peers due to their obscurity, and often result in playful mocking at his expense. Hence, Eric Foreman, represents the technological era of the 1970s.

In addition to Foreman, another character often at the brunt of social ridicule is Fez, a foreign exchange student from a mysteriously unknown South American country, the source of a recurring joke
throughout the show. Evidently, the show’s satirical humor surrounding immigration acknowledges the flaws in federal legislation at the time, such as the Immigration Act of 1965, that of which led to inconsistent laws, irrational racism and nationwide prejudice (Cherry, 4). Undoubtedly, there were drastic changes in national demographics throughout the decade, as foreigners emigrated from their countries due to common factors, including political and economic troubles. America seemed quite appealing to refugees at the time, due to its overwhelming diversity and career opportunities. According to Harcourt, these factors “accounted for increasing illegal immigration during the decade, particularly from Mexico and Central and South America, a trend that continued into the 1980s” (Harcourt, 8). Therefore, it is apparent that the character of Fez is symbolic of the Immigration movement.

In conclusion, the creators of _That 70s Show_ prove a deep understanding of the historical context of the 1970s, as its content is accurate, aware and entertaining. Often times, the show acknowledges and promotes many of the most prevalent, revolutionary events and concepts at the time with poise and humor. Under close analysis, of the show, as well at the works of Cherry, Harcourt and supplementary authors, there are apparent connections between the main characters and popular socio-political movements of the 1970s. Overall, the show cleverly and satirically depicts the uniquely nostalgic, beautiful chaos that will forever be the 1970s in America.
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A Story About a Story
By Destiny Geddis

Since this is, in its essence, a story about a story, it feels only right that I start it in the usually cliché manner of most stories. How fortunate I am that it was a dark night. There was no storm to be found, but then again this isn't a stormy story. The room was dark enough to make up for it, though. The light from the TV where pretty people told jokes that were met with recorded laughter, the glow of two lamps, and a computer screen were the only source of light in that little living room where four people sat. Three were huddled around the TV, talking over adult things that couldn’t matter less to the fourth, whose eyes were glued to the Word document pulled up on the bulky computer.

I was no more than seven or eight, a tiny thing whose feet could barely reach the floor even while sitting on the edge of the seat. The chair swung wildly back and forth, the momentum of my swinging torso keeping it at its steady rhythm. Occasionally my feet would hit against the side of the desk, and my grandparents would bark at me to quit. Like always, I would stop for a few minutes before starting up again. I was filled with energy, but refused to get rid of it in my usual way (i.e. running wildly throughout the house until shouts from my grandparents stilled my feet). That night I had sat down at that desk with a mission, one that I was compelled to finish before leaving the computer chair.

I was going to write my first story. It was going to be amazing; I had already decided. I can’t recall what exactly had inspired this sudden fit of creative passion in my eight-year-old self, but if I had to place my bets it probably would be on a book. Given my tastes and what I remember of the plot of that story, it was likely a fantasy book. It definitely had fairies, because like old me, little me was enamored with
fledges.

Much like how I write now, I had sat down that night with only a vague concept of what this story would be about. It was going to be about a girl. She was going to be older than me, because all girls in fantasy were back then. I don’t remember much of her personality, which probably means there wasn’t much of one to begin with. Her name escapes me as well. It could have been Emily; it could have been Alice. Both names were ones I was fond of during that age. What I do remember is that little Alice-Emily would find herself transported into a magical world with fairies and unicorns. Her method of getting there was not through a rabbit hole as one of her potential names suggests, but rather a bridge that she’d chosen as her hiding spot during a game of Hide-and-Seek.

The resulting story was a mess. I believe the big ‘plot twist’ (if you could call it such) was that the girl was a fairy who had been stolen by her human parents from her true fairy mother. At least, that was what one of the first people she met upon entering this world told her, so of course it was true. Little Alice-Emily decided to stay with the strange fairy woman who claimed to be her mother almost instantly. Never once did she consider that the fairy woman was lying to her, or fret over the revelation that her entire life had been a lie. I was a simpler person back then who thought the world was just as simple as I was.

When I was at last done with what I thought was my one-page magnum opus, I asked my cousin to help me print it. She was much older than I was and therefore a tech genius in my eyes. With her help, I printed it and at last had physical proof of my hard work. I smiled to myself, and ran over to my grandmother.

With about as much flourish as an eight-year-old can give, I handed it over to her and demanded she read it now. I was impatient throughout her entire read-through. I bounced on the pads of my feet. My arms swung widely. My teeth bit down on my bottom lip in a fruitless effort to hold back the, “Are you done? Have you finished?” that wanted to leave my mouth. I was a young child hungry for praise. When one of the escaped, “Are you done?”’s was met with a nod and a smile, I pounced.

“Did you like it? Was it good? Was it your favorite thing ever?”
I asked, bouncing up on my toes with each word.

“Oh of course it is, sweetie,” my grandmother said. She most defi-

nitely didn’t mean it, but those were the kinds of things you told a little
eight year old who’s just given you a story that she was unbelievably

proud of.

I smiled, took the story from her hands, and read it until I

practically had it memorized.

It’s been more than a decade since that night when I wrote my

first true story. I haven’t read it since. The digital version became a ca-

sualty of the age old ‘closing without saving’ blunder, and I no longer

know where the only physical copy is. My grandmother claims she

saved it, but I have yet to see the proof of that. To be honest, I wouldn’t

fault her if she threw it away. From what I remember, it was as awful as

a child’s first fantasy could be.

As to be expected, I have changed within those ten years. I can

write stories longer than a page, thankfully. I’ve learned that starting a

new paragraph when someone talks isn’t a preference but a rule, and

that sometimes the biggest word isn’t the best. I’ve definitely gotten

better at telling the stories I want to tell, though how much better is

anyone’s guess.

What hasn’t changed since that day is the passion and love I

feel for writing. When inspiration strikes, I have to be forcibly removed

from my computer. I have actually downloaded apps for the sole pur-

pose of letting me write when I’m away from my laptop.

When I wrote that story all those years ago, I don’t think I

knew just how important writing would become to me. I probably also

would have laughed if you told me I would grow to hate that story.

However, even if I do hate it (and I do), I can’t deny how important it is

to me. I still remember the plot of that story after more than a decade.

That’s impressive considering how bad my memory is. It’s not so much

the quality that matters, as what that story stands for. It is the turning

point in my life where I realized that writing can be fun, and that I

could write those stories that I loved. There’s nothing I can do that will

change that, although I doubt I would if given the chance. Maybe one

day, however, I’ll go back to that story. Little Alice-Emily deserves a

better story for all she’s done for me.
The Habitual Inhibitor:
The Effects of Our Technology Use on Learning
By Giancarlos Gonzalez

Abstract

Through entry level research from short articles by Nicholas Carr (2007), Ferris Jabr (2013), and several other researchers, a realization of a problem I suffer from started to arise. After hearing about the strains, stress, and struggles that our brains go through when we try to force it to use technology in ways that are ultimately ineffective with our bad habits of multitasking, passive browsing, and desensitized empathy, enlightenment struck me and I knew if I was to improve from these struggles, I would have to learn what to avoid. With this in mind, my research into several topics became akin to an exercise program, where I would learn what I was doing wrong, what it was doing to my body, and how to improve it. With this, the focus became the area of my life where these problems are most apparent; learning and studying. Picking studies that best related to these areas would be the best option for my research, and so, observations in the classroom, student’s study location of choice, and the breaks in between were the most relatable to show that there is clearly a problem with our technology habits. This would be the phase where we identify what we are doing wrong so that we know what to change, as most people are not even aware of what they are doing to themselves and most likely would change their habits if they knew what harm it was causing, which were covered in the other studies used to explain the effects of distractive multitasking and task switching. Armed with this knowledge, I believe anyone can improve their lives or at least their study habits as we don’t realize how the way we use technology is damaging our overall learning experience.
It’s seven o’clock in the afternoon. I’ve just gotten back inside from dinner. I recap on my daily assignments, remember the English paper that must be done, sit at my laptop, and open two tabs. One for English and one for Reddit. Of course, my attention is drawn to Reddit. I begin going down a list of hundreds of links, clicking until they all turn from blue to purple and opening many just to close them a second later, and occasionally alternating tabs, forgetting what the assignment for English even was. I only need to type 300 words; it won’t take long. I reopen Reddit. Now it’s eight-thirty and enough is enough. I struggle to keep on typing and when I occasionally pause and review my work, it either does not make sense or I forgot where I was going with it in the first place. I know I cannot focus and this paper and the video playing in the next tab, and the essay is probably going to be poor, but I’m bored so I click a related video. Now it’s one in the morning.

Millions of students undergo the same vicious circle of distractions and procrastination in their school lives and many, including myself, do not fully understand why they do so poorly. Researchers are starting to examine students at home and in school to understand their patterns and similar habits. Our access to technology has benefited our society in many ways, especially in the schools, with unlimited libraries of information for many subjects that go hand in hand with classes and assignments. Even at home, we use technology for the lecture slides and review videos that we all cram the night before the tests, praying it may give us some power and enlightenment for the assessment to come. However, this sometimes leads to us binging videos, browsing websites, and checking social media. Daily, we struggle to stop ourselves from distraction, but it’s become a norm in our lives. From these studies, researchers believe we are sabotaging ourselves when we allow ourselves to become sidetracked in school or at home as research keeps showing us that we aren’t fully aware of the negative impacts these technological distractions have. It’s hurting our focus, retention, and performance and this will ultimately weaken our learning potential with

The Habitual Inhibitor:  
The Effects of Our Technology Use on Learning
Research Methods

Preliminary Research

Nicholas Carr’s “What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains” (2010) and “The Juggler’s Brain” (2010) both were incredibly helpful in influencing and directing my work. Carr’s (2010) explanation comparing internet information as numerous “information faucets” overflowing the bucket that is our brain as we attempt to fill it with as much information as we can, made me realize that I too suffer exactly from what Carr was explaining. Through all of Carr’s explanations and observations, I learned another way I was using the internet wrong and hurting my focus, and so, I wanted to improve and I thought, “what better way to improve than to write a paper about what I need to improve.” In a symbiotic relationship, by pushing myself to make changes in how I studied, multitasked, and used technology, I found more examples and reasoning behind my paper and it provided better content for me to write about, and through my paper, I improved my own technology habits that Carr helped me realize.

