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Acknowledgements

Revision is a foundation of First-Year Composition (FYC) at the University of Notre Dame, and the work published in this volume of *Fresh Writing* has been re-seen by more writers, readers, and editors than I can name. I do have some names, of course, and I will get to those shortly, but before acknowledging those people who played an explicit role in producing these excellent essays, I first want to thank all those writers, readers, and editors whose support has helped develop a culture of writing at Notre Dame, a culture where writing is valued not just as an academic exercise but as a fundamental skill for developing and expressing critical thinking about academic, personal, and civic concerns. Without the peer respondents who offer their best insight in FYC workshops, without the Writing Center tutors who make it their job to challenge writers to think harder and write clearer, without the faculty who teach writing as ethical practice, these writers would not have been challenged to succeed at the level you see here. So first, my thanks to the unnamed but powerfully influential audience whose feedback helped these writers make meaning through writing.

John Duffy, Francis O'Malley Director of the University Writing Program, is first among names of *Fresh Writing* supporters. Dr. Duffy introduced a rhetoric-based curriculum this year that inspired first-year writers to think carefully about the construction and support of well-reasoned arguments, and he encourages all writers to pursue venues such as *Fresh Writing* where their ideas can reach and enrich audiences outside the classroom. Stuart Greene, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies in Arts and Letters, ignited the *Fresh Writing* project years ago and has continued to support it, as has First Year of Studies Dean Hugh Page and the First Year Advisors.

The following First-Year Composition instructors taught the students whose work is published here: Phillip Albonetti, John Duffy, Tuan Hoang, Ed Kelly, Nicole MacLaughlin, Chris Manley, Connie Snyder Mick, Erin Miller, Stephanie Pocock, Misty Schieberle, Anne Snellen, and Frankie White. Many thanks to each of you for the attention and guidance you clearly provided. You made the job of the Editorial Board extremely difficult. And thanks to the Editorial Board for your thoughtful consideration of the many submissions we received: John Duffy, Kimberly Lander, Nicole MacLaughlin, Chris Manley, and Anne Snellen. Thanks also to these readers for constituting the McPartlin Award Committee, chaired by John Duffy.

Finally, thanks to the authors who cared so deeply about an issue that they pursued it in writing and who believed so deeply in the power of writing as a social act that they shared that exploration as a publication in *Fresh Writing*.

Happy Reading!

Connie Snyder Mick
Notre Dame, IN
April 2008

Foreword

The average incoming first-year student knows how to write a paper. That is, he or she knows how to put words on a page in order to complete an assignment. But the papers in *Fresh Writing* do not represent the average first year paper; these papers are the best of the year. Each writer comes to the table from a different perspective; each one has chosen a subject matter close to his or her heart; each has learned the importance of contributing to the academic conversation in a unique way.

The University Writing Program changed the usual prescription for writing this year, revamping the curriculum with a new focus on rhetoric. The range of subjects discussed in *Fresh Writing* reflects the wider range of assignments. Each assignment challenged the writers to examine a different facet of rhetoric and learn how to explain themselves or convince an audience in a new way.

The definition argument, such as Colin Littlefield's "Gun Control and the Second Amendment" or Caroline Cole's "Idealism," seeks to define terms, allowing the reader to really understand what the author means when he or she uses a word. In the case of "Idealism," Cole has taken a word that could be used in many contexts and explained what it means to her.

The narrative argument is one that offers the authors a more personal way to argue their points. It is a forum for the author to tell a story, rather than merely present facts. Three of *Fresh Writing*'s authors—Jackson Bangs, Hallie Brewster, and Laura Bradley—use their personal experiences to enhance their writing.

In a rhetorical analysis paper, the author seeks to understand why someone would argue his or her case in a certain way. This involves analyzing their language and motivations, as well as the intended effect on the audience. Both Brian Brooke and Rodolfo Disi Pavlic analyzed the language of someone else's argument in order to better articulate their own points.

In a rebuttal argument, the author also engages with someone else's work, but does so in order to refute that person. Although there are many ways to go about disagreeing with someone, the rebuttal argument assignment emphasizes the importance of actively engaging another's work and treating that work with respect even as it is refuted. Elizabeth Dallacqua's "Generation Y: The New Frontier" is an example of a respectful and thorough rebuttal argument.

In a causal argument, the author seeks to not only engage a subject matter but to explain a phenomenon. The author may work backward from a conclusion, exploring the possible explanations in order to convince the audience of the most plausible reason. Josh Flynt looks at a trend in sports in order to determine the causes.

A researched argument can use a variety of rhetorical techniques; the emphasis in this assignment is on the research that goes into the argument itself. These papers tend to be longer, with increasing attention paid to the ongoing conversation into which students insert themselves. Some examples of a researched argument in *Fresh Writing* include the papers by Dan Crupi, Jessica Eder, and Adam Klene.

Also represented in this collection are multimedia projects and satirical argument: Laura Tiche and Annie Pendelton engage satire in their creative work "Parenting Today," which seeks to shock and amuse the reader, and Francisco Zarama does visual analysis in "When East Meets West: Audience and Its Effect," an assignment similar to the textual analysis, but with an emphasis on appearance rather than words.

Armed with this arsenal of rhetoric, the authors of the *Fresh Writing* essays are well equipped to persuade any reader. They have shown that they can respectfully and thoroughly disagree with a reputable source, entertain and engage a reader, and responsibly insert themselves into the academic conversation. These authorial voices have made their mark.

Katharine Dresser
Notre Dame, IN
April 2008

Rhetorical Analyses

of Written, Spoken,
and Visual Texts

Author's Biography

Rodolfo Disi Pavlic

Rodolfo lived his whole life in Santiago, Chile, before becoming a student at the University of Notre Dame. He wants to major in political science and Italian. During his first semester he took Multimedia First-Year Composition, a course that allowed him to analyze in depth one of his favorite subjects: politics. For one of his first assignments he chose to analyze the speech John F. Kennedy gave in Berlin in 1963. He had heard this speech before and thought it would be interesting to listen to it again from a more critical point of view. The use of the rhetorical concepts learned in class together with visits to the Writing Center helped him to write this essay.

Beyond Mere Words:
The Rhetoric Behind Kennedy's "Ich Bin Ein Berliner" Speech

Rodolfo Disi Pavlic
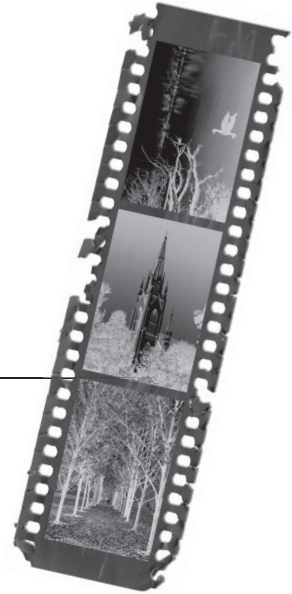
During the Cold War the state of Berlin, once Germany's capital, was the epitome of not only a divided Germany but also of the general international situation of rivalry and separation between the capitalist and communist worlds. After Germany's defeat in World War II, East Berlin fell under Soviet control and West Berlin under American, English and French control. Half of the city was a Western exclave in East Germany, which was under Soviet control. With the outset of the Cold War, Western Berliners were initially isolated by a Soviet blockade in 1948 and later by the construction of a wall around the Western part of the city in 1961. On June 26, 1963, during a visit to the city, American President John F. Kennedy made a speech to an immense crowd of friendly Berliners. This speech came to be known as "Ich bin ein Berliner." Kennedy's purpose with this speech was to boost the citizens' morale, undermined after years of isolation and struggle, so that they could overcome future hardships. In order to comprehend its success and repercussions, the speech must be analyzed from a rhetorical point of view by the use of his own credibility, the appeal to the audience's feelings, and the manner in which he convinces through logical reasoning.

Kennedy's use of ethos is an important appeal in this speech. There are clear moments where the persuasion through the integrity of his figure is prevalent. Kennedy begins his speech by thanking and praising the Mayor of West Berlin, the Chancellor of Federal Germany, and General Clay (the general in charge of the American forces in the city). He does this in order to use these persons' presence and authority as a sign of his own importance. In the case of General Clay he also states that he "will come again if ever needed," forging a link with the city's recent history with the purpose of gaining the audience's favor by using ethos, i.e., drawing on his position as President and therefore as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. This demonstrates on one hand the resources he has access to and on the other his sympathetic disposition toward the Berliners. Another moment when he makes use of ethos is when he says to the audience that he speaks "on behalf of [his] countrymen." This provides credibility because of the authority bestowed upon him as the President of the United States. In any case, the use of ethos is just a prelude, a form of preparing the entrance on stage of the most important way of convincing the United States President uses: persuasion through pathos.

Throughout the speech, the appeal to pathos goes through different stages of intensity expressed using several methods. Pathos makes its appearance for the first time in one of the most defining and iconic moments of the speech, when the President makes an analogy between the pride associated with the declaration of "*civis Romanus sum*" ("I am a Roman citizen") in the ancient Roman Republic and the pride that he says is linked to saying "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" ("I am a Berliner"). This short yet powerful phrase has three main connotations. First, it is an exact paraphrase of "*civis Romanus sum*," and gives more strength and sense to the analogy between the ancient Roman and Berlin citizens. Second, it allows Kennedy to identify with his audience; most of the crowd did not know English, because the phrase was said in its native German it must have created a potent empathy toward Kennedy. Third, there is a special intention when the speaker chooses to talk about Roman citizens: it creates a subtle bond between the Berliners and the roots of western civilization (in opposition to the east), cunningly and potently praising his audience, acknowledging their situation as an isolated part of the West surrounded by the East. The sentence is also repeated at the end of the speech in order to close it in an atmosphere of euphoria and acclaim. The success of this resource is demonstrated by the crowd's shouts of approval following the use of the phrase.

As strange as it may sound, if there is logos to be found in this text, this logos must derive from the use of pathos.

Pathos is also present in a brief moment of humor. When Kennedy says "I appreciate my interpreter translating my German" this may have been intended to create a relaxed atmosphere after the great impression "Ich bin ein Berlin" created in the public. But the appeal to the Berliners' emotions continues. After that Kennedy starts a very peculiar part of the speech, in which he states that some people have a neutral or friendly attitude towards communism, e.g., "There are some who say that communism is the wave of the future." These phrases are answered every time with the anaphora "Let them come to Berlin." This is aimed to move the Berliners and to make them see themselves as an example of the evilness of communism and to sympathize with Kennedy's opinion. This message is heightened when he says the last anaphora in German.

The persuasion through feelings after that becomes even more straightforward. The President describes the communist system as "separating families, dividing husbands and wives and brothers and sisters and dividing people who wish to be together." This must have touched the feelings of many of the Berliners through their personal realities, and thus for them it must have been a very good reason to think that communism is evil. Hence, pathos in this speech follows a progression from a very shrewd way to touch the audience's feelings to an explicit use of reasons appealing to emotions.

As strange as it may sound, if there is logos to be found in this text, this logos must derive from the use of pathos. In Kennedy's very metaphysical—and therefore appealing to reason—statement "Freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free" he tries to convince the Berliners that they have to fight for liberty in the entire

world. "You live in a defended island of freedom, but your life is part of the main," he tells them. According to him, they have to surmount the difficulties the Berlin Wall represents, because that is their logical duty as people who enjoy freedom. The combination between this peculiar use of logos and the omnipresent pathos becomes evident when he says that if they succeed in the fight against the adversities of isolation Berliners could take "sober satisfaction in the fact that they were in the front lines for almost two decades." Therefore, there is a synergic reaction when pathos and logos are combined in the same reason.

As it has been suggested by his rhetoric, President Kennedy's purpose was to encourage the people of West Berlin. These persons had suffered almost constantly since WWII from invasions, occupations, blockades, and isolation. Because Kennedy's purpose was to boost Berlin's morale, his arguments are supported most of all by appealing to the citizens' feelings. The speech is therefore organized in an efficient way to achieve this goal because he goes from more concrete ways to motivate his audience, like when he praises figures familiar to them, to more idealistic forms of encouraging them to overcome adversities, as when he relates the concept of freedom to Berliner citizenship. The rhetorical success of Kennedy's speech has made his visit memorable to the world since it was first delivered in 1963.

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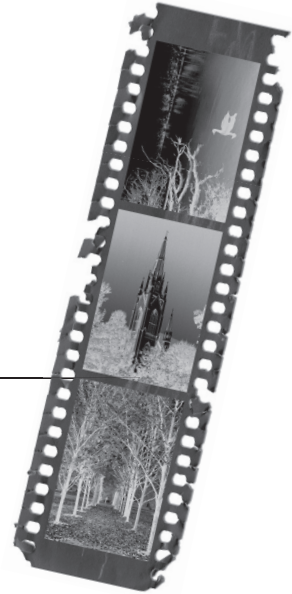
Brian Brooke

Brian chose this topic because gun violence is an issue of increasing importance in America today. While the essay is not primarily focused on gun control, but rather on the persuasive strategies employed by David Hemenway, gun violence is nonetheless addressed as an important issue. Brian believes that understanding these rhetorical methods is essential for effective communication within a scholarly community.

Gun Regulations:

Not Enough

Brian Brooke

"Every hour, guns are used to kill four people and to commit 120 crimes in our country," says David Hemenway, professor of Health Policy at Harvard University, who wrote an essay pointing out gun violence as a growing problem in today's society. Along with being a professor of Health Policy, he is a director of both the Harvard Injury Control Research Center and the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center, two of the leading sources of statistics on violence in the United States. In his essay Hemenway focuses on the problem of gun violence, and he convincingly argues that there must be stronger safety standards and policies focused on more than just gun safety education and enforcement. He persuades the reader by using comparisons, examples, and appeals to the emotions of the audience.

Considering the context of the publication will help illuminate the larger issue. The essay appeared in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM), one of the world's most prestigious medical journals, which frequently publishes medical experiments and research studies. Before an essay is printed in a respected journal such as the NEJM, other experts in the field must approve it. That fact alone is enough to give Hemenway sufficient credibility to establish his ethos.

The essay responds to and reflects the United States' increasing awareness of the high rates of gun-related injuries. At the time of publication, the Brady Bill, which enforced a five-day wait period for a background check before anyone could purchase a gun (making it slightly more tedious to obtain one), had just expired. Upon the expiration of the bill in 1998, a computerized criminal background check was quickly put in place. Another example of increased awareness of gun-related injuries came in the form of a study on the issue. For example, the Houston Peace and Justice Center published their study in the winter of 1999, just over a year after Hemenway published his essay. The study, titled "More Americans Killed by Guns Than by War in the 20th Century" (HPJC), points out the increased rate of gun-related injuries in the past 18 years, and predicts the 1990s as being the deadliest decade of the century. This study, along with the increased scrutiny

involved in purchasing a gun, proves that the issue of gun violence was being brought increasingly to the forefront of America's cultural issues. David Hemenway's essay fits perfectly into this trend.

Hemenway uses claims of comparison in his essay to convince his readers that something can and should be done about gun violence. He first compares the United States to countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The comparison points out that while all four countries have similar crime rates, the United States has an unusually high rate of lethal violence involving guns. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have stronger restrictions on guns than the United States does, and he uses that fact to say, in essence, "If it worked for them, it could work for us." This is an effective comparison that helps the reader to realize how simply a solution could be found.

Hemenway also convincingly compares the effective methods of reducing motor vehicle injuries to possible methods of reducing gun-related injuries. He offers ample background information on how the United States reduced motor vehicle injuries through thoughtful and proactive legislation, and then he pushes the claim that the same techniques should be applied to gun regulations. This particular analogy is consistent throughout the essay, and he touches on it more than once. At the conclusion of his essay, he once again brings the readers back to the motor vehicle comparison. The sound reasoning and evidence he uses here is effective; it demonstrates an appeal to logos, or more specifically, to the logic of common sense. Hemenway illustrates his own common sense by making these effective comparisons and using facts to support claims.

Considering the context of the publication will help illuminate the larger issue.

While Hemenway uses logos most commonly, he also appeals to the audience's emotions. He appeals specifically to empathy by referencing some staggering facts about the gun-related deaths of children and teenagers. The issue of suicide is brought up, clearly in an effort to appeal to the emotions of any reader. Hemenway also briefly connects with the reader by using humor to point out the fact that there are stronger protection standards on teddy bears and toy guns than there are on actual guns. This is effective because it simply evokes another emotion in the reader, one of outrage or disbelief. One way that Hemenway could strengthen his argument, however, would be to provide the actual statistics instead of just referencing them.

In addition to comparisons and appeals to the audience's emotions, Hemenway provides a few strong examples of situations that point out both why regulations are needed, and what types of regulations are possible. For example, he relates the true story of a man who dropped a pistol and accidentally wounded two other people. Hemenway emphasizes that even though the man had a permit to carry the gun and that the gun met current regulations, people still were hurt, reinforcing his point that more must be done to protect citizens from gun-related injury.

A second example addresses a possible solution by showing what one state is doing to help fight gun-related injuries. Massachusetts issued regulations implementing some new safety standards. Hemenway explains that there was conflict between gun manufacturers and the state, but, more importantly, he provides the statistic, "80 percent of gun owners and non-gun owners alike" support these new measures. This example is followed by more statistical evidence showing public support of new policies and a few proposed laws. Hemenway then brings the readers back to reality by saying, "most of these measures have not been enacted." This strategy is effective because it raises the expectations and hopes of the readers only to take them away. The creation of contrasting emotions emphasizes the claim that something really needs to be done.

After effectively using a variety of rhetorical techniques, David Hemenway closes the argument with one last appeal to logos. Much of his argument throughout the essay is based on common sense and clear connections between situations. He sums up his argument by claiming, "It is now quite clear that the implementation of policies focused exclusively on education and enforcement […] is not the most effective way to reduce our firearm-injury problem substantially"—clearly enforcing his point that greater restrictions are needed. Thus Hemenway has effectively used multiple techniques to convince his audience that something more must be done about gun safety regulations.

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Author's Biography

Francisco Zarama

Francisco Zarama has chosen to analyze the profound impact point of view can have on the message of a cartoon. Researching different Danish and Muslim practices via Google, he found himself struggling to understand the delicacies of Eastern thought. Franco spent most of his childhood in Scarsdale, New York, graduated from Scarsdale High School, and is now a proud resident of Stanford Hall. He plans to major in mechanical engineering and may pursue a career in teaching or business.

When East Meets West:
Audience and Its Effect

Francisco Zarama
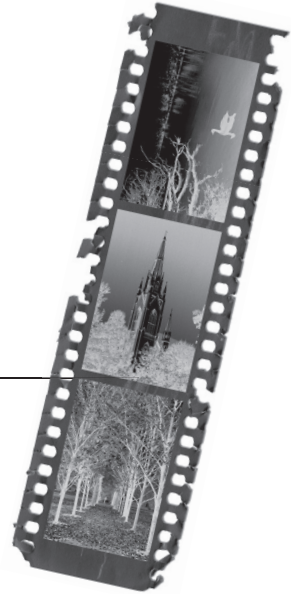
In September of 2005, the Danish newspaper *Jyllends-Posten* published Kurt Westergaard's anti-Islamic cartoons. There were twelve cartoons in all: some were light-hearted and ineffectual; other cartoons, however, were controversial, provocative, and insulting. One of the cartoons represents the prophet Muhammad with a bomb in his head. This illustration of the central figure of the Islamic faith is insulting to Muslims around the world. The basic argument of the cartoon is that Muhammad and Islam, as a whole, are equated with destruction.

The cartoon became controversial because of the different audiences that saw it. Usually, the diverse audience saw the picture in one of two ways. Some in the West saw the cartoon as basically true because they were victims of terrorism perpetrated by some followers of Islam; some Muslims saw the cartoon as a direct attack on their religion. In Denmark, where there is a tradition of bringing taboo topics to the press, Kurt Westergaard felt he was completing this tradition by ending the hypocrisy of not bringing Islam to the forefront ("Row"). His purpose for the cartoon was to satirize a sensitive topic ("Row"). Even though the cartoon effectively suggests that Muslims are irrational and destructive, this was not Westergaard's intentional result. The intent of his argument was to defend "the right to free speech" because some in Denmark felt there was a hypocritical stance on Islam with regard to satire. From either perspective, however, the cartoon depicting Muhammad with a bomb in his head was an effective visual argument because it was clear, relevant, and detailed in the way it showed Muhammad as a symbol of destruction.

The intended audience for the cartoon was Danish citizens who traditionally have a tolerant perspective and are accustomed to the satire of controversial issues ("Row"). However, the intended audience and the actual audience were two very different audiences, and the cartoon became more controversial than Westergaard intended. Its audience became the entire world: both Middle Eastern Muslims and Westerners who were victims of attacks. Many Muslims felt insulted and were outraged by the cartoons, while many Westerners found the cartoons persuasive, even if insulting and unnecessary. The original publisher, the *Jyllends-Posten*, issued a statement on January 30th, 2006 that

read, "In our opinion, the 12 drawings were sober. They were not intended to be offensive, nor were they at variance with Danish law, but they have indisputably offended many Muslims for which we apologise" ("Row"). However, the cartoon was offensive to many because of its effectiveness at conveying an argument.

One reason for the effectiveness of this cartoon is its clarity. The image in the cartoon is clear: Muhammad has a bomb for a brain. The author assumes that most people know who Muhammad is but does not expect people to recognize him because the name of the prophet is written on top of the cartoon. The meaning of the cartoon is clear: a bomb is a bomb, Muhammad is Muhammad, and all that he represents is destruction and mayhem. When the bomb goes off, Muhammad will die, like the suicide bombers.

However, the intended audience and the actual audience were two very different audiences, and the cartoon became more controversial than Westergaard intended. Its audience became the entire world: both Middle Eastern Muslims and Westerners who were victims of attacks. Many Muslims felt insulted and were outraged by the cartoons, while many Westerners found the cartoons persuasive, even if insulting and unnecessary.

The clarity of the cartoon not only makes the cartoon easy to understand, it also evokes certain emotions. The viewer immediately sees the connection between Muhammad and the Islamic religion because he is the prophet of Islam. One cannot help but remember the death and sorrow caused by a few people who worship Muhammad. One logical conclusion suggested by the drawing is that Muhammad is directly responsible for the deaths in New York, Washington, and London. The cartoon portrays to the reader the inhuman Muhammad and suggests that Muslims do not have a brain to be able to communicate peacefully but a destructive mind only used for evil.

Another attempt to play with the emotions of the reader is obvious in the facial expression and features of the depicted Muhammad. Westergaard particularly uses Muhammad's unkempt facial hair and lack of a mouth to make an argument. This representation of Muhammad has hair everywhere, and his asymmetric beard is unkempt; Westergaard is clearly suggesting that Muhammad is dirty and savage. Additionally, Muhammad does not make eye contact with the viewer of the cartoon, which makes him look evil and animalistic (Muller and Ozcan). He has circles under his eyes and looks almost like a caveman. In the cartoon, Muhammad also lacks a mouth. This dehumanization highlights his inability to connect with others in a humane manner. The only way he can effectively communicate is with his appearance and his bomb. Westergaard thus portrays an inhuman Muhammad.

To a Westerner, this cartoon can evoke the radical Islamic groups who communicate through violence. To Muslims, however, because the cartoon is of Muhammad, the message is all encompassing. According to CNN, Afghan President Hamid Karzai's reaction to the cartoon was, "Any insult to the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) is an insult to more than one billion Muslims and an act like this must never be allowed to be repeated" ("Storm"). President Karzai admits that he is personally offended by

the vulgarity of the cartoon: Muhammad is the symbol of Islam, and to insult him is to insult all. The symbol on top of the bomb is an Islamic testimony of faith (Muller and Ozcan). The symbol suggests that the cartoon applies to all Muslims, causing Muslims around the world to interpret these cartoons as a personal attack on their faith.

In keeping with his country's tradition, Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard intended to satirize an issue that had yet to be addressed in this venue: Islamic extremism. However, because of his depiction of Muhammad and a bomb, he unintentionally suggests to his Muslim audiences that all Muslims are inhuman and evil. This controversy teaches the world to be aware of broader audiences and to be prepared for backlash from unintended audience members. Especially when analyzing such a sensitive topic as Muhammad and Islamic terrorism, people must realize that, even though their right of freedom of the press is guaranteed in the West, this right is not guaranteed in the East, and in today's global society, anyone in the world can be part of the audience.

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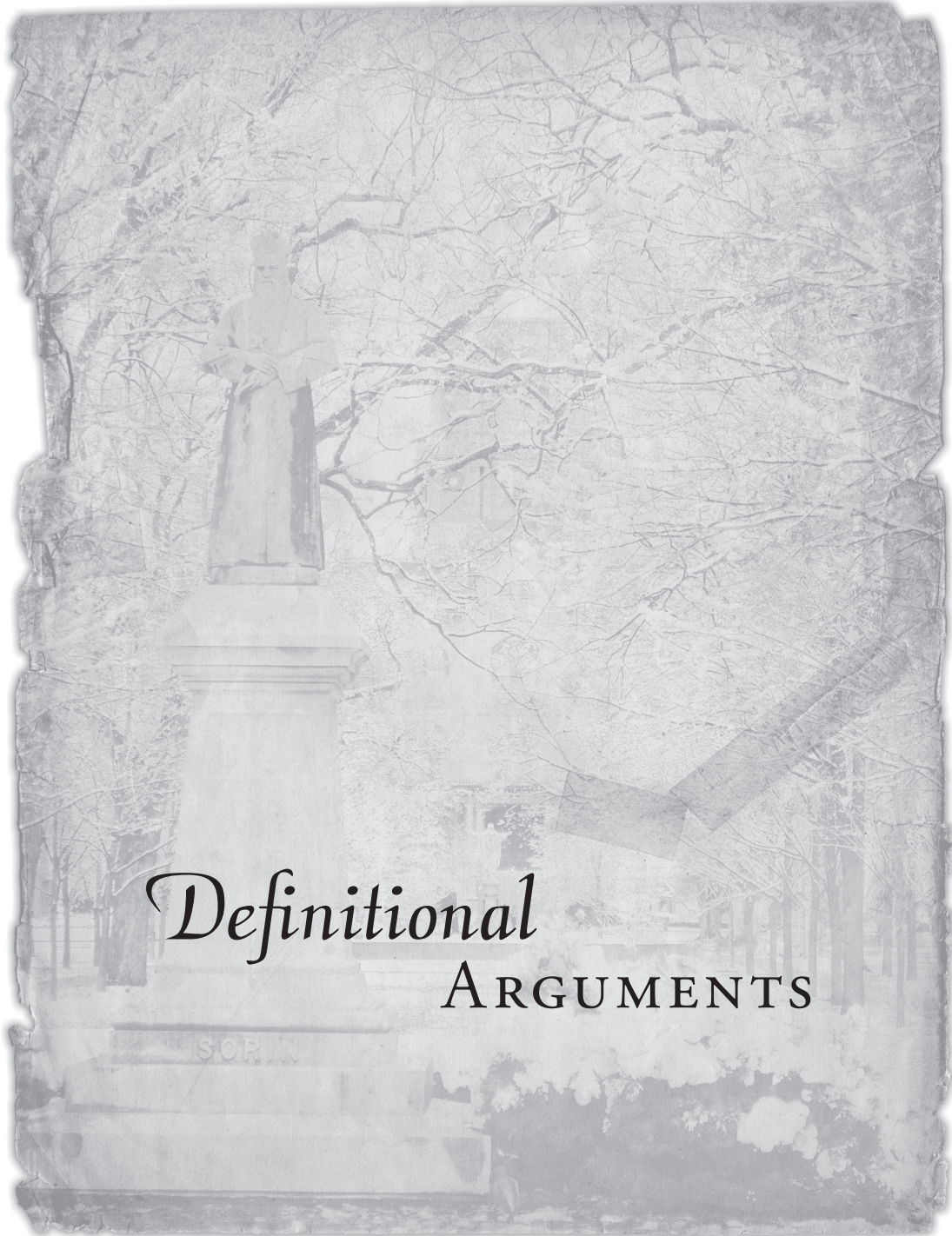
Definitional
Arguments

Author's Biography

CAROLINE COLE

Caroline Cole, a native of St. Louis, Missouri, is thrilled to have her writing appear in *Fresh Writing*. She would like to thank her FYC professor for offering constructive criticism on countless drafts until it was publication-worthy. Caroline is planning to major in architecture and when not in the studio, she enjoys running, attending Campus ministry events, and cheering for the ND football team!

In her FYC class, Caroline was given the assignment of writing a Definition Argument. After observing that "idealism" is a word often met with negative reactions by some of her classmates and others, she decided to define it and defend its role in working for change in the world. She hopes her definition will give her readers a greater appreciation for the concept of idealism.

Idealism

Caroline Cole

The world is not perfect and needs to be changed for the better. I think most people would agree with that statement. If asked *how* to improve it, though, I don't think many would offer the word "idealism" as part of their answer. These people probably think that idealism means having extremely high standards that are unattainable and therefore useless in the real world—practical people, those who are really going to make a difference, shouldn't waste their time on such unrealistic dreaming. I disagree. I believe that no positive changes can occur without some level of idealism being present. Idealism, in its true form, is *essential* for bringing about positive change in the world.

Most of the misconceptions and negative connotations associated with idealism probably come from an incomplete understanding of what idealism actually is. It is more than simply having impossibly high goals. It goes further than that. I think idealism means holding an ideal, or perfected state, as an end to be worked toward. Again, this is an explanation that needs to be elaborated on. To do so, we must go back to the beginning—the beginning of time. When God created the world, it was perfect. The Garden of Eden, Paradise, Heaven—all are names for that place and state. Obviously, that is not how things are now. Adam and Eve sinned, and humanity has inherited that fallen state. We live in a world where corruption, deception, and sin in general are commonplace. This is not the world we were created for, however, and something within us recognizes that. Something within us knows how things were created to be and when we can name that, it is an ideal. This may be a deeper definition than we are used to hearing, but I think it makes sense. For example, an "ideal situation" in the way we usually think of it is simply one that has the best possible outcome. When using the definition I've laid out, however, an "ideal situation" is the way things would be if no sin were present in the world. This is indeed the very best way things could be, so this deeper definition leads to the same conclusion as the more common definition. Other ideals can include truth, justice, love, etc, in their uncorrupted forms. If ideals are the perfected state of things, then idealism is recognizing this perfected state and holding that as the end to be sought after and to be worked toward. This last part of the definition, "as an end to be worked toward," is of vital importance as well. It is not enough to simply recognize the ideal; real idealism inspires action.

