

THE  
**BRUIN REVIEW**

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INAUGURAL EDITION

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# THE BRUIN REVIEW

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# Why the Bruin Review?

**O**n UCLA's campus treads a number of the brightest minds this generation has to offer. Sadly, most of these minds ostensibly hold the same beliefs. Differences in looks, feelings, and orientations are lauded while independence of thought is censured. To think wildly different is to think incorrectly.

**J**ohn Stuart Mill once wrote, "He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that . . . Nor is it enough that he should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. That is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into real contact with his own mind. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them. He must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form . . ."

**W**e at the Bruin Review have found our campus lacking. Eclectic disagreement which once guided discourse no longer reaches students in earnest. Our goal is to bring it back. The deficiency of diverse thinking is not a signal of correct thinking, but one of intellectual stagnation. We believe many students arrive on campus with grand potential for contrarian ideas. Yet, an outspoken minority sets bounds to proper thinking – what is deemed polite, correct, and moral. Soon, our young contrarians have little choice but to kowtow to arbitrary parameters for the sake of saving face.

**I**f the aim of University is the pursuit of truth, freedom of speech must be the tool. This includes speech which may deprecate what is normal and genteel. Erudition implies the risk of being wrong. Finding right, however, is never black and white. Rarely is something blatantly false. New discovery merely finds our current mindset marginally obsolete. We acknowledge there is always new discoveries to be made.

**T**he hubris of University begs us to believe that its "consensus" represents a significant portion of the truth; what we have found thus far is correct, and seldom can new things be found to be notably more true. Here at the Bruin Review we dearly hope, and maintain, this is not the case. We believe there is always truth beyond what we know today – secrets yet to be discovered. Our responsibility as students does not lie with the "right" we have today, but with the potential truth yet to be found. The risk undertaken when learning, in general, is hearing things which do not align with current principle. Reaching into the depths for the unknown requires endangering contemporary consensus. Stand where you are and reach. Reach not because you are wrong, but because you could be more right. As Ben Franklin said, "Half the truth is often a great lie."

**T**he Bruin Review will always push to be on the edge of truth, at times nearly falling off. We seek to present diverse arguments on applicable topics, transcendent of partisan semantics. First and foremost, we are a society of those who enjoy civil discourse and pushing the limits of our intellect. Second, we are a medium for any responsible

message. Our publication does not exist to bolster rumors, gossip, or pontificate over national politics. We hope to bring forward dialogue on issues which affect students' lives and challenge the status quo of ideas – not through simple debate, but by productive and sympathetic discussion of things sparsely mentioned.

**W**e do not intend to unnecessarily offend or spark trivial contention. We refuse to tolerate unsubstantiated enmity or discrimination towards any group or individual, particularly on a superficial basis. We embolden the warfare of ideas, not the battle of persons. In that light, we also do not aim to compete with incumbent publications. We respect their niche as we hope they will acknowledge ours. Regardless, we will not back down. We fully support our writers in their ability to share their thoughts, less any real personal risk besides rhetorical confrontation.

**A**lthough our publication may seem to sustain a certain ideological bent, we hope to mitigate this bias. With your help, we may succeed in providing a voice to those in both tails of any intellectual distribution. If you follow reasoning heretical to the mainstream line of thought, we ask you to make your case – submit an article to management@bruinreview.com. Or, if you want to learn more about how we operate, please join us at our weekly meetings every Tuesday; contact us to learn the location. ☺

BY: JOE RAINY

Class of 2020

Cognitive Science and Economics

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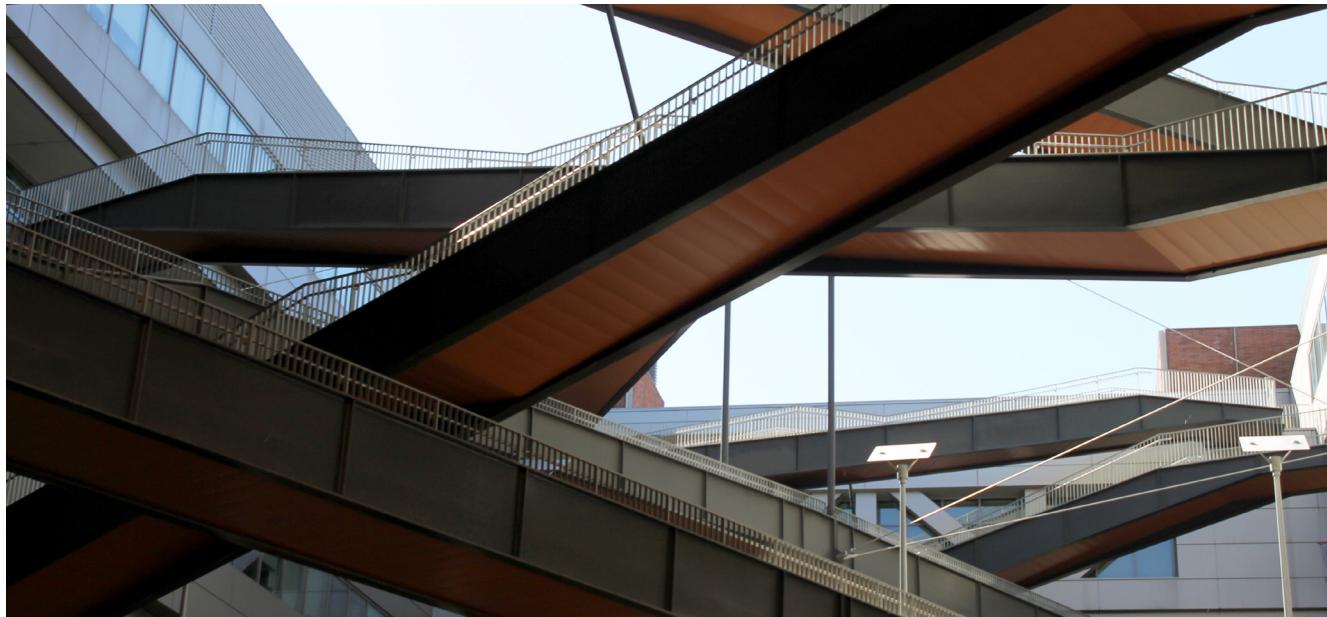