Primary Research

Going out and doing research directly ourselves was an eye opener for my own behavior. After spending time observing people at Landrum Dining Commons, I observed people who wouldn’t take their eyes off them for 5 to 10 minutes at a time and completely ignore their friends’ conversations. After seeing for myself how many times people were distracted by digital technology, which turned out to be 88.95% of all distractions, I realized that I ignore my friends myself, realizing I’m just as guilty as they are. However, after recording how many times I was off topic while studying, how many times I was compelled to text, and how little time I was disconnected, I knew that I would write a stronger essay relating to studying as I related to that struggle more than I did with social communication.
Scholarly Research

For the focus of my paper, I wanted to talk specifically on learning and school, and more importantly, the instances where I personally struggle to concentrate, work, and learn the most. And so, my studies revolved around how people worked, prepared, and studied for school. Similarly to the observations I took at Landrum, these studies were observational, recording instances where people went off topic from their tasks. A study by James M. Kraushaar and David C. Novak (2010) observed laptop usage during a lecture and despite knowing that they voluntarily had spyware installed on their computers, students still managed to be incredibly off-topic during lecture. Oddly enough, many of the students self-reported being off topic less often than the software recorded, leading me to hypothesize that the issue isn’t the technology, or just that we simply have bad habits for no reason, but that we have no idea these habits are occurring. I guessed we are inexperienced with technology since this is a very new paradigm shift in civilization and we may not fully understand its consequences. The other studies by Nicole M. Dudukovic, Sarah DuBrow, AND Anthony D. Wagner (2009) further into figuring out the consequences of these habits relating to attention and memorization, and a study by Larry D. Rosen, L. Mark Carrier, Nancy A. Cheever (20103) discuss the effects of this technology triggered task switching. Finally, after studying what the effects of these habits are, I tried to find proposed ways to combat it. A study by Atsunori Ariga and Alejandro Lleras (2010) discussed their hypothesis and study about giving the brain checkups and breaks to enhance memorization. Through all these studies, it’s clear than understanding the problem is the key to solving it. Through this essay, I hope to inform the readers about these potential threats from our daily habits so that we, as users, know what to look out for so that we can avoid suffering from these issues.

Results

Connected and Addicted

The key to understanding the current debate over how our habits with technology use are negatively affecting our learning can be found by
analyzing how few breaks we give our brains due to our technology use. One can see evidence of these issues with how little we can disconnect from technology in a 2013 article published by Computers in Human Behavior that describes a series of studies conducted by Daria J. Kuss and other researchers from Nottingham Trent University in an attempt to measure internet addiction in students, including its prevalence and factors. Researchers sampled 2,257 students from ninety-four countries, 78.1% being from the UK, and each student had used to internet for an average of 9.9 years. In order to asses the severity of the internet addiction, researchers used the Assessment for Computer and Internet Addiction-Screener (AICA-S), which is a brief self-report instrument. Researches also used the NEO Five-Factor Inventory to measure basic personality traits in participants, which is another self-reporting tool consisting of sixty items. Results showed that 3.2% of the students in the present sample were classified as addicted, all of which used the internet every day compared to the 91.7% of non-addicted students. Addicted students experienced more problems from their usage and scored significantly higher on the AICA-S than non-addicted students. It was found that the use of all social applications also significantly increased risk for addiction, as online shopping appeared as the strongest predictor of addiction and increased the odds for addiction by 135%. Along with being open about internet hobbies such as gaming, and IM use which itself increased addiction change by 51%, there are many factors that are making technology based activity a large part of our lives and even causing some of us to becoming addicted to it, making it rarer for us to be away from technology instead accessing it. To clarify the implications of their findings, the researchers go on to explain that ”communication pleasure is the strongest predictor of Internet addiction” (Chou & Hsiao, 2000), which is supportive of the present conjecture indicating that extensive use of social online applications is a risk factor for Internet addiction.” (Kuss p.964). In terms of nonstop digital use, the reason that Kuss’s point in this passage is important is that it shows how “communication pleasure”, similar to the gratification explained by Rosen, is a red flag and instigator of internet addiction, causing some people to have a very hard time from taking a break from internet and technology usage. Many people spend hundreds of
hours online a week and it will take a toll on a user’s mental health and make it even harder for the user to stop. With so many different means of media and information at a student’s hand at any given time, it’s no wonder that the second they have an opportunity to stop working and look at their phones, they often will, failing to give their mind the rest it needs between classes and as we will see, our mind will see any task as a distraction and want to get those classes over with as quickly as possible to get back to that phone.

**Taking Breaks from Technology Helps Us Remain on Task**

Additionally, one can observe an even clearer evidence of these issues with the toll caused by non-stop technology use illustrated in a 2011 study published by Cognition, where Atsunori Ariga and other researchers from the University of Illinois demonstrate how taking brief mental breaks between tasks helps retention and performance of the task. In this study, eighty-four naive students participated in a task that involved remembering 4 digits presented on a screen, then having to recall those 4 digits after completing vigilant tasks, which involved determining whether a line presented on the screen shorted or not at a random time. After forty minutes, the subjects would input the numbers they were told to remember. A “switch” test group had essentially the same process, but were shown numbers throughout the forty minutes and were asked if the presented numbers belong to the memory set they were told to memorized. After their forty minutes were up, results showed that the switch group not only performed significantly better at recalling the numbers with an eighty-seven percent hit rate compared to the no-switch group who had a hit rate of eighty-four percent, but also had a quicker reaction time. To clarify the implications of their findings, the researchers go on to explain that “vigilance decrements are not about an exhaustion of attention, they are about a loss of control over the contents of our thoughts.” (Ariga 5). In essence, when Ariga refers to “loss of control over the content of our thoughts,” what he means is that our thoughts will go on an autopilot on the task at hand. While not exhausting in itself, as it will keep going in the direction it’s currently moving for long periods of time, if left unattended
for too long, the mind will stray off in a direction, forgetting where it was going in the first place. What the brain requires quick breaks to give the itself a reminder of what its overall goal is, essentially pushing the autopilot back into the path we want it to go. So even if someone explained those dinner plans to you when you had your phone down and swear you were paying attention, just by staying on your phone for two hours and not reminding yourself what the information you just learned, you will end your two-hour Twitter session with your mind forgetting what it was supposed to remember. By occasionally taking a quick break, quizzing yourself about what time those dinner plans were before going back to Twitter, correcting the trajectory of our mind, we will ensure we are thinking on the right track.

**Multitasking with Technology in the Classroom**

To understand why students are having a hard time learning, we must study how we learn in the first place we are educated; the classroom. Students have been using technology to follow along with the lecture and relentlessly multitasking, yet a growing issue recently is that we lack the discipline to resist our multitasking urges. For example, one can see clear evidence of this issue with juggling tasks on technology during classroom lectures illustrated in a 2010 report published in *Journal of Information Systems Education* that outlines a series of studies conducted by James M. Kraushaar and other researchers from the University of Vermont. They examined ninety-seven undergraduate students from several sections of a junior-level course. Using spyware put into the computers by the student’s’ consent, they were able to observe their frequency of multitasking, how many times they were on and off topic, and the duration of each task. The spyware data showed that ninety-four percent of the students used their email during lecture and sixty-one percent had used IM. However, when students self-reported, only eighty-seven percent admitted that they used their email and only twenty-five percent reported using IM. Not only are students multitasking frequently, but often it is unconscious and distractive. Although it may seem subtle initially, one can still see how overexposure to technology combined with the lack of control could be an issue for
our unchecked multitasking when the researchers note, “part of the responsibility for facilitating non-distracting laptop use lies with the educator and part lies with the student. Both students and educators can benefit from better information regarding the potentially negative impacts arising from distracting laptop use.” (Kraushaar p.250). As it relates to inefficient multitasking, the significance of the Kraushaar’s conclusion is that it demonstrates a clear relationship between our multitasking with several streams of information, and our struggle to only keep tasks relating to our main assignment a priority. To see how loose students are with their work, just go to any lecture class and look around the room. Chances are, for every tab open with notes and the lecture slides, there is a tab for Facebook or Twitter.

The Unstoppable Pull of Technology While Studying

Its apparent that multitasking has become a bad habit with our technology usage, but clearly multitasking on its own isn’t fully to blame. To suffer from the issues of multitasking, one must multitask and unfortunately, we cannot stop it. Clearly, our lack of self-control with distractions is a significant factor as most people habitually check their technology and phones, finding it impossible not to. One can find a particularly compelling illustration of the issue with irresistible distractions in a 2013 report published in *Computers in Human Behavior*, where Dr. Larry D. Rosen and other researchers from California State University examined 279 students, ranging from middle school, high school, and college, and how they prefer to study at home in their own preferred studying location instead of a test laboratory or school. Knowing they were being observed, examiners recorded all the student’s activities throughout the fifteen-minute interval. After discovering that the average student couldn’t go more than 6 minutes without being distracted and only sixty-five percent of their study time was actually work, it was clear there is a problem. At one point in their article, Rosen even go as far as to assert that “a combination of the need for emotional gratifications from social media plus similarity between the primary task and distractions present from additional websites might also account for distractions.” (Rosen p.955). To put Rosen’s point in
layman’s terms, when he refers to “emotional gratifications” and “similarity between the primary task and distractions,” he means we are effectively addicted to the emotional feedback we get from social media when we get a like or a comment, as well as the sidetracking we do when we click those “related videos” we see in the sidebar just because it’s related. We actively seek to satisfy that desire we have which causes us to struggle with focusing on a single task for so long. We have a craving for our phones and for every alert and text that pulls our attention away because it’s an easier and more numerous means of satisfaction.