There is a very fine line between the common understanding of idealism and the definition I've put forth. Both include the basic idea of having high standards. A gap is perceived between how things are and how they should be. The common definition stops there, though. If people don't realize that the purpose of identifying this gap is to try to bridge it, as my definition proposes, then it is understandable that they might dismiss idealism as useless. This is very dangerous, however. To understand why, it might be useful to compare the relationship between idealism and action to the process of building a house. Having ideals is like having a blueprint. It shows you what the "finished product" will look like. Obviously, you can't stop there—you need materials to build the house. These are the actions we take to work toward our ideals. Imagine having the materials without the blueprint, however—which is essentially what people suggest when they argue against idealism—you would have no idea where to start or how to put things together. In the same way, we need ideals to show us what form our actions should take. Practical actions fit into the framework set forth by ideals. It doesn't make sense to have actions without ideals, so it also doesn't make sense to place more importance on actions than ideals. If we dismiss idealism too quickly, we are essentially getting rid of any focus or direction for how things should become.

> *Practical actions fit into the framework set forth by ideals.*

Sometimes people are inclined to dismiss an idea or piece they think is too idealistic by saying it would never actually work in the "real world," or people and society "just don't work like that." I think this is taking the easy way out, though. Sometimes what idealists have to say is challenging—it forces us to look at how we as individuals and we as a society are not living up to the standards proposed. But isn't that good? Instead of simply disregarding the messages, shouldn't a greater desire for change and a greater determination for bringing it about be awakened in us? At these times, we also need to remember another aspect of idealism I haven't specifically mentioned yet. Ideals, the perfected state of things, will never be achieved here on earth. That is simply a fact. We can get closer and closer to these ideals and continue to *approach* them, but we will never completely arrive at that entirely flawless state before heaven. (This is like the idea of a mathematical limit—an equation can approach its limit and become infinitely close, but not *reach* it.) That being said, we shouldn't become frustrated and give up when it seems like the ideals set before us are unattainable. They very well could be. That doesn't mean we shouldn't continue to work toward them. It also doesn't mean that we should lower our standards and our goals so that we can feel better if we do achieve those. Personally, I would prefer to know the way things really should be and work for that, even if it means suffering disappointments occasionally, rather than being content to settle for mediocrity.

With this understanding of the concept of idealism, it is easy to see why it is necessary for bringing about positive change in the world. First, we should look in general at how positive changes are made.

The first step in making a change is knowing how things *should* be. I think many people would say that the first step is knowing that a change needs to be made, but that implies knowing that something is wrong, and you can't know that unless you know what "right" is. Once you know, you can identify inconsistencies between what you see around you and how you know things should be. These are obviously the areas that need to be changed. At this point you know what is wrong, you know what it needs to become, and all that remains is taking practical action to bring about that change. I won't say that this final step, taking action, is easier or less important than the others. It is neither, but as we already discussed, it certainly doesn't make sense without the others. You can't take action to "change the world" if you don't know what needs to be changed and why it needs to be changed.

How do you complete the first step; how do you know how things should be? In short, idealism. The way things *should* be are the very "ideals" mentioned earlier. For example, we inherently know that everyone in the world should have enough to eat. That is an ideal. Surely, when God created the world, no one was supposed to go hungry. We start with that. Then we look at how things actually are. It's easy to see where we fall short of that. World hunger is an enormous problem. We know that many people go hungry and we need to figure out a way to redistribute the world's resources so that doesn't happen. We are now ready to find practical methods of doing so, of bringing about that positive change. I understand that that is no easy task. But I hope this simple and almost over-simplified example gets across the idea of how important it is to identify the problem, because nothing can happen until it is identified. Therefore, no positive changes can happen without idealism.

Idealism is a natural state for us as Christians, as people with our eyes set on heaven. We know that there is something better out there for ourselves and for our world, and we are called to be moving toward that constantly. Our culture often tells us something different, however. We have grown up in a world that demands immediate gratification and results. Idealism does not provide these. It provides something much better, though—high standards that we can work toward that really will make the world a better place.

Author's Biography

COLIN LITTLEFIELD

Colin Littlefield is a second-generation Domer and a political science major from Loudonville, New York. After graduation, he would like to attend law school. He looks forward to seeing the New York Yankees win the 2008 World Series.

Gun Control

and the Second Amendment

Colin Littlefield
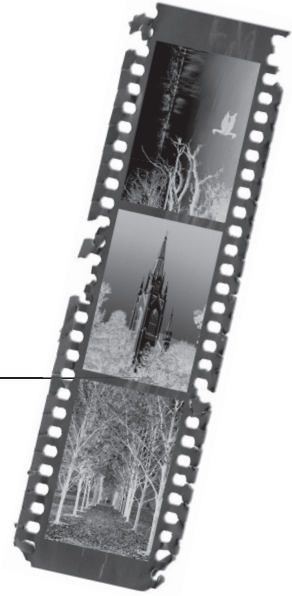
In a testament to America's notoriously ineffectual gun control laws, a disgruntled college student with a documented history of mental instability encountered no difficulty when he purchased two guns and hundreds of rounds of ammunition at gun stores in Virginia. Armed with this virulent arsenal, he murdered 32 people at Virginia Tech in the bloodiest school shooting in American history. While the magnitude of this tragedy is appalling, even more abhorrent is the federal government's tacit acceptance of gun violence as the cost of living in America. Virginia Tech should have been the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back, providing the government with the impetus for urgently-required gun restrictions, but, as happened after the Columbine High School shooting, the nation's most powerful politicians have done little more than express their condolences over this tragedy. Many in Washington defend this inaction by saying that the Constitution forbids the regulation of firearms, but the protection of the second amendment is not an absolute affirmation of a citizen's right to own a gun and, accordingly, the government has a duty to impose meaningful gun restrictions that protect its citizens from gun violence.

Few political debates are as polarizing as that of gun control. This controversy arises from discordant interpretations of the second amendment, which reads, "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the People to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." The gun lobby advocates the notion that the second amendment guarantees an individual's right to own a firearm; to that end, it has consistently and staunchly opposed legislative attempts to restrict access to guns. The problem with this extremely narrow interpretation of the amendment is that it incorrectly defines for whom gun ownership is a right. The preamble of the amendment, which explicitly declares that a militia is "necessary to the security of a free State," establishes its context and purpose. The second amendment is a reflection of the uncertain times in which it was crafted. One of the primary forms of national defense at the time was the militia, and it was imperative that the citizens who comprised these militias be armed. By granting militias of ordinary citizens the right to bear arms, the

second amendment provided much-needed military stability to the fledgling country. Interestingly, the Supreme Court shared this view in 1939 in its unanimous decision in *United States v. Miller*. In that seminal case, the Court upheld a federal gun control law and ruled that the second amendment's protections apply to militias, not individuals.

It is reasonable, therefore, to define the protections of the second amendment as being collective, and not individual, in nature. The Founding Fathers designed the second amendment in the interest of national security, and its protections do not apply to individual gun owners. The amendment protects the rights of the modern-day equivalent of militias—entities such as police agencies and the National Guard—which didn't exist when the Constitution was written. Consequently, Congress has a responsibility to up-hold the second amendment's original intent by making sure that guns don't fall into the wrong hands. These measures needn't hassle law-abiding gun owners, but they must prevent criminals and irresponsible owners from procuring firearms. Renewing the expired ban on assault weapons and reforming the disorganized, porous system of background checks for gun buyers would be a few of the first steps in this process. None of these would cause undue burden for lawful gun owners, but they would make it more difficult for criminals to acquire firearms, especially high-powered automatic and semiautomatic weapons whose only conceivable purpose is to kill. While these measures would not eliminate all gun violence, they would save a sizeable number of innocent lives and act as a good starting point for additional legislative action.

> *Contrary to what the gun lobby contends, gun control isn't about governmental suppression of individual liberty; instead, it espouses a person's right to live, which is one of the most fundamental precepts upon which the Declaration of Independence is based.*

The imposition of strong gun laws would yield a number of benefits to society. Since guns enable people to kill spontaneously during a fit of rage or depression, a decrease in the availability of guns would prevent so-called "crimes of passion" from concluding in fatal bursts of gunfire. In fact, FBI crime data from 2005 shows that over 62% of all homicides in the United States were the result of shootings. The next-most-common form of murder, stabbing, constituted less than 17% of killings. Clearly, guns are the weapon of choice for killers. The gun lobby dismisses statistics such as this by arguing that people—not guns—kill people. However, that argument does not mitigate the indisputable fact that guns, when in the wrong hands, tremendously facilitate murder. To put a spin on the gun lobby's favorite catchphrase, people don't kill people; people use guns to kill people.

Police would profit from enhanced gun regulations. According to an article by Siobhan Morrissey published on *Time*'s website, the number of police officers killed in the line of duty has spiked recently, due in large part to "the continuing proliferation of military-grade firearms [which] often leaves police outgunned." According to the article, there was a 60% increase in the number of shootings of police officers during the first part of

2007. Had there been stronger gun laws on the books, there is a good chance that many of these slain police officers—54 as of September 18, 2007, according to Morrissey— would still be alive. It's reasonable to infer that if a criminal is willing to shoot a po- lice officer, then he wouldn't have any compunction murdering regular citizens, so this should be a matter of great concern to just about everyone.

This is not to say that guns need to be banned completely. Improved gun restrictions, while making it more difficult for criminals to procure dangerous weapons, would have little effect on law-abiding, responsible gun owners. In spite of that, pro-gun activist groups such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) tend to oversimplify the issue by portraying gun control measures as "anti-Freedom," in the words of one message posted on the NRA website. The only freedom that gun control would compromise is the preposterously liberal access to firearms that criminals enjoy. Certainly, the Founding Fathers did not intend for the second amendment to become a shield behind which ir- responsible gun owners and criminals could hide. Gun regulation actually echoes the underlying sentiment of the second amendment: to protect American lives. It was in- comprehensible to the Founding Fathers that future generations would misinterpret the Constitution as a justification for the existence of the gun culture that has engulfed America. Contrary to what the gun lobby contends, gun control isn't about governmen- tal suppression of individual liberty; instead, it espouses a person's right to live, which is one of the most fundamental precepts upon which the Declaration of Independence is based.

The gun lobby would have everyone believe that arming the civilian population is the magical solution to crime. In the wake of the Virginia Tech massacre, Ted Nugent articu- lated the opinion of a number of gun supporters when, in an article published on CNN's website, he denounced gun control measures as "evil… anti-gun cults" that seek "brain- dead celebration of unarmed helplessness." He further asserted that if the Virginia Tech students had carried concealed firearms, they could have killed the shooter early in the rampage while the casualty toll was still low. Somehow, it's hard to imagine that dozens of terrified students would possess the unflappable composure of a glorified action hero like a Jack Bauer or a James Bond when suddenly thrust into a life-or-death situation. On the contrary, it's far more likely that the ensuing hail of gunfire from the panicking students would miss the shooter and make the carnage even worse. Still others, such as the anonymous author of a message on the NRA website, believe that the surge in shoot- ings in the wake of Hurricane Katrina was a welcomed sign that people were exercising some constitutional right to shoot people under the nebulous justification of self-defense in a time of "civil disorder." The NRA fails to acknowledge that said "civil disorder" was the direct result of irresponsible gun owners taking the law into their own hands. These cavalier attitudes pander to people's fear and, ironically, increase the incidence of violent crime in America by encouraging accidental and unjustified shootings. If anything, having so many guns in New Orleans only exacerbated issues by encouraging unbridled vigilantism. While the self-defense argument might seem appealing at a superficial level, it is fallacious and crumbles under scrutiny. You can't necessarily fight fire with fire.

The second amendment, while a popular rallying cry for the gun lobby, defines gun ownership as a collective, not an individual, right. Gun control, consequently, is a fully constitutional concept, and its usage is a necessity in a time when America is awash in gun violence. While the gun lobby maintains that the second amendment is a nearly unconditional assurance of an individual's right to bear arms, it is clear that the Founding Fathers did not intend to protect private gun ownership. Just as the government forbids citizens from owning nuclear bombs and other weapons of mass destruction, so too does it have both the authority and the responsibility to impose meaningful restrictions on guns. To enact better gun control is to repeal a deadly blood tax that perpetuates needless violence and kills thousands of people each year.

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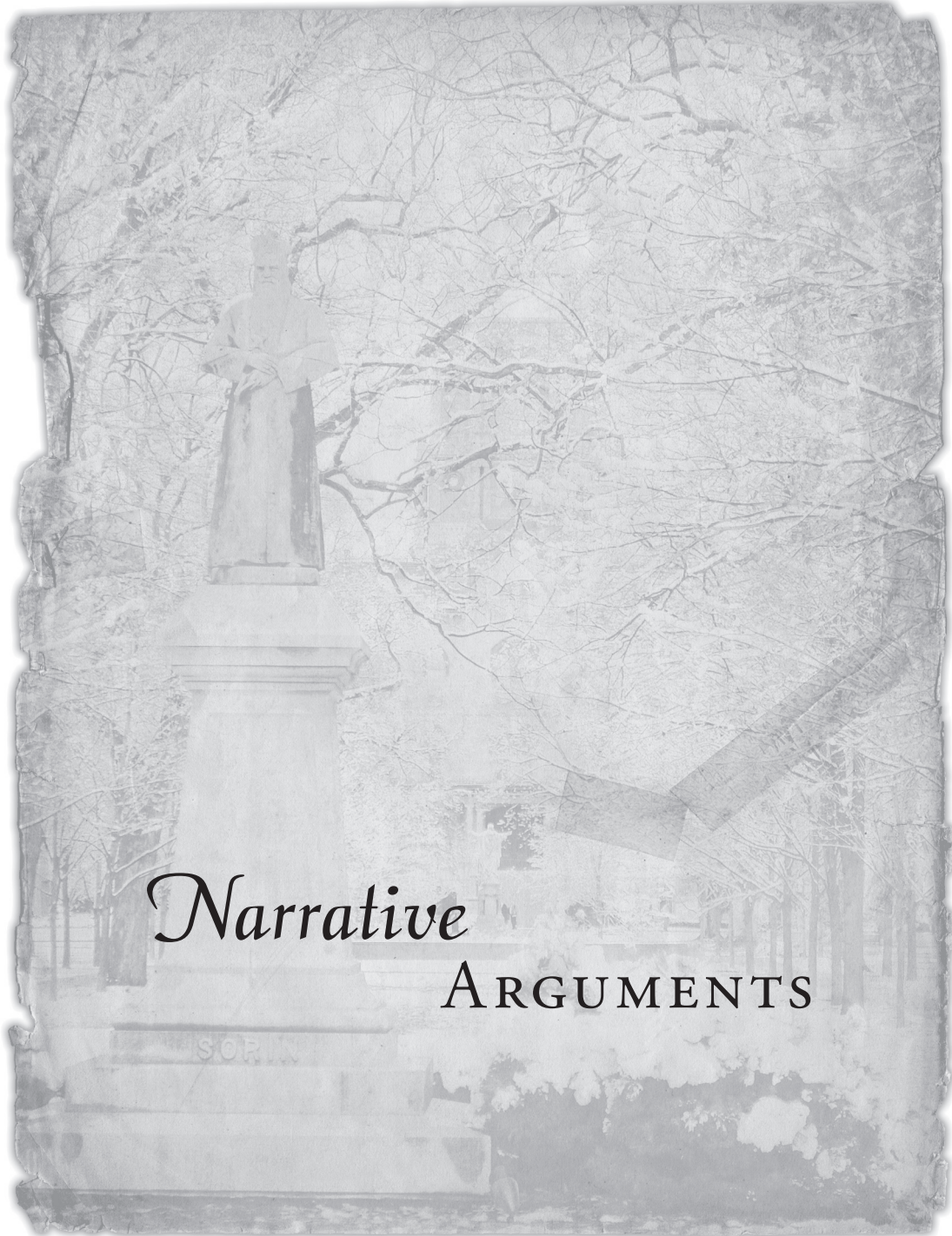
Narrative

Arguments

Author's Biography

Hallie Brewster

Hallie Brewster is an undergraduate in the class of 2011 at the University of Notre Dame. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area in California, she is now a resident of Walsh Hall. She plans on double majoring in business finance and political science, with a minor in Latin American studies. She has never considered English to be her strongest subject, always preferring math and science. However, in her Community-Based Learning First-Year Composition class, she was able to turn her interests and experiences into creative works. One assignment in particular that helped her open up and explore her creative side was the personal narrative, meant to evoke a sense of displacement. She would like to thank her FYC teacher for giving her this opportunity to express herself so freely.

Silver

AND CRIMSON

Hallie Brewster
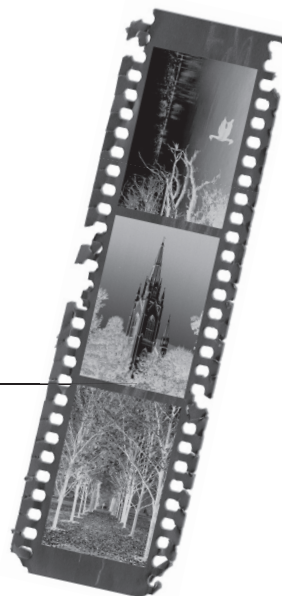
I walk into the classroom that I had once felt comfortable in and try not to notice the twenty pairs of eyes staring at me. Instead of going to the front as I used to, I sit in the back row, corner seat. The teacher sympathetically acknowledges my presence with a slight, uneasy head tilt and a half-smile of worry. My classmates turn their heads in my direction. I look up at them through my glassy and blood-shot eyes that are too tired from excessive crying. They quickly turn back to the front of the room, acting as if they were not really watching me. My face feels like it is on fire, and I am sure it is bright red from embarrassment, anger, or a combination of the two. I realize that everyone has heard why I was not in class this week. The speed at which rumors travel at such a small school is fast enough to make one's head spin. They have all heard the stories, but none can understand what I have been through. For some reason over the past few days I had convinced myself everything would be fine. I should have known better.

The teacher begins talking and writing, but throughout the lecture he too often glances in my direction. I suddenly remember a telephone conversation that I overheard yesterday. My mother was calling my school to ask that the teachers and counselors try to keep track of where I am and what I am doing throughout the following days at school. Her voice trembled with worry. She feared what would happen to me if I went back. I know I had scared her pretty well. Coming home from work to find her daughter crying and shaking uncontrollably, unable to respond, could not have been easy for her. Yet at the same time, I do not like feeling burdensome. I used to like attention, but now I long to be anonymous. I do not want to be *that* girl. The one with all the problems. The one who everyone is scared will suddenly jump off the edge into insanity. I want to be how I was before. I want to go back to that day and do things differently so that this chain reaction of anger and depression would never have started and never have led me to this point. But I can't go back. It happened and now I have to live with it forever.

My mind moves in and out of the classroom. I cannot focus on what the teacher says. I try to ignore the whispering and sharp glances of the people I had formerly called my friends. I look out the window and my mind wanders. My only thoughts are of that one afternoon. I do not know how I will ever be able to get the haunting images out of my

> *I can't go back.*
> *It happened and now*
> *I have to live with it forever.*

mind. Every detail is still so vividly engrained in my head. No matter what, I am reminded of what he did. It was not meant to affect me. He wanted to hurt himself, and did not mean for me to see, but I did. I saw it. I see it. As I sit in the classroom, I am swept back to that same place, that same day. It plays over and over in my head like a broken record with no end. I look up and see his face, scared and pale, staring straight into my soul. I see his hand that is so strained that it resembles a rigid claw, meant for tearing rather than holding. The blade he held to his wrist drops. Finally I see the silver razor lying in a pool of thick crimson that not even light can penetrate. I feel like I am falling, and once again everything goes black.

Author's Biography

JACKSON BANGS

Jackson Bangs, originally from Montclair, New Jersey, now resides in Stanford Hall when he is not working in the architecture studio. He is an avid environmentalist and considers himself somewhat of an idealist. He served at the Center for the Homeless during his freshman year in his Community-Based Learning section of First-Year Composition and feels that he has learned much about the bureaucratic problems associated with large nonprofit organizations. With this narrative argument, he hopes to convey a sense of the importance of helping every individual in need.

Unable to Shelter
THE HOMELESS

JACKSON BANGS

It is seven o'clock on November sixteenth and the temperature is dropping rapidly. I sit at the front desk of the Center for the Homeless, the ten by twenty foot island of relative calm in the barely-controlled chaos of the huge building. As the sun sets, the three of us manning the desk start getting questions from people, both in person and on the telephone, asking if they can come stay with us. I do not know what to say.

I ask Meg, the woman in charge tonight, what I should say when these people ask me if they can stay. She leaves what she is doing and pulls out a binder, explaining to me that this is the Weather Amnesty log. I am to tell people who ask, "Sir, we do not have any beds open, but we do offer Weather Amnesty. If the temperature drops below thirty-two tonight, we can let you sleep here tonight on a cot." While I am being told this, two people come by asking me to page various guests living at the Center. I oblige, then call the people standing in the lobby who had been asking me if they could stay the night and explain the Center's policy to them.

As more people begin congregating in, and thereby congesting, the lobby, a small trapezoidal room just in front of the desk, we realize we need to find them a place where they can spend the night, fast. Unfortunately, Center for the Homeless policy dictates that Weather Amnesty does not start before nine o'clock, the end of check-in for regular guests. Additionally, it dictates that the lobby must close between eight and nine o'clock so that everyone can get checked in without any interruptions.

As I turn away another old, underdressed man who is so cold I can literally feel the drop in temperature around him, I remember how cold I was during my five-minute walk from the bus station to the Center. I realize with a terrible feeling in my stomach that I just sent this man back out into the subfreezing temperature. "Why can't we just take these people in?" I ask my supervisor. "The Hope Rescue Mission only takes men for weather amnesty," she replies, "we made a deal with them that we would take all of the women for them, and in return they said they would take the first men." I nod in understanding. I refer the next three men to the Hope, telling them I am sorry I can't just take them now. I let a few women sit on a bench in the lobby for the time being.

Around seven-thirty, the three men I had sent three blocks up the street to the Hope came back. "They aren't taking anybody," one of them says. "They say it isn't below freezing." I am stunned, and I stammer that I am not sure, but I suppose they can just sit in our lobby while we work out their situation. One of them comes up to the desk again some time later, and tells Andrew, another Notre Dame volunteer, what is going on. Andrew pulls up the weather on the computer. "That's absurd; it's well under thirty-two out there," he says. He tells Meg what they said. She sighs wearily, complaining that she had talked to them about this already. Andrew calls up the Hope and explains what is going on. They agree to open their doors, noticing that it *is* under freezing now. We tell the men that Hope is expecting them, and they leave, their half-hour long attempt to find shelter for the night almost over.

With that issue solved, at least temporarily, I busy myself distributing keys to the medicine cabinets so that guests can retrieve their prescriptions. During the fifteen minutes or so I am doing this, I see a few more shivering men get sent three blocks up the street to the Hope. The clock strikes eight, and still there are a few women—who have nowhere to go—sitting in the lobby. I cannot bear to turn them out. I glance over at Andrew, and we silently decide to pretend they are not there and just let them stay inside until nine.

I realize with a terrible feeling in my stomach that I just sent this man back out into the subfreezing temperature.

As the evening goes on, we continue to field calls every few minutes from people asking about whether they, their parishioner, friend, friend's friend, brother-in-law, or somebody else they know can stay with us. We continue referring them on to the Hope Rescue Mission. It gets frustrating; we have enough cots for these people right now, and we are wasting their time and keeping them out in the cold for longer by sending them up to the Hope Rescue Mission or making them wait outside until it is nine o'clock. The Center is very quiet right now; almost everybody is checked in, and there is barely any activity in the main room. It would be easy enough to just let these people in so that they can get off of the streets and get settled. That *is* the Center for the Homeless's mission; we are trying to help everybody, not just those who are lucky enough to get a bed here.

As I am pondering these things, I glance up at the clock and see that I need to leave and walk to South Street bus station for my ride back to Notre Dame. Standing, shivering, on the platform, I notice that the benches next to me are designed so that it is possible to sit on them, but not lie on them, and I see the signs stating that the station's waiting room is for "Transpo passengers only." I wonder where homeless people who are waiting to get into our building stay. As I see the bus that will take me home pulling into the station, I silently give thanks for the fact that I have a place I know I belong every night, that I do not need to go through a well-intentioned, but inefficient organization in order to find a place to sleep indoors.

Author's Biography

Laura Bradley

Laura Bradley is a native of South Bend, Indiana, and a proud resident of Howard Hall. Growing up in a family of eight children gave her plenty of experience with a diverse family dynamic. She spent a lot of time in high school with children: babysitting, nannying, and volunteering with kids at a local homeless shelter. She is interested in political science, specifically international relations and peace studies. She hopes to continue to be involved in political and volunteer projects that are geared toward improving the plight of children from impoverished families. It was her varied experience with family dynamics that motivated her to explore the effects of family dinner in a narrative argument. She found that forming an argument around a topic that she had plenty of personal experience with made the writing process easier.

Gather Round:
The Importance of Family Dinner

Laura Bradley
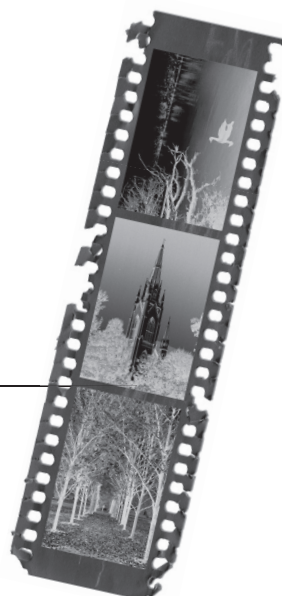
While most of my friends worked as waitresses or lifeguards in high school, I chose to spend the majority of my time with people under the age of twelve. One night when I was babysitting for two kids, their parents rushed in from work. It had been a hot summer day, and the kids had not seen their parents all day. The children were a little cranky and hungry. Their mother rushed in and immediately began preparing the nightly meal, a meal in which the children would have no part. The children's parents would make a three course meal for themselves and sit at the dining room table, while the children occupied the kitchen table and ate Easy Mac. Yes, the children probably preferred the mac and cheese to spicy grilled tuna, but the disconnect between the two groups was striking. Not only was there a physical separation, but there was no exchange of real conversation, and no apparent interest between the kids and the parents. This was the nightly routine. Their parents were usually distracted and almost overlooked their kids. The kids were grumpy and became ornery to get attention from their parents. On the other end of the spectrum is my personal dinner experience with my own family. There are eight kids in the Bradley clan, so I grew up in a big family environment. My family sits down to dinner every night, nothing formal, just gathers for the nightly meal. While some may claim that eating together as a family is unnecessary and impractical in today's world, the importance of stability in today's hectic society suggests instead that family dinner is essential for the good physical and emotional health of the family members.

Family dinner keeps children in good physical health. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University did a study recently on the correlation between family dinner and substance abuse. The study found that the more often that children and parents eat dinner together, the less likely it is that the children will develop a substance abuse problem, whether it be with alcohol, drugs, or tobacco. The reasons behind this finding may have something to do with the stability and parental presence that family dinner affords children. There are also many studies being done on whether family dinner and healthy eating are related. A study of 20,000 adolescents published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that the presence of a parent at a

daily meal was crucial to children getting a daily dose of fruits, vegetables, and protein. Three-fourths of the kids who reported sharing few meals with their parents did not eat enough vegetables. In comparison, only two-thirds of those who ate with their parents at least five times a week did not eat enough vegetables. An interesting finding was that it was not enough for a parent to be present in the house. The study found that it did not matter if parents were home but did not eat with their kids; the vegetable intake was still poor. The study concluded that there is a positive interest in the health and eating patterns of children in having family dinner.

Family dinner nourishes the family members emotionally and mentally. In my family we sit down to dinner together every night without fail. It may not be a full thanksgiving feast, but we still sit down at the kitchen table for at least 25 minutes and just share food and swap stories, tease, shout, discuss, argue, and laugh. The dinner table is where the family dynamic comes out most clearly. With eight kids and two parents, there are a lot of personalities to contend with, and the various roles we assume in the familial hierarchy come out in full force at dinner. Family dinner is like a free group counseling session. Any problems or troubles can be laid out for everyone to analyze. Granted, some of the advice may not be helpful (ahem, smart aleck older brothers), but, still, the feeling that there are people rooting for you gives you a certain strength. The regularity of family dinner itself gives stability to everyday life. Our dinner table conversation ranges from the day's events to funny stories from past family events to arguments about politics and religion to discussions about philosophy to impromptu song and dance routines by the younger members of the clan. Just for everyone to drop what they are doing and gather with their family is itself a release from the stresses of the day and can help put things in perspective. It makes the family members break out of the self-focused bubble that most of us live in and literally sit down facing other people and share their life and food.

> *It makes the family members break out of the self-focused bubble that most of us live in, and literally sit down facing other people and share their life and food.*

Engaging with each other in a meal is crucial to solidifying familial relationships. Some may argue that it does not matter where the gathering takes place as long as it does. However, sitting in front of the television as a family does not have the same effect as everyone facing each other around the dinner table. A Harvard Medical School study of over 10,000 teens found that the closer kids get to adolescence, the less they eat with their families. Part of this finding may be because of the busy schedule of today's teens, but adolescence is the most crucial time for parental guidance. The cliché "strained relationship" between teens and parents may be caused, in part, by the separation of parents' and children's lives. Family dinner is an easy way to solve that problem. Relationships between siblings are enhanced by family dinner, too. I know that with my busy schedule in high school, I probably wouldn't know what was going on at my siblings' school or with their friends if I didn't see them at dinner every night. Family dinner is also important in establishing role models. Older siblings can dispense advice or commiserate with younger kids' troubles, or friend drama.

The institution of family dinner is crucial to keeping the family dynamic strong and the family unit healthy. It has many physical benefits in terms of diet and nutrition, but it also nourishes the soul. In our hectic modern world, though, it is increasingly difficult to set aside time for a nightly meal. In fact, the positive and negative effects are subtle, and therefore the importance of family dinner is hard to gauge. But from my personal family dinner experiences at both ends of the spectrum, it is clear that breaking bread together is the best thing a family can do together to solidify relationships and develop the dynamic.