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# The Villianization of Disagreement



In modern society, statements such as “I don’t agree,” and “I see it differently,” are often associated with anger, disrespect, or avarice. People have lost sight of the value of disagreement – a phenomenon particularly noticeable in politics. Disagreement possesses immense value and should be respected and facilitated in modern-day society.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato presented arguments as a back-and-forth dialogue, or debate, where one party would express their views while another party would either concede or challenge. This kind of discourse between opposing sides produced a linear progression of thought. During this process, theories would be conjured through the presentation of a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, laying a more concrete path towards robust principles, allowing for productive discourse between people who disagreed.

Unfortunately, society no longer endorses this kind of dialogue. We tend to judge people for certain beliefs they possess in proxy of their real character. In some cases, our judgment leads to actions with grave implications. When James Damore criticized the gender-based affirmative action policies implemented by his

employer, Google, he was fired immediately; in fact, the CEO wrote a public letter disparaging the former employee. Damore’s memo merely quoted scientific literature making the case that occupational misrepresentation was based in biology, while also suggesting ways to effectively incorporate more women into the workforce. Google saw it otherwise, claiming that his writings went against the values and interests of the corporation. Many remark that such a disdain towards reactive judgment is a conservative inclination. However, similar instances are found on the other side of the political spectrum as well. Angela Davis, an activist and scholar, was revoked of the Human Rights award for her support of the BDS movement that aims to end the Israeli Apartheid and liberate the people of Palestine. When asked, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute claimed they acted after hearing from “concerned individuals and organizations.” The underlying reason for these acts, and countless others, is the inherent belief that many members of society possess: we must agree to be associated and disagreement is the result of contradictory morals.

On the contrary, differing views do not always stem from differing morals. The

foundation of all our beliefs is comprised of truth conditions. Two people may have varying opinions, albeit sharing the same value behind them. As a result of unclear evidence and partial information – a combination of factors which applies to nearly every topic – people may develop differing approaches to the same objective. Two people may have the same goal: to create equality amongst the genders. One may believe it is crucial to create an environment of equal representation through affirmative action-based policies in the workplace and other settings. Conversely, the other may believe the best approach is to treat every individual with the same perception disregarding gender altogether whilst fostering an environment of equality and intolerance towards sexist views. They may engage in an intense argument over the morality of the stances taken without realizing the true nature of the argument – a debate over approach rather than final objective.

Numerous cases of discourse involve a clash of conflicting shared values opposed to seeking out the righteous one. Two people may share the values of striving for liberty and equality yet still hold differing views on tax laws. A progressive-tax advocate may claim that redistribution of wealth

is essential for creating an equal society through bringing every citizen closer to a central income level. Conversely, a flat-tax advocate may argue that inherently owing the state a greater proportion of wealth due to high income status violates people's liberty. Since neither view violates an agreed upon moral and both persons provide sound arguments, the real debate lies in the varying practicality of each policy.

**R**egardless of the nature of disagreement, one aspect stands firm – when a system of thought is in place and settled upon, it takes a lot of courage to be at variance. People often resist change, so convincing a large set of people to redirect their line of thought to an unfamiliar path requires a great deal of force. Those who are able to stand up and maintain civil disagreement in an environment of dissimilar-minded people should be commended. Instead, we treat disagreement with alienation and abnormality. We take comfort in sharing similar views with the people around us and set our own views as the standard – anything that deviates falls under foreign territory.

**W**e have thereby become strongly opinionated while minimizing disagreement and corrupting its meaning. Blocks of belief have formed, embedding

people further into their standpoints while blurring out opposition. The consequence of this, unfortunately, is the belittled nature of disagreement. When western nations began to adopt the secular notion of enacting human beliefs based on inherent qualities and compassion, as opposed to the words of a higher deity, there was a strong pursuit for the most practical set of principles. This resulted in productive discourse where people were willing to concede in an argument and acknowledge valid points presented by an opposing party. People sought out the most tenable assertion, not the most convincing one. In contrast, today's world involves disagreement in the form of persuasion and criticism, leading to ineffective and heated debates.

**T**he truth is, disagreement is effective and useful. As iterated in the Hegelian dialectic model, disagreement can lead to a more robust form of thought. Moreover, discussions with disagreement inspire spectators to rationalize based on their own perspectives – forming well informed and unbiased opinions.

**A**t UCLA, such respect for disagreement is not found. Classes tend to be biased, discussion sections avoid sensitive matter, and clubs on campus foster

conversation between like-minded individuals alone. The result: our views are hardly ever challenged. While we might take comfort in being around people with similar stances on certain topics, we are losing the intrinsic value disagreement offers in the process.

**N**evertheless, this can be remedied. Starting with classes, heavy emphasis can be placed on opposing stances, where strong arguments could be presented from all viewpoints. Discussion sections can involve more debates, where students would not be given the opportunity of choosing their stance (thereby forcing the student to explore their line of thought). There could be civil discourse between clubs with contrasting objectives and the promotion of more clubs who remain un-opinionated with the mere objective of facilitating debate. These changes can lead to an overturn of the corrupt version of disagreement that has become prevalent in modern times. It all starts here, at the higher educational level, where we take the students of today and turn them into the leaders of tomorrow. ☺

BY: PRAVEEN BANDLA

Class of 2023

Business Economics

#### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

*In a single quarter, the Bruin Review has grown from two friends with an idea to almost 50 student-contributors. Nonetheless, we do not plan on stopping here. If you have the slightest interest in contributing-to or joining our publication and society in fighting for the diversity of ideas on UCLA's campus, send us an email at **management@bruinreview.com**, or visit us online at **www.bruinreview.com**.*

*We encourage those of all opinions, values, and mindsets to get involved. There is no need to be a member to contribute. Our weekly meetings, which are structured around civil debate and conversation, are open to anyone and are held each Tuesday night. For the location, please inquire with the email above.*

*Thanks,*

*Joe Rainey, Editor-in-Chief*

*joe@bruinreview.com*



# Mental Health and the Devaluation of Religion

**B**efore Freud entered the scene in the late 19th century, mental illness was addressed primarily by religious institutions. Perceiving the mental state through a religious lens shifted when Freud's development of early psychiatry diagnosed religious devotion as a form of neurosis. His diagnosis challenged the consideration of religion as a psychologically beneficial practice. As a result of his works, the application of spiritual interpretation in treating psychological events rapidly declined.