Scattered Attention Creates Scattered Memory

One can observe an even clearer evidence of these issues with our addiction to distractions illustrated in a 2009 study published by Memory & Cognition, where Nicole M. Dudukovic and other researchers from Stanford University demonstrate how distractions when learning material affected over forty-two different university students in two separate experiments. The students were tested on material shown under divided attention and undivided attention and the results showed not only that distracted learning causes the participant to do poorly on the test, with full attention students having a hit rate of .84 versus the divided attention rate of .81, but were more likely to fabricate false recollections with the divided attention group only having a hit rate of .64 when identifying the source of their information, versus the .74 from the full attention group. Particularly, with regards to attention, Dudukovic points out that “distraction during memory retrieval disrupts memory processes that give rise to later item recognition and source memory.” (Dudukovic 959). In other words, when Dudukovic explains that we have difficulty with “distractions during memory retrieval”, she is pointing out that when we fail to give material the full attention it deserves, the lack of effort we put into storing information will match the effort our brain puts into recollecting. So, when a friend tells you to pick up chips for the party while you were playing Angry Birds, it should be expected that you will inevitably forget to buy the chips as you were never paying full attention, leaving everyone frustrated and hungry. One can see that both studies on multitasking and distractions
illustrate how our lack of control in an environment filled with technology is leading to our inefficiency in performance and memory. Not only have we seen that we are multitasking more in school more than ever and that the multitasking is leading to us working harder than necessary, but it also follows us to our very homes where we study. We shoot ourselves in the foot when we allow ourselves to be distracted by texts from our friends about movie plans when we are studying key terms for biology and suddenly can’t remember that the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell when the time comes. When we cannot avoid these harmful effects at home nor in the classroom, we are hurting our overall learning experience.

Discussion

Sure, most experts in the field do acknowledge that our use of technology may be inhibiting our learning experience, but that is not to say that all experts agree on whether it is the technology or genetics or personalities. Often in school when teachers notice students who are easily distracted in their behavior, they jump to the ADHD claim. For older students, teachers are also just as quick to call them simply bad students. They say that they clearly don’t want to be in school and could care less about their time. While it’s true that students who are like that would rather be on their phones than listening to class, many students suffer from these tendencies to be easily distracted. There are many bright students out there who just have the bad habit to stare at their phone or want to check that text and miss out on some important information and unfortunately, the grades show. However, we cannot honestly say that they students are choosing to make themselves suffer in school and it’s up to teachers to find ways to counter the addiction many students have toward their phones. By now, cell phones have become so integrated into our society that we cannot pretend they don’t exists. We just need to learn how to understand it and adapt. We cannot afford to take high horses and blame kids for using their technology since clearly, we would never check our phone in class. Just think back to the last time you felt the need to check your phone. It most likely was only a couple of seconds ago. If you made yourself resist that
urge, then you are learning and this type of conditioning will better our education system for the days of the future. Technology is a beautiful tool that has improved our lives and our education immensely, but like with all tools, we must learn how to use it appropriately. Perhaps the best way to appreciate the true impact of these issues with our technological distractions can be seen in cases like choosing how to approach a late-night English paper, where one eventually realizes that the real heart of this problem is that it is up to one’s self to pull the trigger and close those distractions. Sure, we can have the paper left open in a tab, blank for hours while we watch videos on the other monitor, procrastinate and take online “what celebrity are you?” quizzes, or we can close the tab, focus on the paper, finish in an hour or two, write a solid essay, and sleep knowing the essay was finished well and distraction free.
References


Quit Before It’s Too Late

By Claire Goodall

“Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States, killing more than 480,000 Americans each year” (“Tips Impact and Results” par. 1). Determined to lower this number, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched a nationwide campaign, *Tips From Former Smokers*, featuring real life stories of former smokers whose bad habits resulted in long-term disease or disability. One of CDC’s most popular print advertisements is that of Terrie Hall, an older woman who could only speak with the aid of an artificial voice box, inserted in her throat, as a result of throat cancer due to nonstop tobacco use. This single page advertisement incorporates a current image of Terrie on the left side, revealing her facial deformities and the hole centering her throat; balanced by large text on the right side, which quote Terrie’s personal words of advice, telling viewers to record their natural voice for their loved ones while they still can. Terrie’s anti-smoking print advertisement, from the CDC’s campaign against smoking, utilizes the artistic appeals ethos, pathos, and logos to build public awareness of the immediate health damage caused by smoking and successfully persuade current smokers to quit using tobacco products.

The CDC’s *Tips* campaign exhibits worst-case scenarios of smoking-related health effects through advertising compelling stories of real victims and the daily struggles they face. The “Terrie’s Tip” ad is one of the most powerful examples under this campaign, as it utilizes real images of Terrie’s physical condition and her unpleasant appearance to evoke emotional reactions from the audience. The advertisement shows Terrie’s facial deformities, excessively wrinkled skin, and frightening hole centering her throat to create a strong sense of sympa-
thy, as well as fear in the audience. Viewers feel sorry for Terrie upon witnessing her devastating living conditions, and tremendously fear the idea that this could happen to them if they don’t quit immediately. The ad documents a personal tip from Terrie herself stating, “RECORD YOUR VOICE FOR LOVED ONES WHILE YOU STILL CAN,” referring to the fact that smoking cigarettes took away her ability to communicate using her natural born voice. This text appears larger than any other component of the ad and is printed in all capital letters in order to place emphasis on the importance of quitting before it’s too late. Depth is created from the shadows of each letter, presenting the idea that Terrie’s simple words contain a deeper meaning. These visual elements all work together to create a stronger, more dramatic appeal to pathos, persuading the audience away from cigarette use by attacking their vulnerable emotions.

The tone developed in Terrie’s personal statement is one of disappointment and regret, further drawing sympathetic feelings from audience viewers. The regretful tone is in agreement with the advertisement, and can be seen through Terrie’s blank facial expression and glossed eyes as she holds a picture frame containing a current photo of herself with her arms wrapped around a young boy. In reference to the ad’s context and word choice stating, “Loved ones,” it is safe to assume that the young boy present in the photograph is her grandson. His young age indicates the understanding that the only voice her grandson knows for her, is the one spoken through an artificial voice box. The consequences resulting from Terrie’s excessive tobacco use affected more lives than just her own, and broke close connections with the people she loved most. Incorporating family and love into the ad is a major example of the ad’s pathos and evokes a sense of guilt and selfishness in current smokers as they realize their actions are not just impacting their individual lives. Terrie’s advertisement successfully argues the dangers of tobacco use and the negative long-term health effects, and utilizes the rhetorical appeal to pathos as one way of persuading current smokers to quit using tobacco products. Seeing how smoking could directly impact one’s family is the true way to motivate individuals to actually quit for good.

Another rhetorical technique put to use in the “Terrie’s Tip”
advertisement is the appeal to ethos, convincing the audience to believe that the advertisement contains reliable information that they can trust. Ethos is created through the identification of the ad sponsor’s logo, informing viewers that the Center for Disease Control and Prevention is the creator of “Terrie’s Tip.” The CDC is the leading federal agency for comprehensive tobacco prevention and control, specializing in educating the general public of smoking’s life threatening health effects. Terrie herself also contributes to the advertisement’s ethos, as she is a real victim to tobacco, suffering daily. Using someone with first-hand experience of tobacco’s negative effects provides additional credibility, and allows the audience to visually experience tobacco’s horrifying health effects through personal narration. Terrie seems sincere with good intentions, as she clearly teamed up with CDC to share her awful experience with smoking and persuade current tobacco users to quit before they end up in her shoes. The CDC’s Tips campaign utilizes the power of true stories as an effective persuasive technique. The simple yet engaging language draws in the audience and gives the ad an approachable tone that helps build trustworthiness. The tone created is appropriate in regards to context, as the ad strives to represent average people and utilizes a personal approach to let viewers know it can and will happen to anyone. The development of ethos within “Terrie’s Tip” advertisement helps convince viewers to avoid using tobacco products and provides necessary authority to create a successful argument that smoking causes serious health risks.

The final rhetorical strategy utilized throughout this advertisement is logos, the appeal to an audience’s intellectual side. “Terrie’s Tip” advertisement uses logos to present the audience with accurate facts of smoking’s negative health effects. Although the advertisement does not incorporate any specific numbers or charts, the information provided still embodies a logical appeal to audience viewers. For example, the bottom of the advertisement reads, “Smoking causes immediate damage to your body. For Terrie, it gave her throat cancer.” Logos is portrayed through the message that people smoking cigarettes will eventually undergo throat cancer or another major health issue. The advertisement effectively uses a legitimate appeal to reason; logically convincing the audience to either stop smoking, or never start smok-
fledge

...because smoking cigarettes comes with damaging consequences that will cause one to end up in the same shoes as Terrie. The ad does not include vast amounts of facts and statistics, but because the general public is already well aware of smoking’s brutal effects, it is not essential in persuading the audience.

Holding their vision of a tobacco free future, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found great success in devoting maximum effort towards achieving their overall mission, which is, “To develop, conduct, and support strategic efforts to protect the public’s health from the harmful effects of tobacco use” (“Office on Smoking and Health” par. 1). When all three appeals are used in conjunction, they serve as a powerful tool for persuasion. “Terrie’s Tip” advertisement from the Tips campaign utilizes the artistic appeals ethos, pathos, and logos to spread public awareness on tobacco’s negative health effects and successfully persuade current smokers to quit using tobacco products and non-smokers to stay away from them.
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Modern Rape Culture
By Ansley Herring

The term “rape culture” came to light in the 1970’s when a group of feminist activists defined it as how society has normalized sexual violence and resorted to blaming the female victim of sexual assault rather than the male perpetrator. It can include almost every aspect of modern life, but it is most commonly found in everyday fashion and entertainment, such as music, television and advertisements. Rape Culture is teaching women from an early age that their bodies are erotic objects and they are responsible for their own safety against sexual violence, which in turn is teaching young girls to not get raped, rather than teaching boys not to rape.

If rape culture is so awful, why do so many of us accept it? The answer is simply that it is an all too recurrent part of everyday life in the United States, but it is something we rarely tend to even notice. It can be compared to sitting in a classroom to learn, watching the things we watch on television, or what we consider necessities for living. We rarely wonder why we go to a room filled with chairs, a single black board, and professor, to learn among other students; we just do it. So when we adhere to dress codes in schools, feel uncomfortable when a woman breastfeeds in public, or watch a rape victim suffer interrogation during a trial, we do not even think to question it. We are conditioned as a society to believe that a woman’s body is so forbidden that we condemn those who attempt to show it, unless of course we want them to.