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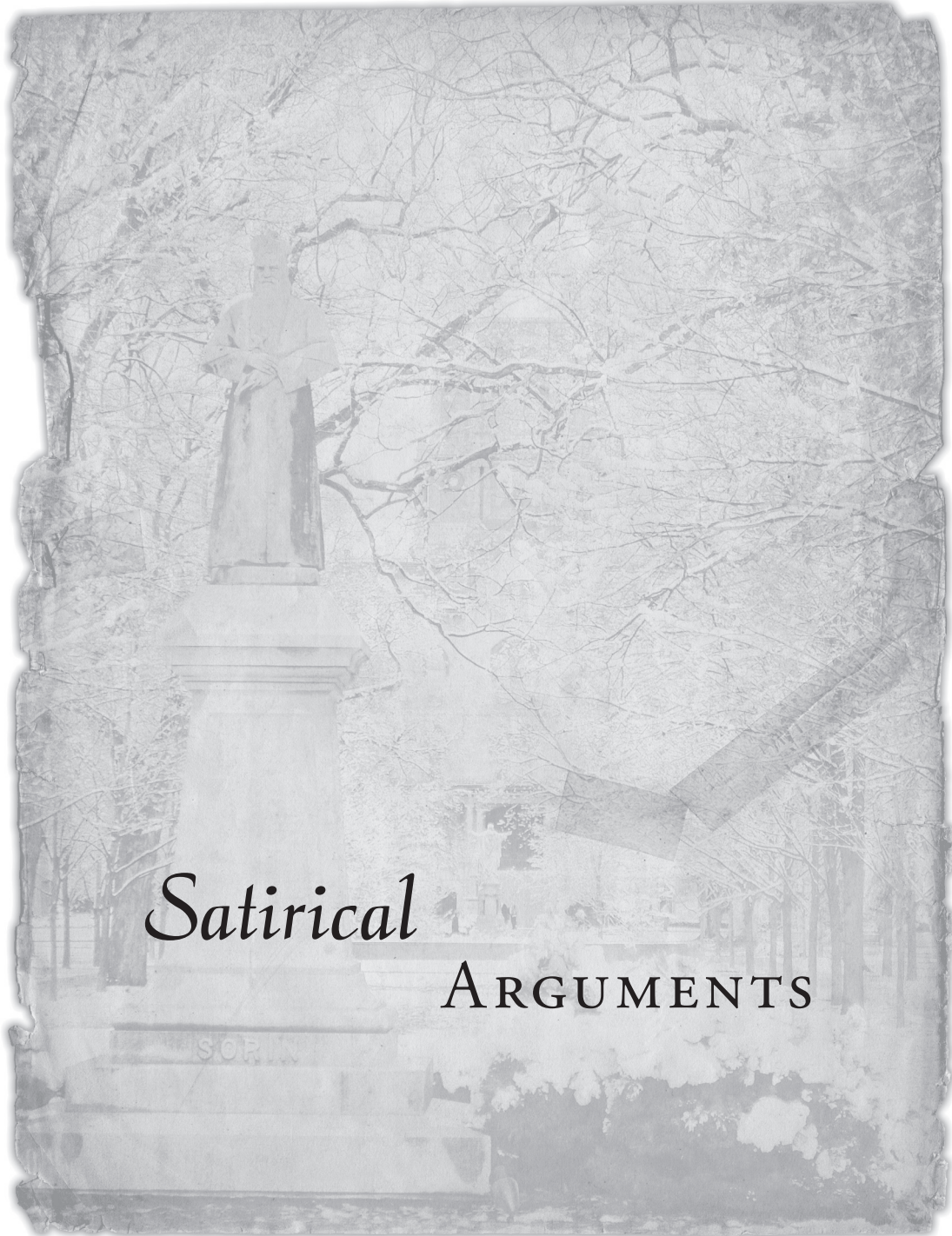
Satirical

Arguments

Authors' Biographies

LAURA TICHE
ANNIE PENDLETON

Laura Tiche and Annie Pendleton are among the select few truly educated people who can draw perfect chair cyclohexanes. In addition to this monumental achievement, Laura and Annie are also (now) published writers and well-established authorities on a variety of subjects, including, but certainly not limited to, successful child rearing (although they have none of their own), creating chaos through chemistry, and power-walking up Jordan's stairs. Originally from the middle of nowhere north of Pittsburgh and even farther out in the boondocks of northern South Carolina, these two pride themselves on doing what is generally considered shocking and distasteful, like being free spirits and voting Democrat. Future plans include saving the world one rotten little monster at a time.

Contextualization

The idea for this *Parenting Today* article stemmed from an assignment to respond to Jonathan Swift's essay, "A Modest Proposal." In this article, Swift offers an outrageous solution to a contemporary problem. Clearly, we have done the same. We chose to find a solution for incompetent parents and their bratty children due to our dining hall frustrations on football game days when kids run out of control eating massive amounts of sugary frozen yogurt creations while their parents try to control them, but to no avail. We do not necessarily condone the type of parenting advice offered in *Parenting Today*, but we hope it gives parents and other readers reason to consider how children should be disciplined.

Parenting Today
Article

Laura Tiche
Annie Pendleton

Go to http://www.nd.edu/~frswrite/TP.htm for the full text of this article.

Demon Child? Turn Him into an Angel in Three Easy Steps

People call them the "terrible twos" for a reason. Just as kids are beginning to walk and talk, they start to cause trouble. If these poor behaviors are not corrected early and decisively, then your child may end up as a terrible burden when he is eight or nine. If this sounds like your little darling, then ask yourself these questions: Does your child refuse to do things that you ask him to for any reason? Does he yell "NO!" and speak rudely to you? Does he deliberately disobey you? And have you tried talking to him to no avail, and he just refuses to cooperate? If so, then I've got good news for you. A new study, done by the Child Development Institute, shows that there is a remedy for this situation. It is called Behavior Alteration for Kids, and it transforms your child into the angel you always dreamed he'd be in three simple steps.

Step One: *Identify the source of the undesirable behavior.*

This is the most difficult part of the Behavior Alteration process. However, it can be done easily if you carefully observe your child. At times when he is most unruly, what is he doing? Is he playing basketball or video games? Is he watching TV or reading a book? Is he tired or hyper? Or is he many of these? Identify all of the times when he is disobedient and make a list. Once you've got your list, you can move on to step two.

Step Two: *Associate the identified source(s) with punishment.*

The simplest way to curb bad behavior is to associate the source of the distraction with a negative consequence. Thus, step two is really quite simple: punish your child every time he goes near that basketball hoop or TV set. Even if he isn't doing anything wrong at the time, you have seen in the past that this specific activity makes him disobedient, so you have to prevent him from ever doing it again. If you see him pick up his basketball, slap him on the face, take the ball, and lock it away. Do the same with the TV. If he turns it on, slap him on the face and cut the cord. The key to this step is to do the

exact same thing to punish him every time he begins the offensive activity. Slap him in the same manner every time, so that he begins to associate that specific activity with the pain caused by your hand. Once he begins to associate playing basketball with pain, he won't even want to play basketball anymore. Thus, you have successfully eliminated the source of bad behavior.

Step Three: *Introduce a new, more favorable behavior.*

You will know step two is complete because you will have a very bored child on your hands. Depending on how severe the case of bad behavior is, your child may have eliminated one or a dozen activities from his daily life. Now, he has a lot of free time that needs to be filled up. This is your opportunity. When he doesn't want to play basketball, suggest he do an activity that is more likely to promote proper behavior, such as listening to Tchaikovsky, solving calculus problems, or cleaning the kitchen. (They are never too young to learn how to clean. Trust me.) Thus, you are replacing his bad habits with good ones, and he is willing to allow you to do so. He will offer no resistance; in fact, he will be grateful to you for providing him with something to do with his time. And, as an added bonus, but not a necessary one, you could praise him when he happily does the good activities.

Slap him in the same manner every time

Step one is the most challenging and time consuming portion of this process, but be patient and the benefits will be great. You will finally have your little angel.

AUTHORS' NOTE

The following annotations are from websites we used in creating our article. We used the websites more for layout and design ideas, and only a few were used as contextual sources.

"Brainwashing." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.* **15 Nov 2007, 07:12 UTC. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 19 Nov 2007 <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php ?title=Brainwashing&oldid=171617058>.**

Although Wikipedia is not accepted by some teachers, the articles almost always provide valid links to websites from where the article's information came and offer facts that can be verified by other sources. The brainwashing article found on Wikipedia provides a general summary of brainwashing techniques. The article was useful for our purposes because we did not want all of the details of brainwashing, we were only trying to get a general idea of the concept of brainwashing, which is exactly what the article provided.

McGraw, Dr. Phillip Calvin. "Common Discipline Mistakes." <u>Parenting</u>. 2007. 18 Nov 2007 <http://www.drphil.com/articles/article/250>.

Dr. Phil always has something interesting to say about anything, including parenting and discipline. This article describes some of what are, in his opinion, parenting mistakes. He includes things like "inconsistent discipline" and "inappropriate punishment," so we were sure to avoid those in our behavior alteration methods.

Pavlina, Steve. "Behavioral Conditioning." <u>02 Nov 2007</u> 11 Nov 2007 <http://www.stevepavlina.com/blog/2004/11/behavioral-conditioning/>.

This article provided us with all the ammunition necessary to create the three easy steps theme in our article. It outlines a great number of tasks that are suggested to conditioning yourself to perform better. The three steps we used come loosely from these instructions.

Pavlik, Rebekah. "Behavioral Parenting." <u>Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies</u> (2007). 11 Nov 2007 <http://www.behavior.org/parenting/>.

The name of the article on this website explains quite well why we found it helpful while writing our article. The Cambridge center is a well known and reliable source. Also, we have certainly learned a good deal about the importance of adult influence on a child's development.
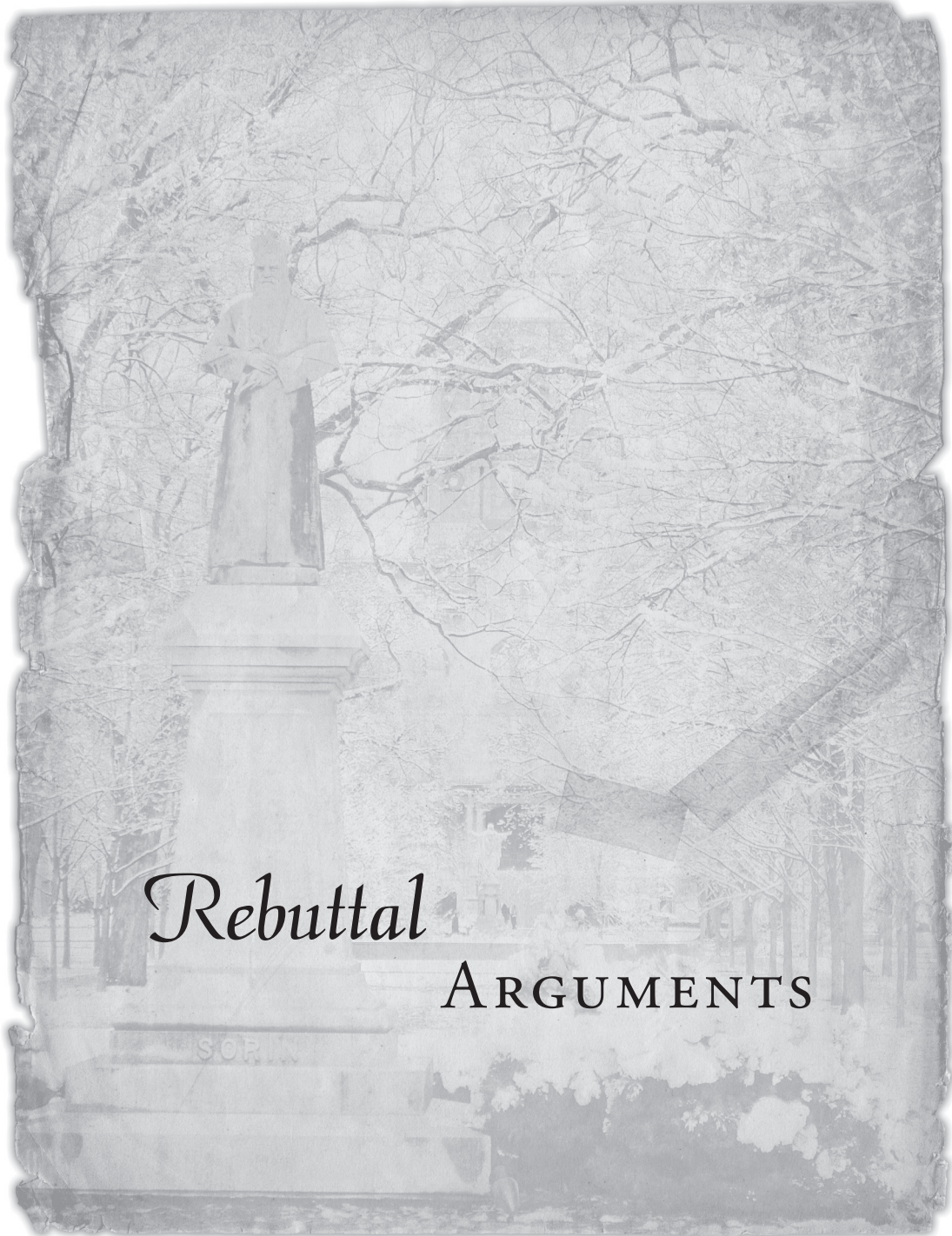
Rebuttal
Arguments

Author's Biography

Elizabeth Dallacqua

Liz has always had trouble finding her "hot coal," a term copyrighted by her eleventh grade composition teacher meaning "inspiration." Yet, when she composed "Generation Y: The New Frontier," she had all the inspiration she needed. The paper pertained directly to her and her experiences, and although the editing was tedious, the end result represented something meaningful. Liz is a double major in engineering and music and is a Michigan native, growing up forty minutes north of Detroit.

Generation Y:

The New Frontier

Elizabeth Dallacqua

Haven't you ever heard the expression, "It's a college thing"? That phrase that so perfectly explains why some college freshmen come home at Christmas with a new piercing or a different hair color, and why most college kids join every extracurricular activity in an attempt to solve the mystery question "Where do you see yourself in ten years?" Young adults enter their freshman year of college ready to take on the unexpected and explore the rugged terrain of the "college experience." This experience is supposed to be an adventure, a liberating awakening, a chance to escape the grasp of adult supervision. Despite this common assumption, many people today debate just what exactly this experience entails. Rick Perlstein defines what he believes to be the college experience in his article, "Why College Matters," published in *The New York Times* magazine on September 30, 2007. To Perlstein, the generation of today is failing miserably at fulfilling the definition of college life, "College as America understood it is coming to an end" (1). I agree with Perlstein that college as previous generations of America understood it is drifting into the memory bank, but Perlstein fails to acknowledge the identity of the generation today. Although Perlstein supports his argument with facts and narratives of college past, he only touches upon some of the reasons behind the college crash and the revolution of "Generation Y."

Who is Generation Y? We are the children of the baby-boomers. We are dubbed the "Google Generation" and the "iGeneration" according to Sophia Yan's article in the *Oberlin Review* (1). Generation Y is usually identified as those born between 1977 and 1995. Unlike the generations before us, our memories begin with the Gulf War, the death of Princess Diana, and the Columbine Shooting, and continue through the millennium with 9/11, the war in Iraq, and Hurricane Katrina. These are the significant moments that define us. We are unable to connect with the era of the world wars or the Cold War. We are the generation of junk food, technology, pop culture, school shootings, and global warming. Perlstein asks "What's the matter with college?" and I believe he has to begin his search by finding out who exactly goes to college today.

Perlstein argues that the reason the college generation has failed is because of the diminished gap between high school and college due to the influence of baby-boomer parents. As Perlstein maintains, college today is one without a generation gap. "Hip" baby-boomer parents have a different relationship with their children than they did with their parents in the '60s and '70s. Kids today, unlike past generations, not only have more technological opportunities but are okay with calling their parents a couple times a week to chat. E-mail, text messaging, free family cell-to-cell all provide smooth and accessible means of communication between parent and child. It's not like in the "good ol' days" when all that was available was a community phone in the dorm instead of a personal phone in your pocket or pen and paper instead of wireless. Perlstein does not address the technological changes in society that impacted the way all generations, not just Generation Y, communicate.

Technological advances expand beyond communication, they include accessibility to information. With Google, Yahoo, and You-Tube a mouse-click away, students enter college having seen almost everything. Little fazes a college student today. They have already ventured through the web of search engines and related links to dig up random facts and banned knowledge. This is very different from past generations. According to Perlstein, "You used to have to go to college to discover your first independent film, or read your first forbidden book" (4). Now, kids start filming their own "independent films" in high school and placing them on You-Tube to be rated on a scale of one to five stars by their peers. Generation Y was built on technology as a cornerstone for growth. We revolve around our Macs and IBMs and cannot wait to "Facebook" that new buddy in our calculus class. This dependence on technology is a definitive element of Generation Y.

> *Perlstein asks "What's the matter with college?" and I believe he has to begin his search by finding out who exactly goes to college today.*

Despite, or even because of, the communications and information technology available to today's college students, they are viewed as uncreative and unresponsive. It is evident in Perlstein's argument that he believes Generation Y is uncreative when he defines the "organization kid." According to Perlstein, the organization kid "schedules self-exploration" (1). The students of today are so SAT-crazed and Advanced Placement-orientated that they never experience life or do anything on impulse. Generation Y, as we have been labeled, is a competitive, driven generation contending to win admittance to the best universities or extraordinary employment opportunities. This drive has jaded us; Perlstein deems our generation the "culture of enervation," a culture of lesser moral and mental vitality. There are some in the college generation of today that even agree with Perlstein's assumption. University of Notre Dame junior Aidan Gillespie agrees with Perlstein. In a response to Perlstein's argument published in the *New York Times*, he writes, "It seems as if exploration and creativity for its own sake are gone; now our campuses are essentially proving grounds where students take on a huge amount of responsibility and work in the hopes that it looks good on a resume" (2). Gillespie himself admits that, yes, we overindulge, we "schedule free time;" what is a whim to us? But

have the "organization kid," the scheduled free-time, and the drive really taken away Generation Y's ability to self-explore and indulge in independence?

What Perlstein does not acknowledge is that although today's college experience differs in form from that of previous generations, it is still genuine; college kids today are significantly independent and capable of self-exploration. One example of such independence and self-exploration is seated in study abroad opportunities. The past decade revealed a shift from study abroad being a "marginal activity" to being integrated into part of the "institution's core mission," according to Burton Bollag in his article "Get Out of the Country, Please." The significance of study abroad for college students is its ability to "transform." It has been observed that "people who have studied abroad are often transformed by the experience: more willing—and able—to engage with the world beyond America's borders" (Bollag 1). For three months to a full academic year, college students are given the opportunity to study in a foreign country, thus opening their eyes to differences in culture, customs, government policies, and national issues. In 2002–2003, more than 175,000 students, almost 1% of the total undergraduate population, received undergraduate "study abroad" credit (Bollag 1). These numbers have continued to grow, and because of study abroad programs, Generation Y faces global issues rather than staying inside the national fence. Through study abroad programs, Generation Y discovers independence and self-exploration to the utmost. Students are in a foreign country for an extended period of time, unable to see family, or even familiar faces. They must find independence to survive. Perlstein does not include this in his argument because study abroad is a trend of the generation today. Generations of the past did not have the same access to such a tool as study abroad to build independence. Kids today may call their parents and chat for ten or fifteen minutes at a time, something that is foreign to generations of the past, but the generation today also has the ability to travel, to uproot away from their childhood and become independent and cultured adults.

Lack of political activism is another example of students' lack of personal engagement in the college experience. Perlstein believes we don't have the antiwar movements or building takeovers like colleges did in the '60s and '70s. He mentions Berkeley and the University of Chicago as his examples of the liberal belles of the "college era," the era of visible radical rebellion, and implies that today's college students ought to be engaged in similar ways. But what Perlstein fails to mention is that Generation Y did not experience what the '60s and '70s experienced. As Nicholas Handler explained in his response to Perlstein, "We are the 'post-generation'" (2). We are not as enthusiastic about public protest, but we are rebelling in our own way. Generation Y responds through Internet sites such as Moveon.org or Scoop08.com (a website geared towards the 18–24 age bracket committed solely to the upcoming presidential elections), as well as silent protests. The Notre Dame campus is an example of such silent demonstrations. We "Domers" raised white crosses on South Quad during Pro-Life week against abortion, and during the Jena 6 crisis we wore black in support of the victims of racism. When it comes to environmental consciousness, every building has recycling stations and the dorms have "stall notes" that express energy conservation and ways to get involved with environmental issues. On September 22, student volunteers collected 120 bags of non-contaminated

recyclables from tailgates in the Notre Dame library parking lot (MacMahon 1). The same spirit was in evidence when an astounding 85 members attended the first meeting of the GreeND club. Moreover, various clubs are routinely trying to sell t-shirts and wrist bands to gather funds to support research for cancer or build a school for children in impoverished countries. It is true that Generation Y does not have the antiwar movements that Perlstein is referencing, but we are silently working toward change through small movements and universal access to knowledge.

Perlstein is right to note that former manifestations of the American college experience are disappearing, but the essence remains: college continues to be a time of self-discovery and activism. Perlstein expects college life to look the same as it did in the '60s and '70s, but given the changes of the past forty years, this is an impossible expectation. College today is still a liberating experience. You wake up to a schedule that you formatted, take a weekend to Chicago on your own money and time, pick your extracurricular activities, and wash your laundry when you see fit. College today is not comprised of the same lackadaisical free-bird lounge discussions for which Perlstein seems nostalgic, nor is it an extension of high school, as he claims. It is simply the epitome of an example of changing with the times. Advances in information technologies give students greater access to the world than ever before. But just because students are more prepared and informed upon entering college than were previous generations, it does not mean that college is not as liberating for Generation Y as it was for the baby boomers.

Various factors have shaped Generation Y into a generation that uses competitive drive and global knowledge to make a difference. College as America understood it *is* coming to an end. Yet, Generation Y is not as unresponsive or uncreative as Perlstein's claims. Our familiarity with and exploitation of technological advances, our commitment to service, and our desire for long-term, permanent change could support that argument that Generation Y stepped outside the box to find a college experience that was of its very own.

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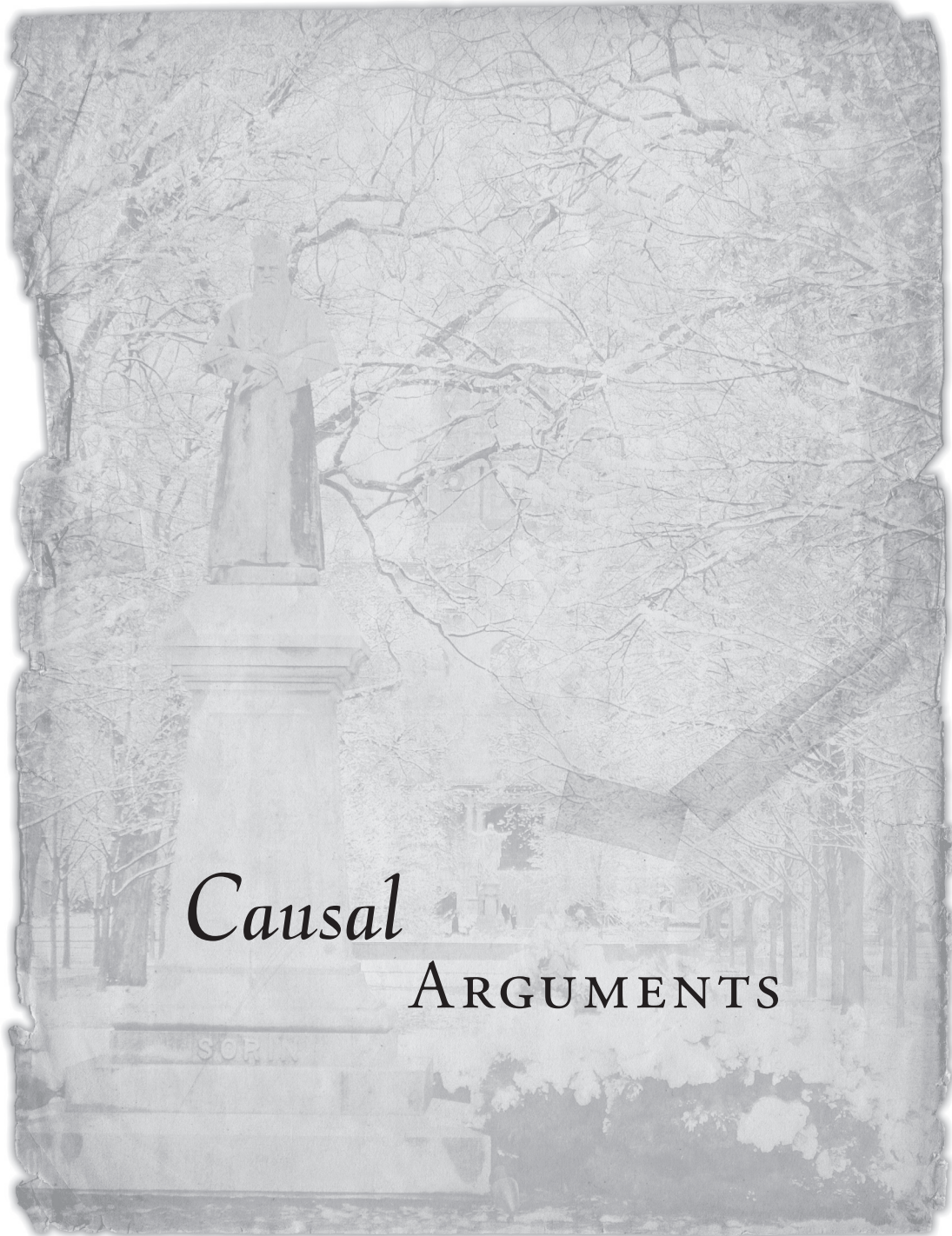
Causal Arguments

Author's Biography

JOSH FLYNT

Josh Flynt is a first-year student at the University of Notre Dame. He plans to major in business and hopes to pursue a career working for a professional sports franchise. While growing up, he read the sports section of the newspaper every morning with his dad and developed a passion for journalism. Josh is from Ballston Spa, New York, and many people are surprised to learn that he is a die-hard fan of the Boston Red Sox and Green Bay Packers. The First-Year Composition course presented a new and interesting challenge for Josh because it focused on establishing an effective argument, a relatively new aspect of his writing. By the end of the semester, Josh realized that the techniques learned in FYC would benefit him beyond the classroom.

Shutout:

Why Soccer Has Yet to Score a Goal Among American Sports Fans

Josh Flynt

In America today, sports are an important part of our nation's culture. Baseball has long been heralded as "America's pastime." Children on playgrounds grow up idolizing basketball great Michael Jordan. Super Bowl Sunday is like a national holiday. Some students may even decide what college to attend based on its athletic tradition. Baseball, basketball, and football dominate American athletics from a spectator's perspective. For the rest of the world, however, another football, known more commonly in the United States as soccer, is most popular as both a spectator and participatory sport. As with other American sports, there is a professional league in the United States, and millions of children play soccer in youth leagues across the country. Nevertheless, soccer lacks the popularity among spectators in America that it has achieved throughout the rest of the world. It is difficult to determine explicitly the reasons for this, but the small size of the professional league, the lack of excitement, international success, and knowledge of the game may be some of the potential causes of this trend. As a passionate American sports fan, I will evaluate the current state of soccer in our country, discussing the historical and immediate causes for soccer's lack of popularity compared to other sports.

Despite soccer's popularity among America's youth, Major League Soccer (MLS) and the United States national team have a fan base that pales in comparison to those of European national teams and leagues. The MLS has a television contract with the nation's premier sports network, ESPN, which includes a broadcast of the MLS Cup Final on ABC (Reynolds). Television ratings for a regular season MLS game average, according to the Nielsen ratings average a 0.2, meaning that only about 223,000 households watch the games (Goff). In contrast, Major League Baseball games during the 2007 season averaged a 1.5 rating, over seven times more than that of the MLS (Brown). It is clear that soccer has not attracted television viewers in the same way that other sports have, but there are many other factors that have hindered the sport's chances of becoming a major interest among American sports fans.

Earlier this year, soccer in the United States took a step toward the level of popularity it has reached in Europe. English star David Beckham signed with the Los Angeles Galaxy, drawing both national and global attention to the MLS. Beckham appeared

on the cover of both *ESPN: The Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated* this summer and for several days the national spotlight surrounded his arrival in America. In addition to the attention that professional soccer received from the media upon Beckham's arrival, MLS game attendance also increased. This past August, Beckham's L.A. Galaxy took on the New York Red Bulls. The game drew over 66,000 fans to Giants Stadium, over four times the team's average attendance. Even still, the crowd was far short of filling the 80,000-seat stadium. The New York Giants' average attendance, however, was 78,731, the second highest average in the NFL ("NFL Attendance – 2007"). While Beckham's arrival in America has certainly sparked interest in soccer, the sport is nowhere near the level of popularity it has in Europe, where it fills soccer-only stadiums to capacity.

Despite the league's television contract, and the addition of one of the world's most well-known players, the league's size has limited it from becoming as powerful as other sports leagues. These other leagues, including the National Basketball Association, National Football League, and Major League Baseball, each have at least 29 teams; the MLS only has thirteen franchises. This makes it difficult for fans across the country to develop a devotion to a soccer team as they might with baseball or football. Of the nation's ten most populated cities, only New York, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, and Los Angeles are home to a Major League Soccer franchise ("Top 50"). As a result, fewer Americans have had the opportunity to watch a regional team play and fewer local superstars have emerged. In smaller cities like Cleveland and Boston, superstars such as LeBron James in basketball and David Ortiz in baseball have become legends. These players bring fans to the games, but the lack of this type of athlete in soccer has put the sport at a disadvantage.

> *Soccer does take a great amount of patience to watch, and based on our culture's obsession with always wanting more, it is easy to understand why a lack of scoring might detract people from tuning into major broadcasts or from filling up the MLS stadiums.*

Smaller salaries have also discouraged some of the nation's top athletes from pursuing a career in soccer. When compared to baseball and basketball, soccer players earn modest salaries. The average MLS all-star in 2006 earned $335,827, while the average MLB and NBA all-stars earned over $7 million and $12 million, respectively ("Range"). Consequently, some of the nation's top soccer players may recognize the chance for monetary success and either change sports at a young age, or pursue a career in a European premier league, in which salaries are greater.

Perhaps one of the primary reasons that soccer in America has not caught on the way other sports have is the lack of "action" that the average sports fan thrives upon. In a poll on USAToday.com, one-third of more than 15,000 respondents to the question "What is the biggest reason that soccer has not caught on in the United States?" answered the lack of scoring. Although the time of game play exceeds that of American football, basketball, and hockey, matches often end in 0–0 draws and even those games that are considered "high scoring" usually only have a handful of goals. Soccer does take a great amount of patience to watch, and based on our culture's obsession with always wanting more, it is easy to understand why a lack of scoring might detract people from tuning into major broadcasts or from filling up the MLS stadiums.

The relative failure of soccer to attract spectators in America in comparison to other major sports can be traced back many years. In the 1970s, some people felt that soccer was on the precipice of becoming a major sport in America. With global stars Pelé and Franz Beckenbauer playing in the North American Soccer League (NASL), teams such as the New York Cosmos were able to draw 77,000 fans to their stadiums (Della Cava). However, the NASL has since disbanded, which did not help to contribute to soccer's development as a popular American spectator sport.

Soccer's lack of success as a spectator sport may also be attributed to the lack of knowledge of the game among "baby boomers" and other adults. It wasn't until 1974 that the United States Youth Soccer Association was established to unite the growing world of youth soccer ("United States Youth"). Thus, soccer is relatively new in the United States and not many of our parents and grandparents grew up playing the sport. Instead, many of them developed a lifelong passion for baseball, basketball, or football through their involvement in these youth leagues. These sports have also had professional leagues for much longer than soccer, as the MLS was only established in 1996. It is very common for parents, especially fathers, to take their children to their first professional game and teach them about the rules and traditions of the sport. Instead of kicking a soccer ball around in their backyard, many children have grown up quoting baseball stats and playing catch. Due to lack of knowledge of the game, few parents would take their children to a soccer game, and instead choose to share their love for another sport with their children. This helped create a new generation of fans in baseball, basketball, and football, while soccer has not experienced this growth.