**N**ow, studies of the last few decades have revealed an acute rise in cases of mental illness. According to a survey by SAMHSA done in 2016, one in five adults experience any mental illness. In Psychology Today, Robert L. Leahy, Ph.D. wrote that today, the average high schooler has the same level of anxiety as the average psychiatric patient in the early 1950s. The prevalence of undiagnosed anxiety

disorders in our culture has allowed high levels of anxiety and stress to become the norm, particularly for college students. Daunting statistics show that mental health issues are ubiquitous among recent generations. This begs the question of correlation between Freud's detachment of religion from psychological interpretation and the subsequent increase in mental illnesses. Perhaps our postmodern society is struggling with being post-religion.

**H**umanism has become an ideal standard to uphold in the West. Most people no longer look to the supernatural, as they did hundreds of years ago, to solve or reflect on their problems. Instead, the individual is praised for its own reasoning and mental faculties. Humanism replaces divinity with human intellect. Freud's removal of religion from psychiatry reflects the broader trend of developing a-religious systems of thought within various fields. Devaluing the sacred,

then, is not as often caused by blatant persecutions as much as the rise in modern humanism. The assumptions of humanism leave little room to validate, or really even consider, the religious person's spiritual reality which exists beyond the realm of empirically-observable data.

**P**art of this move away from religion in socio-political spheres originates in the works of social theorists such as Karl Marx and Émile Durkheim. Marx's theories equated religion with opium; simply put, religion is a way for individuals to spiritually drug themselves into a mystical escape from present circumstances. Religious people are then relieving themselves of the burdens of reality by disassociating from actual social responsibilities. On the other hand, Durkheim's study of the "primitive religion" of Australian Aborigines led him to conclude religion is merely a way for the community to worship itself; thereby ensuring its own survival through unifying

commitment to the group. Under this interpretation, modern religious people are simply seeking refuge in a supportive community. The issue with these interpretations is they oversimplify religious devotion to its observable benefits. However, people who disparage the validity of religious values on the basis of Marx or Durkheim's theories mistakenly overlook the possible benefits to mental health the theorists themselves inadvertently point out.

**T**he opium-escape effect described in Marx's theory and the supportive cohesion Durkheim discusses may be two aspects of religion conducive to strong mental health. Religious devotees' perceived connection to a higher power may help relieve some symptoms of mental illnesses. Illnesses caused by existential crisis could be addressed by looking at religious teachings which bring a sense of purpose and meaning to the believer's life. Some mental illnesses may be linked to eschatological dread, which could be curbed by an understanding of religious soteriologies. Religious communities often come together to support a member struggling financially or in times of crisis. Many religions have concepts that help its members mentally address struggles. Sikhism, for example, teaches an aspiration to a concept called chardi kala, which can be described as eternal optimism. Chardi kala encourages Sikhs to overcome life's trials and mend inner conflicts and dissatisfactions in the hopes of attaining *hukam* (i.e. harmony with god's will). Answers to eschatological and existential questions, encouraged social support, and the importance of positive emotions are reasons for valuing religion as a humanitarian endeavor, not for disregarding it as Marx and Durkheim propose. If these benefits can be understood conceptually, we would expect them to be corroborated by empirical data.

**A**lthough lacking in abundance, some research has been done to observe the connection between religion and mental health. In *Psychiatric Times*, Simon Dein, FRCPsych, Ph.D. compiled a number of studies on the topic. Of

93 observational studies on the connection between religion and depression done by Koenig and colleagues, two-thirds demonstrated lower rates of depressive disorder with fewer depressive symptoms in those who were more religious. They found that religion enhances remission in patients who have established depression. Koenig and colleagues also conducted seven clinical trials and 69 observational studies on the connection between religion and anxiety. Half of these studies reported lower levels of anxiety among more religious people, while only 10 reported higher anxiety levels. Freud's view of religion as a form of obsessional neurosis has been challenged by studies comparing religiosity and OCD/PTSD, which suggest religion is not associated with higher levels of obsessional symptoms. While the connection between religion and mental health is predictably complex, the majority of research demonstrates a positive correlation. To the outside observer, the abstract religious ideas which bring relief from physical or mental suffering may very well appear like opium. However, unlike opium, religion does not have adverse health effects. Rather, studies have shown that religion can actually play a significant role in maintaining and restoring mental health.



**S**ome may argue that certain religions have fueled violent events in recent years and throughout history. (To be clear, the validity of any religion is not something I wish to dispute. Any debate on which religions ought to be practiced goes well beyond the scope of this article). On these grounds some secular disparagement might be well-warranted. One crucial caveat to this statement, however, is that most religions with violent histories have been detached from their original teaching. The emergence of the majority of religions brought callings to peace – respect for one's fellow man and one's fellow woman. The greatest truth is that although religions have been misappropriated to fuel hate, their basic ideals are peaceful through and through, often teaching of an interconnectedness that draws humanity not apart, but together. Peaceful idealism is akin to nearly every religion. It is imperative to keep this in mind when disparaging the devotion of a religious person.