It is not that we are attracted to rape culture itself, but we are attracted to many of it’s attributes. The music we listen to, the shows and movies we watch, and even the advertisements we see while driving on the interstate can all be included in the composition of rape culture. If you live in the United States and listen to pop music there
is little doubt that you have heard Robin Thicke’s song *Blurred Lines*, which was released in 2013, and maybe you even sang along. Some of the lyrics state “I know you want it”, “That’s why I’m gon’ take a good girl”, and “I hate these blurred lines”, which suggests that he is not acknowledging a woman’s lack of consent and sees her as something that is his to take because of her dress and behavior, but many of us accept this or simply do not pay attention because it is catchy.

A common theory as to why rape culture is so prevalent in America is the popular idea that men are supposed to be the strong, dominant sex and women are supposed to be weaker and submissive. Popular Disney movies such as *Snow White, Hercules, Sleeping Beauty,* and *Tarzan* all include this in their story lines, which is in turn teaching the girls who watch them that they need to depend on men and that they are not strong enough to defend themselves on their own. The opposite is also true for boys because they are being taught that they always need to be the bravest and the strongest, so this reinforces the idea that if a woman is more accomplished or skillful than a man then he becomes less masculine in the eyes of our society. But despite this, people love these stories and they are some of the most popular, current movies in our country and have been for years. Diane Herman explains this in her article by stating “What is clear is that the rapist is not an exotic freak. Rather rape evolves out of a situation in which normal males feel a need to prove themselves to be “men” by displaying dominance over females” (Herman 49). Therefore this belief contributes to the idea that our society’s love for these kinds of gender roles is a major contribution to the rising amount of rapes and sexual violence in our society. This could correlate directly with rise of women’s rights and the increasing amount of women being found in the higher paying divisions of the work force.

Because of the effects of rape culture, dress codes for young girls in schools are especially strict. Sending a young girl home from class because she showed her shoulders or leg above the knee is absolutely unacceptable. Why should a woman have her education deprived from her because her presence makes a boy unable to focus properly? Why should she be forced to walk to class in 100 degree heat in long pants and a sleeved shirt to keep from distracting a boy? Our culture chooses to believe that men are not responsible for their thoughts and
are therefore also not responsible for the actions that result from them. These ideals likely arose when women lacked any rights and men held all the power in our society, and despite women’s advancements this misconception still remains prevalent. People attack feminism with the assertion that sexism no longer exists, but still allow more value to be placed on the education of males rather than females in schools across the country. Thus by doing this feeding into rape culture with the concept that women are culpable for the inappropriate feelings men have when in their company.

In the past years many men and women have taken a stand against rape culture. One such way they are doing this is through movements such as “Free the Nipple”, which is fighting to remove the stigma on women for showing their breasts in public. In other cultures across the world women walk topless and no one thinks twice, but our society only sees men being topless as appropriate when truly the only visible difference is fat content in one area of the body. Women are often verbally attacked and negatively judged by bystanders for breastfeeding their children in public places, even if their breasts and the baby’s head are fully covered. However, do to large feminist outcry and movements such as “Free the Nipple”, Idaho is currently the only state which has not taken action to remove the laws to prevent public breastfeeding, and only a few states such as Indiana, Tennessee, and Utah still have strict laws stating that a woman showing her bare breast in public is indecent.

The most predominate examples of how rape culture influences American society can be found in our judicial system. “Unlike the majority of felony crimes, sexual assault typically produces suspicion of the victim, rather than the alleged perpetrator” (Fitzgerald 4). This statement from Regan Fitzgerald’s thesis paper gives a brief overview of why feminists are so outraged with our judicial system. One of the most appalling components of modern rape culture deals with this subject because so many women are interrogated and even harassed when they decide to come forward about an incidence of rape. Common inquiries include “What were you wearing?”, “Did you flirt with him?”, “How much alcohol did you drink?”, and many more intrusive and degrading questions. Interrogations such as these can make
the victim and those involved feel as if she is responsible for another person's actions upon her, and therefore take some or all of the responsibility away from the perpetrator. This leads those who acknowledge the problem to ask questions such as the ones mentioned by Sharon Marcus, “Whose words count in rape and a rape trial? Whose “no” can even mean “no”? How do rape trials condone men’s misinterpretations of women’s words? How do rape trials consolidate men’s subjective account into objective “norms of truth” and deprive women’s accounts of cognitive value?” (Marcus 168).

One of the most recent incidences dealing with the mistreatment of women in the court system is the Stanford rape trial, which revolves around the case of Brock Turner and his short sentence of six months after being witnessed violently raping an unconscious woman behind a dumpster. The victim, who remains unnamed, continues to fight the court system by giving an insight into her perspective of the trial. Liam Stack summarized her report with the statement “In court, the victim had spoken out against the inequities of the legal process, arguing that the trial, the sentencing and the legal system’s approach to sexual assault, from the defense lawyer’s questions about what she wore that night to her attacker’s sentence, were irrevocably marred by male and class privilege” (Stack). The judge presiding over the case stated that a prison sentence would have a negative impact on Turner, who was a pre-Olympic swimmer at Stanford University, and he did not see him as a danger to society. This case has opened the eyes of many to the wrongdoings of those who seek to protect the perpetrators of rape, primarily white males, and voice for change.

There are many people who realize that there is a problem, but there are also many more people who remain blind to the social standards put on women. Our society punishes women simply because they are women every day. There will always be rape just like there will always be murder and theft. However, the situation for women will not change or get better unless we as a society change and begin to accept rape as the horrific crime that it is. A woman should feel safe in her own body and never made to feel like she is responsible for the odious actions of others. “Simply put, feminists want equality for everyone and that begins with physical safety.”(Maxwell).
Works Cited


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I stumble. How does a blind man see if there is no sound? Quiet. I was in a valley, a canyon carved between hills; where am I now? I hear no music. Scissors have been taken to the strings on the lyre of destiny. There is no music. Was there music? My mind rewinds, scrolling through the tracks. There are none. Were there? The violins, the cellos, the bass, they are gargled. Corrupted. Majesty rubbed in the dirt, still sold at full price.

Guitars, horns, electric keyboards! I shield my ears. The music returns. Once a Valkyrie, now a gorgon. Are these the same tunes? Familiarity is fleeting, yet present.

It’s too loud; I still can’t see. Am I still in the valley? Was it a valley, or a tunnel? A cave? No, caves are closed, tunnels have openings. But how was I to know if there was an opening? I am blind, I see no light.

The music comes from all sides; I can’t place the origin. It could be flowing from both mouths of the tunnel, but if this is a cave, it could be echoing off the back wall, being truly born from behind. I spin. I am lost.

Reality strikes my brain. The music before, the sweet melodies of guidance, honest and pure, could have carried the same lie. What if they, in their cherubic beauty and innocence, had bounced off the throat of the cave as well, fooling me? Could they have been so sinister? Would that make the new music, blaring and crude, the honest tune? This music’s deafening volume tears at my ears, but does it do this out of benevolence rather than torture to reveal that the tunnel is
closed, or that there never was one? I slip. My face slams against the ground.

Touch.

That is my guide. Individual, personal. Touch is chained to me, unable to converse with any other. Unbiased, immediately honest; it reports to me on demand. My true guide has been discovered, incorruptible, for it is within me. It is me.

I bring myself to my knees, supporting myself with my hand against the wall. Cool stone licks my palm. It’s wet. This is no valley or canyon; it has to be a tunnel or cave. I shuffle forward, feeling with my feet, leaning against the rock. I believe this is the direction I was going, no other is welcome nor welcoming.

Touch does not have the range of sound, I will not know if this path is open until I reach the end, but I will know for touch cannot lie. All I can do now is feel the way and ignore the music and hope that, if this is a cave, I can make it back to the mouth in time to search for another path.
The Social Construction of a Good Woman

Winner of the First-Year Writing Award for Analysis

By Erin Maurer

There’s no such thing as a good woman, only the idea of a good woman. Even that idea is an unachievable, self-contradictory, and historically male-made standard that girls spend their lives tiptoeing around. It invades practically every aspect of our lives from the ways we dress to the way we think. Looking into the spread of these ideas, you can see the saturation into everyday actions. No matter how non-conformist you think yourself to be, this affects you. All ages and genders are affected by the fear of gender deviance. There are physical and hormonal differences between the genders on average, but culture also influences artificial differences and expectations that are misrepresented as physical that can be harmful.

The clearest way to see the problem is when someone tells you what to do. It can be as subtle as the tone people use, as explained in “The Power of Talk” by Deborah Tannen, or as direct as my one-sided nemesis Camille Paglia when she tells women how they should act. A prime example is in Paglia’s essay “It’s a Man’s World and it Always Will Be.” Though even the title made me cringe, in reading it I found such lovely nuggets as, “Without strong men as role models to either embrace of (for dissident lesbians) to resist, women will never attain a centered and profound sense of themselves as women.” Telling girls that they cannot live without men and that only they can do the harder jobs reinforces stereotypes. It tells girls they can’t do these things and if they do not try then they never will. In another one of her papers, “A Feminist Defense of Masculine Virtues,” she makes equally cringe-worthy statements such as, “If civilization had been left in female hands we would still be living in grass huts.” These messages are everywhere, telling us that girls cannot take charge or that without men
everything would collapse and be in ruins. Even though we have seen multiple rulers through history such as Cleopatra, Queen Elizabeth and so on that did not in fact cause the end of humanity.

Once ideas have been put into place, they start to influence the rest of how we interact in society. One of the best examples comes from the reading “The Power of Talk” by Deborah Tannen. It illustrates how ideas in society can influence how we act in ways that we ourselves don’t even notice. In particular, Tannen focuses on the way girls are taught to be nice and wait their turn to speak. While this would not seem a big deal at first, it means that a lot of girls are seen as not having confidence. If you ask someone to mimic a girly voice then you often get high pitched, quieter and ending all of the sentences like it is a question. One reason is that, “language also negotiates relationships.” For example It can be as obvious as the person telling everyone else to be quiet before they talk holds power. At times a second pause between sentences can make a huge difference. While men tend to fill every second with words girls leave pauses to think. This often results in girls being talked over or not heard during conversations. These small social clues add up to form the often incorrect idea that girls are subordinate.