Additionally, as sports fans, we enjoy watching American teams compete on an international level. Every four years, the Summer Olympics provide the best opportunity for countries to pit their best athletes against one another. Men's soccer became an official Olympic sport in 1908. Since then, the United States has never won an Olympic medal ("Olympic Soccer") or placed in the World Cup, except for 1930 when they finished third ("History"). On the other hand, American basketball has dominated the Olympics, the men's team having won twelve gold medals since 1936. In addition, the American baseball team won the gold medal in 2000 ("Summer Olympics"). This has translated into increased ticket sales and television ratings, demonstrating that success leads to increased fan base and revenue.

On a very basic level, our society thrives on competition and international success, developing a sense of pride when Americans are successful on a global level. In sports, the most recent example of this comes in Lance Armstrong's dominance of the Tour de France. Similarly, we support teams that have had international success. American soccer, however, has struggled globally. Women's soccer has grown during the last decade with the American team's success and a growing fan base. The men's team's lack of success, however, has left men's American soccer out of the media's spotlight, perhaps resulting in fewer soccer fans.

Sports are an important part of the American way of life. We pride ourselves on being fans of certain franchises, and we grow to dislike others simply because of rivalries on the playing fields. Despite our nation's passion for athletics, we have never developed the same love for soccer that we have for other sports. Even with a television contract, soccer has not had the same success as other leagues in attracting spectators. Soccer's failure as a spectator sport may be attributed to several causes. Compared to other major American sports, soccer did not become a popular participatory sport until the 1970s when the U.S. Youth Soccer Association was established. The MLS is a small professional league and lacks teams in some of the nation's largest markets. As a result, it seems unlikely that soccer will ever reach the level of popularity in America that football and baseball have enjoyed. However, some still wonder if the country's passion for playing the sport will ever translate to professional rivalries that are close to the intensity of those present in Europe.

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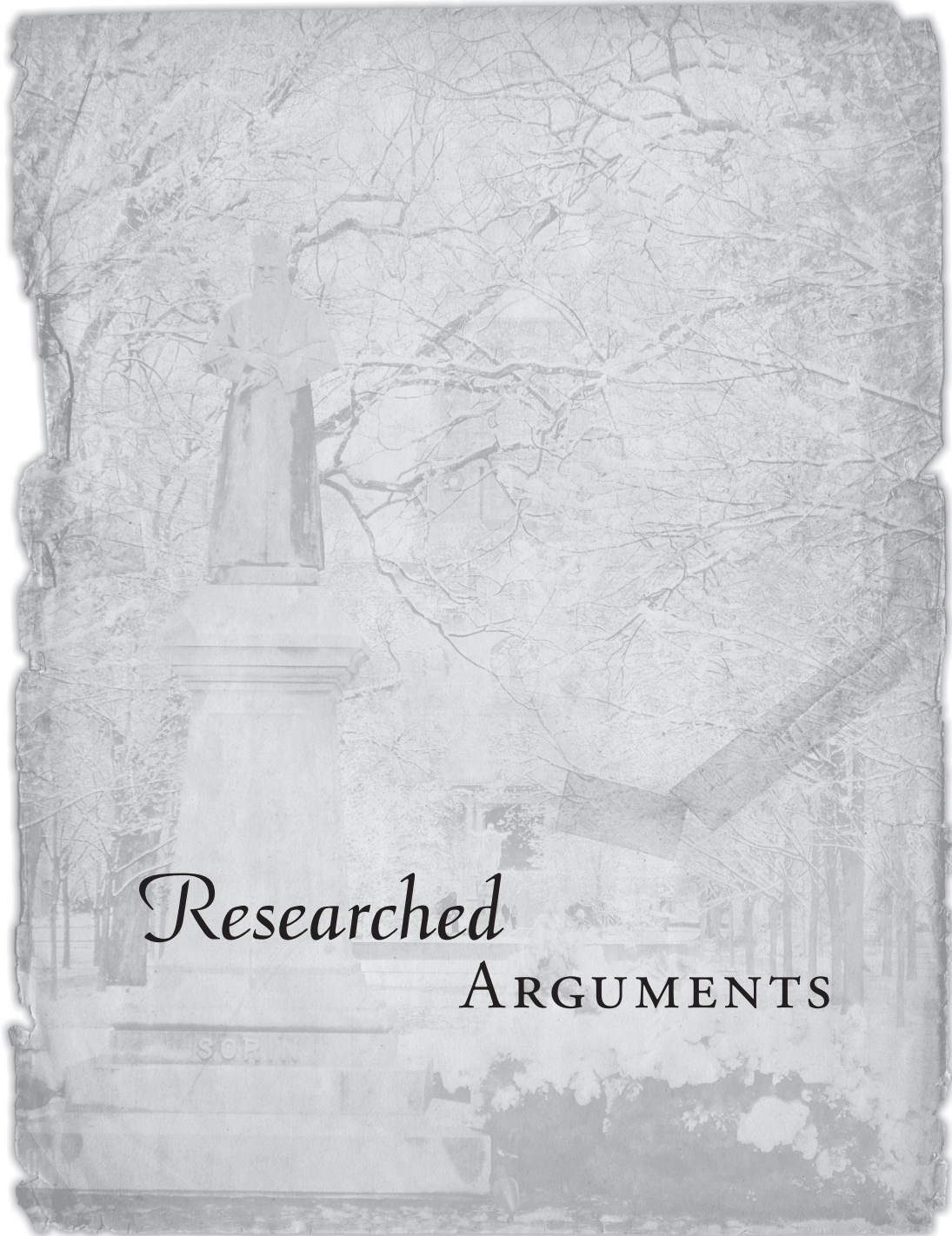
Researched
Arguments

Author's Biography

ADAM KLENE

Adam Klene is a first-year student from Quincy, Illinois. With the intent to major in business, he decided to explore Social Security, an issue that he hopes college students become more aware of. Additionally, the topic of Social Security is one of the most pressing issues on the docket for the 2008 Presidential Campaign. By using recent sources, he hoped to make it the most updated paper on the issue he could. His biggest challenge was turning scholarly business and finance sources into something that could be understood by the average college student.

Partially Privatizing Social Security:

A Feasible Possibility

Adam Klene

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt established Social Security as a means of securing the nation's elderly population of an income and giving them the ability to stay above the poverty line. The system, formally called Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI), was designed so that the present workforce of a given society would fund the system for the retirees of that same society (Dwyer 9). Once the members of that workforce retired, the next generation of workers would then contribute to their economic security. Yet the flaw in this system is about to be realized. Soon, the retired population in the United States will be collecting more money than the system will be bringing in. Around 2017, tax revenue will be unable to finance Social Security by itself, and the benefits will have to be paid out through the Trust Fund. By the year 2042 Social Security will no longer have any funds available to distribute as benefits (Dattalo 233). What can be done to solve this financial crisis? Partially privatizing Social Security into individual private accounts is the most feasible option for a long term financial solution. While it may take away from some of the values of establishing economic security for all, it is an option that will ensure retirement funds for the current generation of workers in our society. Through careful analysis of statistical data, theoretical proposals, and the example of this system in another country, it is the purpose of this paper to offer a better understanding of why partial privatization is a necessary option to saving Social Security.

Social Security in the United States was enacted in 1935, with its first payments being distributed in 1940. It is mainly a program to distribute benefits to retirees, but also pays out benefits to disabled workers and retirees' living spouses. The goal of the program is to provide economic security to all members of American society who have reached old age and retirement. Social Security is primarily a "pay-as-you-go" system. Current workers fund the system for current retirees, and future retirees theoretically would be funded by the future workforce. Today's workers are eligible for full benefits at age 65 and partial benefits at age 62. By the time today's college students are eligible, the age will be raised to 67 for full benefits, with greater penalty for receiving partial benefits at

age 62 (Diamond and Orszag 14–21). Social Security brought in $658 billion in 2004, and only paid out benefits of $502 billion. That leaves a surplus of $156 billion. At the end of 2004, the system held roughly $1.687 billion. With so much money in the system, what is this crisis all about? (Dwyer 9)

Social Security has two major sources of income: the Social Security Trust Fund and the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) tax. The FICA tax is a payroll tax that deducts 6.2% of an employee's income. The FICA tax is also imposed on the employer at the same 6.2% rate, meaning it collects a total tax of 12.4%. The Trust Fund essentially collects the surplus income from the FICA tax and invests it. Currently, the FICA tax is able to cover the payments of all Social Security benefits. Most projections are that the FICA tax will be unable to pay out all Social Security benefits beginning in 2017 or 2018. At that point, funds would start to be drawn from the Trust Fund. What will cause this sudden lack of funding? Primarily, the retirement of baby boomers will drastically increase the number of retirees living in the United States. Coupled with benefits rising due to inflation, these main factors will take Social Security from operating as a surplus to operating from a deficit. Social Security funding will be totally depleted from both sources by 2042 unless changes are made to the system (Hardy and Hazelrigg 67–69).

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Social Security reform is a pressing political issue because of projected shortfalls in funding. Even though benefits are still expected to be around through 2042, unless changes are made soon, financing this program might be a lost possibility. In 2001, President George W. Bush created the Commission to Strengthen Social Security, which came up with three proposals for saving Social Security. All of these proposals involved partially privatizing Social Security through the creation of Personal Retirement Accounts (PRAs).

Personal Retirement Accounts would be private savings accounts funded by a portion of an individual's payroll tax. These accounts could then be invested into government-approved bond and stock funds. The owner of each account would have personal ownership rights over his or her account, because it would be his or her property (Dwyer 1–2). There are a great number of proposals concerning private accounts with many different variations. I would like to focus primarily on President Bush's main proposal, often called Model 2, because it is the proposal with the best chance of gaining public support (Kosterlitz). According to documents released from the White House, private accounts would begin gradually, with only $1,000 per year allowed to be deposited into them. This rate would increase each year, eventually allowing 4% of a worker's payroll tax to be diverted into his or her private account. Money in personal retirement accounts would not be accessible prior to retirement, but accounts would be transferable upon death of the account holder. Upon retirement, funds would not be available all at once as a lump sum, but would rather be paid out over the remainder of the retiree's life, similar to an annuity. These accounts would be voluntary and would be paid out in addition to present Social Security benefits (4–8).

Social Security would continue to exist in the way it does today. Julie Kosterlitz explains in her article "Inside the New Social Security Accounts," that the remaining 8.4% of the FICA tax would still be diverted into the Social Security general account. Because personal accounts would be optional, not all workers would choose to invest in them. The proposal would work out so that if a worker's PRA exceeded the value that the Social Security fund would pay out, he would simply not receive any regular benefits and would receive a higher return than Social Security would pay him. If that worker's PRA is below the value of the benefit he would be eligible to receive via Social Security; Social Security would compensate for that difference. So under this idealistic plan, sometimes called a "take-back" formula, individuals would be better off investing in private accounts, because they are guaranteed to receive a payment of at least the minimum Social Security benefit. If the market is favorable, and an individual makes sound investment choices, then the benefit of their private account could greatly exceed the benefit they would receive from traditional Social Security (Kosterlitz). Despite this guaranteed money, the creation of private accounts has received a lot of criticism from both politicians and other members of society.

Private Accounts would initially set the government back a large amount of money. Because 4% of an individual's FICA tax would be diverted into his or her private account and current retirees or those nearing retirement would keep their checks, the government would have significantly less revenue to pay out the same amount in benefits early on in this new system. These transitional costs are one of the biggest problems facing partial privatization. One estimate is that the federal government would need to borrow $160 billion a year in the first few years under the new plan to ensure that it could pay out all benefits. This would increase the national deficit by roughly 40% annually (Dattalo 236–237) and could eventually total up to $2 trillion in borrowing costs (Jones 26). This huge transitional cost is what politicians are concerned about, and it undoubtedly is a big apprehension. Yet the creation of private accounts would alleviate pressure on the system for future generations. The government would initially experience some hardship financially, but this proposal, although risky, is a solid option for securing Social Security's financial future for current workers.

Risk is the term most often used regarding why privatization is a less than acceptable way of saving Social Security. Because private accounts become a personal asset, they have a certain amount of risk incurred with them. Under the President's proposal, workers would be allowed to place their assets in a wide range of government-approved investment funds, depending on the risk they would like to take with their asset. Generally, the higher the risk, the greater the expected payoff, but the less the predictability when it comes to its ultimate value (Dwyer 3–4). Some believe that allowing individuals to manage their own retirement funds is a poor decision because of these risks individuals would take. Not all American workers are familiar with economics and how the market works, so how are those workers supposed to choose how to invest their money? Recognizing this problem, President Bush has proposed limiting the options for investing a PRA to government-reviewed conservative funds. Even the high risk end of the investment options will not be as risky as relying on individual stocks in a portfolio.

This plan puts faith in individuals to make smart investment choices, but keeps them from placing their money in a fund that is too risky (Weller 334–337).

Human beings have faults, and these inherent faults might cause problems with letting individuals control their own accounts. Patrick Dattalo, in his article "Borrowing to Save: A Critique of Recent Proposals to Partially Privatize Social Security," recognizes one of these faults. He states that it might be tempting for workers to want to draw money from their PRA prematurely to help pay for school, emergency surgery, or a new car. It is human nature for workers to want the money they earned now, disregarding the need they will have for it in the future. But under the President's plan, once money enters a PRA, it is locked in and cannot be withdrawn until retirement. This is a crucial element to the bid for privatization, otherwise the risk carried with the new system might be too large for the public to handle.

It is undeniable that private accounts do carry a lot of risk with them. However, does the present Social Security system not also carry quite a large amount of risk?

It is undeniable that private accounts do carry a lot of risk with them. However, does the present Social Security system not also carry quite a large amount of risk? If a worker pays into the Social Security system her entire life but dies before reaching retirement, she will never see the returns of her investment into the Social Security system. The surviving family of the worker likewise will receive little to no compensation from Social Security for that worker's death (currently the surviving family members receive a stipend of $255). Additional risk carried by the present system is the uncertainty of its future. If changes are not made now, Social Security will likely be depleted by the time those thirty and younger retire (Dwyer 4–12). Even if funds are not totally depleted, benefit cuts are likely to occur because the Trust Fund will not last forever. Quite possibly the greatest risk posed by the current Social Security system is the possibility of the government being unable to pay out benefits from the Trust Fund (Hardy and Hazelrigg 48–51).

Social Security is going to need the Trust Fund, regardless of whether private accounts are implemented or not. For over thirty years Social Security funds (FICA revenue and the Trust Fund) were completely separate from the federal government's accounts. They were off budget to the general workings of the nation. However, as Melissa Hardy and Lawerence Hazelrigg state in their book, *Pension Puzzles,* late in the 1960s President Lyndon Johnson adopted a unified budget, so that all government funds emptied into a single set of accounts. This occurred largely due to the growing costs of the Vietnam War and the hope of covering up the steep costs with funds from other government programs. During the mid 1980s, reform took place, setting the Trust Fund off budget again. But again during the 1990s, the Social Security Trust Fund was used to hide the national deficit. The government would only count as new debt that money that could not be covered by the Trust Fund. Fortunately, the deficit was erased by the end of the decade and currently is not being used as a governmental tool. The Trust Fund has been an object of much interest over the past fifty years, but currently holds a lot of money that will be needed in coming years (48–51).

As of 2005, the Social Security Trust Fund held assets of $1.663 trillion. Recent estimates taken from the book *Pension Puzzles*, which are based on surpluses from previous years, project that the fund will grow to $3.932 trillion by 2015. Clearly, the Trust Fund has a substantial amount of money that would be able to pay out benefits until, as most estimates assume, 2042. Yet the Trust Fund works like any other bank account—stacks of cash do not sit around waiting to be passed out. The money has been invested into various stocks and funds, but mainly into treasury bills. The risk of the Trust Fund lies primarily in its ability to convert its financial assets into benefit payments of actual money. The Trust Fund has had to convert part of its assets into benefit checks before, but not on the grand scale that is presently looming for the country. Will the Trust Fund be able to handle this liquidation of its assets? It is certainly a risk that no one can accurately predict (51–53).

Personal retirement accounts avoid the risk of relying on the government for retirement funding. PRAs provide ownership to individual citizens. They give citizens a chance to own and manage their own retirement funding. Getting away from relying heavily on the government is an important step in securing one's future financially. Under the present Social Security system, no one has a legal right to the money they are paying into the system. The Supreme Court has ruled that no member of the American public has ownership or property rights over the Social Security benefit they expect to receive. By creating private accounts, individual citizens will be free of the risk of relying on the federal government for their retirement (Dwyer 9). But do private accounts live up to the mission the government established long ago for the Social Security program?

Social Security is a system created to provide basic economic security for all Americans. Partially privatizing this system, many argue, will drastically change the makeup of Social Security to a system that does not fulfill its basic mission. In her article entitled "Privatizing Social Security," Joyce Jones, a journalist for the magazine *Black Enterprise,* claims that privatization changes the system from providing guaranteed benefits to a system in which nothing is certain. Jones believes that the creation of private accounts would hurt the African-American community the most. Currently, African-Americans represent 11% of the work force but around 18% of the workers receiving Social Security disability insurance (25). According to Jones, critics of private accounts state that African-American retirees and disabled persons would be harmed because they have less money to put into a personal retirement account. They believe that PRAs would only increase the number of impoverished African-Americans because basic benefits would lower. However, even though private accounts would be optional, those minorities who choose to invest in them would then have a better chance at enhanced benefits upon retirement. Currently, only 28% of African-American retirees have some form of retirement fund other than Social Security (Jones 24). The establishment of a personal retirement account would enable them to take ownership over a sum of money for their retirement. Creating their own account would allow them to catch up to their white counterparts, many of whom have some other way of financing their retirement through IRAs or 401k plans. While regular Social Security benefits would not increase at the

same levels they do today, the opportunity to control their own retirement account would be a very big plus for the African-American community. Through careful analysis of another privatized pension system, we might gain a better understanding of how effective a partially privatized system in America could be.

Private accounts have been implemented in other nations, most notably in the United Kingdom. David Blake and John Turney explain that the United Kingdom makes use of voluntary carve-out (VCO) accounts, which are very similar to the proposed personal retirement accounts. "Carve-out" in this sense means that the account is carved out of the normal pension plan in the UK. A part of the payroll tax is diverted to their VCO account, just like PRAs would be designed to do in America. VCOs are voluntary, and a worker choosing a VCO pays the same payroll tax as everyone else, but part of their tax is diverted into the VCO. Workers choosing VCOs are entitled to lower government benefits upon retirement, similar to the plan envisioned by the United States. VCO owners are required to annuitize their account, meaning that they sign a contract so that funds are distributed to them over the remaining course of their life. VCOs have been relatively successful in the United Kingdom. In the late 1990s, roughly 61% of eligible workers made use of VCOs and 93% of men ages 45–54 did. They have provided a stable asset for workers to own that will provide funds for their retirement. The biggest problem in the United Kingdom's system has been balancing benefits paid from the VCO with benefits paid from traditional Social Security. But through trial and error, the United Kingdom and hopefully the United States will be able to figure out the right balance. The United Kingdom should serve as a great example for why the United States should make the transition to personal retirement accounts (Blake and Turner 56–61). Yet individual involvement in retirement funding still remains an idea rather than a real opportunity. Reform needs to take place soon, but what are the realistic chances of it happening?

Social Security reform likely will not happen soon because of the questions still looming over partial privatization. Many people believe that the current system can be saved through preservation. Preservation could involve a number of different options, many of which are outlined by Dattalo. These preservation proposals include raising the payroll tax ceiling (currently only the first $94,200 of income is subject to the FICA tax), raising the normal retirement age past 67, cutting benefits, or raising taxes. All of these options would likely increase the longevity of Social Security for a few years, but they would all be a temporary solution. None of these options solve the financial crisis long term. They would extend the life of the current system, but not for much longer. The most popular option is raising the payroll tax ceiling, but a study done by the Heritage Foundation found that even if the salary ceiling were eliminated entirely and all income were taxed, the system would only remain operational for an additional six years. Reform on a larger scale has to be done through the creation of private accounts (239).

Social Security has been one of the most successful governmental programs in the history of the United States. The poverty rate for older Americans has fallen from 35% in 1959 to 10% in 2003. Two-thirds of America's retirees receive at least half of their

income from Social Security (Dattalo 233). But imagine a country in which nearly all America's retirees rely solely on Social Security as their basic means of income. In 2005, for the first time since the Great Depression, Americans spent more than they earned, resulting in a negative savings rate. In 1985, the average American saved 11.1% of his disposable income, compared with a negative 0.5% rate in 2005 (Bruce 1). With a negative savings rate, it means that the current working generation will have less to spend on their retirement than ever before and will rely more heavily on Social Security. Thus if changes are not made to Social Security soon, the system might end up causing retirees to have no source of income, and the quality of life for the nation's elderly will decrease drastically. By partially privatizing Social Security, the government can financially ensure benefits to current workers upon their retirement. It is an option that benefits the younger generation of Americans a great deal, but more importantly that benefits the future of the nation immensely.

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Author's Biography

JESSICA EDER

Jess Eder is a first-year student residing in Farley Hall. She plans to double major in business and psychology. While a high school student at Loyola Academy in Wilmette, Illinois, Jess became actively involved in the service group Life! Be in it! This year, she has pursued her passion for service by volunteering at the Center for the Homeless in South Bend. Jess decided to volunteer at the Center because she considers homelessness in America to be a national disgrace, and she wanted to learn more about the problem firsthand. At the Center for the Homeless, Jess has worked with adults who are studying for the GED test. In this essay, Jess faced the challenge of broadening the personal, but limited, perspective of homelessness she gained from her community-based learning experience to provide an objective, researched proposal for addressing this national tragedy.

Improve Education Now
to Reduce Homelessness Later

Jessica Eder
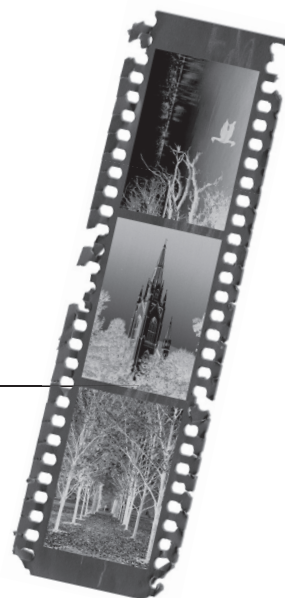
A man, dirty and dressed only in tattered clothes, rummages through a garbage can for something to eat. As a family walks down the street in downtown South Bend, he quickly approaches them with a cup in his hand. Before he can ask them for spare change, the family scurries across the street. When the children look back at the man, the mother admonishes them "to not make eye contact with him." This brief encounter is the closest many people come to homelessness. This may be fortunate for them, but it does little to enlighten them to the magnitude of the homelessness problem in the United States today. Numbers quantifying the problem are hard to come by, but "between 2.3 and 3.5 million Americans experience homelessness at some point each year" ("Homelessness: The Causes and Facts" 1). Unfortunately, since many people are quick to dismiss the problem as one brought on by the individuals themselves—and certainly there is some amount of responsibility that many homeless people bear—efforts to combat the problem are not given nearly the popular attention as more "chic" causes like global warming. In fact, "municipal ordinances … punish homeless people primarily because they have no stable housing. Aimed at banishing them from public places, statutes … prohibit begging, lying down, sitting, or loitering" (*America* 5). This strong sentiment against the homeless, however, does not make the effects of homelessness any less devastating for the individuals it affects or the society that it permeates. In the richest country in the world, homelessness is a problem that cries out for justice, compassion, and reasoned response.

The individual causes of homelessness are as varied as the individuals who are homeless, but the most commonly identified causes are the lack of affordable housing, mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment, and the inability to earn livable wages. Unfortunately, most programs or plans that have been implemented to reduce homelessness have focused on dealing with the existing homeless population. While these programs are certainly needed and deserve public support, they do not address in any meaningful way the core causes of homelessness or reducing the number of future homeless people. Without addressing the sources of homelessness, the number of formerly homeless people reintroduced into society will just be replaced with increasing

numbers of newly homeless people. Programs need to be initiated to successfully address the root causes of homelessness and reduce the number of future victims. While many different approaches may find support, education must play a critical role in addressing the homeless problem. In order to reduce homelessness in the United States and locally in the city of South Bend, intervention programs need to be implemented to reduce the high school drop-out rate and assist drop-outs with obtaining General Educational Development diplomas (GEDs) or other vocational training.

If a lack of affordable housing, unemployment, and the inability to earn livable wages are seen as immediate causes of homelessness, then it should be clear how a lack of education—measured here by the lack of a high school diploma—has a direct correlation with the likelihood of homelessness. Numerous studies and reports have shown that there is a direct relationship between education level attained and average wages earned. Furthermore, "homelessness and poverty are inextricably linked. Poor people are frequently unable to pay for basic … necessities. Often it is housing, which absorbs a high proportion of income that must be given up" ("Root Causes of Homelessness" 1).

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Minimum wage laws, meant to protect those without the education to fill higher-paying jobs, simply do not offer much protection. Shockingly, "in every state, no one earning minimum wage can afford a one or two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent" ("Root Causes of Homelessness" 1–2). Since 1975, the real value of the minimum wage has fallen by 25%. In fact, *Out of Reach*, the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2006 survey, notes that "a family must earn over $28,000 to afford a one-bedroom apartment—substantially more than what a household with two full-time workers earning the minimum wage earns in a year" (*America* 5). As a result, people who rely on the minimum wage for their earnings simply cannot afford decent housing: "In 1970, there were 300,000 more affordable housing units available, nationally, than there were low-income households who needed to rent them. By 1995, there were 4.4 million fewer available units than low-income households who needed to rent them" ("Causes of Homelessness" 4). These numbers are staggering—a catastrophic decline in the number of housing units available for low-income families.

As a result of this shortage in low-income housing, many have focused their attention on how to create more available low-income housing units. This approach, while understandable, is flawed in a capitalist economy. Without the money available to spend on low-income housing (demand), builders will not create the supply. Temporary government programs to subsidize the creation of additional low-income housing may provide minimal, temporary relief, but no long-term solutions. In order to generate any sustainable reduction in the number of homeless, both nationally and locally, an effort must be made to improve the financial situations of people before they lead to homelessness. That's where reducing the high school drop-out rate and helping drop-outs receive additional education comes into play.

While the idea that lack of education can lead to homelessness is intuitively logical, there is also quantitative research to support the hypothesis. In 1994, two professors at the University of Missouri performed research to identify the most accurate predictors (causes) of chronic homelessness and presented their findings in "Predictors of Past and Current Homelessness," published in the *Journal of Community Psychology.* Robert J. Caslyn and Laurie A. Roades used multiple regression analysis to test their hypothesized causes of past (length of time since first homeless) and current (length of the current episode) homelessness. Their hypothesized causes (predictors) were lack of human capital (education and income), social alienation, and psychiatric pathology. For the study, three hundred residents from twelve of the twenty-four homeless shelters in St. Louis were interviewed by seven Master's-level psychologists and social workers. The results of the study showed that lack of education was the primary cause of homelessness and the best predictor of length of time since first homeless. This confirmed prior research that has consistently shown that lack of education—defined as less than a high school diploma or equivalency—predicts homelessness (Caslyn and Roades 272–78). Furthermore, the study showed that other hypothesized causes of homelessness—poor employment history, prior foster care or institutional placement, and marital status—did not predict homelessness as well as lack of education. Only prior psychiatric hospitalization rivaled lack of education as a primary predictor of chronic homelessness (Caslyn and Roades 272–78).

This quantitative national research is supported by evidence gathered locally in South Bend. Dr. Peter Lombardo, the Director of Community Involvement at the Center for the Homeless in South Bend, is convinced there is a correlation between the high school drop-out rate and the number of homeless in South Bend. A former Notre Dame professor with a Ph.D. in history from the university, Lombardo has taken an active interest in fighting homelessness since the Center for the Homeless opened in South Bend in 1991. He supervises the Center's volunteers, interns, and work study students and makes sure their efforts are efficiently integrated into the Center's operations. In his position at the Center, Dr. Lombardo has seen first-hand the devastating effects of homelessness. He has also had the opportunity to witness both successful and unsuccessful strategies to reduce homelessness (Lombardo).

While Dr. Lombardo noted that the number of homeless is influenced by many factors, including drugs and domestic violence, he emphatically stated, "A 50% high school drop-out rate in South Bend is unacceptable. There is a need for a better education system, where students are not only motivated to learn, but also learn the computer skills they need in most entry-level jobs" (Lombardo). Lombardo pointed out that increased technology in the workplace has made it increasingly important for students to receive at least a high school education.

Even though the link between lack of education and homelessness is clear, this is not where the majority of attention and resources have been directed to fight homelessness. The National Alliance to End Homelessness, one of the organizations leading the fight

against homelessness, has created and published on its website, www.endhomelessness.org, a guideline for communities looking to end homelessness. Drawing upon its "Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness," the alliance identified ten essential ingredients for a successful community plan to combat homelessness: 1) Planning; 2) Data (tracking homeless people); 3) Emergency Prevention (preventing evictions); 4) Systems Prevention (providing care for low-income people); 5) Outreach (encouraging homeless people to take advantage of services); 6) Shortening Homelessness; 7) Rapid Re-Housing; 8) Services (for re-housed households); 9) Permanent Housing (for the chronically homeless); and 10) Income Assistance ("The Ten Essentials").

Although it is difficult to argue with the merits of each of the "Ten Essentials" of the National Alliance's plan to end homelessness, they shockingly do not address the core causes of homelessness. Unfortunately, like most existing plans to fight homelessness, the "Ten Essentials" only help to *contain* the problem. It is hard to imagine that any community that strictly adheres to the guidelines spelled out by the National Alliance will actually significantly decrease homelessness, let alone end it. Of course, the reason the National Alliance and other hard-working, well-intentioned organizations are more focused on present problems than future solutions is the enormity of the existing need. It is hard to focus on developing solutions for the future when there is so much suffering and hardship in the present. For this reason, the efforts of organizations like the National Alliance must be complemented by the coordinated efforts of many different educational, governmental, and volunteer groups to attack the sources that most often lead to homelessness: insufficient education or vocational training; drug abuse; mental illness; and domestic abuse. If a community really wants to dramatically reduce its number of homeless people, it must start by aggressively tackling the issues that most often lead people to the poverty that results in homelessness, most notably the adequate education of everyone in the community.