**O**ver time, the social theorists that drove wedges between religion and psychiatry hindered ministration to the mentally ill. Whether a religion is a universal truth is not the essential question. The spread of mental illness is a staggering predicament; and to be clear, religious devotion is certainly not the only treatment for mental illness. Nonetheless, studies have proven religion's value as a possible avenue for healing. To combat the scourge of mental illness, especially as a society which heavily values the mind, we should be affirming those who seek and find solace with peaceful religious institutions. ☺

BY: REAGAN PASSMORE

*Class of 2020  
Philosophy*

# Hypertracking: A Modern Malady

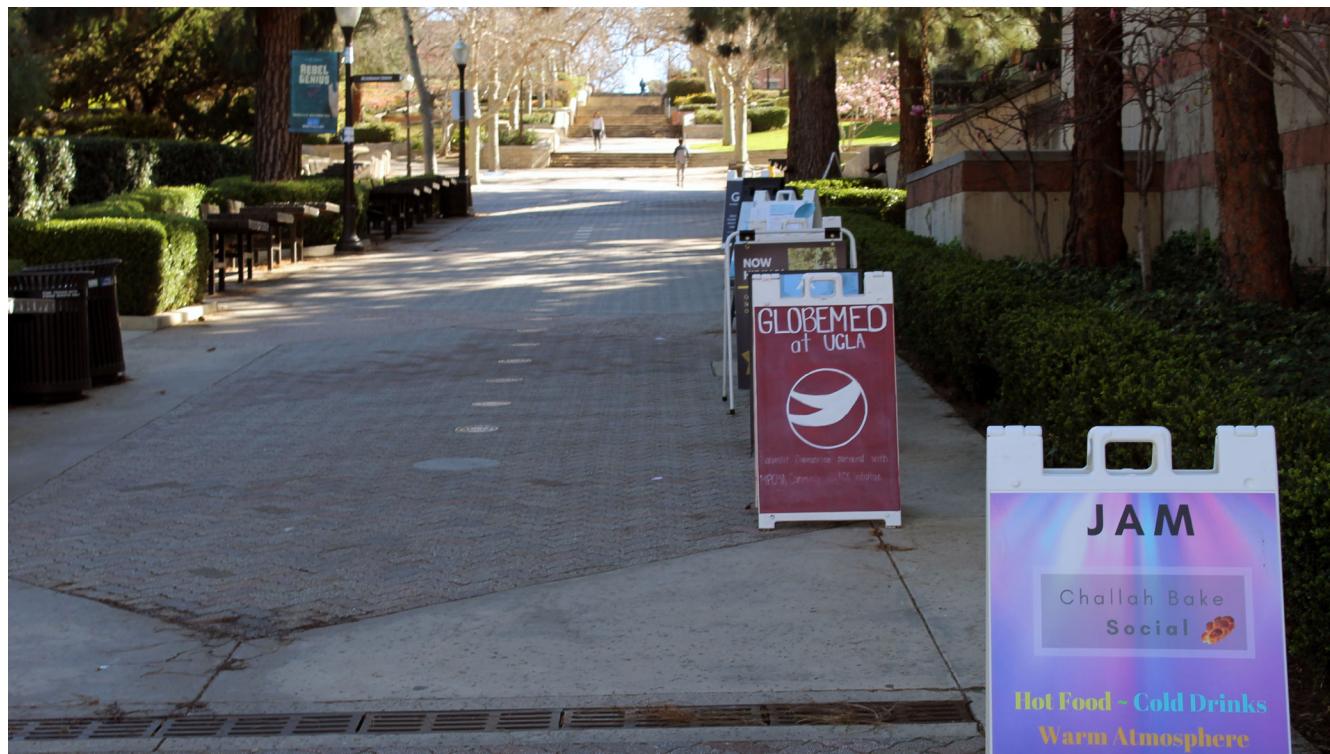
The conversation in competitive, premier universities such as ours is dominated by students looking over their shoulders to see what their peers are doing. Many remark that they don't think they're doing enough because they see others 'doing' more – others with busier-than-thou Google Calendars stacked with class, club activities, networking nights, career fairs, and resume workshops. Around sophomore year, students have packaged their experiences and involvements into LinkedIn-friendly captions. Increasingly, this isn't uncommon with first quarter freshmen. The motivation behind this arms race is obvious – college is expensive so we should get the most out of it. At a top university, it's likely you ranked highly in high school and societal norms require you to run the coveted professional races. A friend at Harvard University recently lamented to me that his peers are almost exclusively going into the conventional tracks – Management Consulting, Investment Banking, Finance, Medical School, and Law School. He expected a save-the-world ethos in their freshman class; after all, isn't that

what these promising high schoolers wrote about in their Harvard application essays?

I came to college expecting an intellectual playground – where ideas and opinions could be molded, new skills acquired, and technical expertise examined. I discovered something quite different. My peers from competitive California high schools had sketched out their career plans and actively sought-out associations to amass titles for themselves. Perhaps this is a product of two American ideals – entrepreneurship, which compels some people to form collectives wherever possible, and careerism, which centers the individual around professional progress. Few of us had a plan for our careers early in high school, and many still lie at crossroads years into college. This uncertainty is fueled by ever increasing options, but specialization has led to wider separation between professionals and apprentices (us). I don't know if I'd rather be a Software Engineer or Product Manager, partly because I'm not sure what those roles will entail in the long term at companies of varying sizes.

The singularity of college relies on how careerist ambitions play second fiddle to the intellectual and emotional growth of the individual. Resume pitching, club-forming, and leading goes a long way towards certifying an individual's involvement; perhaps there is value found in exploring areas independently. A busy day might signal productivity, or the fear of free time and an inability to create value therein. It's become almost cliched to champion books and reading, but they're often a great way to expand one's horizons beyond the immediate environment. The emergence of the world wide web has greatly eliminated the tyranny of place – you no longer have to be at UCLA to learn university level mathematics or economics.