This mirrors the idea that men have to be dominant and emotionless all of the time. Men’s relationships and emotional levels was studied in “Men as Cultural Ideals: How Culture Shapes Gender Stereotypes” By interviewing men and getting them to rank their sociability and ambitiousness on a seven point scale, the Harvard Business team compared the scores of American men to those of East Asians and bicultural men. They found that these ideas were rooted far more in culture than in biology. Men in non-American cultures put far more value into friendships on average, and their connections are deeper. A hypothesis for this occurrence is that, “Men are seen as embodying those traits that are most culturally valued”. The reason that men are so cut off from their emotions is not that testosterone or testicles change them but that these behaviors are what we teach them.

The struggle to be seen as masculine can be extremely harmful especially in the case of those with depression. “College men’s Depression-Related Help-Seeking: A Gender Analysis,” discusses how this
pressure to be emotionless means that a lot of boys with depression never seek help or tell anyone about their problems. The stereotype of being a good woman includes making up for the lack of emotion in men by being seen as overly emotional. There’s little benefit to the enforcement of these gender role stereotypes, and so many people are hurt by them.

These sentiments are echoed in the realm of intimacy, where conflicting and often damaging messages are commonplace. Especially in the sexual realm, girls have been pinned with more labels than you can count. From whore to prude, no matter what you do there is a derogatory term. The paper “Promiscuities: the Secret Struggle Toward Womanhood,” addresses the issue of “labels that are put on woman, rather than woman choosing labels for themselves. “Men were deciding for us if we are women. Heck: teenage boys were deciding for us if we were women.” Stories are told time and time again portraying women as, “dependent, ornamental objects whose primary functions are to look good, please men, and stay quietly on the periphery of life.”

Gender roles are constantly holding us back in our daily lives. While men are seen as lacking emotions, girls are often seen as lacking logical reasoning. Even with all of the scientific evidence that the makeup of a gender is based in social experience, many are lured into the trap of thinking that it is essential to the physical make up. In fact, the president of Harvard, Lawrence H. Summers, suggested that “one factor in women’s lagging progress in science and mathematics might be innate differences between the sexes.” With the same attitude that allowed white pioneers to think of other races as inferior to justify enslaving them, many still believe that this is just the way girls were born. “Gray Matter and Sexes: A Gray Area Scientifically” quotes multiple esteemed members of the science community making these closed-minded statements, including Virginia Valian (a psychology professor at Hunter College), Gustave Le Bon (French scientist), Dr. Summers, and other scientists.

One explanation for these discrepancies is the focus of girls on perfection a. The Ted Talk, “Teach Girls Bravery, Not Perfection,” by Reshma Saujani, examines how the pressure of being perfect often
stops girls from even trying. She says, “The difference is in how boys and girls approach a challenge.” While our girls are taught to avoid risk and play it safe to avoid even the chance of failure are boys are taught to take it head on. Many of the fields that are extremely male centric are hard to break into because they involve a lot of failure and re-working. On example referenced was coding in that to make a code you must fail at it before you can remake it.

Another example of artificial gendered stereotypes can be found in domestic work. Julia T. Wood points out that though many ads and other media that “Each season new ads for cooking and cleaning supplies include characters of men as incompetent buffoons, who are klutzes in the kitchen and no better at taking care of children.” This not only discourages them from doing the household chores but supplies them with an easy excuse if they are not inclined to do the work. To this day Beth A. Latshaw cites that “married mothers still complete nearly twice as much household labor as fathers”. This hurts everyone included because it means that especially working mothers have to spend their time on unpaid labor. While many boys are not even taught how to do the chores and those who put the effort into it are seen as less masculine.

There are some counterbalances in place that are changing dynamics. This idea is explored in “The End of Men.” the author explores how women are gaining quickly in the workplace. Women in the workforce, “now hold a majority of the nation’s jobs.” One of the factors is that many of the physical labor jobs usually given to men, such as construction or manufacturing jobs, have been taken over by computers or machines which do not require as as many people with as much physical strength to operate. The more automated we get, the more we value things like teamwork and compassion in the workplace. These are skills that tend to be more highly trained in girls. While girls are still less likely to get higher paying or management level jobs, they have definitely made huge leaps in the job market.

As we challenge the ideas of femininity the rules of femininity also change; The ideas are swatted back and forth like a game of ping pong. One of the biggest examples is the long standing debate on
the morality of prostitution and sex workers. On the one hand it goes against traditional femininity to seek multiple sexual partners, yet we still expect boys to have multiple conquests leaving a lack of available female partners that was often filled by prostitutes. While prostitutes are shamed, the “Johns” purchasing their services often have little to no social backlash. In Amanda Castleman’s book Madonnas and Whores, she talks about, “prostitution being the oldest profession.” yet so often we mock them calling their make up crude and saying that don’t have enough self-respect. Many sex workers have plenty of self respect just a little more cash to spend.

This all links back to the idea that girls must be pure and modest. In “Modesty: I Don’t Think it Means What You Think it Means,” Rachel Held Evans elaborates on how, “Women today are bombarded with mixed messages.” On the one hand it is all about sex and looking sexy and feeling sexy, while on the other it is sinful and shameful to show any skin or make men think of you in that way. society does it to little girls by the time from when we first find out their gender much like “ the tear stained faces of little girls turned away from swimming pools because their bathing suits had two pieces.” The sexualization of little girls is so commonplace we can send them home for showing their shoulders. We tell them to dress in certain ways so that others will not look at them the wrong way. Yet “Jesus placed the responsibility for lust on the person doing the lusting.” It is easy to shift the blame onto the victimised group as we have seen in so many examples from race to sexuality. With gender in particular we even have girls putting other girls down, seeing them as competition, and giving them a bad name if they do not act within the protocol. There are more laws about what women are allowed to wear then there are on guns. The real enemy in this fight is the system of rules and policies that are keeping us down in the first place.

There have been many moves to desexualize the body. In the book “Vamps and Tramps” Camille Paglia said, “There is nothing degrading in the display of any part of the human body.” The only shame that comes from it is put on these women by society. The paper, “The Social and Legal Arguments for Allowing Women to Go Topless in
Public" also addresses this topic. It is perfectly accepted for men to strut around with no shirt on but if a girl were to do the same she could be arrested for public indecency, disorderly conduct, or even a sexual offence if there are children around. While it is fine for toddlers to drink milk from their mothers, god forbid they see another woman’s chest. “In over 200,000 annual occurrences of sexual assault, 9 out of 10 victims being women, both sides understandably feel that the sexualization of female body is a high stakes issue.” There are people being hurt by this. We have the numbers. and yet day and day again we do nothing to change it. If we want to make a difference in “the normalization of female bodies” could we lose the idea that girls bodies are only to be sexulized? Then we can move past this part of history.

In a clear example of the self-contradictory nature of imposed gender “rules,” even when girls cover themselves fully they are still called names like prude or bitch. They are similarly derided when they do not “put out” sexually. Not all of the rules are protecting others’ sinless eyes. In France there was a law made banning girls from covering too much of their body. As explained in “The History Behind Cannes Banning the Burkini,” there was a law making it illegal to wear a bathing suit that covered all of your body. The law claimed that such outfits were, “linked to terrorism,” and a, “symbol of Islamic extremism”. These are blatantly islamophobic comments that repress women of these religions. There are many example of if there places that have banned headscarves in school for a while now yet there has been little to no public outcry. Girls have had law after law passed to restrain them from acting anywhere outside of the gender norms.

Even if they can manage the juggling act of holding up to expectations, it is still a very dangerous world for the average woman. Like Julia Wood said in “Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on the View of Gender,” the themes of media often,“normalize violence against women.”

Another example of unbalanced gender roles is the concept of rape culture - the ways in which society blames victims of sexual assault and normalizes male sexual violence. Much like the unequal blame in prostitution, many are quick to blame the victim. Questions like, “what
were you wearing?” and, “had you been drinking,” are thrown around so often it can be easy to forget how harmful they can be to those that have experienced trauma. The number one reason girls do not report incidents of rape is shame. While it can be comforting to believe in the just world hypothesis and that victims must have deserved the attack in some way, it only exacerbates the problem. As Zerlina Maxwell writes, “97% of rapists never spent a day in jail”. Women don’t report, they don’t get help, and the criminals are free to do it again if they please. You can see examples of victims being marginalized everywhere, as in the article “The Campus Rape Myth” which talks about victims’ experiences. The author constantly casts doubt about them with such wordings as, “self proclaimed rape survivors,” “rape per se,” and even “alleged assailants.” The article goes on to say that many girls who say they have been raped are just exaggerating and only clear cut examples of strangers with guns are “real rape.” It was irresponsible for the City Journal to publish this defense of rape culture.

If there’s one thing that society loves to do its shame girls for not upholding their beauty standards. One of the more prominent double standard taboos is about body hair. While everyone has hair, girls are expected to take hours out of their lives to remove any trace of it. In “Why are We Grossed Out by Armpit Hair,” The author talks about how when hair was left to grow, “boyfriends were furious and mother’s disapproving.” There seemed to be a lot of anger about a few unkempt hair follicles. In truth, they are most likely not even mad about the hair itself. It is the lack of social conformity that, consciously or not, they are grossed out by. People may say that it is about being healthy but we live in a time when we do not have to worry about parasites or insects hiding away in hair. The only reason that the fad of shaving body hair started was marketers wanted to sell more razors. Many think they are justifying their sexist biases with “facts,” however upon closer inspection many of their logical fallacy comes to the surface.

These ideas are not even limited to the adult women either; even small children are under the influence of the gender forms. In the paper “NO WAY MY BOYS ARE GOING TO BE LIKE THAT! Parents’ responses to the Children’s Gender Nonconformity,” it explains
that, “children themselves become active participants in this gender process,” and this usually happens, “before the age of two.” Many of our ideas of gender are conceptualized around how our parents treat the topics. Children are excellent mimics, and will often follow whatever their role models value. This is especially clear in the face of homophobia, since the main fear parents voice when their children do not conform to their idea of gender is that they might have a gay child. These studies show that part of the stereotype of being a “good woman” is not only performing your assigned gender from birth but also to pass down proper gender ideas to your children.