> *As the income gap between high school drop-outs and other citizens widens, more drop-outs will ultimately suffer poverty and homelessness.*

That is why I am proposing an aggressive, comprehensive intervention program to reduce high school drop-out rates and help existing drop-outs get their GEDs or vocational training. While high school drop-out rates have remained relatively level nationally as well as locally in South Bend over the past fifteen years, their impact on the economy and homelessness has increased. Employment opportunities are more limited for drop-outs today because "Americans with less education must compete with computerized machines and people in low-wage nations" ("Reducing the Dropout Rate" 2). Today's economy requires a work force that is more literate, more educated, and more skilled in technology. As a result of this lack of viable employment opportunities for drop-outs, "a growth of unskilled laborers in low-wage jobs will increase the trend toward developing a large American underclass" (Asche 13). As the income gap between high school drop-outs and other citizens widens, more drop-outs will ultimately suffer poverty and homelessness.

This cycle of insufficient education leading to homelessness must be broken. Of course, as with other problems of this magnitude, there is no one simple solution to reducing drop-out rates and homelessness. Multiple steps must be taken on both the national and local levels and must include government officials, administrators, educators, social workers, parents, and communities working together. While there is no magic cure for the drop-out problem, there are many actions that can contribute to its reduction.

First of all, there must be a commitment to the goal of reducing the number of drop-outs—this commitment will require considerable amounts of time, money, effort, and perseverance. It will not be easy to institute the universal changes that are required. The program must be centered on the students and recognize that no one strategy will work for all students. However, there are a number of factors that are critical to any successful effort to reduce the drop-out rate. Safe, stable, structured learning environments must be created and maintained for all students: "A climate that is characterized by safety and orderliness in a location that is accessible and non-threatening can make a powerful contribution to drop-out prevention" ("Reducing the Drop-out Rate" 5). Students of all ages must be given proper attention and support in the classroom. In order for this to be possible, in many cases there will need to be smaller classes and smaller student-teacher ratios. Students who are struggling with their school work should be provided with tutoring, mentoring, and counseling programs. Students should be able to rely on their schools as their support systems and should feel like their schools and their educators are concerned about their well-being and success. Where possible, students should be involved in the design of their school programs to increase their commitment. In cases where this kind of approach has been implemented, "a lower incidence of dropping out was also noted" ("Reducing the Drop-out Rate" 5).

Most significantly, schools need to engage students in learning and the future benefits that learning will provide them. I believe that it is very important for students to start thinking about their career options in high school, so they can find the motivation to study and learn, even when it is difficult. They need to learn about the variety of potential job and career opportunities they can achieve with education. One program that addresses this issue is the Adopt-A-Student Program, which has been implemented in Atlanta, Georgia. This program focuses on a "career-oriented support system," where "students are helped to think about future employment, identify occupational interests, and begin taking steps to get a job that matches them" ("Reducing the Dropout Rate" 7). This is the kind of proactive approach that needs to be part of the effort to reduce the drop-out rate.

In addition to providing students with a safe, supportive environment and career motivation, a drop-out reduction program must emphasize early detection of potential drop-outs. It is vitally important to identify at-risk students early and to provide corrective action at the earliest possible stage. At-risk students should be monitored closely and placed in programs that provide one-on-one attention and emphasize both academic and occupational or vocational training. In this way, students will be provided with

proper training for a range of potential future job opportunities. Students need to be convinced that they can be successful in both school and in the workplace. These efforts in high schools should also be supplemented with careful attention at the middle school and junior high levels. Success in these early school years diminishes the possibility of dropping out in high school. Since 17% of high school drop-outs are between the ages of fifteen and sixteen, it is clear that the seeds for their educational failure were sewn well before they reached high school ("Dropout Rates in the United States: 2000").

Beyond reducing the number of future high school drop-outs, it is important to also help former drop-outs attain the educational or vocational training they need to gain employment that provides adequate compensation for housing expenses. That is where places like the Center for the Homeless provide an invaluable service. To prepare men and women for the workplace, the Center provides computer and occupational training and tutoring for the GED test. According to Dr. Lombardo, "Fifteen to eighteen adults receive their GEDs each year at the Center. This will help them get better jobs in a more competitive world and support themselves. That means fewer people who are homeless" (Lombardo). And that should be everyone's goal.

> *Students need to be convinced that they can be successful in both school and in the workplace.*

A society can and should be judged by how it treats those who cannot take care of themselves. How should we be judged? The number of people who are homeless in South Bend and throughout the United States is a national disgrace. While efforts to care for the currently homeless need to be continued, we need to focus our attention on reducing the number of people who become homeless in the future—we must aggressively attack the causes of homelessness. Most importantly, we must make a coordinated, committed effort in South Bend and throughout the country to reduce the number of high school drop-outs. We all must do our part to build a better future. Through the collective efforts of educators, administrators, government officials, and concerned communities, we can better educate and prepare young men and women for meaningful, well-compensated employment that will enable them to afford the proper housing that every American deserves.

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Author's Biography

CHARLES MITCHELL

Charles found his inspiration for the essay "Repeat Head Injuries in High School Athletes: Examining a Disturbing Trend in Amateur Athletics" while watching a segment on ESPN's SportsCenter. The segment, which outlined some of the dangers of repeat head injuries, struck a chord with Charles, who witnessed several of his teammates suffer repeat head injuries during his high school prep hockey career. He also observed the various pressures that affected their post-injury decision making. Charles enjoyed the opportunity to write an academic paper that was relevant to one of his greatest passions outside of the classroom. Charles is a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and an avid Steelers and Penguins fan. He currently resides in Keenan Hall and is pursuing a degree in chemical engineering. Presently, Charles's plans include pursuing a graduate degree after his time at Notre Dame.

Repeat Head Injuries in High School Athletes:
Examining a Disturbing Trend in Amateur Athletics

Charles Mitchell

In the 2004 hit football movie *Friday Night Lights,* which recounts Permian-Odessa High School's run to the 1988 Texas state football championship, a dramatic subplot involves the team's star running back, Boobie Miles. Boobie, a top Division I college prospect, injures his knee in the first game of the season. Just three weeks later, when Permian is in danger of losing to rival Midland Lee and Division I coaches are beginning to ask more and more questions about his injury, Boobie ignores the fact that his knee is seriously damaged and suits up anyway. On just his second play after entering the game, Boobie's knee disintegrates as two defenders pummel him, permanently ending his lifelong dream of playing college and professional football. Boobie's uncle, watching in horror and disbelief, stands amid the stunned and silent crowd as his nephew is carried from the field.

This heart-wrenching scene, which is based on the true story of the 1988 Permian Panthers and the real Boobie Miles, depicts a tragedy that was completely avoidable. The magnetic resonance image (MRI) of Boobie's knee was not at all ambiguous; he entered the Midland game with a badly torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). Yet he chose to disregard his doctor's orders, deceived his coach, and suffered a horrible, career-ending injury as a result. Unfortunately, tragic stories like that of Boobie Miles are not limited to the silver screen. Every day across America, compromised high school athletes choose to step onto fields, courts, and ice to compete despite serious injuries. While this practice is worrisome when it applies to common injuries such as strains and pulls, it is more critical when head injuries are involved. The case of Boobie Miles may be extreme, but it is generally accurate in its portrayal of a disturbing trend within America's sports culture: high school athletes attempting to "play through" serious injuries. These athletes oftentimes refuse to admit impairment and sometimes overtly conceal information regarding injuries from coaches, parents, and teammates. These actions frequently lead to more serious secondary injuries that could be prevented if players simply sought the appropriate medical attention and made sound choices. Although it is not new, this pattern has only recently received national attention. This trend to "play through" injuries is of particular concern, and the consequences potentially more devastating, when head injuries are involved.

A growing chorus of research has exposed the dangers of repeat head injuries that occur before a prior injury has fully healed, especially in young adults such as high school athletes. While an athlete attempting to play through a torn ACL may suffer additional damage to the knee, a second head injury can leave the athlete with permanent brain damage and even prove fatal. This danger is compounded by the fact that it is much easier for a high school athlete to hide a head injury than most other injuries from coaches and trainers. Players may be able to perform at or near 100% after a head injury that has not fully healed even though they remain at significantly elevated risk for a more serious injury. In light of this dangerous situation, it is vitally important that head injuries receive special attention and that practices consistent with prevention of their potentially serious consequences become ingrained into the culture of high school sports. Achieving these goals involves two steps. First, the results of recent research into head injuries in athletics must be disseminated, including the overall frequency and severity of initial and repeat head injuries, related health consequences, and statistics on player-compliance and awareness after suffering a head injury. Second, an investigation of the pressures and other factors at work on the psyches of high school athletes must be better understood, including factors influencing both their post-injury decision making and their risk-versus-reward assessment when it comes to playing with a head injury.

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The risk of injury is inherent in contact sports like football and hockey. In these sports, tough physical play is cherished as an important dimension of competition. Recent studies have shown that, over the course of a season, an average of 39 out of 100 males competing in youth contact sports will suffer an injury (Koester 1). Yet football and other physical sports are more popular than ever. This popularity means that players in organized sports believe that the positive aspects of the activity outweigh the 40% chance of injury. This belief is no doubt reinforced by the relatively small chance of suffering a serious injury. A recent report looked at catastrophic head injuries in high school football over the last thirteen academic years, and found that the frequency of serious head injury was .67 injuries per 100,000 players (Mueller and Colgate). Thus, it seems clear that although the potential for serious injury is always present, the rewards of competition greatly outweigh the risks under normal circumstances. What many high school athletes fail to grasp, or choose to ignore, is that this whole dynamic changes the moment an athlete returns to the field too soon after suffering an initial injury. This is especially true, and even more critical, in the case of head injuries like concussions.

Based on a national survey of athletic trainers, it is estimated that approximately 6% of high school football players are concussed each year (Guskiewicz, et al. 643). In total, this amounts to about 250,000 concussions per year (Lowrey-Schrandt). This statistic

is not, in and of itself, alarming; the occurrence of some concussions in football is inevitable and a rate of 6% of players per year is relatively small compared to the overall injury rate of nearly 40%. What is startling, however, is that the same survey found that of the 6% of football players who receive concussions each year, up to 30% return to the field the same day (Guskiewicz, et al. 643). This is very troubling, as the most dangerous aspect of concussions is that they predispose players to additional concussions and much more serious head injuries, especially when they are not allowed the appropriate time to heal. According to a report released by the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Neurosurgery in 2001, the brain is more susceptible to severe injury, and even permanent damage, for at least 24 hours after an initial concussion ("Unnecessary Roughness"). Returning to play before a concussion has fully healed also puts athletes at risk for second-impact syndrome (SIS), a condition that occurs almost exclusively among athletes in their teenage years. SIS consists of swelling in the brain when a second blow to the head is received, which can result in a coma or death (Schwarz). This means that those 30% of players who return to the field the same day are placing themselves in grave danger of permanent brain damage or death. Victims of repeat concussions may also suffer other serious complications such as chronic headaches, memory problems, impaired thinking ability, and depression (Lowrey-Schrandt 82). Furthermore, studies have repeatedly shown that football players who suffer one concussion are up to three times more likely to suffer another concussion compared to other players (Guskiewicz, et al. 643). Statistics such as these, which represent only those concussions reported by players to coaches or athletic trainers, coupled with the growing volume of research on the short- and long-term negative effects of multiple concussions, have led some in the medical field to conclude that the number and severity of head injuries in high school athletics constitutes an epidemic. It is also noteworthy that the actual number of head injuries and concussions in contact sports may be significantly underreported.

One of the most pervasive problems with studies relating to head injuries in athletics is the inconsistency of injury reporting. A study designed specifically to determine the accuracy of concussion reporting in high school age hockey players found that approximately 50% of players surveyed did not report an injury involving symptoms similar to a concussion (Williamson and Goodman 130). It is reasonable to draw two important conclusions from this data. First, assuming that a similar problem exists in football, that would mean that the rate of 6% of players receiving concussions represents only about half of the concussions actually suffered. It also means that all of the players who suffer the other 6% of unreported concussions remain on the field, in prime danger of suffering a second, potentially devastating, head injury. Additionally, one of the primary reasons concussions are so underreported and thus poorly managed in high school athletics is because the players themselves are choosing, either intentionally or unintentionally, not to report them to coaches or athletic trainers.

While the data presented above clearly demonstrates the prevalence and potential dangers of concussions in high school athletics today, the reported rate of catastrophic head injuries in high school football is just .6 per 100,000 players per year. So why is this

such an important issue to examine? The fact is that despite this low rate of occurrence, fifty serious head injuries or deaths have occurred on high school football fields since 1997 (Schwarz). More importantly, the majority of those fifty injuries were the result of a secondary incident, which means that the majority, if not all, of those injuries were theoretically preventable, if more attention had been paid to the initial injury. It also means that, had the appropriate precautions been taken, Will Benson, a star quarterback for his Texas high school who was headed for the Ivy League, might still be alive today. In his senior year, Benson suffered a concussion during the first game of the season, but never lost consciousness. He sat out the rest of that game and the next week as a precaution. The following week, with his team struggling, he decided to enter the game. He rushed for a touchdown, walked to the sideline, and collapsed. An hour later he was in a coma, suffering from swelling and bleeding in his brain, a result of SIS. He never woke up. The research is very clear about the dangers of high school athletes playing through concussions. The tragic story of Will Benson is perhaps the most compelling reason why it is necessary to examine why players continue to ignore the dangers and put themselves in serious peril.

Several internal and external factors are at play in the psyche of a high school athlete, all of which tend to influence the player's decision to sit out or play when injured. These factors include perceived and real pressure from coaches, parents, and teammates to play through injuries, the desire to win at all cost, the allure of college scholarships, the dream of becoming a professional athlete, and the fear of being perceived as weak or cowardly.

Several internal and external factors are at play in the psyche of a high school athlete, all of which tend to influence the player's decision to sit out or play when injured. These factors include perceived and real pressure from coaches, parents, and teammates to play through injuries, the desire to win at all cost, the allure of college scholarships, the dream of becoming a professional athlete, and the fear of being perceived as weak or cowardly. Although they vary from athlete to athlete, these factors oftentimes trump the concerns that athletes have for their safety and well-being and are therefore responsible for athletes putting themselves in danger.

For his article "Silence on Concussions Raises Risks of Injury" that appeared in *The New York Times* September 2007, author Alan Schwarz asked Kelby Jasmon, a football player at an Illinois high school, if he would tell either a coach or an athletic trainer if he received a second concussion this season. Jasmon, without hesitation, replied, "No chance. It's not dangerous to play with a concussion. You've got to sacrifice for the sake of the team. The only way I come out is on a stretcher" (Schwarz). One of the primary motivating factors for Jasmon's comment and his corresponding risky behavior likely stems from his strong internal desire to satisfy the expectations of others in order to maintain the image that he wishes to project of himself. Jasmon desires to be perceived as tough and courageous by his teammates and fans. This is a natural tendency in all athletic competition, and especially in the machismo, testosterone-fueled "gladiator" culture of football (Schwarz). From a very young age, football players, and almost all athletes in American culture, receive consistent exposure to glorified tales and images of gridiron all-stars hopping up unscathed after bone-jarring collisions and repeatedly

absorbing crushing blows in order to make the big play. It is inevitable that high school age players will try to emulate what they see as the courageous actions of the stars in their own sports without much concern for their health. If a wide receiver is disoriented and has a headache after making a big catch and being flattened by a linebacker, he will most likely not want to taint the glory of the moment by admitting to his teammates that he might have been injured. If he remains quiet, he not only receives the admiration of others for his skills, but also for his toughness and commitment to the team for absorbing the physical punishment delivered by his opponent without showing weakness. If a player returns to the field despite injury, in his mind he is both proving to others that he is tough and assuaging the fear that he may feel of being perceived as weak for being injured. This type of mentality, which plays a powerful role in contact sports, primarily consists of courage versus cowardice assessments (Hyland 6).

Drew A. Hyland, a philosophy professor at Trinity College and former high level athlete himself, examines how the public and the sports media tend to judge an athlete's willingness to play with an injury in his commentary on the ethics of sports medicine entitled "Playing to Win: How Much Should It Hurt?" (6). Specifically, Hyland contrasts the public's positive reaction to Dan Pastorini's decision to play quarterback for the Houston Oilers while wearing a knee brace, flak jacket, and bandages to protect his injured knee, ribs, and elbow respectively, against questions raised about Bill Walton's character and commitment when he refused to take pain medication and refused to play with an injured foot for the Portland Trailblazers. Hyland ultimately concludes that there is a natural tendency in America's sports culture to make these judgments solely in terms of courage and cowardice, ultimately feeding the dangerous mentality so prevalent among high school athletes (6). The fundamental problem with this tendency is that it oversimplifies situations into black and white cases of courage versus cowardice based solely on an athlete's decision to play or to sit out. There are certain instances when an athlete can play with an injury without assuming any extra risk of further injury—the sole concern then becomes the individual athlete's pain threshold. In other instances, especially when head injuries are involved, a player may be completely asymptomatic and yet still be at an elevated risk for a second, more dangerous injury. This means that the problem is not with the glorification of toughness *per se*, but the refusal to acknowledge that not all injuries, especially head injuries, are created equal.

While courage versus cowardice assessments impose a primarily internal pressure on athletes, there are several notable external pressures that significantly impact athletes' decision-making regarding injuries. Parents and coaches are two of the most powerful of these influences, although an important distinction must be drawn between their direct and indirect influence on players. Matt Selvaggio, one of Kelby Jasmon's teammates, gave the following explanation as to why he would hide a concussion from his coach: "Our coaches would take us out in a second. So why would we tell them?" (Schwarz). This quote describes a peculiar paradox: a situation where the coach does indeed have the player's safety and best interest at heart, but the player sees the situation differently and thus hides vital information from the coach. While this situation is undesirable, the negative influence of the coach is indirect and unintentional.

Unfortunately, there are many instances when coaches and parents exert a direct negative influence on players' decision-making. Since in many cases there are no outward signs or symptoms of concussions, no visible bruises or blood, and no definitive diagnosis, many ill-informed coaches have a tendency to downplay the seriousness of concussions. In these instances, coaches may revert to the courage versus cowardice assessment discussed above and punish players for what they view as a lack of commitment or toughness. They may also encourage players, rather brusquely, to "man up" or "play tough" in order to coax them back onto the field. The inherent danger in this type of coaching mentality is obvious, and examples of poor judgment abound. According to Scott Robertson, a physician who volunteers for a high school football team in the Los Angeles area, some coaches "berate and ostracize" players for claiming to have concussions (Schwarz). Coaches' ire is not always directed just at the players, but can be focused on the team trainers and physicians as well. Parents are prone to similar actions and have also been known to confront medical staff. Then there are the parents and coaches who will not stop at mere words, instead resorting to action to push players back onto the field. For example, one Connecticut high school coach told a player to switch uniforms and switch to defense after a trainer had sidelined the player because of a head injury (Schwarz). Vito Perriello, a team doctor in Charlottesville, Virginia said, "I have had parents tear up the form that I've filled out strongly recommending their child not play, and shop a doc to get their kid O.K.'d." (Schwarz). These particular parents and coaches not only display reckless abandon for the health of young people, but also a gross and dangerous lack of knowledge about the hard facts of concussion research.

Aside from coaches and parents, professional and college athletics have perhaps the greatest external influence on high school athletes. In his article, "Playing to Win: How Much Should It Hurt?" Drew Hyland focuses special attention on the context in which an injury occurs, and the corresponding likelihood that an individual will attempt to continue whatever activity led to the injury. The most important factor, according to Hyland, is the importance that society and the individual place on the activity (6). It only seems logical that a professional football player might try to play through a significant injury in the Super Bowl; this single game could be the highlight of his career and he may never have the opportunity to play in it again. It seems less logical, on the other hand, for a high school athlete to take a similar risk for an amateur athletic competition. To the NFL player, football is not only his profession and livelihood, but also one of the top two to three most important aspects of his life. The same cannot be said for a high school football player, who in all likelihood will not play football at a competitive level after high school or at best after college. In fact, according to the NCAA, just 5.7% percent of high school football players will go on to play in college and just .08%, will ultimately reach the NFL ("Estimated Probability of Competing"). Yet, despite these blatant differences in life importance, high school athletes seem to approach their games with the same mentality as if they were professional football players. This is ultimately the result of the "professionalization" of amateur athletics, an idea explored by Jonathan J. Brower, a Sociology Professor at the California State University at Fullerton.

According to Brower, "In most youth leagues the model of how a sport should be approached is that of the adult professional ranks—those athletes who earn a living from their sport" (39). Ultimately this means that high school athletes are willing to take risks disproportionate to the significance of the event in which they are participating. The professionalization of high school athletics is no doubt a byproduct of the enormity of professional and Division I college athletics today. Dreams of huge contracts, fame, and publicity have trickled down into lower and lower ranks, and now permeate all levels of competition. High schools are often seen as breeding grounds for the next college and pro stars. Today, high school teams play in national tournaments and can be nationally ranked, and high school athletes can become well-known nationwide if they are highly touted by coaches, scouts, and analysts. All of these elements combine to create an atmosphere in high school athletics that is skewed out of proportion to reality and not conducive to a healthy approach to appropriately handling injuries, most importantly concussions. By losing sight of their amateur status and setting their sights, and attitudes, on college and the pros, high school athletes all too frequently attempt to play through a head injury and, in turn, risk serious consequences.

Although this frightening trend of repeat concussions in high school athletes shows little sign of abating, there is reason for optimism. The high quality and extensive research currently underway promises a greater understanding and a more informed general public in the future. A clear method of diagnosis, which still remains elusive for concussions, but which is vitally important for handling athletes' injuries appropriately, appears to be closer than ever with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's development of the ImPACT (Immediate Post-concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) Test. This test establishes a baseline level of mental function at the beginning of an athlete's season. If the athlete subsequently suffers what could be a concussion, the athlete immediately retakes the test and a comparison to the baseline is established. This yields valuable insight into the severity of the player's injury with the ultimate goal of providing a timeline for a player's safe return to the field. The ImPACT test is currently in the testing phase at several high schools and colleges as well as with professional teams around the country. Today, repeat head injuries in athletics continue to be a silent danger waiting to strike individuals like Will Benson without warning. Hopefully, this dangerous trend will be reversed in the future through continuing research and education, and growing public awareness.

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Author's Biography

BRIAN ROURKE BOLL

Brian Rourke Boll hails from the Detroit suburb of Grosse Pointe, where, in his youth, he daydreamed incessantly, if in vain. He has entertained nearly every academic (and otherwise) field as a possible career, but a resilient motif is his desire to fulfill any given profession so far as can be done, most often as an academic. Of late, he has contemplated pursuing philosophy, as he thinks that it would indeed be nice to know what one ought to do, and why. One further recent (in fact rather long-running) object of his ardor has been linguistics, of which some semblance is attempted in the present essay in its treatment of African-American English. Brian would not mind learning more languages or attaining philosophical perfection, but he knows that he must first maintain an appearance of literacy in his native English as best he can, which is a proposition scarcely to be trifled with. It may be that he should inevitably fail, but he shall hardly surrender before then.

Y'all Be
Trippin'

Brian Rourke Boll
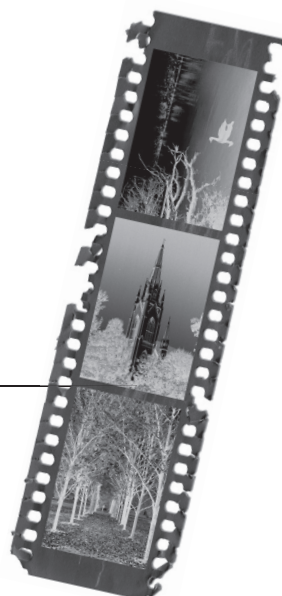
The mother tongue of many contemporary African-Americans, given such names as "Ebonics," "Black English," or "African-American English" (AAE), amongst others, is often thought of by mainstream American society as a sort of slang dialect of "proper English" (or Standard American English, SAE), or as an unsuccessful attempt at or a cruder and more uncouth form of standard English. Subsequently, its speakers are often judged as incompetent, essentially by reason of the language they speak. Whatever the specific appellation, AAE is often viewed as substandard, and, as with several contemporary issues attributed to the African-American demographic, it is seen as symptomatic of a want of education. Seen from a linguistically-informed perspective, however, AAE is in fact often linguistically coherent and is itself a legitimate medium of communication. The reign of SAE, today's socially dominant language or dialect in America (and indeed increasingly further afield as well), often demands that speakers of other, less acceptable languages or varieties conform in order to achieve success in education, business, and, indeed, in near any public or professional matter at all. Though this necessity may be unavoidable, it may be said that some few actions may combine in importance to aid in understanding prejudice and culture difference due to language in America today: namely, recognizing that AAE is viewed as substandard but is in fact a legitimate language system different from but not inherently inferior to SAE; studying the actual circumstances and causes of AAE; recognizing that AAE is non-standard by convention, and not by fate; and recognizing that it is the speakers who cause and perceive differences in linguistic structure and status, and not the languages that produce the character of the speakers.

First, in order to ably conduct this discussion, the general bounds and connotations of such terms as "dialect," "prestige variety," or "non-standard" must be presented. There are several meanings of the word "dialect" commonly used, among them "a regional, temporal or social variety of a language, differing in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary from the standard language" (Hartmann 65). However, "most dialectologists hold that there is no correlation between linguistic type or structure and suitability for adoption as a standard, written or prestigious variety, and regard this distinction

as placing undue weight on these essentially accidental social properties of varieties" (Malmkjær 109). Indeed, it is the case that the standard language "is in itself a socially favoured dialect," or a variety of the language attributed more social prestige (Hartmann 65), and most dialectologists "would describe standard varieties as being dialects to the same degree as non-standard varieties, despite their differences in status" (Malmkjær 109). The reason any prestige variety, or the dialect form which is accepted as the standard, of a language is so esteemed is almost always a result of circumstantial political and social conditions: that is, the dominant dialect is dominant, not because of any inherent linguistic qualities or characteristics, but because it is used by those *speakers* who are accepted as socially dominant or who are in the majority.

That is, the "standard" language, as that spoken by mainstream white America, or likewise Parisian French, is but the acknowledged dominant dialect. Linguistically, a standard language is not inherently superior or better than that language's other dialects.

> *Non-standard dialects are not necessarily "deviations" from or "bastardizations" of the standard language— they, just as a dominant dialect, are equally legitimate modes of communicating.*

Non-standard dialects are not necessarily "deviations" from or "bastardizations" of the standard language—they, just as a dominant dialect, are equally legitimate modes of communicating.

Indeed, as a linguist herself, Welden, in reference to an instance of miscommunication between the linguistics community and the community of language-speakers itself, makes note of several misconceptions had by many that are contradicted by linguistic knowledge:

As language experts, we know best that dialects are not evil or linguistically inferior, but are instead natural, rule-governed linguistic systems that allow groups of people to identify themselves in various ways socially. We know that what language or dialect a person speaks is not genetically based but socially determined. We know that determinations about which language varieties get viewed as standard or nonstandard are based on social rather than linguistic factors. And we know that the prejudices that people have against certain dialects and the prestige values that they assign to others are really about the speakers themselves and not the languages they speak (Welden 276).

Instances of these misconceptions and their respective refutations have a strong application to the situation of AAE.

The perspective of much of mainstream America as concerns AAE is usually negative, and the possibility of legitimate reasons for this outlook must first be examined. There are several phenomena that might seem to correlate with and support such a view. AAE is often referred to as "slang" and its speakers labeled as "lazy" or "sloppy"—"at best," it is maintained, "it is nonstandard English" (Murray 144). It may be seen that African-Americans as a demographic indeed do seem to underperform in measures of reading proficiency and language competency. In one gauge, the *Nation's Report Card* (2000)

indicated that just "2% of African-Americans performed at the advanced level, 10% at the proficient level, 25% at the basic level and 63% performed below basic" in a measure of reading proficiency (Green 674). This is taken by some to show that AAE is an uneducated tongue spoken by an uneducated group of people. Even when compared with students from other language groups, AAE speakers fare poorer in such areas. In a study by Ogbu done in Oakland, California, he notes that "there are more than 60 language groups in Oakland schools," and that, "furthermore, students in Oakland (including Black Americans) whose mother tongue is not standard English encounter lexical, phonological, syntactic, and prosodic problems with standard English. But most of these language groups appear to be more successful in overcoming the language differences than Black Americans" (Ogbu 148). This might appear to buttress the position that AAE is an inherently inferior communication system, if even immigrant speakers of foreign languages are making better progress toward proficiency in SAE than speakers of AAE. Moreover, as a language or dialect used almost exclusively by a group of people of statistically below-average education and literacy, AAE as used in speech may have access to a smaller vocabulary than SAE, and lacks SAE's literary and academic tradition. By some measures, then, AAE may be judged as existing in a less-favorable position or state than SAE.

Whether rationalized as above or not, it can be seen that mainstream America (namely white America), which is comprised mostly of speakers of SAE (the dominant dialect, or prestige variety), does in fact view the speaking of AAE as an inferior attribute. In a study by Billings, video clips of white people speaking SAE, black people speaking SAE, and black people speaking AAE were shown to subjects (both black and white high school and college students) in an effort to discern what effect the race of the speaker and the dialect spoken by the speaker have on a participant's perception of the speaker, perception here comprising measures of competence, trustworthiness and social distance. The results show that, "not surprisingly, BE [Black English] clearly lowered the ratings of speakers, leading to diminished ratings in … intelligence, articulation, aggression, education, and qualification (all five measures of competence)" (Billings 74). Indeed, "in fact, Black participants were much harsher critics of BE than were whites" (74–77). These results affirm that which had been demonstrated before, as when Billings notes that "numerous studies have convincingly shown that BE speakers are rated as 'less credible' than speakers of standard American English (SAE)" (68). The effect of dialect on the external perception of a speaker is clear—AAE is seen, by both black and white America, as indicative in itself of a lack of education or ability.

Though seen by laymen as base and unprofessional, AAE, when studied academically, has been shown to be as legitimate a language form as any. One description of AAE is Ebonics as "a superordinate term that refers to all the West African-European language mixtures (i.e., pidgins and creoles) developed in various language contact situations, principally in the so-called New World, as a result of the African slave trade" (Smitherman 140). That is to say that "Africans created a language, with its own morphology, syntax, phonology, and rhetorical and semantic styles and strategies of discourse"—they created

a mode of communication with a legitimate, traceable foundation. Its basis was the organizational and structural properties of the Africans' West African languages "(e.g., Yoruba, Wolof, Mandinka) and the lexicon of the European languages (e.g., English, French, Dutch)" combined (Smitherman 140–141). As an example of the resultant properties in AAE, Smitherman mentions that "unlike English, which inflects verbs to indicate tense and person, USEB [United States Ebonics] follows the uninflected pattern of West African languages, relying on stress or the encoding of contextual information to convey time" (141). Green more systematically describes many of the structural properties of AAE, including verb structure and usage (for example, the convention of omitting the copulative verb in certain instances), phonological consistencies (such as dropping "the final consonant of a cluster formed by two consonants with the same voicing value"), and other semantic differences including differential usage of the verb "to be" as compared to SAE, the sum of which concurs with the general consensus among linguists that AAE is orderly and rule-bound (Green 678–686). That is, "AAE is indeed rule-governed and not a result of using bad English;" and it is "a systematic variety of English" as opposed to being simple slang-ridden and rule-disregarding SAE (687). The apparently prejudicial perception of incompetence found when AAE is spoken is then unfounded, for the language and its differences from SAE are the results, not of a deficient attempt at SAE or of a lack of education, but of a systematic, if different, approach to communication.