The natural psychological impulse is to take advantage of the resources provided. If I'm spending all this money on college, I ought to maximize its push towards my ideals. I have no antidote for this mindset other than appreciating that a great portion of your investment goes towards putting you in the same physical area as your equally





brilliant peers. A seedier aspect of embracing the tracks is that it tends to produce similar thinkers. It is a superimposed convention perpetuated by largely extroverted people; everyone else then feels obliged to join. Perhaps I have particular disregard for formal environments, but I have long felt that some of my great passions like technology and writing developed entirely outside the classroom.

**P**roductively investing your free time to learn across disciplines can produce a kind of eclectic learning increasingly discouraged by specialized tracks. We were told two decades ago that the economy belongs to specialists. Yet, some of the most successful entrepreneurs of our times such as Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, and Paul Graham are truly heterodox thinkers who work in areas they did not formally study. Excellent Product Managers are now prized unicorns in Silicon Valley since savvy generalists to synthesize the work of specialists are in high demand. Perhaps their varied influences allowed them to circumvent the dramatic groupthink that ensues when everyone is purely ingesting

opinions from their peers.

**S**ince I'm involved with a competitive technology club on campus, my last few quarters have been marked by a flood of resumes and project-portfolios from the usual archetypical college suspects, ranging from starry-eyed freshmen to late blooming seniors. As I sit with the rest of my team to process applications, we're left feeling like this is our comeuppance for spamming summer internship postings ourselves. On more than a few occasions, I've noticed qualified, yet unexceptional, applicants fall through the cracks. Why? Well, they seemed like slightly worse versions of people we already decided we wanted. We encountered the same web application project listed on at least 25 resumes, which was later discovered as a thinly veiled class project. As reviewers, we craved originality. We wanted people who were different enough yet had certifying merits that we could assess. The system demands originality from you even if it floods your world with things that make you unoriginal – the unfortunate paradox of the whole situation.

**W**hile the democratizing effect of the internet has changed the game in terms of information access, organized involvement certainly has its merits. Simply learning from and collaborating with your peers is worth the involvement. The true crux is not to rail against systemic collaboration, but rather to advocate for the value of unorganized productivity. Want to learn chess? Start playing your friends online in your free time. Want to pick up programming? Trust me, there are more resources out there than you could consume in a lifetime. Your environment should accelerate your progress, but you shouldn't be limited due to the purview of your environment. A great way to ensure this is to draw from more sources. ¶

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BY: SHARON JOHN  
Class of 2020  
Computer Science

# Hyper-Stacking: Is it worth it?

**W**hen college application season hit, I didn't check my transcripts, or scan over the prompts. Instead, I headed towards a dusty drawer next to my desk and dumped out all the club memorabilia and awards accumulated over the past four years. I asked myself a question: What's the pattern here, and how can I shape it to my application? I wasn't the only one.

**A**ccording to Dobler College Consulting, "a situation like this is typical. High school students feel they have to be involved in so many different things so that they stand out in the college application process." College advisors have transitioned from encouraging students to become more involved overall to encouraging them to find a spike – a specific area that will make them stand out.

**F**lash forward a year later to the UCLA Activities Fair. Over 1,000 undergraduate clubs crowded onto North Campus, actively recruiting naive freshmen. If my overachieving-self thought my options were varied before, here was an even bigger monster. With an overwhelming number of options, freshmen often fall into the common trap of joining a bit of everything. Unsure about what clubs to join, they do what I did in high school: engage in "hyper-stacking." Hyper-stacking is highly common, especially in the UCLA community, where one stacks their résumé with multiple clubs and activities while their level of involvement remains low. It's a form of "fluffing up the resume", and the truth is, employers despise it.

**A**s it stands, the American system is set up for hyper-stacking. Since the moment we learned to crawl, our parents have packed us into activities such as daycare, junior ballet, youth soccer, private piano lessons, robotics club, cheer team, and Kumon, all before bedtime. The system has only gotten worse. In 2018, a study found that over 88 percent of kids participate in activities four to five days a week,

leading to less quality time spent with their family and to themselves. Free time could have given students an opportunity to organically develop their own passions, rather than forced to participate in activity upon activity. Many of the great geniuses did not have an after-school club or team for their talent. For example, Steven Spielberg started out as an average student who spent quality time recording family videos on his video camera.

**T**n high school, the pressure only increases thanks to college applications. Then, after 4 years of stacking our résumés, we finally get our acceptance letter to UCLA. For a moment, we think it might be over. Nevertheless, once on campus, we assume the same pattern we've followed since we started to crawl.

**W**hat distinguishes your college years from those before, however, is what follows – the ever-looming threat of the "real-world" that sends seniors quaking in their boots. Since college does not have an excellent track record of setting up graduates for jobs (2008 Recession, anyone?), students today must take matters into their own hands.

**T**o be clear, the solution is not to disregard clubs entirely. Nor is it to choose one organization and sacrifice 80% of your energy to it. The answer depends on what you want to do once you graduate; quite honestly, most of us are still figuring that out. The best way to sort through the clutter of clubs is by taking a quality over quantity approach. Freshmen: Don't believe that the first club you join at UCLA will be your number one commitment these four years. Juniors: Don't give up on ALL clubs because internships are now your life.

**C**lubs are an integral aspect of college life because of the connections. UCLA consists of a diverse mixture of dreamers, innovators, and go-getters. We thrive in community and clubs are the perfect platform to experiment and develop intrapersonal skills. Additionally,

clubs are increasingly bridging the gap between the "real world" and student life. Take, for example, UCLA's wide network of business organizations. They frequently collaborate with corporations like UPS, Oracle, Accenture and L'Oréal for case competitions, career fairs, and other undergraduate competitions. LA Hacks, sponsored by companies like WIX, Google, Honey, and SAAP, hosts over 1,000 hackers from different corners of the United States and guarantees admission to UCLA students.