If raising children to perform their gender is potentially limiting, even more confusion is thrown into the mix when parents are forced to see the gray space of gender in their child’s physical body. While in most cases the XX chromosome is girl and XY is boy, nothing in nature is that black and white, and there are many children (about as many as born with red hair) that do not fall into such easily defined groups. In an excerpt from Woman - An Intimate Geography, the authors tackle the idea of how intersex children are raised. The book tells the story of a girl with AIS (Androgen insensitivity syndrome - when a person who is genetically male but with the physical traits of a female). She was not even told of her condition until she did not experience menses and realized that she was different. The book talks about the struggle of finding a place to fit in within the already perilous realm of gender. This brings up the question of whether you even have to reside in a stereotypical female body to be a “good woman.” The title of woman is a concept that we have created, and if you want the title to apply to you, then by all means others should respect that as well. This goes for transgendered individuals and the entire spectrum of feminine individuals who want the title. It hurts no one for them to take on this title, and if it makes them feel themselves then they should use it.

The topic of such intersex individuals has been treated differently in different cultures. The paper “The Gender Blur” talks about how, in some cases, the idea of a physical gender can be even more obscured. In a group of Dominican Republic villages there is a birth difference where babies, “have the right chromosomes and genes to be
boys but; they just don’t grow a penis.” In some cases they can be raised as girls but when the penis grows they just throw out the dresses and start to raise the kid a boy. If these roles are so flexible in the Dominican republic then why do we act like they are essential to being human. Yet even in the same paper Debora Blum goes onto to state that girls and boys are different, saying that, “testosterone may create the difference,” keeping the focus away from the social aspect of gender. While it may seem simpler to take a gender-essentialism approach to the topic, the overwhelming data supports the idea that gender is largely constructed through interaction. Therefore to be a good woman you must interact with and react to people in the expected ways.

These issues have been with us since the idea of man and woman was made. We can go back in history of story after story from religious texts to folk tales about how girls were and should be treated. The document “Women’s Rights” talks about old traditions where it was customary to, “cut designs into women’s skin to promote fertility.” while this may seem gross and highly outdated at first glance, is it any different from the pain we put girls through as they try to maintain the state of being a “good woman?” So many problems have been caused by artificial gender expectations. To be a “good woman” by these rules, you have to put yourself through trial after trial so that a man can decide if you are good enough, and no matter how hard you work at it or how long you try, you can never be everything all at once. The only real way to be a good woman is to take a stand for yourself and decide that you are a good woman.

As the ideas on femininity change, we also fight back against the ideas we have seen in a lot of modern media and culture today. We can not just try to be “a good woman.” We must each define what a good woman is. In the end, if you are happy and you are a woman (who does not hurt others) then you are a good woman. There are so many people trying to sell you the idea that if you work just a little harder buy a few more products then you can get where you want to be. Once examined “how to be a good woman” is a different question to everyone that you ask. The only person that is allowed to decide if you are a good woman is yourself.
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Eleven Million and Counting

Winner of the First-Year Writing Award for Synthesis

By Ana Mora

What would happen if the United States deported 11 million people? Yes, undocumented immigrants are people. Average people that have jobs, families, and values they follow every single day. If these immigrants vanish from our country, would there be an economic crisis? Or possibly the United States would strive for a better and more sufficient working class for Americans to gain jobs, and maybe the deportation of free riders would benefit our economy overall. Presidential Candidate Donald Trump exercised in one of his speeches that the mass deportation will happen in an orderly and humane fashion. Immigrants essentially built the United States of America, but what are the lives of those who are undocumented really like?

Jose Antonio Vargas came out to the world as an undocumented immigrant after winning one of the highest honors in literature. Shocking everyone around him, he soon became an immigration activist and spoke freely about his journey to this country. Similarly, one of my friends father, arrived to the United States illegally at the age of fifteen. Mr. Alvaro Garcia is from Jalisco, Mexico, and lives in fear of being deported every day. The lives of these two men have been far from eventful and their struggle trying to get by with their families in America is harder than anyone can imagine. Even though Trump claimed deporting eleven million immigrants would help our country by eliminating the main cause of the America’s economic crisis, immigration should be an easier process because immigrants are contributing to the country by getting an education, paying taxes, and becoming
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a professional in what they do. They’re contributing in these ways, yet they struggle in fear on a day-to-day basis to lose everything they ever worked for like Alvaro Garcia and Jose Vargas.

This is not how anyone should live in the United States. As a human being, one chooses the path in which would benefit them rather than hurt their well being as well as their future. The reasoning for migrating to another country could vary by personal reasons, economic reasons, or simply just a chance to start again from scratch. Vargas wrote an article for The New Yorks Times Magazine in which he went into detail about his journey in the United States as an undocumented immigrant. “My mother wanted to give me a better life, so she sent me thousands of miles away to live with her parents in America” (Vargas) With the intent of searching for a better life, America is said to be the land of opportunities. Vargas expressed his feelings in a way where he didn’t know for sure why he came to the U.S. because of his young age. Similarly, Mr. Garcia also came to the United States in search for a better future. Mr. Garcia was only 14 years old whereas Vargas was 12. The level of awareness during this point in a young man’s life is at all kinds of extremities. In the interview with Mr. Garcia, he stated, “My mother didn’t want me to go” (Translated Interview). His tone was in a way resentful, yet hopeful. This huge decision can change someone’s life to measures that can get you killed.

The journey in itself is a dangerous one depending on the form of travel. Fortunately, Vargas arrived to the United States by plane, but with a false passport and other documents, could be the break of his attempt. Vargas was taken to the international airport unaware and unsure of why he was really leaving the country. Though this is a frightening thought in itself, he was tagging along a very risky and illegal act. “I was introduced to a man I’d never seen. They told me he was my uncle” (Vargas) this act that the man that Vargas mentioned is called federal alien smuggling or also known as a form of human trafficking for illegal immigrants. The act of bringing or help bring an undocumented immigrant over the country’s national borders is considered a federal crime and it is usually discussed in secret and with minimal extra information. Smuggling an adolescent like Vargas at the time,
can call for large amounts of money and time. This is very dangerous with the law. Similarly, Alvaro Garcia experienced the same amount of danger, if not more in his journey to America.

Garcia claims he traveled for miles and weeks devastated by hunger and thirst while worrying for his own safety when crossing the Mexican border (Garcia). His powerful will and desire to get to Arizona was what really got him through the endless cold and lonely nights of walking and the blazing desert sun that called for just a drop of water, just a little bit of hope. Once he got to Arizona, he came across others just like him and of all ages. This ultimately led to a factor regarding his age: He was only fourteen! “I had no choice but to lie about my age to get a simple job” (Translated Interview) Garcia worked cutting grass and washing cars for the little pay they offered him. Within time he became partners in a painting company with a friend of his named Carlos. Carlos led Garcia to his future: starting his own painting company. Having the luxury of obtaining a personal company led to Garcia getting his license, which is a similar issue to that of Vargas. One cannot acquire a license with a false social security card. Fortunately to Garcia’s knowledge, the state of California does not ask for social security card. This is another unfortunate event that he must go through because he does not have the proper papers. Every time his license expires, he has to go back to California, with only increases the possibility of getting caught. With a recent event of Mr. Garcia getting pulled over by the police, lots of questions rise as to why he owns a certain amount of cars under his California license. Vanesa recently stated that the family decided to put all of the cars under her name to avoid any other conflicts since she is an American citizen. It isn’t the average normal thing to do for a typical college freshman. With one more slip up like the simple act of getting pulled over, both of her parents may get deported with this evidence. “You learn to drive every day thinking you might not come back,” (Gibson) this is one of the few fears undocumented immigrants face everyday.

The language barrier with new immigrants is an issue that could make someone or break someone. For Vargas, he claimed that he discovered a passion for the language, hinting at his future carrier, he
learned English fairly quickly. The influence also relied greatly on his education, for he also entered the sixth grade almost immediately. On the other hand, Mr. Garcia did not have family that provided food and shelter as well as education, like Vargas’ grandparents. While Vargas was winning English spelling bees, Mr. Garcia was working the fields as a young boy, to get enough money to survive. (Translated Interview) At the young ages of twelve and fourteen, both of these young boys had the potential to learn English, but the circumstances they were in directed them in different directions. Personally, learning English in my immigrant story, I was taught in an ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) class, which slowed the learning process until I was able to make out enough English to learn in a regular class. According to research, it is said that English is one of the hardest languages to learn, but children tend to pick up the English trend a lot faster than adults. (Oxford Academy) Which explains why Vargas enjoyed learning the language, and I learned it fairly quickly.

Life in the United States as an immigrant in general is extremely challenging. It is a welcoming journey that could lead to many opportunities. I am an immigrant myself, and the quest my family and I have gone through really shows the struggle within starting new. I came to the United States with my mother on a tourist visa. I was only five years old but I will never forget the problems I faced as a young girl. I remember eating Pizza Hut on the floor because we didn’t quite have a table yet, and drinking out of plastic cups because we didn’t own glass. After a couple of years going to school, I began to see the change in my mother’s income. She worked with children at a daycare, and soon enough I got an actual lunch box like my friends at school instead of using a plastic bag. I remember the humility I felt when career day came around and see so many children’s parents were doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, even teachers while my mom took care of my classmate’s siblings. I didn’t recognize back then, but my mother wouldn’t eat so she can afford my school supplies.

With immigrant parents sacrificing so much for their child to grow up with endless opportunities, comes several successful stories. I got through grade school. Graduated top 25 percent in my high
school, and I am the first in my family to go to college in the golden and glorious United States of America. I became a naturalized citizen under my mother’s claim in February of 2014. The feeling of becoming an American citizen and being able to hold the same rights as anyone else in this country is completely and utterly indescribable.