To dispel with the idea that AAE is somehow inherently to be associated with African-Americans as people (some have claimed there is a genetic predisposition, or, as aforementioned, that it is just uneducated English spoken by uneducated mouths), it is of avail to study the actual origins and causes of AAE. One paper by Smith-Charles and Crozier posits, as also submitted by Smitherman above, that AAE derives its differences from its kinship with the West African languages spoken by modern AAE's speakers' ancestors. Smith-Charles and Crozier again bring up the case where the copula is omitted in AAE where it would be used in SAE, e.g., "'that teacher she mean'," but they say that it is strictly incorrect to say that the copula has been "dropped" or the like: they say that this, as much of AAE's grammar, is actually a feature of the language derived from the West African tongues of African Americans' ancestors (Smith-Charles and Crozier 114). In this case "the verb 'to be' never existed in the first place, and it does not exist or tends not to occur, in the Niger-Congo African descendants' speech today" (114). Furthermore, though it may seem trivial, it must be said that speakers of AAE learn their language from their families and communities, just as any mother tongue is learned— AAE is not a bastardized version of SAE, but is a mother tongue to its speakers just as SAE is to many mainstream white Americans.

SAE is the prestige variety of English and the foremost language in America, and has been so for quite some time, and it is directly descended from the British English tradition, which, again, is and has been a prestige variety or language. It is because of this that the resources of SAE are so extensive, and not because of any inherent superiority of the dialect (indeed, for example, it is only because of the historical dominance of

London commercially and politically that modern standard British English is accepted as the standard, and not for example the dialect of Kent or of Yorkshire; or again in the case of Paris and the political power of *its* denizens and consequently their language in France). Though prestige dialects are not linguistically any better than less-accepted ones, dialectologists "would accept that prolonged and marked differences of status can affect structure and, in particular, speakers' perceptions of the relevant varieties" (Malmkjær 109). That is, any extant divergences in quantity or quality (as in vocabulary and corpora) between AAE and SAE (just as those between the King's English and a peasant's in the Yorkshire countryside) are consequences of culture and thereafter perception, and not of the languages *qua* language. AAE and SAE can then be placed within the structure laid out earlier, SAE as the prestige or dominant dialect, variety, or language, and AAE as a fringe or minority one. Their statuses established, the causes of the discrepancy between them can be examined.

Ogbu makes several interesting points in his study "Beyond Language: Ebonics, Proper English, and Identity in a Black-American Speech Community." The title is relevant in that it specifies the function of languages as being important to identity. Through interviews and participant observation, Ogbu and his assistants gleaned an interesting understanding of how black Americans think of themselves and their mother tongue. The black inhabitants of the community under study (Lafayette, a low-income section of West Oakland, California) had definite ideas about their respective dialect and its applications. They differentiated between their mother tongue, "slang English" (or AAE) natural to them, and the "proper English" (SAE) which they thought natural to white folks (Ogbu 161–162). The "slang English" spoken by the Lafayette blacks was used, as many of the interviews make clear, as a means of establishing identity within the community: They speak it with their friends and families because they "[Parent 24L] just be plain talkin' English…Plain talkin';" the same interviewee goes on to note that speaking in such a manner "makes you feel comfortable, I guess" (161). Further interview subjects confirm that, in fact, forgoing slang English (AAE) and using white or proper English (SAE) can be seen as being "[Parent 38L] 'uppity' or…trying to be White, or something like that, you know," which implies that the mother tongue of many African-Americans is intimately associated with their racial (and therefore sociocultural) identity (171). That is, though they very much agree that SAE is "more appropriate for school, workplace, and communicating with outsiders" and that "mastering proper English also increases one's chances of getting a good job," "Lafayette people claim that slang English is their 'natural dialect' or mother tongue; they are 'born with it' and feel more comfortable speaking it" (164–166). This latter is explained by the fact that AAE "is the dialect they hear and learn very early in life because it is the dialect spoken around them from birth" (166). Indeed, despite admitting this, that it is the tongue they have heard spoken by their intimate relations since birth, the Lafayette AAE speakers call their dialect "slang English," as though it were somehow still illegitimate. Furthermore, in the interviews it was made evident that some speakers of AAE thought learning "proper English" at school could present difficulties. However, Ogbu notes that

"Lafayette children do not lag in developing standard English—*this is not the dialect they have been developing*" from youth (179 emphasis mine). AAE is a dialect passed on intact through culture as a means of communication, and, as one component of culture, has ties with many other parts including social identity (including race and its attendant properties), status, and worldview. It is these other aspects of culture that can and do affect how language is seen and used.

Insight into sociocultural influences can also be found in Ogbu's study. Ogbu maintains that "of particular importance in the history of minority groups is whether people became a minority group voluntarily through immigration or involuntarily through conquest, slavery, and so forth" (149). Specifically, voluntary minorities, "who have come to settle in the United States more or less voluntarily" expecting a better life of some sort, are contrasted with nonimmigrant or involuntary minorities, "who have been made a part of the United States permanently against their will through conquest, colonization, or slavery" (153). It is noted that while both types of minority include many different races, ethnicities, religions, and languages, and both usually "consider the standard English as 'White'," there are differences, caused by asymmetries in the origin of minority status, in how that standard English is perceived culturally. That is, where immigrants have a "collective identity that is mainly different from, rather than oppositional to, White-American collective identity," nonimmigrant minorities develop "their English dialects after being deprived of their original languages" (154). In fact, "the creation of oppositional dialect or language frame of reference is a part of the overall

They speak it with their friends and families because they "just be plain talkin' English...Plain talkin'"

effort of these minorities to solve the status problems caused by forced" integration with America and its culture (154). For example, from my own experience, Albanian immigrants in my hometown brought their mother tongue with them, complete with a "pre-existing notion of the correct way to speak" it, as well as expecting to have to learn standard English in order to succeed, which latter has relevance in that "the immigrants do not think that accommodating White American ways of talking threatens their language identity" (154). Ogbu says convincingly, however, that such nonimmigrant minorities as African-Americans have a different mindset concerning SAE. They do not have the expectations or stable frame of reference of the immigrant minorities, but have instead such ideas as that "they are required to give up their own way of talking to be able to talk like White Americans" (155). In essence, Ogbu's point is that the cultural history and place of African-Americans has an effect on the manner in which they see and deal with dialect coexistence. The position of the speech community of AAE is such that its constituent speakers have historically been separated from and discriminated against by the constituent speakers of the SAE speech community. It is this, and like sociocultural forces, which have given AAE the status it now holds in American society.

Linguistically, there is no reason why the French of Paris, or in this case the English of white Americans, has any more intrinsic merit than any provincial or minority varieties. It is purely social and political circumstance that together lead to the differences in

status and structure between dialects. AAE is not improper English—it fulfils its role as a mother tongue of its speech community *as* AAE, a stand-alone, rule-governed medium of communication. Black Americans are not attempting to speak SAE and failing—they are speaking the sounds they have heard since birth, just as many white Americans do with SAE. The state of AAE in America is analogous, as noted above, to many other instances of dialect confrontation, such as the case in English history, where London, becoming a political, social and commercial area of power, had its English accepted as the standard form in England—just so, a like situation for SAE has had like effects in the U.S. The dialect of the London social elite did not possess any inherent linguistic merits that the provincial dialects did not (SAE to AAE in America); only, in socio-cultural, political, or economic matters, it was of avail to speak the dialect of London (of mainstream whites), e.g., better jobs were accessible, and the like. Of course, large differentials between the statuses of different dialects, when continued for long periods of time, can result in socio-linguistic differences. For example, the dominant dialect, in use by the dominant or prestigious social group, will inevitably be used in more linguistically demanding circumstances than perhaps minority dialects might, e.g., most academic works and business transactions will be conducted in the prestige dialect. Over time, the content of the dominant dialect may come to quantitatively and qualitatively differ measurably from other, so-called lesser dialects by virtue of the additional fruits of culture. The balance of society and culture aside, however, what seems best discerned from all of this is that it is strictly linguistically incorrect to judge a speaker of a minority dialect incompetent solely because of the mother tongue he speaks.

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Author's Biography

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Michelle Roemer is currently a first-year student residing in Welsh Family Hall. She is from Mountain View, California, and plans to major in mechanical engineering and then pursue her MBA. She hopes to eventually work in a management position for a high-tech company. Inspired by the upcoming presidential election, Michelle chose to write on the understated, yet vital role religion plays in politics, especially with a Mormon candidate running for office in 2008. Michelle thoroughly enjoyed the research aspect of this essay, which revealed the different strategies politicians take to be portrayed as a man or woman of God and how Americans vote.

One Nation Under God?

A Look at the Relationship Between Religion and Politics in the United States

Michelle Roemer
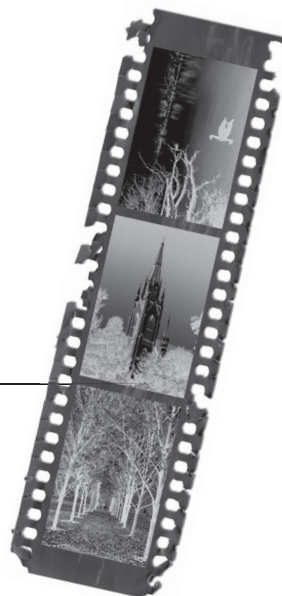
Living in the United States, religious language and imagery surrounds us. It is in our nation's pledge, on the back of the coins we use each day, and in the speeches our politicians make. According to the Constitution, however, the separation of church and state is supposed to be absolute. In other words, religion should never interfere with politics, and, conversely, politics should never interfere with religion. But does separation of religion and politics apply to all realms of government? Elections are one area of government where religion seems especially appropriate. In contemporary American society, presidential candidates reveal their faith and morals to the public during their campaigns. United States citizens then use this information about a candidate's religiosity to formulate their opinions about the candidate, which is a prime instance of religion meddling with politics.

The American public, however, is responsible for this interaction between religion and state. By voting, citizens are the ones that bring religion into the political sphere. They vote based on their values, and in doing so, elect politicians that share their religious morals and beliefs. American citizens make religion an issue in the elections; not the candidates or the laws of the United States' government. By making religion such an influential factor in the success of a campaign, the American public forces candidates to talk about their faith, which gives voters insight into their values. Mark Rozzel, professor of public policy at George Mason University, agrees. He observes that America "is a deeply religious nation by many standards. [Americans] want their leaders to be believers. They want them to believe in something higher, to have a moral framework as they lead the country" (Luo). Since Americans want religious leaders, politicians must discuss their faith in order to be elected. The American citizens then determine the relationship between religion and government by virtue of their right to vote.

In order to re-define the relationship between religion and politics, one needs to understand the role religion plays in American society. Polls conducted by the BBC found Americans "four times more likely than a Frenchman to attend a house of worship regularly, and eight times likely than a Norwegian" (Green). The Pew Forum on Religion

and Public Life conducted a poll that found that seventy-two percent of Americans agreed with the statement "the president should have strong religious beliefs" (Green). Because an overwhelming majority of Americans want a president with religious beliefs, religion plays a defining role in our country's elections. In fact, many Americans believe it is the duty of the president to "offer prayers to grieving families of soldiers killed in action or invoke God's blessing on the nation on holidays like Thanksgiving and Memorial Day" (Fowler 116). The president performs these duties as a response to the religious nature of the United States. It is the American public that wants a leader who is not afraid to call on God or rely on prayer in times of need. Most Americans want a president that will lead our nation in a direction that reflects the morality and religious values they practice at home, reflecting the original intent of our Founding Fathers.

Over two hundred years ago, our Founding Fathers understood that Americans wanted moral leaders. They knew the American public would choose the politicians that held religious beliefs. Our Founding Fathers never wanted religion to be established by the government, but instead established by the people (Allen). The Founding Fathers wanted America to be a country of religious freedom and so made religion intentionally unregulated by the government (Allen). Thomas Jefferson knew that "no nation has ever yet existed or been governed without religion. Nor will be" (Allen). Jefferson wanted the American public to enforce religion upon politics themselves through their right to vote. According to critics, Jefferson knew that "most people seem to believe that religion and morality are intimately linked, and it is only a fear of God that keeps us morally in line. Therefore, for a politician to admit to doubts about God's existence would raise serious doubts as to his or her basic morality" (Allen). Jefferson understood that America is a religious nation and its citizens want leaders to hold the same basic morals as they do. Consequently, religion does not need to be regulated by the government because it is regulated by the people as the Founding Fathers believed it would be. As long as Americas are religious, they will continue to elect leaders who express their same religious views.

> *By voting, citizens are the ones that bring religion into the political sphere. They vote based on their values, and in doing so, elect politicians that share their religious morals and beliefs.*

Knowing the weight religion holds in American society, it is easy to understand how Americans allow their religious beliefs to transcend into the political sphere, especially in elections. In today's society, "one's beliefs about God have become a new political fault line" ("Faith"). Based on an individual's religious beliefs and practices, one can easily predict who they will elect for president ("Faith"). Protestants are more inclined to vote Republican, while Catholics are more often Liberals. While these trends do not hold true for every individual, the overarching theme does demonstrate the vast degree to which Americans allow religion to influence their votes. A recent poll conducted by Pew Research Center reinforces this theme. They asked Americans which of the following characteristics would hurt a candidate's chances the most when running for president: being black, a Mormon, a Muslim, a homosexual, a woman, or an atheist ("Faith"). The

overwhelming majority replied that being an atheist would hinder a candidate's chances the most at being elected to the presidency ("Faith"). This poll shows the importance Americans place on a candidate's religiosity. The absence of religious values damages a candidate's campaign more than his race, sexuality, or gender. This statistic implies that religion plays a necessary role in a candidate's run for office. It appears Americans identify more with religion than they do with their sexuality or race. Hence, Americans may be ready to separate gender and race from politics, but not yet religion.

Although atheism is most detrimental to a presidential run, candidates that practice non-mainstream religions are often also criticized. Mitt Romney, one of the Republican candidates for president in 2008, knows this all too well. Romney, a Mormon, has had to bear much criticism from the right regarding his faith. Many fear he will allow his faith to dictate his policies if elected. Although Americans want a president with religious beliefs, they are extremely skeptical of those faiths that are not considered mainstream. Many Americans regard Mormonism as a cult, and furthermore, 37% of Americans confess they would not elect a Mormon candidate to the presidency (Goodstein). Romney faces a clear disadvantage because his faith inhibits him from reaching a larger audience of voters. The American public makes this choice. The degree to which Romney's faith influences his success in the election depends completely upon the American citizens. They must decide how much they will allow his religion to influence their vote. The debate over Romney's faith illustrates how tied Americans are to their religion. Many Americans refuse to look outside their denomination and consider a candidate with notably different religious views.

John F. Kennedy, like Romney, endured much criticism about his Catholic faith when he ran for president in 1960. Americans feared that Kennedy would take orders from the Pope, and thereby undermine democracy by allowing the Pope to indirectly run America. President Kennedy responded by addressing the issue head-on with a powerful speech. In it, he claimed that the separation of church and state should be absolute. He believed "in a president whose religious views [were] his own private affair, neither imposed by him upon the nation or imposed by the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office" ("Address"). Kennedy made it clear that his religion would not dictate his decisions in office. Romney, like Kennedy, also recently addressed the issue of his faith. In his speech, Romney reassured Americans that if elected, he would "serve no one religion, no one group, no one cause and no one interest" ("Baptist"). Unlike Kennedy, who believed that the separation of church and state should be absolute, Romney believes in some overlap. Romney argues "that a president's specific denomination is unimportant, so long as he has one" ("Baptist"). Romney has also organized several "faith and values steering committees" to dispel the American public's fears (Arnoldy). These committees are comprised of people from all religious backgrounds and faiths and work to advise Romney on value-related issues and stress the common ground between Romney and the average American (Arnoldy). Politicians are not responsible for the entanglement of religion and politics as these committees show. Rather, candidates, like Romney, try to steer the focus away from religion and toward American values such as patriotism. The

American voters are the ones that criticize Romney for his faith and constantly bring the focus of the campaign back to his religion.

Democrats, often referred to by opponents as the party of secularists, have recognized this trend and increasingly tried to incorporate religion into their campaign. With white evangelicals comprising "nearly a quarter of all voters," their votes are highly sought after (Cook). In the 2004 presidential election, Republicans held the upper-hand with this voting bloc. White evangelicals voted seventy-eight percent to twenty-one percent for Bush and Kerry respectively (Cook). Democrats, however, are hoping to bridge this "God gap" in the upcoming presidential election by reaching out to this group of "value voters" (Cook). By voting based on their values, Americans are once again bringing religion into politics. This time, however, Democrats are responding. The number of times Democratic candidates mention God in their speeches provides evidence of this new Democratic strategy. Since 1992, Democrats have mentioned God 4.3 times per speech and faith terms 16.5 times per speech. This is a seventy-seven percent and forty percent increase since 1980 (Domke). Polls show that the Democratic strategy has been a success with voters so far. The number of evangelicals that considered themselves Republicans in 2004 has decreased from fifty to forty-two percent (Coe). Democratic candidates are not discussing God because they want religion to play a crucial role in politics. Rather, they are speaking about religion in an attempt to win over voters. They understand voters want a candidate that is not afraid to discuss his religion and values, and so, the candidates are doing just that.

> *By making religion such an influential factor in the success of a campaign, the American public forces candidates to talk about their faith, which gives voters insight into their values.*

The three major Democratic candidates in the 2008 election have especially taken notice of America's "value voters" by bringing God and religion into their respective campaigns. Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, and Barack Obama have each hired faith outreach advisors and partaken in a televised forum on faith, values, and poverty (Cook). During the forum, each of them answered questions regarding their personal faith (Cook). Each also created an ad for Christian radio. Clinton and Obama, especially, have been very candid about their faith. Clinton has professed that she is a "praying person," while Obama has said a few years ago he found himself "kneeling beneath that cross" in submission "to His will" (Cook). The fact that Democratic candidates feel the need to address religion in their campaigns reveals the strong influence religion holds over elections. With so many Americans voting based on their own values and religious beliefs, candidates feel obligated to discuss religion in order to appear as religious individuals to the American public.

Once a candidate becomes president, this entanglement of religion and politics only continues. The best evidence of this union occurs when a president engages in "God talk" or "faith talk" (Coe). "God talk" is any reference to a supreme being, usually by name (Coe). "Faith talk," on the other hand, is the use of any words that carry a spiritual

meaning such as prayer, faith, and heaven (Coe). Presidents often employ this type of language when they want to relate to their audience and win political support. The use of "God talk" and "faith talk" has significantly increased since 1981. In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt addressed the nation just once and mentioned God's name only once during that speech (Domke). After September 11th, President Bush spoke to the nation three times and used God's name more than twenty times (Coe). This increase in "God talk" and "faith talk" is a response to the American public. In times of strife, many Americans seek comfort in the power of prayer. In response to this, presidents rely on religious language to relate to their constituency and win support. In instances such as these, the president does not enforce a religion upon the nation. Instead, the religious make-up of our country triggers the president's strong use of religious language.

Despite the predominance of religion in our society, many argue that religion should not play any role in politics. They believe that "no candidate's fitness for office should be judged by whether, where or how often he or she worships, or even whether he or she is a believer or a nonbeliever. It is simply too slippery a slope" (Butland). It is one thing to want a president to hold religious values, but it is another for Americans to refuse to elect a candidate *solely* based on his beliefs. Although many may want religion and politics to be in two separate spheres, there is no way for separation of church and state to be completely separate in contemporary American society because of the beliefs of the American public.

As long as Americans are religious, politics and religion will continue to overlap. When Americans go to vote, their morals and beliefs will inevitably influence them. Human nature teaches us to endorse a candidate that believes in the same fundamental values and beliefs as we do. With controversial issues such as abortion, stem cell research, and gay marriage forming an integral part of contemporary politics, religion naturally enters the political arena. Individuals inherently develop their opinions about these issues based on their faith and morals. Knowing a candidate's religion allows Americans to get a sense of the direction the country might be headed if that candidate is elected. The interaction of religion and politics does not have to be necessarily dangerous. Religion in politics can serve as a reminder to politicians that they should work to preserve the common good. A multitude of religious beliefs in politics also sparks discussion and debate, which is beneficial for our pluralistic society. Religion and politics are never going to be completely separate unless America becomes a secular nation. As long as religion only influences politics to a point at which justice and democracy can be preserved, then there is no need for absolute separation between the two.

With more instances of religion used in speeches and campaigns, religion has become increasingly politicized in American government. Many suggest that this trend will only continue. American voters, who consider themselves "religious," are having roughly 78% more children than secular Americans (Brooks). Typically, children worship as their parents do. And since Americans vote based on their values, the only way for religion

and politics to become completely separate would mean that America became predominantly secular. Only having secular citizens can guarantee a secular nation (Brooks). And since there is a significant fertility gap between secularists and religious, it appears America will remain a religious nation in the near future (Brooks). If America stays a religious nation, then its citizens will continue to vote based on their religious beliefs and values, thereby allowing religion to enter the realm of politics. If this theme continues, religion and politics will continue to be entwined until America has more secular citizens than religious ones.

In contemporary America, for a politician to win an election he must, at the very least, believe in God. It is fair for Americans to want their leaders to be guided by the same values and beliefs as they do. Especially in this time of uncertainty, many Americans find comfort knowing that the decisions the president makes are rooted in values that they share as well. Americans, however, need to be careful to what degree they allow religion to influence their vote. They should also consider a candidate's experience and his solutions for many of the pressing issues in society when voting. As Kennedy suggests, if candidates lose "their chance of being President on the day they were baptized, then it is the whole nation that will be the loser" ("Address"*)*. The best candidate for office might not be Christian, but could be a Mormon or Muslim. What America should consider in electing a candidate is the candidate's past history and experience in politics, not just his or her Sunday activities.

> *Over two hundred years ago, our Founding Fathers understood that Americans wanted moral leaders. They knew the American public would choose the politicians that held religious beliefs.*

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Author's Biography

Caroline Cole

Caroline Cole, a native of St. Louis, Missouri, is thrilled to have her writing appear in *Fresh Writing.* She would like to thank her FYC professor for offering constructive criticism on countless drafts until it was publication-worthy. Caroline is planning to major in architecture, and when not in the studio, she enjoys running, attending Campus Ministry events, and cheering for the ND football team!

She knew immigration was a major issue facing our country but became especially interested in it after attending the 2007 ND Forum, which focused on that very topic. It is a problem that needs a solution, and Caroline's strong Catholic faith led her to look for one in what the Church has to say about it. She is hopeful that an effective way of handling immigration will be reached soon in our communities and in our country.

Strangers

No Longer

Caroline Cole
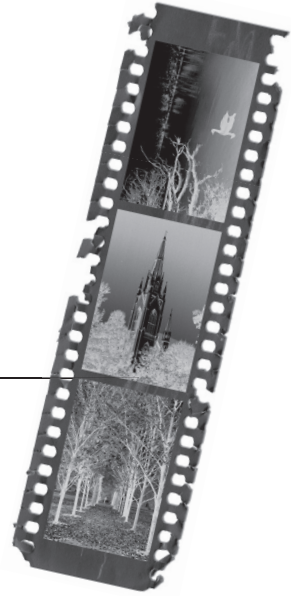
It's a normal day at work. You get to the factory early, set up your things, and get started. Suddenly, the door flies open. Men in green uniforms march in. They're carrying guns! Everything is confusion. Without knowing how, you find yourself in handcuffs and being escorted out the door. You look back and see your boss. You catch his eye, sure that the wild fear and desperation he must see in yours will inspire him to take action and stop this, but he does nothing. He simply stands there as you are taken away. Your future is suddenly terrifyingly uncertain. You realize, of course, that this is happening because you don't have the correct papers to be here. You're an illegal immigrant. You've dreaded this day but never thought it would be quite like this. You hoped you would at least have had a chance to say goodbye to your family, but right now, you don't know if you'll ever see them again.

What I just described is an immigration raid. These have been happening all over the country in an effort to deal with the issues of immigration that we are currently facing. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided a factory in South Bend last spring in a manner much like this, in fact (Cox). However, this way of handling the problem is completely ineffective. For one thing, it undermines the dignity the migrants have as human beings. Coming in with guns to arrest them is going too far. They are still people, even though they came (illegally) from another country. That, I think, is what is most important to keep in mind when we discuss and propose immigration reforms. Any new policies *must* ensure protection of the dignity the migrants have as human beings. So, how and why do we go about doing that?

First, we need to look at why the rights of migrants need to be respected. Indirectly, it is because every time we make a choice *not* to defend human life, it makes it easier to do so again in other areas. Abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, and immigration policies that use excessive force to harm migrants are all examples of things that contribute to what Pope John Paul II called the "culture of death" that is so prevalent in our country. All of these issues, and more, need to be addressed in order to improve the overall condition of our country, but we must start one step at a time. Right now, I will focus only on immigration.

On a more practical (rather than ethical) note, our country needs immigrants. This means we need effective ways of bringing them in legally and sustaining them while they're here. Migrants hold important jobs that Americans either can't or won't do. If they weren't here, these jobs (like harvesting crops) either wouldn't get done or would have to be done by Americans. At the moment, we can't afford to have too many of our citizens take labor/low skill jobs (although these are necessary, and an improvement for the migrants over what is usually available in their home countries). Instead, right now we need to focus on providing our citizens with a good education so that we can keep up with foreign countries, and also simply because we have the potential to do so. We shouldn't sell ourselves and our citizens short by letting these resources go to waste. It seems to benefit everyone to allow migrants to enter the country and take these jobs.

As I've shown, the issue of immigration is tied to others on both practical and ethical levels. Therefore, how we deal with immigration is going to affect many other areas of public policy. We also need to be sure to do this soon, because immigration is going on *right now*. The longer we delay enacting reforms, the more migrants have entered and the issue is that much more complicated. The more legislators continue to debate the issue, the less time they have to spend on other important topics. The U.S. has always been a world leader—it is time for us to set an example for the world of how to welcome migrants well and handle the issues connected with doing that.

> *I propose that the best way to bring effective reforms to immigration policy on the national and local levels is to implement the ideas of Catholic Social Teaching on immigration in public policy.*

Currently, our government does not know how to do this. Our immigration system is broken beyond repair (Cox). The legislators haven't been able to come up with one list of what needs to happen and why it needs to happen that way. Luckily, another group has been able to: the Catholic bishops of the U.S. and Mexico. They wrote a joint pastoral letter in 2003 explaining Catholic social teaching on the issue. This document is called "Strangers No Longer: Together on a Journey of Hope." It calls for welcoming migrants ("Strangers") and solidarity with the migrants ("together"). The bishops ultimately believe that this is a problem that does have a solution ("hope"). I think the bishops' ideas make sense. In fact, I propose that the best way to bring effective reforms to immigration policy on the national and local levels is to implement the ideas of Catholic Social Teaching on immigration in public policy.

In order to show how the bishops' policies apply to issues we are currently dealing with in our country, and why and how they are an improvement, we need to look at some specific issues.

First, let's examine an issue that has been a subject of much debate recently in Congress: whether or not to build a fence on the Mexico/U.S. Border. The purpose of this fence would be, of course, to keep illegal immigrants out. The U.S. government supports this course of action. Various bills have proposed it. In fact, a bill passed in the House in 2006 that "approved the building of a 700-mile fence along the U.S.-Mexico border and

would make illegal presence in the U.S. a crime, rather than the civil offense it is now" ("House" 1). Supporters say that the best way to go about handling immigration is first to strongly increase border patrol (such as with a fence) and then deal with just the immigrants who are already in the country.

The bishops, on the other hand, are opposed to the building of this fence. An editorial from *America* magazine addresses this issue. It quotes Bishop Gerald Barnes of San Bernardino, California, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Immigration, as saying that "the ever lengthening barrier would lead to increased exploitation of undocumented persons through more and riskier human smuggling" ("Reform" 1). I think the government would argue that that is the point of building a fence—to make crossing the border more dangerous. However, the bishops are saying it will only be *more* difficult, not impossible. In fact, it would not effectively stop enough people from entering the country illegally to justify the harm it would cause to those who do. Also, it would make this transition from country to country seem more permanent. Because of the increased danger, once immigrants cross the border, they will be more likely to stay forever rather than return to their home countries eventually (Bethel 4).

I agree with the bishops and think their view is a much more reasonable one to take. Simply keeping people out of our country is not enough and won't benefit anyone. There are obviously other issues that need to be addressed. Building a fence, however, almost makes it seem like we don't want to have to deal with those issues, we just want to ignore what's going on and hope it goes away. It seems to me like the equivalent of covering your ears and humming when you don't want to hear something.

Another issue is whether or not illegal immigrants should receive welfare. The government does not have one specific stance. Some people are for it and some are against. Those who are against it, such as Tom Bethel, assert that illegal immigrants aren't citizens and therefore don't need to be provided for by the government. These people think that illegal immigrants can come in and work for us, but shouldn't have any other rights until they're legal. Bethel states, "Let those who want to work come, I say. Pay them their wages, give them raises where necessary. Let them send money back to Mexico, El Salvador, and the rest. But let's also discourage government handouts" (3). To me, this seems like exploitation. To Bethel and others, however, it seems perfectly fair in a "protect only your own" sort of view.

The bishops also oppose this. They believe that immigrants, whether legal or illegal, should be given welfare and be provided for. I think this view makes much more sense for multiple reasons. On a practical note, we want a good, strong work force. This requires healthy workers. For workers to be healthy, they need to be well taken care of—given food, shelter, and other basic needs. In addition to keeping them physically healthy, this will keep the migrants psychologically healthy as well in that they will feel like someone is on their side and cares about them. Even more than this somewhat self-centered reason of having productive workers, there is also an ethical obligation present as well. People's basic needs need to be provided for. We must do this for all people

residing in our country, whether they are citizens or not. We cannot stand by and watch people suffer while at the same time expect them to labor in our factories and harvest our crops.