**G**o ahead. Join that club. But before you fork over the membership fee, think about your reasons. Don't fall into the trap of hyper-stacking your every move, listing 5 different clubs on your resume whose past 4 meetings you've missed. Instead, feel it out, do a 2-4 week "trial period" where you're all in. Get to know the members and see if it clicks. Understand the message. If it's a fit, go for it. ☺

By: CHLOE MURPHY

Class of 2020

Economics and Global Studies



# Making Conversation: Depression and Mental Health

**D**epression is one of the most debilitating ailments in the entire world, affecting over 300 million people, according to the World Health Organization. In the United States alone, 18 million, or 1 in 10, individuals suffer from depression. It takes 110 American lives per day with over 3,500 suicide attempts caused by depression or some other mental illness. Within the U.S. population, 1 in 5 college students report they are affected by anxiety or depression, according to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health. Unfortunately, UCLA's microcosm is not immune to this statistic; many students suffer from anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders due to stress, demand for high achievement, expectations, and other struggles that college students go through on the daily. There are very severe and harmful side effects of untreated depression; many cases lead to self-harm, substance abuse, or even suicide.

**A**s one of the top research institutions and the no. 1 ranked public university in the U.S., one would think UCLA should have conducted plenty of research, collected valuable data, and composed a proper set of solutions for those among the student body that deal

with depression and mental illness. Instead, this immensely pertinent issue that is so pervasive on UCLA's campus is still highly stigmatized and a topic of conversation avoided by most. This also raises the question of why the mental health programs that are supposed to help and alleviate these issues are still severely underfunded and underused.

**S**tudies have shown time and time again that social stigma around mental health on college campuses directly correlates with students failing to seek treatment. In turn, this creates an endless downward spiral for students. Conversation about mental health is avoided and further stigmatized, making it harder for students to seek services for their own well-being. At most, UCLA has enough mental health and psychiatric resources for 20% of the entire undergraduate population, while the only professional resource is the controversial CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services). This furthers the downward spiral that some students may experience in their journey of seeking help, as there simply are not enough resources for them.

**D**epression is more common than most people like to admit and can strike anyone at

any time. The first step to reducing stigma and creating a safe-space for students on campus is facilitating healthy dialogue about the issue – not avoiding the difficult conversations or closing the door on mental health topics. Redirecting UCLA funds to create effective and accessible mental health programs on campus would provide advocacy, detection, diagnosis, and treatment to help students currently suffering in silence as well as those at risk. Well-funded programs would provide for the hiring of trained professionals to advocate for student mental health and to help staff CAPS. By opening dialogue, allocating more funding, encouraging equality between physical and mental health, and choosing empowerment over shame, we would be able to move closer to a mentally healthier community. These could be the first steps in the right direction in the fight against social stigmas about facing mental illness and paramount in creating a safer and happier campus. ☀

BY: EMMA KOWIAK

Class of 2020

Anthropology



# PersianZuck



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: KEDAR IYER, SAM KAZEMIAN, DAVID LIEBOWITZ, AND LARRY SANGER.

**S**itting behind a desk laden with computers, keyboards, and scattered notes is Sam Kazemian – the President and co-founder of Everipedia, also known as PersianZuck. “There is no better time to [start a company] than in college or right after college.” Kazemian is one of the few that took his own advice.

**E**veripedia is the first and largest decentralized encyclopedia. It uses blockchain technology via its own “IQ token” to incentivize the creation and editing of encyclopedia articles on the platform. Along with Everipedia’s other decentralized web applications, such as a stable coin and prediction market, the decentralized encyclopedia remains at the forefront of pragmatic and consumer-focused use cases for blockchain technology.

**M**ost of Kazemian’s time is spent on the stable coin project, Decentral Bank. In fact, Kazemian has designed almost all the protocols for the application. Decentral Bank takes aim at a few weak points in current cryptocurrencies: “Crypto is unstable, volatile, and speculative, which is fine, but it’s almost like they are commodities you invest in – you don’t use them as currencies. When your assets aren’t

stable, it is like trying to use a national currency like Venezuela’s or Zimbabwe’s,” says Kazemian.

**T**he stable coin works similar to how the Federal Reserve responds to changes in the money supply in the U.S. In response to deflation, the Federal Reserve often participates in quantitative easing, or creating money to purchase bonds, to lessen the blow. During inflationary periods, the Federal Reserve can issue bonds to combat dramatic surges. Kazemian makes the same case Milton Friedman made in the 1970’s – stability of currency can be controlled by an algorithm, mitigating both human error and the potential for despotism.

**K**azemian’s personal involvement in the stable coin project, and blockchain in general, comes from a deeper place. Kazemian claims crypto is, “a very political movement, even though it seems more tech.” He believes capital allocation is of upmost importance.

“The fact that we have a capitalist system, the fact that we have been fairly decently working out...basically there were some mistakes in how we regulate stuff like the housing bubble and tech boom and bust, but generally we got it right.

This system that actually works for organizing large societies allows us to have such good lives so we can debate these also important social issues, but they come posterior to the fact that we have our very basic needs met, and we have these innovations and a competitive market that continually improves our lives.”

**K**azemian’s founding of Everipedia came from an economic sentiment. “Social issues are important and stuff, but I stay rather agnostic of that. The most important thing is in a capitalist world: how is capital allocated? If there was a bread line at Ralphs here in Westwood, no one would be talking about whether the bathrooms should be LGBT or whatever, they would just be hungry as fuck, right? That was a very real thing.” Kazemian argues the “socialist experiments and governments of the 20th century” show that proper capital allocation, rather than government intervention, brings about the greatest progress.

**R**egardless of Kazemian’s focus on innovation, he still finds social issues to be “very important,” and something worth discussing. Much like happiness in a productive life, Kazemian chooses to

pursue social justice as a beneficial symptom of the productive capitalist system, rather than the main focus of attention. Although he aligns as libertarian, Kazemian thinks, “there is obviously a role for the state which is to regulate moral, social goods.” Nevertheless, he stands by his free-market principles: “If you look at different types of government, the ones that are freer are usually the ones that are more free-market oriented.”