Vargas was drenched in his outstanding aspiration to learn more than the average student led him to doors of opportunities bigger than he could imagine. With the help of teachers and even the principal himself, he managed to gain a scholarship that paid his tuition and other fees for San Francisco State University (Vargas). With the blessing of an opportunity for a college education, his choices still varied with his situation and lack of papers. Throughout several internships and even a landing a writers position in The Huffington Post, Vargas said, “I learned that no amount of professional success would solve my problem or ease the sense of loss and displacement I felt.” (Vargas). This sense of loss and displacement only leaned him towards coming out to everyone as an undocumented person. After dodging opportunities like business trips, he said that he was done running, finished hiding. This is when he decided to tell his story to the world, and the world seemed to sit still and listen.

On the other hand, the success of Mr. Garcia within his painting company and nurturing his four children did in fact give him the American dream. With his giving job, Mr. Garcia is more than happy to pay his taxes. “Anything it takes to do my part as if I was a true American Citizen” (Translated Interview)

Diane Guerrero is a widely known actress for her phenomenal role in the Netflix series “Orange is the New Black”. In an interview with The Huffington Post, she talked about her personal story of her parents being deported back to Columbia. In a very emotional transition towards a brighter discussion she stated, “Being the daughter of immigrants is a very American story” (Huffington Post). We tend to focus strongly on those who are undocumented, and leave out the families that luckily, were born American citizens and have all the right to live in the United States.

Vanesa Garcia is the daughter of Alvaro Garcia, born in the
United States and currently going to Georgia Southern University. Vanesa said, “I am very scared to come home one day and both of my parents would be gone.” (Personal Interview) Gone. That word is the pure substance of fear. The disappearing love of her parents and her beloved father would leave her and her two younger American born siblings with a broken family. I asked Vanesa what it was like to be the first American born in a family of undocumented immigrants. Her response consisted of a story that really pierced my heart. Since her father struggled with English his entire life, Vanesa began translating English to Spanish as soon as she learned the language at the age of nine. Imagine a nine year old translating and knowing what bills, the IRS, and taxes were before anyone else in their class. Instead of having the real childhood worrying about playing with dolls, having play dates and what’s new on kids channels, Vanesa was making proposals, invoices and talking to contractors in her fathers paint company. Translating has taken over her life in order to help her father, but even with this favor, Vanesa is always true to her heart and continues to help her father over the phone freely in her time in college. Vanesa says something that is very true to several others with undocumented families, “this is real life. This happens and it is so real to us, but people think its still a joke.” (Personal Interview) Unfortunately hidden behind the average immigrant family, these kinds of situations still exist in the United States.

With Mr. Donald Trump’s attention grabbing idea of deporting 11 million undocumented immigrants commenced a wide state of worry for those who could be affected. Not only the undocumented people themselves, but their remaining families, friends, jobs. Paying for such an immense deportation can lead to billions over the debt the United States already has. A common American citizen in America without Migrants claimed, “I don’t think the taxpayers here want to pay for that.” (Gibson, Article) this is also a factor that could make such an act economically impossible.

“If Trump sends everybody back to Mexico, who’s going to work the jobs?” (Gibson, Article) certain jobs like doing drywall, building the house, landscaping, nannies, and house cleaning services are skillful jobs and will always need people to do the work. With the
glory of Vargas achievements, his undocumented name wasn’t even suspected until he came out in his article. His various achievements in literature made him who he was, and that is the amount of effort that glowed through his work in this country. Mr. Garcia after working under someone now owns his own painting company and still being helped by his daughters in translating orders. Though the language barrier is still a common factor within immigrants, the desire to work and the honor of working in the United States mean everything to Mr. Garcia (Personal Interview).

There is a very interesting argument made in America without Migrants article that gets the input of a woman on working jobs. She said that people make her mad, especially those who are around 22 years of age, and homeless. Dulce, a Mexican immigrant said she came into this country without speaking English, no driver’s license and she could still find work. But in the streets of New York City, you can see people with all the benefits she missed, but still beg on the street for money instead of finding a job (Gibson). “If all the undocumented workers in New York were deported? Most agriculture would just shut down” wisely said by Maggie Gray (Gibson). The determination to rise over more than the common misconception of undocumented immigrants in America is the overall foundation of work.

The American dream holds sufficiently to its name, a dream. A delusion that someone can reach the ultimate happiness to that we see on television, or read in stories. It is a hallucination of an ideal family, with an ideal house, in an ideal American neighborhood, living in an ideal American society both civilized and abundant. Rafael Cruz said, “Only in America can someone start with nothing and achieve the American Dream. That’s the greatness of this country.” (Cruz) As a country known for the richness of opportunity, it screams and calls to immigrants for a chance of greatness. For this is what America should be knowledgeable of, the purity and intentions of those who desire to be here legally. Sending eleven million people and counting would be unforgivable to the people, the country, and society.
Works Cited


Reflective Letter

November 21, 2016
Dear Professor Williams:

The purpose for this letter is to inform the reader of the following essay that exhibits the lives of undocumented immigrants in the United States. These are the lives of roughly eleven million inhabitants in America and some of their quests living and thriving in our society.

I began my essay by finding sources relevant to my topic and also ones that were extremely intriguing to the audience to engage them in my theme. I was really passionate about this specific topic, therefore I had a lot to say, and even a lot I didn’t get to say. Most of the examples stated within my sources are less of scientific facts, and more of real life situations, which make this essay so relevant to real people.

The main issue I came across in the writing process of this paper is the organization of my ideas. The flow of my topic is smooth, but I had more trouble towards the end.

I have been dying to write about immigration since the past election results because during this time is when most people need to be knowledgeable about the realities of being an immigrant. I felt an overpowering and overwhelming pull to write about this topic, which would explain the length of this essay. The flexibility of this paper really gave me the opportunity to express not only my views but also the real lives of eleven million people in our country. It has been an honor to write about this topic as an immigrant myself and I hope to further inform others about an immigrant’s journey, whether documented or undocumented.

Sincerely,
Ana
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To the black kid that sits in the front row,
By Liyah Terrell

I see you. Though your presence may not be recognized by those sitting around you, I see a reflection of what every parent wishes their child to be. But because you’re black, you’re just another ink spill on paper, another fly on the wall—something that can be “wiped away” oh so effortlessly, going barely noticed, and leaving only the white canvas that was originally created. Your relentless endeavors to keep striving for success says so much about your character, and I am here to remind you that your worth is so much more than everyone else’s opinion of you.

You—the black kid that sits on the front row. You’ve been excelling in all of your subjects, making the highest grades on class assignments, and have incredibly high test scores. It seems as though you’d be the perfect candidate for a gifted program, but of course, you’re black. It isn’t exactly that simple for you. The white kids that sit all around you though, that are also on the front row, and have just as high test scores as you, have recently been invited to a high achieving program that displays their hard work and exceptional intelligence. You sit wondering if your invitation is going to come too this time. Even the white kids know just how clever you are. Apparently that don’t realize the odds of you getting assigned to such programs are 66% lower for black students (Wong). And that white students are twice as likely as an equally high achieving black student to get assigned to a gifted program (Wong).

You sit so attentively at your desk, focused on what’s on the board, taking notes, making sure you don’t miss a beat. What is it that your teacher can’t possibly see? Please help me understand this reality.
that does not at all seem idealistic to me.

You raised your hand one day in class, but your teacher refused to call on you. She called on the other white students, suggesting to me that your race affected her interests. And let’s not forget about the stereotype threats. Of course college is a big deal to you, and there’s no doubt that you’re getting in. But on your visit to one of your favorite schools, you talked to some black students who felt isolated and pressured to perform well academically. When you asked them why, they explained the racist assumptions amongst their white peers. Saying that black students didn’t get into this school through their own merit, which also gave them the pressure to prove that they “deserved” admission (Quinlan). I would have thought that by now, black people wouldn’t still be fighting for the right prove themselves or better yet for the right to exist, but who’s to say otherwise.

Don’t think you’re alone though. There are lots of hard working black students just like you who stands out in academic excellence that hardly gets recognized for it. There are also students who just face the hard reality of being a black kid in school, whether they excel in a particular class or subject or not. Then of course there are the police officers, metal detectors, and zero tolerance policy that makes school seems more like prison than an education center.

Crystal Paul, a black student who attended public and private schools, made it very straightforward in one of her stories just how surreal white teachers often treat their black students (Paul). Hear me clearly. Paul was given a failing grade on an essay about graffiti that as her teacher explained, “Graffiti isn’t art”. There’s also the time her white principal refused to sign a recommendation letter that she needed for an application to get into a private school. And when she finally got into private school one of her white teachers showed photos of apes and compared them to African American women. It’s sad to say this is harsh reality that we have come too, but people need to understand just how badly this affects the African American community.

So congratulations teachers, you have done yourself well with this one. You are definitely making someone’s school experience a living hell. But needless to say, not all white teachers treat their students like this. There are some genuine teachers who really care and have a
lot of respect for their students and are willing to do anything to help a child succeed and be the best possible version of themselves.

To the black kid that sits on the front row. I would also like to say congratulations to you. Your ability to persevere through all the negativity that surrounds your everyday life has caused me to speak out against the racial injustice that exists in the classroom that has yet to be fixed. You know exactly your potential. You know your strengths and your weaknesses. You are a powerful human being bound by passion, ready to achieve greatness.

I can’t help but to thank those who have come before you—the Barack Obamas, the Oprah Winfreys, and the Ben Carsons of the world who are defying the odds of being a black person in this country. Like you, they inspire others to achieve their best and serve as role models for people to know that the dream they’re holding on to…it’s possible.

As I conclude this letter, you should know one thing. I am also in your class too. I am the black kid that sits on the back row. Always watching, always analyzing your studious ways. You have never noticed me because you are so focused on what’s going on in class. I am trying to make my way up to the front row like you. I am not yet as courageous as you are, but I know that one day, my time will come. I have no doubt in my mind, that I will be a successful black woman. My will to succeed in life only pushes me to be work harder every day. You have truly been an inspiration. Whether you, your teacher, or anyone else in this world may see it, you are making a difference in my life. You—the black kid that sits on the front row. I see you.