This issue leads to another: Those who say no about providing welfare think we only need to aid those who are legal. In that case, should currently undocumented immigrants be legalized? According to that view, we could then offer them support. However, through example, we can see that the government does not follow this train of thought. Instead they support arresting undocumented immigrants, such as in the case of the Janco raid in South Bend last spring. In fact, the number of these raids across the country has increased drastically since 2006. In that year, "ICE reports that it arrested 718 people on criminal charges at work sites, including executives, contractors, workers who've falsified documents and those who've re-entered the United States after having been deported before. It has detained an additional 3,667 workers on suspicion of immigration violations" ("Hearings" 2). I think these statistics give a pretty clear idea of what the government's position is. However, it is not only *that* the government performs these raids, but *how* they do it that is a problem. As illustrated in the earlier narrative, they often use excessive and unnecessary force. The bishops and the Church certainly take issue with this. There is absolutely no need for it. It is easier to see why the government supports these raids in the first place—after all, undocumented immigration *is* illegal. They are simply carrying out the law. However, besides the fact that force shouldn't be used, this law in itself is impractical and needs to be changed for several reasons, as pointed out by the bishops and the Church.

> *We cannot stand by and watch people suffer while at the same time expect them to labor in our factories and harvest our crops.*

First, Fr. Chris Cox, pastor of St. Adalbert's parish in South Bend, points out a practical problem with these arrests: "if 36 families leave South Bend, we have 36 more abandoned houses. We lose property taxes, income taxes, and sales taxes. The consequence is that we will then lay off teachers, firefighters, and police officers. This is a bad day for South Bend—economically, morally, and spiritually" ("Arrests" 2). The problem that Fr. Cox foresees for South Bend is already a reality for other communities, such as Riverside, New Jersey. Last year, they enacted "legislation penalizing anyone who employed or rented to an illegal immigrant" (Belson 1). Within months, hundreds of illegal immigrants had fled, and the local economy suffered greatly from losing so many people. Businesses closed and lawsuits were filed that have cost the town greatly monetarily in legal bills (Belson 1).

So, for practical reasons, arresting illegal immigrants is a bad idea. The bishops go further than just to say they shouldn't be arrested, though. They support a path to citizenship for these migrants. This is a better policy than arresting them by conducting raids. The bishops argue that "a broad legalization program of the undocumented would benefit not only the migrants but also both nations" ("Strangers" 69). They support this claim by saying it would "help stabilize the labor market in the U.S, preserve family

unity, and improve the standard of living in immigrant communities" and would allow immigrants to "continue to contribute to the economy" ("Strangers" 69).

Another aspect of legalization that I think is sometimes overlooked is that it can happen through both temporary and permanent visas. We don't have to automatically let everyone in for life. These visas can also be granted for a few different reasons. They can be employment-based (coming in to work) or family-based (coming to join family members who are already here), both of which are supported by the bishops ("Reform" 1).

A closely related issue to legalization is deportation. Again, we can see from the raids that the government supports deportation. The bishops, however, do not have a one-way-or-the-other policy. They allow for it when the immigrants have committed serious crimes, because nations have the right to ensure safety within their borders (Cox). (This is the same reason that it is okay to have jails.) However, they do not support deportation for illegal immigrants who have not done anything else wrong. They recognize that these migrants left their home countries for a reason, whether it was to escape a bad situation there or come into new opportunities here. Sending them back would be placing them right back in the situation that caused them to leave in the first place. Deportation is like treating the symptoms, whereas what we need to be doing is getting to the bottom of these problems and addressing their root causes. For instance, why can't the Mexican government create employment for all its citizens? Are they even trying to do so? These are the questions that need answering, not whether someone working in a factory happens to be here legally or not. We need to look at the bigger picture.

By now, one can probably start to see a pattern in the different approaches the government and the bishops take on issues related to immigration. In general, the government tends to look only at what is best for the U.S. and its citizens. This can be a very selfish view. The bishops, on the other hand, always support the path that benefits and respects the migrants. This makes much more sense in our world today. Immigration is an international issue, not just a national one. The rights of both the people coming in and the people already here need to be respected. Usually if that isn't happening, it is the rights of the people coming in that are being neglected, not the other way around. In order to balance things out we need to make a conscious effort to respect the migrants' rights.

That is essentially where we are now. So where do we go from here? What role should the government and church leaders try to play? As previously mentioned, the government has not yet been able to come up with effective policies. However, I think it is a good sign that they are still debating. This shows that they recognize that it is an important issue that needs to be dealt with that they have not yet solved. If they suddenly stopped debating the issues, that would be a cause for concern. Their role right now needs to be to continue to stay open and look for the best possible solution. Obviously, I think they should seriously consider what the bishops have to say and work toward implementing those policies, but that cannot simply be forced upon them; they must come to that conclusion on their own.

In order for the government to find out about the bishops' ideas and policies, church leaders need to be in close contact with government leaders to communicate them. South Bend is doing pretty well in this area. Fr. Cox has been involved with this aspect. He proposed and helped push for a law that banned a form of false advertising that led to immigrants being taken advantage of in legal matters. People were advertising themselves in a way that led migrants to think they had much more authority than they actually did and therefore trusted them to perform legal duties that they couldn't actually do (Cox). This bill passed. This is part of the Church's role right now—to be that communication. Another part is to continue to provide a support system and a good community for the migrants ("Strangers" 41–43). This, above all else, will make them feel welcome and help them integrate smoothly into our country.

When looked at from a general standpoint, this issue seems logical and rather clear-cut—the government is looking for effective immigration policies, and the bishops' teachings can provide that while making sure that the basic rights of all humans are respected. It makes sense for the government to at least seriously consider what the bishops have to say. Not only that, but I believe I have a personal stake in the issue despite the fact I am not a migrant. As a citizen, I want to live in a country that respects and welcomes "outsiders." If the government doesn't treat these people well, is it so much of a stretch to consider that someday they'll start mistreating their own people in the same way? Anytime the dignity of one group of people is being attacked, it puts every other group a little more at risk also. Instead of letting that happen, we should move in the other direction and do all we can to protect the rights of all people at all times, starting with immigrants.

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Author's Biography

KHA TRINH

Kha Trinh is a first-year student at Notre Dame from Atlanta, Georgia. He was originally born in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, before moving to the United States in 1997. Kha's identity as a Vietnamese-American student has shaped the development of his writing, from the initial struggle with English as a second language to the eventual appreciation of rhetoric. Moreover, writing has allowed him to express multiple facets of his identity—mainly his experience as an Asian-American and as a gay student at the university. Kha plans to major in history and French, and then attend graduate school. He hopes to pursue a teaching career as a professor in history. As Kha continues through schooling, he will always be comforted by Thomas Mann's claim that, "A writer is somebody for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people."

Pursuing Nothingness:
## The Tragedy of Mark Rothko's Art

Kha Trinh

The Question

When I encountered Mark Rothko's color field paintings, I was captivated and deeply perplexed by the paintings' massive colored rectangles stacked on top of one another. A part of me was drawn into looking at the painting, yet I could not recognize anything familiar from it. By grabbing my attention and pulling me into the canvas, I realized that the artist had achieved his purpose—a poignant piece of art, suspended in space, which left an imprint on the beholder. In this case, the beholder was me. As I reflected, I felt lost in his disturbing pictures, lost and confused to a point of anxiety, a state of which I could not break free. It was as if I were confronting a void that was visible through the untamed rectangles on canvas, which somehow awakened an anxiety in me—an anxiety that was a response to the emptiness in his pictures. In essence, Rothko's art presented me with a paradox: artworks were supposed to be real and tangible, yet the images on his canvas were neither real nor tangible. It seemed as if these images were hinging on the edge of nothing. Maybe, then, I was responding to nothingness. Since my initial encounter with Rothko's work, I began to pose the question of what makes Mark Rothko's paintings distinct from his contemporaries, since none of his contemporaries have produced anything similar to his work. Moreover, I do not maintain that any of his colleagues were seeking to recreate a state of controlled anxiety in their art. Perhaps Rothko's paintings are intrinsically different since he made "nothingness" his central subject, something which none of his contemporaries had ever done. If that is so, then to what extent is Rothko's portrayal of his subject peculiar from his peers and why did he pursue it? In order to understand how and why Rothko's arts were unconventional, even for abstract standards, one must first consider the nature and motifs of abstract art.

The Nature of Abstract Art

Abstraction was a new current in artistic expression that first appeared in the early 1900s and later popularized into the middle and late stages of the twentieth century. The works of Wassily Kandinsky, one of the first artists to create abstract art and define abstract philosophy, suggested that abstraction in itself is a way, not an end result, in which we can look at our surrounding—our reality. Principally, abstract art offers us
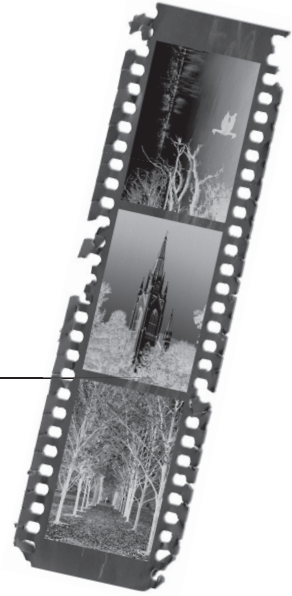
an alternative way of looking, reflecting, and understanding our environment by its use of basic and simple geometric shapes "to draw away from, to separate," the spectator's material view of what is present to a more spiritual one. In essence, abstraction is a style of creating art that separates itself from what is real—its surrounding environment. If the goal of abstraction is creating boundaries to distinguish itself, then all art must be abstract since even the most convincing imitation has a barrier between the spectator and the work and can never fool a viewer into believing that the art is indeed the actual subject (Janson). However, that is not the case.

Unlike previous schools of art, abstract art rejects the idea that art—whether it is a picture, collage, sculpture, or any other form—should imitate nature (Matthias). In other words, abstraction seeks to reject the rationality and the realistic imitation of the material world. Abstract artists realized that art can be made out of a wider spectrum of mediums than just out of preexisting objects (Matthias). Hence, in contrast with Renoir, Rembrandt, and the old masters whose masterpieces were an imitation—at best an illusion of reality—abstract artists created art that was otherworldly. Essentially, these artists no longer felt the need to continue the Italian Renaissance tradition in which three-dimensional perspectives and horizons were used to construct an illusion of space, and objects were meticulously drawn to be an imitation of the material world (Matthias). As a result, abstract artists such as Kandinsky, Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, Rothko and the like strived to create artworks that were disparate from reality, from the common ontology of existing objects, and from any reconstruction of the environment.

> *Indeed, death in itself is the ending of a life, the negation of existence, and in essence a deletion of reality.*

Liberated from tradition, these artists began to experiment with various aspects of art-making in search of their own styles; and to express their ideas *a posteriori* of their new understanding that they could develop a new world in which ideas and shapes have little references to reason, to what we know, and to what we see. And thus, we begin to see art that is made out of purely geometric shapes, out of pictures that were unfamiliar and at times strange to us, out of interplay of colors, and out of shapes that had more to do with "mathematics" than to what we considered "art." For instance, one can take a look at Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* to see the female body depicted by simplified geometric shapes and the human face distorted to convey emotions. Picasso's paintings were considered abstract, but more on the side of semi-abstract since he was still engaging in a dialogue with imitation (Matthias). His subjects were somewhat a depiction of real life. On the contrary, Mondrian broke away completely with the Italian Renaissance tradition, realism, and began a new style that was uniquely rooted in modern classicism. In other words, his works went fully abstract—he only used lines, geometric quadrilaterals, and primary colors as evidenced in his *Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Red* (Matthias). There is not a trace of imitation in his pictures, at least not anything that is instantly similar to the material world. Mondrian's works exemplify the spirit and

style of abstract art. In fact, his art was so influential and successful that it became a standard, a reference point of excellence for future generations of abstract artists like Mark Rothko.

Stylistically, the abstract artists aimed to "invent" instead of "imitate," and they felt it was the better form of artistic expression (Matthias). Having that confidence in the ideals of invention established, the aim of abstract art was applauded by the French theorist Andre Felibien who remarked that, "History painters occupy the second-highest rank; above them are the inventors of allegorical compositions. This hierarchy is defined both by the relative status of the subject matter and by the distinction between imitation and invention." In making this comment, Felibien shared a common view with abstract artists regarding the act of "inventing" as superior to an the act of "imitation."

Development of a Universal Language

Consequently, the drive for invention, as seen in the new styles of abstract art, has led abstract artists to pursue a new world of their own, but what was that world? The interpretations of their new world were controversial, and oftentimes debatable. However, for the purpose of understanding Mark Rothko's work, I will demonstrate that the newly reconstructed world of abstraction gradually distanced itself from the associative ontology (meaning) of the extroverted material reality and moves toward a more philosophical and spiritual realm—a move toward introspection.

Introspection was a movement in which the artist examined his own mind, thoughts, feelings and mental state, and produced art that he believed to be a reflection of the human condition. It was a romantic treatment of abstraction's aim to portray something that was innately human, something ontologically unfamiliar to the spectator. This introspection eventually led to the unifying theme of regression in abstract art. It was a common theme that the majority of abstract art tried to accomplish—to portray emotional, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual expressions by their most primal instincts, so primal that all human beings could somehow relate to. This was sound reasoning because why would one look anywhere else but the past to find a universal connection. After all, as Charles Darwin suggested in *The Origin of Species*, we all evolve from the same ancestry, therefore our point of connection must be traced back in time.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "regression" is defined as "The action of returning to or towards a point of departure or place." With that said, the goal of abstract art to create a new world is to take us, as humans, to a place where we all came from—our point of shared departure. It is an appeal to the senses, the emotions, and the common psyche that defines humanity and what it means to be human. That ambitious aim to find the basic pillar of human existence—the timeless commonality across different geographies, ethnicities, and histories—was not a point of conjecture singular to the world of art alone. Hence, abstract artists have been drawing inspirations from various sources that they perceived as primal and distinct in its connections to the common human psyche: non-European arts, writing on cave walls, prehistoric arts unearthed

by anthropologists, the art of children, amateur painters, and most notably the ideas of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung about the collective unconscious and personal archetypes. Moreover, the ideas of the collective unconscious and personal archetypes have been the most influential in shaping abstract art since they focused on the roles of anti-rational imagery of dreams and the unconscious (Matthias). By extension, the spheres of dreams and the unconscious were generally accepted to be primal elements that all humans possess and thus coincided with abstraction's aim of achieving regression and being able to take humans back to a "place where all humans come from."

Over time, the outside influences of non-European art and modern philosophies contributed to abstraction's goal of communicating through art about that "common place." This continual process of adopting new ideas about the state of human existence has been refined to a search of a universal language. In essence, a universal language is one that can communicate a shared feeling or state of mind to any observer visually and can bring humans closer to our "common point of departure." Indeed, a universal language is the manifestation of the theme of regression. This is so because in order to be universal, abstraction must return, and go back in time to find that primordial landscape of the human condition, something that is shared, to which all modern humans can once again reconnect. With a unifying theme established, all abstract artists' goal was to search for and communicate that universal language through their artwork. Needless to say, each artist came up with different conclusions (Matthias). Their various conclusions were evidenced by the diversity of styles from Pablo Picasso to Piet Mondrian, Barnett Newman to Salvador Dali, and Max Ernst to Mark Rothko.

Even though the works of major abstract artists varied, the majority of them share a common practice of producing "substantive art" to convey their universal language. Substantive art, by my definition, has symbols and subjects that could be identifiable and recognizable. They can be interpreted by either tradition or through the philosophy of the "collective subconscious" or personal archetypes or by current events. It is important to note that they were not imitations because they were not exact reflections of the environment, they were distortions. However, those distortions have meanings that could be understood. It is through careful understanding of these paintings that the artist hoped his universal language would be communicated to the spectator.

Mark Rothko was Different

It is here, in the practice of conveying a universal language, that Mark Rothko's work radically delineates from that of his contemporaries. I argue that Mark Rothko was a revolutionary because unlike his colleagues, who chose to produce substantive art, he purposefully sought to create art that was non-substantive—art that was a depiction of nothing. Furthermore, he did so because he felt that "nothingness" was the best way in which he could communicate his universal language—tragedy. Through an examination of Martin Heidegger's philosophy, I will offer proofs of what Mark Rothko meant by "nothingness," and why he chose it to embody his universal language of tragedy.

Before entering the discussion of Mark Rothko's motifs for portraying tragedy through nothingness, I will demonstrate how his art is non-substantive by juxtaposing his painting *Untitled, 1952* with Picasso's famous abstract painting—*Guernica*—a standard work by which we can define substantive art. The analysis of the two pictures will be brief and by no means exhaustive since my purpose is to show how Rothko's art is non-substantive.

Guernica is a substantive piece of art, by definition, because it contains elements of symbolism, material subjects, and its messages are identifiable and recognizable. Moreover, this classic painting could be interpreted by recognizing the symbols in its distortions (a feature of abstract art) of the material world. Likewise, the use of symbols are noted for their significance by Picasso's biographer Patrick O'Brian when he asserted that, "*Guernica* is also an allegory, making an entirely conscious use of symbol, and it is reasonable to ask how successfully and at what level of art that the 'message' is conveyed."

What then is the message of *Guernica* and how is it conveyed in the painting? Considering the context of the painting, it is clear that Picasso created this work of art as a response to the Bombing of Guernica on Monday, April 27, 1937. Since Guernica was the epicenter of Basque resistance, it was an easy target for the German attack in support of Franco's unification of Spain in the Spanish Civil War. Picasso's response, embodied through *Guernica*, is an obvious one—"a denunciation of the crime of war, of mindless cruelty, hatred, the massacre of innocents." In other words, Picasso clearly despises the war and the killing of innocent lives. *Guernica* is his way of protest in which he declares the evil of war through a visual medium. In doing so, he uses various symbols that could be interpreted in a historical context for a demonstration of what is substantive art.

The three main symbols of the painting are the horse, the bull, and the woman holding a lamp. In the historical interpretation, the horse can be viewed as the Republic (the people of Spain), the bull as Fascism (the party that aims to destroy the people), and the woman holding the lamp as a mythic character who repels evil with light (O'Brian). A closer look at the picture demonstrates the caustic relationship among the three major symbols. First, the horse screams in pain because it had been stabbed and deeply wounded by the knife of fascism. It is in essence dying a slow death (O'Brian). The bull, symbolic of fascism, is in a position of composure and void of any pain. The calmness of the bull in comparison to the suffering, horror, and struggle of all the other symbols of the painting is indicative that it is in a position of victory. However, it is shying away from the lamp of the woman who is holding it. This purposeful action demonstrates Picasso's view that the bull is a monster shying away from the light of the savior, which is the mythic representation of the woman with the lamp (O'Brian).

In the case of Picasso's abstract painting, one can recognize the symbolism, associate it with characteristics of human life such as pain, horror, war, and etc., and be able to make sense of it all. In addition, Picasso associated his painting with a real event, something that is undeniably real and certainly not "nothingness." That clear presence of the painting's message is the difference between substantive art and Rothko's.

By contrast, Rothko's painting *Untitled, 1952* is made up of heavily mixed colors that are set on a grey canvas. These colors are so abstracted that it is almost impossible to recognize any symbols they represent. In addition, the shapes of his painting are large rectangles, filled with colors, which have no clear boundaries. These rectangles are heavily exaggerated by paint strokes that their edges, the lines that define them as rectangles, are blended chaotically into the background. It is as if these rectangles are trying to ooze out into space. Likewise, the colors seem to be oozing out as well in the violent brush strokes. In addition, the colors work against each other, contrasting in an endless cycle of violence. Together, these elements conjure a sense of confusion to the point that the spectator falls into a state of anxiety because Rothko's pictures are so confined and repressive—it is that way because it has no meaning, it represents nothingness. There are no symbols or distortions in Rothko's art, only a feeling of anxiety that arises out of nothingness.

For most, death is a certainty that is also unknown—it is an accepted truth that we will die but we do not know when or how. For Mark Rothko, that was not the case. On February 25th, 1970, Rothko committed suicide by cutting deep into his elbow; he bled to death in his studio (Schama). For him, death was a certainty that was known since he ended his own life when he wanted to and exactly how he wanted to.

Nothingness Defined

What is nothingness? A dictionary definition of the word is "the realm of nonexistent, that which is non-existent." But what does that really mean? What does "the realm of nonexistent" means? Martin Heidegger, the late German philosopher best known for his book *Being and Time*, claimed that nothingness is the origin of negation. The cause of negation, or of the opposition, is of course the existence of "something." From that premise in which he believes the state of nothingness is the reason in which we are able to see the environment as being of something, something of existence. In essence, Heidegger argues that nothingness is also an affirmation of being as it is the limit imposed on all beings. In other words, he asserts that nothingness limits our existence, it defines us. How is that so? First, we are something and we are confined to being "something," because we have ontology. Second, what is that line, that demarcation that confines us to be something? The answer, according to Heidegger is the existence of nothingness because we cannot be "nothing" if we are already something. Therefore, there is a clear distinction between the two realms of nothing and something.

Moreover, Heidegger theory maintains that, "Everything in our world, including ourselves, is finite, and hence nothingness constitute the being of all that exists, and as such forms everything in the way that it is." In addition to claiming that the existence of nothingness defines and constrains all existence in its own world, Heidegger also maintains that because everything that exists is finite; or having an end, they will eventually be a part of nothingness when they come to that end. Once an existence comes to an end, it no longer knows whether it is existing or not; and by that same token, it becomes a part of nothingness because it no longer acknowledges itself as something.

If all forms of existence are finite, then there must be an end that is their nothingness. What is that nothingness to humans? Heidegger argues that human nothingness is death because it is death that defines what is living. With the absence of death, then, humans are not living, and if humans are not living, then what is human existence? Humans, then, are in essence nothing. Like all other forms of existence, humans are finite and will reach death when we become nothing. Indeed, death is our "impending nothingness." In short, Heidegger believes that nothingness (death) is a reason and a proof that humans are something (living), and that humans will eventually become a part of nothingness because all life will come to an end. Here, Heidegger is proposing a deeply pessimistic view of life—life is possible because of nothingness and it will be nothingness sooner or later. There are no heavens or the afterlife according to Heidegger's philosophy; rather, there is only an intangible void that is nothing. It is important to keep Heidegger's concept of the relationship of life and nothingness in mind because it is pertinent in the discussion of Rothko's portrayal of tragedy that I will discuss later.

In addition to conceding the intrinsic role of nothingness in constituting human existence, Heidegger also suggests that, "death, our own impending nothingness, is not simply something that happens at the end of life." In other words, Heidegger is suggesting that our experience with death is not just a physical one that we will encounter once, but also a psychological one that we may encounter multiple times in life.

If humans are able to psychologically experience a certain form of death, certain interaction with nothingness, then how do we know when we are encountering that psychological state of death that is the impending nothingness that Heidegger was referring to? The answer is the feeling of anxiety. Anxiety is the criteria in which nothingness can be detected by humans. What Heidegger is suggesting is that our awareness of the fact that we will die and might die at any moment, our fears of it, penetrates our lives. And thus it affects all aspects of human livelihood by making humans "anxious creatures" (Kosoi). In fact, Heidegger maintains that human nature is that of anxiety because human instincts are designed to protect one from death, to ensure one's survival. Ultimately, anxiety is the universal mental state of human existence. In continuation with Heidegger's views, anxiety brings human beings toward nothingness, it reveals nothingness. In anxiety, nothingness is known "with beings and in beings expressly as a slipping away of the whole." The statement suggests, particularly with the phrase "slipping away of the whole," that anxiety is a feeling that takes humans to a state of mind that they are stripped away from their ontology—stripped from the entities of the world that they derive their meanings, relationship and identity from. Once they are stripped away from that ontology, they are again nothing, and that nothing is death. This is so since there are no other natural forces that are strong enough to induce an anxiety that could sever the ties of a human to his or her ontology. For instance, humans find their meaning for life (ontology) through their family, faith, career, race, and etc… These superficial human inventions can all be severed by death, the event that succeeds true anxiety.

In sum, Heidegger argues, and I agree for the purpose of analyzing Mark Rothko's work, that anxiety is a response to nothingness because nothingness is ultimately death as mentioned before. As noted by Nathalie Kosoi in her concurrent agreement with Heidegger that anxiety is the only accurate clue to nothingness:

> Nothingness evokes anxiety and the sublime horror mixed with pleasure, however, there is a fundamental difference between the two. The sublime … is contingent on nothingness, as it is the apprehension of our finitude and fragility, of the fact that there are forces in nature that can destroy us. At the same time, the sublime is also a withdrawal from such realization, because we know that there is no real or immediate threat to our existence, according to Burke, or because we discover our superiority over our finite nature, according to Kant. The encounter with nothingness offers us no such redemption. On the contrary, it points to the impossibility of a salvation, as our impending nothingness is also what constitutes us.

Perhaps he ended his life as a martyr, a martyr for his art—he wanted people to view his life as an artwork in itself, in that his own anxiety revealed his nothingness—his death.

Here, Kosoi notes that unlike the sublime, anxiety does not offer a "redemption" in which one has superiority over finitude. If one is not finite, then one would not cease to exist. And if an entity does not cease to exist, it will not confront nothingness. On the other hand, the lack of that "redemption" of superiority over finitude in anxiety is proof that anxiety is an accurate indicator of nothingness and ultimately death. Furthermore, on a more basic level, humans in general do not fear death because when asked about those topics, I tend to receive responses that indicate a level of anxiety concerning death, not fear.

Why Nothingness?

I argue that Mark Rothko chose to portray nothingness in his paintings because he felt it was the best way of conveying the universal language of tragedy. With the background provided beforehand about nothingness, its association with death, and that it caused anxiety, I will now explain why Rothko chose nothingness as a way to communicate tragedy.

Mark Rothko made a remark that he intended to produce art that was "tragic and timeless" and that there was always an element of tragedy in each one of his works. Then, it is sound logic that he used nothingness to portray tragedy since nothingness; according to Heidegger, is a representation of death. And death is the most tragic of all tragedies. Indeed, death in itself is the ending of a life, the negation of existence, and in essence a deletion of reality.

How did Rothko know that he had successfully communicated to the audience tragedy? Better yet, how do we, as the spectators of his art, know that we are indeed seeing tragedy? The answer lies in how effectively the painting provokes a state of anxiety because

anxiety, according to Heidegger, is the state in which humans confront nothingness—death. And in the same way that nothingness triggers a response of anxiety, Rothko's paintings, too, provoke a sense of anxiety. He aimed to recreate that nothingness in his painting so he too could communicate a sense of psychological experience with death that is anxiety, a state that his paintings cause the spectators to feel. In this way, he was successful in communicating his universal language through his depiction of nothingness in his art work. In fact, Rothko admitted to purposefully creating art that arouses anxiety in his interview with *Harper's Magazine* when commenting on how he intended his art to, "make the viewer feel that they are trapped in a room where all the doors and windows are bricked up, so that all they can do is to butt their heads forever against the wall."

Yet is it entirely true that Mark Rothko was that much different from his contemporaries? Is it always the case as I have been suggesting that Rothko was the only artist who tried to portray nothingness in his art? Critics have proposed that abstract artists who painted with geometric shapes and color fields were also trying to portray nothingness. Although I grant that these artworks have some stylistic similarities, I still maintain that Rothko is the only artist whose purpose was to paint nothingness and successfully conveyed it through anxiety. For instance, Piet Mondrian's art may look strange and full of emptiness at first, but that is not the case. A closer look at Mondrian's art will reveal its classical characteristic—the solid lines, the clearly defined rectangles, the perfect angles, and the grid-like structure, the calming effects of primary colors, and the aesthetic uniformity of the art. For example, a careful look at his *Composition with red, yellow blue and black* exemplifies all classical characteristics. In fact, Mondrian's paintings evoke a feeling of security and safety since all of his angles are precisely perfect and his representation of space is solid. Clearly, it was not Mondrian's intention to create anxiety through his art; therefore, he does not provide any basis for confronting nothingness.

For most, death is a certainty that is also unknown—it is an accepted truth that we will die but we do not know when or how. For Mark Rothko, that was not the case. On February 25th, 1970, Rothko committed suicide by cutting deep into his elbow; he bled to death in his studio (Schama). For him, death was a certainty that was known since he ended his own life when he wanted to and exactly how he wanted to. Because of this, I conclude that Rothko's death was the ultimate physical manifestation of the tragedy of his artwork. He himself had been psychologically confronting death by confronting that anxiety that his art had forced him to. I believe that he confronted anxiety, death, and nothingness so much that he could no longer bear to be in this world of existence. Perhaps he ended his life as a martyr, a martyr for his art—he wanted people to view his life as an artwork in itself, in that his own anxiety revealed his nothingness—his death.

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Author's Biography

Daniel Crupi

Currently planning on a double major in political science and vocal performance, Daniel chose his research topic by examining the thing most influential in his life: music. Initially, he was simply curious about the effect that iPod earbud headphones might be having on his hearing, but after some research, he realized that he may have caused more damage to his ears than he had thought. Discovering how easy it is to permanently ruin your hearing and how many teenagers seemed to unknowingly be doing just that, he decided to construct his research argument based on his findings. Graduating from Marshalltown High School in Iowa, and a proud member of Keenan Hall, Daniel hopes to pursue a career in arts management, performance, or government.

Falling on Deaf Ears:
Noise-Induced Hearing Loss

Daniel Crupi

Music plays a significant role in my life. In my spare time, I listen to my iPod, blare songs from the stereo, investigate new bands, and attend concerts; it is one of the things that I enjoy most. However, I became curious whether or not the constant barrage of music being pumped into my ears was having any effect on my ability to hear. I had read about hearing loss as a result of constant exposure to loud noises, but I never thought that such a problem was applicable to my life. Quite soon into my research, I discovered that I was very wrong. Permanently damaging your hearing is easy to accomplish and is something that I, and more than likely a majority of youth today, have done without realizing it. It is an issue that the majority of teenagers have not considered; and it is not pleasant to think about.

Whether it is the songs spun daily on the radio, Christmas hymns sung by carolers in the street, or the jingles created by advertisers on television, music has an impact on everyone. In one way or another, it is an influential aspect of daily life. And in today's world, music has a much greater and possibly more negative impact on individuals than they might expect; an impact that may include permanent hearing loss or deafness in a substantial portion of the population. Noise-induced hearing loss [NIHL] is becoming a prominent issue in the United States, not only among adults in the workplace, but more noticeably among teenagers and young adults, many of whom frequently listen to iPods or other MP3 players at high volumes and attend music concerts, which are widely known to produce hazardous noise levels. NIHL is a serious problem, but it is preventable. For this reason, major changes need to be implemented concerning the stock of MP3 players currently on the market, concerts nationwide, and the system of hearing education in place, and the music companies themselves should be the ones to employ these alterations. MP3 player corporations need to cap maximum volumes at 85 dB, concert venues must begin distributing earplugs to crowds free of charge at shows over 85 dB, and both organizations should take steps to educate the public about the dangers of noise-induced hearing loss, because music suppliers should be interested in the health and safety of their customers.