**K**azemian embodies a virtue rarely found on college campuses today: actionable, stoic conviction. Unlike the visceral angst of many students, Kazemian’s motivation stems from a reasoned approach to progress. Just like the rest of us, Kazemian wants the best for each of his neighbors, near and far. Kazemian chose to take action using all the resources within his grasp. As a result, he and his team have brought more free information to the masses than ever before.

**E**veripedia began just as you might imagine. Sam Kazemian and one of his friends,

Theodor Forselius, started Everipedia as a side project in Kazemian’s UCLA dorm room in 2014. Soon enough, Travis Moore and Mahbod Moghadom had joined the founding team. At first, things were “really hectic and exciting.” Challenges such as raising money and recruiting talent were ever-present. To-date, Everipedia has raised over \$30 million in venture funding.

**K**azemian has always encouraged entrepreneurship. Although he is thankful for the personal edification and discovery UCLA facilitated, he also advocates for those who teach themselves to code, skip college to learn a trade, or go into a field completely unrelated to their field of study. Kazemian was a Neuroscience and Philosophy double major, yet ended up in technology due to extracurricular erudition.

**W**ith respect to starting a company, Kazemian says the sooner the better: “The longer you leave it and work your way up the career ladder, the more you have to lose; it becomes reasonable

to not do it.” He acknowledges that many can be dubious about the validity of their idea; regardless, he says to go for it. “You might not think it’s really good enough, but once you get going, there is actual substance.”

**U**CLA is filled with students who maintain the pursuit of job-security – a mindset Kazemian was all too familiar with as a pre-med student. His story is an inspiration to those who want to break through such a mindset and take on risks others find too daunting. After all, there is only one way to find out if your idea really is worth something. ☺

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Cognitive Science and Economics

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## The American Dream – Dispelling the Myth of Social Immobility

**L**anding a job after college is never far from our mind. We worked hard and were fortunate enough to get here. Now, with an eye to the future, we join clubs, secure internships, and take difficult classes, all with the hope of learning something that interests us but also makes us attractive to employers. Frankly, for most of us, looks just won’t cut it. We put tremendous effort in because we expect – or, at the very least, hope – it will pay off. In the back of our mind, we still believe hard work translates to success. Then why do we often hear people say the American Dream is dead? What’s the point of crying yourself to sleep during finals week if, at the end of it all, you’re stuck precisely where you started? Don’t worry, I’m here to tell you those tears were

worth it. Hard work is still worth it. While some popular polemics might say the American Dream is a thing of the past, they’re wrong. Dead wrong.

**M**ake no mistake, poverty remains a serious issue and a pressing concern for a lot of Americans. While poverty has always existed, America was long thought of as a land of opportunity where anyone from anywhere could achieve anything. Now, to many, the American Dream has slipped away. Some fear economic mobility is only accessible to the privileged and connected. Consequently, many have insisted that economic status is dependent on birth place. Put simply, if you’re born rich, you’ll stay rich. If you’re born poor, you’ll stay poor. But is that really true? If so, is there any way to escape it?

**A**ccording to a study conducted by Mark Rank and Thomas Hirschl of Cornell, Americans continue to experience high levels of social mobility. They studied a group of American adults aged 25-60 over a 44-year period and found remarkable results:

“It turns out that 12% of the population will find themselves in the top 1% of the income distribution for at least one year. What’s more, 39% of Americans will spend a year in the top 5% of the income distribution, 56% will find themselves in the top 10%, and a whopping 73% will spend a year in the top 20% of the income distribution.”

**T**his disputes the notion of a rigid American class structure. Almost three fourths of all Americans will climb to the top 20% at some point in their lives. Moreover, according to researcher Scott Winship,

“...roughly three in four adults — and the overwhelming majority of poor children — live better off than their parents after taking the rising cost of living into account.”

**T**hese results show the American Dream is far from dead. America remains a land of immense opportunity with a rather fluid class structure. With that said, Rank is quick to point out America isn’t perfect:

“This is just as true at the bottom of the income distribution scale, where 54 percent of Americans will experience poverty or near poverty at least once between the ages of 25 and 60.”

**D**espite the persistence of the American Dream, many continue to experience poverty. While about 75 percent of children will be better off than their parents, what about the other 25 percent? And while our class structure may be fluid, how can we ensure the American Dream remains accessible to all Americans, not just the privileged? For those who are not financially privileged, it may feel as if fighting poverty is a fleeting battle. Yet, in

the midst of that powerlessness, the “Success Sequence” offers a glimmer of hope. Developed by some researchers at the Brookings Institution, it consists of three steps to achieving success:

**1** Finish high school.

**2** Get a job (Any job).

**3** Get married before having children.

**A**ccording to their research, Americans who follow these three steps have a 98% chance of avoiding poverty while around 75% will end up in the middle class. Moreover, another study showed that 97% of millennials who followed the sequence were not poor, while about 86% made it to the middle class. In other words, as college students, we are already a third of the way to success (do I sound hopeful yet?).