Sincerely,

Liyah Terrell
References


Reflective Letter

To my English professor with the cool pink hair,

Hopefully you haven’t changed your hair color buy now to a blue or green or orange, otherwise my attempt to persuade you on this reflective letter about the effectiveness of my persuasion would be a complete fail. This obviously goes without saying—I absolutely love pink. Pink shirts, pink shoes, pink pants…I’m even wearing pink socks right now. Did I mention you have cool pink hair? You see, the art of persuasion is a unique argument that utilizes sound reasoning and logic to convey a convincing message. According to the Business Dictionary, persuasion is the process aimed at changing a person’s (or a group’s) attitude or behavior toward some event, idea, object, or other person(s), by using written or spoken words to convey information, feelings, or reasoning, or a combination of them (Business Dictionary). My main goal in writing my open letter was to let students of color know that I can hear their loud screams of silence from their frustration. And that I can see their passion and effort and hard work that goes into getting and maintaining good grades.

African American students, the primary audience for my open letter, are fighting for the right be noticed in our stereotypical, wicked world. Since my blog topic and stories all discuss the injustice, racial stereotyping, and struggle of being a black kid in the school systems, there’s no doubt that choosing a primary audience like African American students would again be the most suitable for this open letter. Only this time I wanted to point out specifically high achieving African Americans who hardly ever gets recognized for their success. I also wanted to make it known just how personal this affects me.

When it came down to sharing my open letter, this was perhaps the most difficult process. The problem is, I don’t have any social media. No Facebook, no Twitter, no Snapchat—just a phone filled with lots of telephone numbers. My mission was to contact as many people willing to read this open letter. I gained a lot of confidence during our fish bowl discussion when my peers seemed a bit
wowed by its content. Then of course you also showed your interest which was to me the icing on the cake. As of now I currently have seven comments. Not a lot to say the least, but a good step in the right direction. Fortunately for me though, my open letter was a great success. I received all positive comments from individuals who were intrigued and moved by my letter in which they all thanked me for speaking out on this issue. Perhaps this letter was an eye opener for those who were blinded by the unbelievable truth that goes on every day in a Black student’s life. Hopefully it gained enough attention for the people who read this letter to pass on the message so we can put an end to this unfairness. However, it would be nice to hear from people of the caucasian race just so I could see how effective or ineffective my letter was to them, being that it discusses the racial gap between black and white students.

One of the principal rhetoric tools I used in my open letter was belief. Appealing to someone’s beliefs can help form a direct link to the modification of their emotions and can therefore impact and affect an audience’s pathos. According to Jay Heinrichs’s, Thank You For Arguing, “to stir an emotion, use what your audience has experienced and what it expects to happen” (Heinrichs 94). It seems almost ironic that experience and expectations are what these high achieving African American students has suffered from and what they hope to happen as a result of it. Black students believe in their capabilities. They believe in their dreams, their desires, their faith, and themselves. But with the numerous accounts of racial stereotyping and negativity that exists in the classroom, sometimes they lose this confidence. It’s about time that these students start having some memorable experiences that they are glad to look back on and not vice versa.

The story about Crystal Paul and her encounters both in public and private schools was a direct attempt in which I wanted my audience to be in the shoes of. Heinrichs describes a well told narrative as one that “gives the audience a virtual experience—especially if it calls on their own past experiences” (Heinrichs 95). Experience! Experience! Experience! It seems to be a central persuasive tool amongst these rhetoric devices. But if experience is the best teacher, then what
do you call it when it’s not? No one wants to experience what someone like Crystal went through. It not only hurts your feelings, but can have a lasting effect on the way an individual looks upon their own self. I placed this story in my letter not to show that white teachers in particularly are the direct correlation to an African American student’s success, but to raise awareness that the American American race is not worthy enough for some teachers out there.

The title of my open letter is packed with persuasion in those three tiny words as it sends a momentous and meaningful message that sparks a light in those serving in the position of the “black kid that sits on the front row.” I can almost bet you that at the beginning or end of this letter, someone was smiling knowing that I can see all of the hard work they’ve put in, but most importantly that they have a sense of relief and comfort that someone strongly believes in them. “In order to achieve comfort,” says Heinrichs, “keep things simple, empower your audience, and try to get it to smile” (Heinrichs 103). I believe this was an effective tool when it came to reaching my audience’s emotions because they were happy to know that I am fighting for them. Not just sometimes, but all the time.

Deciding on what specific facts to include in my letter took a while because I wanted to make sure I chose facts that stood out. The first were statistics that compared equally high achieving black students with white students in gifted programs. In an article published by The Atlantic, these statistics showed that the likelihood of black students getting in such programs were 66% lower, where as white students were twice as likely to get assigned to these programs (Wong). This imbalance spoke out very loudly when I first came across it and clarified a lot of questions that I was unsure about. I believe that these statistics took people by surprise with their high results and made an impact on black students knowing why they don’t ever get assigned to gifted programs despite a high performance in the classroom.

Crystal Paul’s remarkable story about her experiences in both public and private schools was perhaps what summarized it all. Her encounters of being an African American student in predominately
all white schools with white teachers showed just how horribly black students get treated (Paul). When Paul pointed out how her teacher compared apes to African American women, I personally got very offended because I fit that description. It sounds almost ridiculous to even argue that statement, but of course this is what black students have to face. As I concluded my letter, I wanted to make a lasting affect on all the “black students that sit on the front row”. I wanted to make them realize that they are role models in my life and individuals who I and lots of other people look up to. These students inspire me to achieve my greatest potentials and give me hope that something great is coming my way. The three words, I see you, serves as a validation that everything they’ve gone through is going to be ok.

Sincerely,

Liyah Terrell
Contributors

Samuel Baraban comes from Suwanee, Georgia, and is currently a sophomore at Georgia Southern. After working various live performance events at North Gwinnett High School, Samuel came to GSU to pursue working in audio production. Currently, Samuel works with GSU Football’s GATA Lifestyle to help capture the success of the Eagles and the feeling of being in Paulson Stadium every Saturday.

John Bard came to Georgia Southern because he believed that’s where he was going to find himself. His life has been a journey of trying to figure out what to do and who to be with and GSU gave him that place. John loves sports, people, and is devoted in performing any task that is set before him to the best of his ability.

Marnus Coetzee was born in South Africa, and now lives in Atlanta, GA with his wife, two kids, and their dog. He has a wide range of hobbies, including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, hiking, video games, and taking naps at 6 p.m. when it’s time to feed his kids their dinner.

Gabrielle—or Ella, depending on who you ask—Darr is a first year Accounting student who grew up in Suwanee, Georgia, and she came to Georgia Southern to try something new. She enjoys anime, books, comics, and creative writing, and her favorite subjects are history, literature, and language. In high school, she was part of a three man team that produced two award winning student films, and she is a member of a small student lead creative group called Manticore Collaborative.
Megan Farmer is a sophomore transfer student from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, majoring in Business Management. She’s a spontaneous, old soul with an affinity for words, travel, romance and adventure. She dreams of becoming a successful screenplay writer and owning a holistic medicine spa and retreat.

Destiny Geddis is an 18-year-old resident of the small town of Brooklet. Her interest in writing is deeply rooted in a childhood spent devouring fantasy and mystery books. She’s involved in a small book reviewing team that’s currently going through a rebranding, but gained a small amount of attention for their panel at the mystery writing convention, Bouchercon. When not writing, she usually attempts to finish playing a bunch of games she’ll never actually finish and listening to music louder than she probably should (to the chagrin of her grandparents).

Giancarlos Gonzalez is an aerospace engineering major, currently residing in Fayetteville, Georgia. Born in Orlando, Florida, and originally from Hudson, New Hampshire, he loves the outdoors, folk music, mountains, his dog, flannels and layers, and all things aircraft and spaceships. Since the third grade, he knew that one day, he wanted to build flying machines and to this day, he is working on that dream. At Georgia Southern, he hopes to get the experience and preparation needed for a jumpstart in the aerospace industry and cannot wait to contribute toward pushing mankind’s limits in the sky.

Born and raised in Marietta Georgia, Claire Goodall chose to follow in the footsteps of her older siblings and attend Georgia Southern University. Claire is excited about her major in nursing, as it has always been her childhood dream. She is an exceptional student, with a desire to get involved. Currently an active member of Zeta Tau Alpha at Georgia Southern, Claire enjoys the opportunity to support their philanthropy, Breast Cancer Education and Awareness. Overall, Claire Goodall is a hard working and well-rounded student, who is beyond excited to see what her future holds at GSU.
Ansley Herring is currently a biology major in the pre-dental program here at Georgia Southern. She was born and grew up in Kingsland, Georgia. Georgia Southern was her first choice after graduation because she fell in love with the campus and the small town feeling that encompassed it, and also enjoyed being so close to home and her family. She loves animals, going on adventures, and sleeping in until 3 p.m.

Conner J. Kirsch is a Writing and Linguistics major currently undergoing his freshman year at Georgia Southern University. While writing is his field of specialization, he is heavily involved in the filmmaking community on campus, since he plans to write scripts for cartoons professionally. “Touch” was a unique piece for him to write, as he originally wrote it in one sitting without any direction or idea of what sentence would come after the next. This was an experimental approach that allowed the story to develop a meaning of its own rather than being written around a certain concept. “Touch” is the first on Conner J. Kirsch’s list of official publications, of which he plans to greatly expand in the near future.

Erin Maurer loves to write, though she has never been published before. She is part of Georgia Southern’s creative writing club and tends to go a bit overboard on assignments. This paper started out as a final for a FYE class but the more she worked on it, the more out of hand it got until she ended up turning in a paper two to three times bigger than her peers.

Ana Mora was born in Lima, Peru and moved to the United States at the age of five. Throughout her life, growing up in the U.S meant trying to accustom to the American lifestyle. School and writing has become a source of escape from the negative influences of being an immigrant. Despite the difficulties like learning English, and being introduced to a completely new culture, Ana quickly became adjusted. Ana is more than happy to finish her Nursing major at Georgia Southern University, as well as search for other writing opportunities to bring awareness to the topic of immigration.
Liyah Terrell is a 19-year-old exercise science major born in Atlanta, Georgia. She enjoys running, traveling, and decorating whatever she can get her hands on. She decided to attend Georgia Southern University because of its large scale with a small feel and beautiful campus environment. The moment she walked on campus she knew she was home. Her assignment “I See You” was intended to shine a light on hard working, intelligent African American students and to make it known that we see their efforts in gaining success.