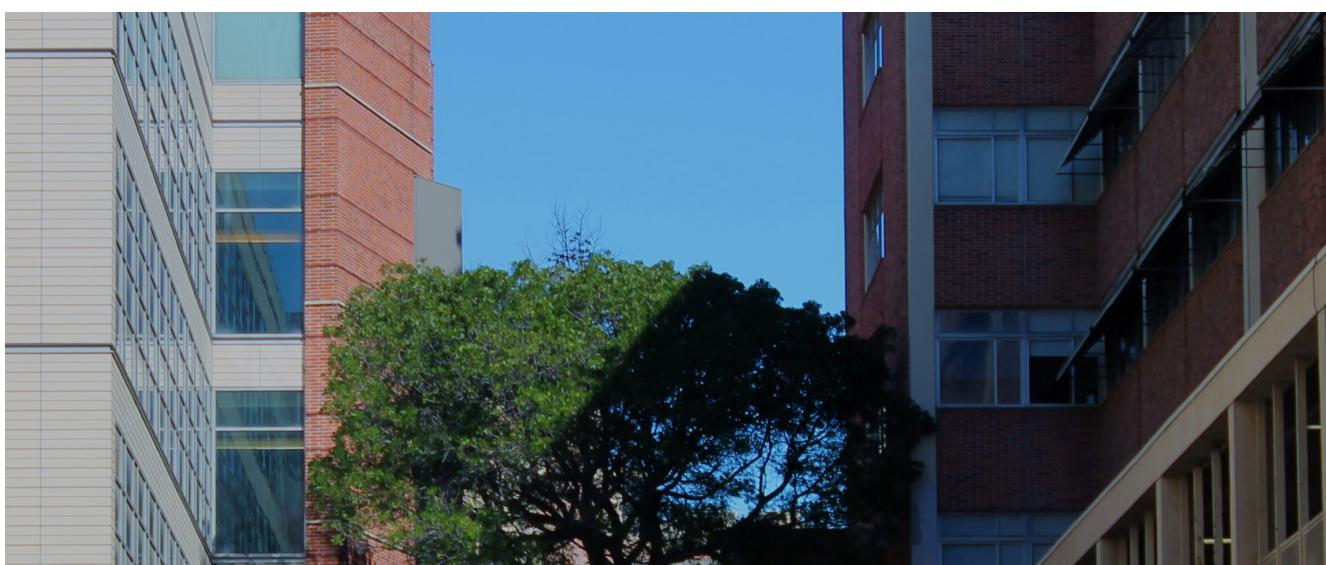
**S**till, some critics of the Success Sequence point out African-Americans who follow these rules are more likely to end up in poverty than whites, suggesting it is not solely a result of individual actions. Personal circumstances certainly play a significant role. However, so do personal decisions. In the same study, only 39% of racial minorities

who had children out of wedlock were in the middle class or better as compared to 76% who were married first. Furthermore, for Americans who grew up in low-income households, only 9% of those who followed the steps ended up in poverty, compared to 58% of those who failed all three steps. Simply put, your decisions can dramatically change the course of your life, regardless of the circumstances you were born into.

**T**o be clear, I do not intend to denigrate those who fail to complete these steps; nor do I wish to underestimate the challenges for many in doing so. I’m well aware of the privileges I have been afforded in my life and how those have benefitted me. I simply aim to reinforce the evidence, despite the popular narrative, that demonstrates you can significantly improve your odds of success by choosing to pursue it. While it is certainly true other factors play a significant role in determining whether or not someone ends up in poverty, we still have a lot of control over our own destiny. In other words, your hard work means something; your sacrifices matter. So, keep your head up and dig deeper into your pursuits; because, with the right ethic and proven discipline, you can and will achieve anything. ☺

By: ALEXANDER HEMERLING

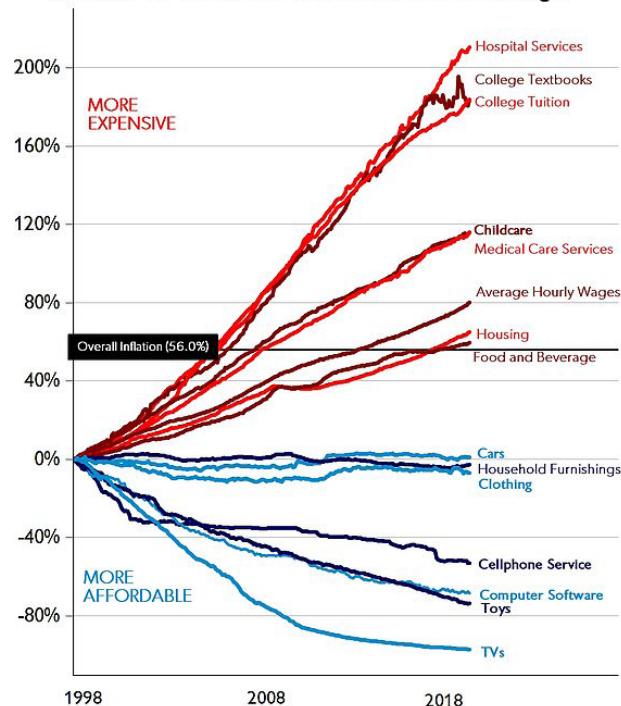
Class of 2022  
Political Science



# Statistical Food-for-Thought

**Price Changes (January 1998 to December 2018)**

Selected US Consumer Goods and Services, Wages



Source: BLS

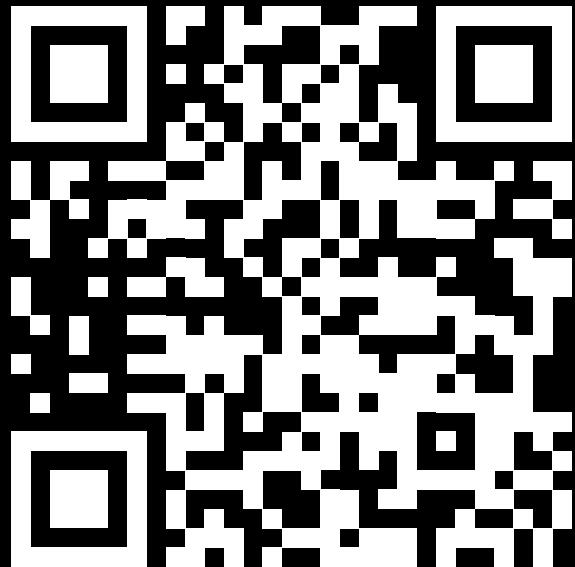
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