The inner ear is a delicate organ; it can be easily damaged by constant exposure to loud noise, or even by a short burst of intense volume. In fact, firecrackers detonate with enough force and at such sound levels that a dosage of a few minutes could make a person permanently deaf (Davis). The hearing process itself is intricate: first, noise is funneled through the eardrum by the cone-like outer ear, is transformed into sound wave vibrations, and then sent to the middle ear. This structure then amplifies the sound and sends the vibrations to the cochlea of the inner ear, where the fluid inside begins to ripple. These ripples press against cilia, hair-like sound receptors, which transform the pressure into nerve impulses that are sent directly to the brain ("Noise-Induced Hearing Loss"). Hearing loss can occur easily throughout this process; if too much noise is funneled into the cochlea, the cilia can become over-stimulated and eventually, hair cell damage or destruction takes place. Cellular injury is generally not immediate, however, as most damage takes place over an extended period of time. Tommy Choo, senior audiologist at the Canadian Hearing Society, indicates that damage to the ear's hair cells is something akin to ruining the grass: "If a marching band walks all over your lawn, it just stomps everything to hell. Sooner or later, the grass recovers a bit, but every time you trample it, there are little bits that never come back. It's permanent damage" (Hawaleshka).

Noise-induced hearing loss poses a much different threat than maladies afflicting other organs because victims do not necessarily realize the damage they are doing to their ears until it is too late.

Noise-induced hearing loss poses a much different threat than maladies afflicting other organs because victims do not necessarily realize the damage they are doing to their ears until it is too late (Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families 13). Hearing loss is a gradual problem, taking years to manifest and even then showing itself in such a subtle way that individuals may not realize what is happening. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders states that 22 million Americans suffer from some form of NIHL (Noise-Induced Hearing Loss), and in 2007, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimated that 5.2 million children ages 6 to 19 have some form of NIHL in at least one ear (Moninger). In addition, the number of Americans older than age three that have auditory disorders has doubled since 1971, and one-third of the victims are those with NIHL (Mott). With elevated volumes of music constantly being pumped into teenagers' ears, the risk of NIHL will continue to rise in America, unless some measures are taken to limit the levels of excessive noise.

Sound itself is measured by units called decibels (dB). In decibels, silence is equivalent to zero; a whisper, 30; and a firework explosion, 150 dB. Constant exposure to noises over 85 dB, about the volume of a lawn mower, is considered toxic and damaging to the ear (Moninger). Unfortunately for today's music lovers, MP3 players typically max out volume at around 100 to 120 dB, which is louder than a chain saw and risks hearing damage within fifteen minutes to one hour of exposure (Mott). Music concerts are even worse when it comes to elevated listening levels, as the typical rock concert ranges from 120 to 140 dB—far above the acceptable limits for hearing safety (Chung 861). And

while the difference of a few decibels may not seem important, the decibel scale works exponentially, so that every increase of three units doubles noise intensity, according to Choo. In other words, 85 dB for eight hours is equivalent to 88 dB for four hours, which is equal to 91 dB for two hours. Therefore, a simple 15 minutes of music at 100 dB would equal that of an eight hour work shift at 85 dB (Hawaleshka).

MP3 players are one of the main culprits in the realm of NIHL today. With volumes that can reach well over 100 dB, these portable stereos can be highly unsafe, especially for children and teens who do not realize the problems they are creating. In fact, when participants in a musical study were asked to listen to personal stereo systems at a "comfortable volume," levels ranged anywhere from 83 to 107 dB. When another set of teenagers was asked to listen at an enjoyable level for one hour, the mean temporary hearing loss was 9 dB, with some reaching up to 35 dB (Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families 6). Scientists are not entirely certain what kind of effect modern MP3 players will have on the hearing of the current generation, as NIHL generally takes a number of years to manifest, and these products are so new on the market. However, experts' estimates of potentially affected users vary, from as low as .5% up to 20% ("More Noise Than Signal"). What is clear is that while the currently measurable temporary hearing loss does not always have a lasting effect, repeated temporary losses will eventually result in permanent damage to hearing.

One of the main problems with MP3 players is the temptation users have to crank up the volume in loud environments ("More Noise Than Signal"). Since their ears have already adapted to a high level of sound, listeners naturally feel that more volume is necessary in order to hear, and in order to drive out the background noise. In addition, iPods and other MP3 players can now be used for significantly longer amounts of time; the current iPod can hold 40,000 songs and play for 40 hours straight, according to Apple. com. Dr. Brian Fligor, director of diagnostic audiology at Children's Hospital Boston, suggests capping the volume at 50% of the maximum for all day usage, or at 80% for approximately 90 minutes. At the highest volume level, however, listening bouts of longer than five minutes can gradually cause hearing loss, according to Fligor (Davis). He also advises against the use of the earbuds that come with iPods and other MP3 players, as they can cause additional harm to hearing. Unlike traditional headphones that rest on the outside of the ears, buds are placed further down the ear canal, where there is significantly less room for sound to be dispersed and absorbed before reaching the cochlea (Davis). Apple has made recent attempts to protect listener's hearing; in 2006, Apple introduced new software that allows users to set an upper limit on volume, which they hoped would guard against hearing damage in users. However, this volume limit is easily overridden, and still does not address the problem of the background noise causing the volume increase in the first place ("More Noise Than Signal").

For this reason, and in order to prevent damage from earbuds, Fligor recommends using noise-cancelling headphones, which block surrounding acoustic noise through the use of tiny microphones; these detect sound waves and produce a wave with the opposite

polarity, effectively cutting out background sound (Davis). However, even these superior noise-cancelling headphones have their limitations. They require batteries in order to function at all, and as a result of the advanced technology, they are often massive and ungainly-looking—not something sought after in today's compact and appearance-conscious society. As a result, many teens refuse to purchase these headphones, and instead continue to crank the volume on their earbuds well past the safety limits. If there is not serious reformation with regard to iPod and MP3 volume levels, the world is going to be facing a deaf generation at unprecedented low ages. Several years ago, the European Union implemented a 100 dB cap on portable stereos sold within its countries; however, the United States and Canada have not subjected themselves to this plan (Hawaleshka). Although a 100 dB limit still exceeds the safety recommendations by a considerable amount, it is certainly better than no volume cap at all, and with all of the evidence showing how dangerously loud MP3 players can be to hearing, there is no reason why the U.S. should not be under a similar protection plan. However, instead of waiting for legislation to form and pass within the United States, it would be in Apple's and other MP3 player companies' best interests if they took responsibility for their customers' hearing and implemented an 85 dB volume cap without governmental pressure.

MP3 players are one of the main culprits in the realm of NIHL today. With volumes that can reach well over 100 dB, these portable stereos can be highly unsafe, especially for children and teens who do not realize the problems they are creating.

Critics might argue a number of things to contend with this proposal; they may believe that personal freedom is at stake, and that customers should have the right to listen to music at whatever volume they choose. In another scenario, they might state that it is not the company's responsibility to deal with this problem, claiming it a task for the government to take care of or for individuals to deal with on a personal level. However, the most likely counterargument for capping MP3 player decibel levels is that rather than portable stereo companies profiting from such limits, doing so would have the opposite effect: they would lose a significant amount of customers. They believe that corporations will benefit by giving customers the maximum amount of choice at the same cost; that way, health conscious customers can keep volume levels low, while ones that disregard the warnings can crank the music as high as they desire. While a seemingly effective argument, the reasoning behind this criticism is severely flawed. While initially corporations might lose a small percentage of patrons, over a relatively short period of time, companies will actually benefit greatly from providing safe entertainment to the public. With maximum volumes finally inside a level considered safe by experts, in the long run, corporations would profit from customers without auditory impairments, and they would also display their knowledge of a public health issue. While pleasing those campaigning for safer options for music listening, these companies would simultaneously gain new customers and encourage past ones to buy second or third products from them, since those patrons will still retain their hearing abilities into increasingly older ages. It would be a winning situation for everyone involved.

Another significant problem in the battle against NIHL concerns music concerts. Concerts are popular entertainment attractions throughout the United States; in 2005, roughly 14.5 million tickets were sold merely to the top 100 tours in the country between January and June (Veiga). As seen with MP3 players and iPods, however, just because something is popular does not necessarily mean it is safe. In 2005, researchers from Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Public Health, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary and Cogent Research Inc. published findings from an online survey displayed at MTV.com regarding public opinion of the dangers of hearing loss. MTV was chosen "because of the large congruence of visitors with the project requirements," and because "MTV is accepted as a leading authority in music and is specifically geared toward 15- to 34-year-olds" (Chung). In the poll, results showed that the majority of the 9,693 participants had attended a concert, club, or party involving loud music within the previous six months, and that 61% admitted to experiencing tinnitus, or ringing in the ears often associated with hearing loss and which is caused by high levels of noise, following the event. Only 14% of participants wore earplugs to the venues, although 39% reported that others had suggested they should utilize ear protection (Chung). In a similar study, a group of 20 adolescents and 7 adults attended a school dance in Connecticut with loud music; by the end of the night, all but two had experienced "at least a 5 dB temporary hearing loss," and with the exception of one, all reported tinnitus. When tested again three days after the dance, two-thirds only showed partial recovery (Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families 5).

When attending concerts, decibel counts of 120–140 are common; levels equivalent to a jet taking off. For this reason, earplugs are essential at shows. According to neurobiologist Josef Miller from the Kresge Hearing Research Institute of the University of Michigan, when it isn't possible to avoid noise, earplugs, or muffs can do an excellent job of prevention, lowering noise by 30 dB or more (Healy). Miller also indicated that a supplement nutrient bar to protect the inner ear may be on the way. He and other researchers have demonstrated that together, antioxidant vitamins A, C, and E, as well as magnesium, can have beneficial effects on hearing preservation both before and after noise exposure. Still, this nutrient bar would not take the place of earplugs or other forms of physical protection; it would be more of an added measure of protection for earplug users, or those who are unable to wear them (Healy). Because of this, it is vital to promote ear protection among teenagers and adults that frequent concerts, and the task may not be as difficult as some may think.

The chief reason why teenagers may not want to use earplugs is a desire to fit in; they may not feel it looks "cool" to utilize ear protection at concerts. In contrast to this popular sentiment, findings of the Harvard survey on MTV.com noted that 59% of respondents were "positive or equivocal" about earplug use in others, whereas a minority of 41% was negative. Results of the study also indicated that 66% of participants could be persuaded to use ear protection if they were aware of the potential dangers for permanent hearing loss, and 59% could be convinced by a medical professional (Chung). Much of the blame, therefore, lies in the realm of hearing protection education; evidently,

individuals are not aware of the damage that they are doing to their hearing and are not being advised often enough to utilize hearing protection by medical professionals or other adults. However, one relatively easy way to solve this problem is for concert venues to distribute foam earplugs free of cost to crowds at shows louder than 85 dB. These cheap, disposable earplugs can block out approximately 33 dB of noise, and can cost merely $20.00 for 200 pairs on Amazon.com. Such action would be an easy, effective, and inexpensive way to help reduce noise-induced hearing loss at concerts. In addition, when participants realize that suppliers truly care about their personal health, and when they continue to retain their hearing 20 years in the future, venues will only benefit from customer satisfaction.

The principle dilemma at the heart of these issues concerns a lack of public awareness that both portable stereo systems and music concerts can cause serious damage to hearing. In the same Harvard study presented on MTV.com, out of the 9,693 participants with an average age of 19, only 8% indicated that "hearing loss was considered 'a very big problem' … behind acne at 18%, nutrition and weight issues at 31%, depression at 44%, smoking at 45%, alcohol/drug use at 47%, and sexually transmitted diseases at 50%" (Most Teens Oblivious). In addition, in the same poll, a mere "20% of respondents reported the personal intention to use earplugs at a future concert or club with loud music" when unaware of the potential for hearing loss, and 32% of participants were not aware that local drug stores carry inexpensive earplugs for purchase (Chung). The youth of today do not realize what problems they are causing for themselves in the future; if such trivial, short-lived issues as acne place ahead of permanent hearing loss in teens' lists of concern, then something must be done about the American education system. And once again, the music suppliers themselves should be the ones to take action in this instance. If teenagers were exposed to campaign slogans denouncing overly loud volumes of music from their own MP3 player corporations and concert venues, they would receive a much better response than if instructed by adults in their lives. When the company selling a product presents warnings about its safety, it demonstrates both that there is a real danger in using the product, and that the corporation genuinely cares for the health of its customers.

Noise-induced hearing loss is a problem that needs to be solved in the United States, and quickly. With 22 million Americans currently affected by NIHL and that number steadily on the rise, something needs to be done, and portable stereo corporations and concert venues are in the perfect position to start the movement. By reducing maximum MP3 player volumes to 85 dB, the highest level of music recommended by audiologists for extended periods of time, corporations are likely to gain additional customers and encourage past ones to return by displaying awareness of a public health issue and by helping maintain customer hearing and safety. Concert venues should also distribute cheap, foam earplugs at shows louder than 85 dB, once again protecting listener hearing and allowing them to return in the future when they are still able to hear properly. Finally, steps need to be taken by both MP3 player corporations and concert venues in order to educate the public about the dangers of noise-induced hearing loss. With

vendors themselves suggesting caution, users will be much more likely to either turn down the volume or use ear protection at the next opportunity. As the world progresses more and more swiftly into an electronic age, individuals everywhere are going to want to preserve their hearing for as long as possible. Who knows what will be possible in the future for audio entertainment? I am certain of one thing, however—whatever is in store, I will want to be able to hear and enjoy it to the fullest.

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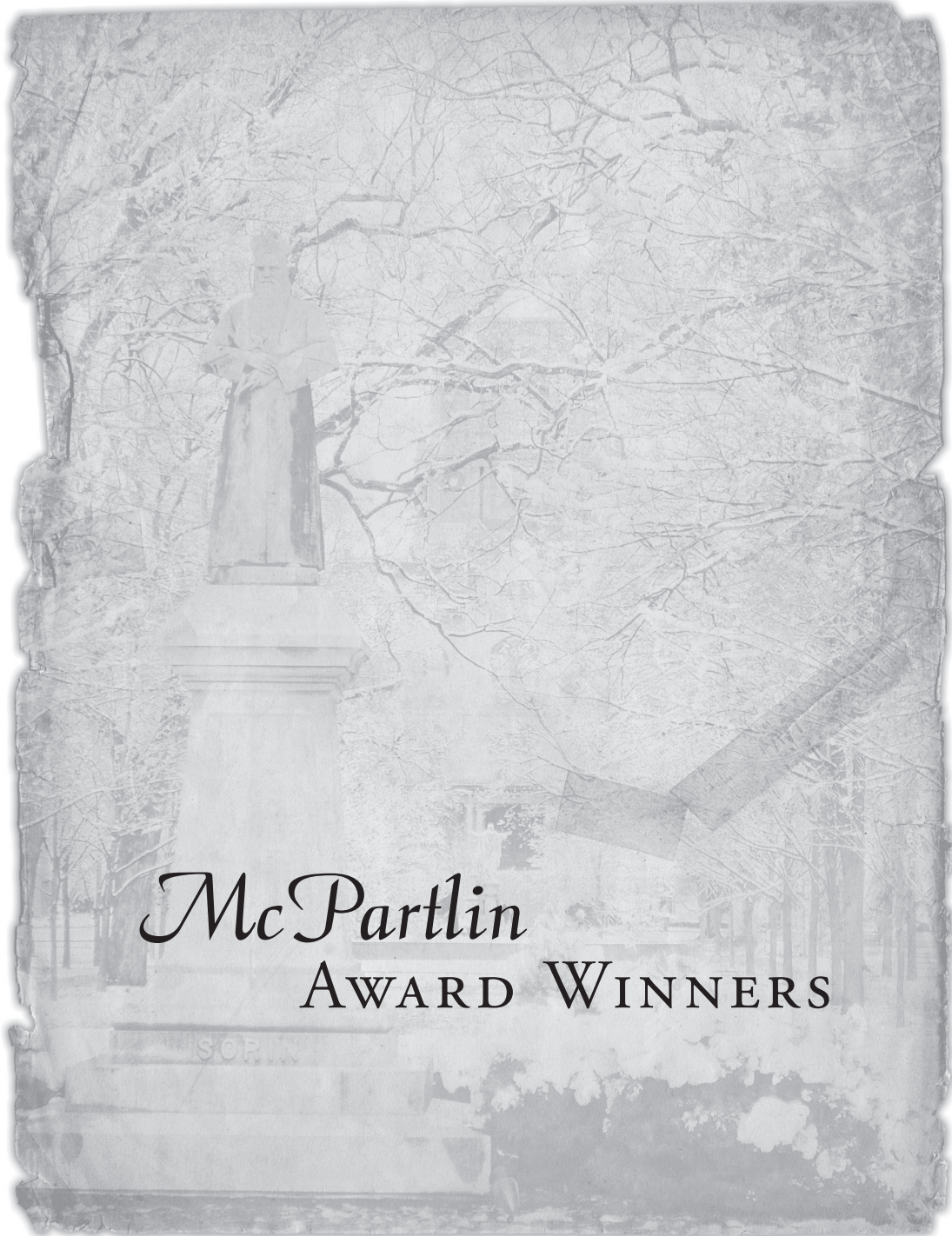
McPartlin
Award Winners

Authors' Biographies

Nicholas Bosler

Nicholas Bosler is an electrical engineering major at the University of Notre Dame who hails from Cassopolis, Michigan. He found that the unique challenges presented by using audio and video—instead of traditional writing methods—have developed skills that will be useful upon graduation. He never expected that this essay would come to mean so much to him and others. During the creation process, Nicholas found that he had discovered not only how he feels about his time at the University of Notre Dame, but that others feel the same as well.

Nicholas would like to thank all those who had a hand in making "My Life, My Home, My School" a great success, but especially Laura Comana whose idea began this wonderful work.

Laura Comana

Laura Comana is a freshman at the University Notre Dame from Swansea, Illinois. She is currently majoring in business. Laura is also earning a minor in dance from Saint Mary's College and is a member of the Saint Mary's Dance Company.

The photo essay's use of technology, music, visual art, and writing would be an ideal combination for her future career. Laura would like to thank all of the Notre Dame students whose photos and heartfelt insights were instrumental in the creation of this photo essay.

First Place

My Life, My Home, My School:
A Photo Essay Commenting on First Semester Experiences at Notre Dame

Nicholas Bosler
Laura Comana

http://www.nd.edu/~frswrite/mcpartlin/MyLifeMyHomeMySchool.htm

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"I expected Notre Dame to be awesome; instead, it's been awesome, hard, and the best time of my life."
—George Warner

Author's Biography


Rodolfo Disi Pavlic

Rodolfo lived his whole life in Santiago, Chile, before becoming a first-year student at the University of Notre Dame. He wants to major in political science and Italian. During his first semester he took Multimedia First-Year Composition, a course that allowed him to analyze in depth one of his favorite subjects: politics.

Blogged Research Argument:
U.N. Reform

Rodolfo Disi Pavlic

To view this blog, visit http://unreform.blogspot.com/
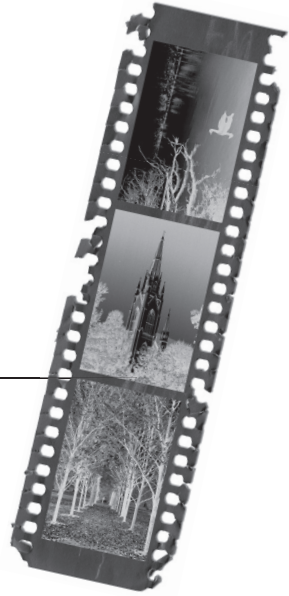
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Michelle Gaseor

Michelle Gaseor is a first-year student at Notre Dame, currently residing in Howard Hall. Raised all her life in Batavia, Illinois, she developed a passion for French and Francophone culture at an early age due to her parents' love of the French language. Although she has never been to France, or even outside of the United States for that matter, it has always been one of her lifelong dreams and goals to travel the world. Michelle is currently considering majoring in French, political science, or history, and has aspirations of going to law school and writing a novel.

Restaveks:

The Modern Slaves of Haiti

Michelle Gaseor
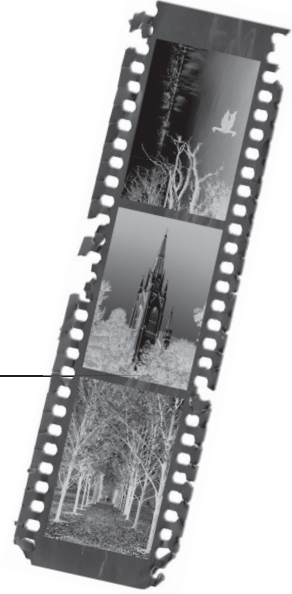
The sun is about to rise on another steamy day in Port-au-Prince, the capital city of Haiti. Although darkness still cloaks this urban island, and most of its inhabitants are sleeping, all over the first signs of life are heard. A small, bleary eyed girl quietly opens a shabby wooden door, and exits a dilapidated shack, making her way with a large clay jar to the nearest source of fresh water. Upon returning, she sweeps the floor, cooks a simple breakfast, and then silently makes her way to a bedroom with its door closed over. Meekly, she raps on the door and the woman inside snaps a tart "I hear you." Several moments later, the tall figure of a woman looms in the frame of the once closed door. "You're late," she says harshly, "You should have been done ten minutes ago." The woman swiftly smacks the girl upside the head, knocking her to the ground. "Learn to complete your chores on time." The girl's eyes fall to the floor, and she nods passively.

 Although it has been over two hundred years since Haiti abolished slavery, the process still lives on in a cultural phenomenon known as "restaveks," derived from the French words "rester" and "avec," meaning "to stay with." Due to the poor economy, the prevalence of poverty, and the excessive birth rate, parents living in impoverished areas either send away, sell, or lend their children to families that have can feed and possibly educate them. These families, however, use the children as domestic servants, habitually overworking and abusing them. It is due to this situation, as this essay will argue, that restaveks are a modern form of slavery.

The persistence of restaveks, despite their illegality, can be attributed to many varying and complex circumstances. The roots of the restavek problem, surprisingly, can be found in the United States. When the first democratic elections were held in Haiti in 1990, the Haitian economy was incredibly weak and very dependent on the aid of powerful countries, such as the United States, after over a hundred years of occupation and dictatorship following its independence. Dr. Farmer, a physician who is researching the effects of lack of aid on the economy and consequently the healthcare system of Haiti, explains the situation:

In 1994, the USA, other "donor nations," and multilateral organizations promised US$500 million dollars over 2–3 years in development aid to re-build Haiti's battered health, education, and sanitation infrastructure, and to stimulate what had become one of the weakest economies in the world. Most of this aid has been withheld, thus further crippling Haiti's new democracy. (NP)

Lack of foreign aid has undermined the progress that Haiti made toward achieving a democratic government with a solid economy that could help alleviate the severe poverty of the nation. Furthermore, embargos on Haiti, mainly due to the subsequent collapse of the democratic government, have limited the country's ability to export products and in turn revitalize their economy. It is due to the horrible economic conditions that cause the pervasive poverty in Haiti that many families have no choice other than to sell their children into servitude or let them die. In the eyes of many Haitians, a life of servitude is better than no life at all. Furthermore, it is a sad truth that the families who house restaveks are those who can afford to keep them alive. Thus, the system flourishes by necessity—Haitian society, although it knows that child servi-tude is wrong, has no other course of action that it can take. By legally defining restaveks as slaves, a light will be shed on the im-portance of rectifying the situation, which has been overlooked and forgotten, and pressure for action will be placed on the world and the United States.

> *Both slaves and restaveks occupy the same position in society—that of the subjugated and abused.*

The current International Law definition of slavery was devel-oped in 1926 by the League of Nations sub-committee on slavery and was re-affirmed by the United Nations at its 1956 Slavery Convention. It reads as follows: "Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the pow-ers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised" (Qtd. in Allain 2). The United Nations 1956 Slavery Convention, however, also examined "institutions and practices similar to slavery." Under this category, the following definition was provided: "Any institution or practice whereby a child or young person under the age of 18 years is delivered by either or both of his natural parents or by his guardian to another person, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of the child or young person or of his labor" (2). This definition is synonymous with the current definition of the restavek system. The words "similar to slavery," however, imply an innate difference between the restavek system and slavery. The key elements of the definition of slavery, "status or condition," "the power attaching to," and "the right of ownership," are visible in the restaveks situation, which marks the correlation between the two systems.

Restaveks, like slaves, possess an abused and suppressed "status or condition" in Haitian society. Jean Allain, in a lecture on "The Definition of 'Slavery' in General International Law and the Crime of Enslavement within the Roman Statute," argues the definition of the word "status" in regard to slavery:

> With regard to the word 'status', while the *Oxford English Dictionary* speaks of social status or financial status, it also defines status as it relates to law: 'The legal standing or position of a person as determined by his membership to some class of standing or position of a person as determined by his membership of some class of persons legally enjoying rights or subject to certain limitations (11).

For an individual who is a slave, their "status," or social standing, is below that of all other human beings. In addition, slaves were historically subject to all of the limitations of being property rather than individuals, which denied them their inalienable human rights including life, liberty, and the security of person. Restaveks, like slaves, are treated as less than human. Restaveks, as described by Amy Bracken, a journalist who spent two years in Haiti reporting on the crisis, are part of "a system in which children, usually girls, are exploited during their most formative years, then cast out in their early to mid-teens" (24). This description is reminiscent of the system of slavery in early American history, in which the slaves were utilized for hard physical labor until they were no longer of any use, at which point they were discarded. Both slaves and restaveks occupy the same position in society—that of the subjugated and abused.

Another key element in defining slavery that is mirrored in restaveks culture is the phrase "the power attaching to." Allain postulates the meaning of these words:

> To use an analogy, the powers attached to the right of ownership are the powers that manifest themselves say, when two drug dealers have a dispute over a kilo of heroin. Neither can have their claim dealt with in a court of law, but one or the other will exercise the powers attached to the right of ownership, for example, possession; thus what would amount to the right of ownership but for the fact that it is illegal to own, or possess, heroin. (13)

Mainly, this phrase is necessary because slavery is no longer upheld by the law; therefore, no technical rights to ownership can be had legally, but one individual can still lord over another. The idea of illegal control is also seen in the issue of restaveks. Adults gain control over children either through purchasing them, being lent them, or finding them; then, in return for basic survival needs, the children are obedient to their will. Pierre Richard Thomas, a spokesman for the Haitian Government, describes the crisis as a "losing battle": "'Why? Because even if it's illegal, they [the restaveks] are better off: there is more to eat with the host family, and they don't want to return.' … Indeed, to the guardians, middlemen, parents, and even many of the children involved, the restavek system is a necessary evil" (Qtd. in Bracken 24). Due to this unfortunate view of the issue, much of the abuse that children suffer goes unnoticed, or ignored, by both their families and the government. In their eyes, it is easier to allow the restavek system to continue than to solve Haiti's economic problems. This, however, does not justify slavery. Bracken notes the norm in restavek treatment: "… Most restaveks are psychologically, physically, and sexually abused, and most run away or are thrown out by their guardians, winding up on the streets, begging, stealing, and prostituting themselves"

(24). Much like the current restaveks situation, a similar mindset was held about slavery in the United States before it was abolished. A South without slaves was unimaginable to plantation owners and the wealthy who had never relied on their own efforts to perform manual labor. Also, the idea that slaves wouldn't be able to survive on their own, which was disproved after slavery ended, was a common excuse of the time. Just as the abolition of slavery dispersed many the myths of its necessity, the end of the restavek system will prove that it is unnecessary.

The final key phrase in the definition of slavery is perhaps the most important—"the right of ownership." The definition of what specifically entails ownership is paramount to proving the connection between slavery and restaveks. Allain quotes an explanation of this phrase:

> The Secretary-General [of the United Nations] spells out what should be understood not as the right of ownership where it touches upon slavery, but rather, the exercise of power attached to the right of ownership [in 6 principles]: 1) The individual of servile status may be made the object of purchase; 2) The master may use the individuals of servile status, and in particular capacity to work, in an absolute manner, without any restrictions other than which might be expressly provided by law; 3) The products of labour of the individual of servile status become the property of the master without any compensation commensurate to the value of the labour; 4) The ownership of the individual of servile status can be transferred to another person; 5) The servile status is permanent, that is to say, it cannot be terminated by will of the individual subject to it; and 6) The servile status is transmitted *ipso facto* to the descendants of the individual having such a status. (13)

All six of the principles can also be applied to restaveks, proving that the two systems are synonymous. Like slaves, restaveks are often sold to families by their parents, or lent for extended periods of time; thus, they can be purchased, or bartered. The nature of restavek work is also such that there is no means of restricting it other than by law. "The Trade That Won't Go Away" notes typical restaveks' duties: "On average, they work a 12–16 hour day" (35). Despite the moral dilemma of this situation, the system prevails even though it is outlawed by Haitian law. Modesier expresses the issue from a native's perspective: "'Restaveks are slaves because these children wake up early, go to sleep late and have to do all kinds of work. They get beaten up and there's nobody to say anything …' says Marline Modesir, director of a local support organization" (Qtd. in "The Trade That Won't Go Away" 35). While these children are overworked and abused, they are not compensated for their work. Bracken reflects on an interview with a guardian and expeditor of the system: "And though he portrays himself as a benevolent guardian, he admits he is just that, a guardian, not an employer or an adoptive parent, but someone exploiting a child for unpaid labor" (24). In addition to laboring for free, the environments in which restaveks live are subject to the whims of their guardians. At any time, a guardian can decide that their restavek is no longer useful, and cast them out, leaving

them for another family. The only other means of escaping this life is to run away, like slaves ran away from their abusive masters. Even if escape is possible, however, there is nowhere to run to—the children's families can't support them, and other families won't take them in because they cannot be controlled. A life on the streets is the fate that awaits them, and as such, restaveks, and their future children will be doomed to perpetuate this cycle because of the pestilence of poverty. Due to its cyclical nature, inescapable oppression, dehumanizing qualities, and lack of enforced restrictions, the life of a restavek is that of a slave.

This cycle of dehumanization must be stopped. International law made slavery illegal over eighty years ago, and yet, modern slavery still lives on today in the form of restaveks due to their ability to alleviate the stresses of a poor economy. Economic turmoil, however, does not justify slavery. By defining restaveks as slaves rather than as merely domestics, there will be greater pressure for action to rectify the situation. The definition of slavery adopted by the United Nations is not only that of what it means to be a slave, but also, what it means to be a restavek.

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Author's Biography

Jessica Shaffer

Jessica Shaffer was born in Berkeley, California, but raised in the similarly liberal Washington, D.C. Jess attended St. John's College High School and is currently an undecided first-year student. Her interest in the Program of Liberal Studies and languages, particularly Spanish, threatens her undecided major status. She is a resident of ND's finest hall, Farley, where she often procrastinates while spending quality time with friends. During her more productive moments, she works for the Scene Section of *The Observer*, writing movie and music reviews as well as the occasional satirical rant. Though Jess's career aspirations are a bit vague, wherever life takes her she hopes to remain close to the three things she loves most: learning, writing, and people. She would like to thank her unfathomably patient friend, Meghan Sweeney, who is forced to read and edit nearly everything Jess writes. Additionally, she would like to thank her teachers, friends, and family, especially her mom.

Pan's Labyrinth:
An Evaluation Argument

Jessica Shaffer
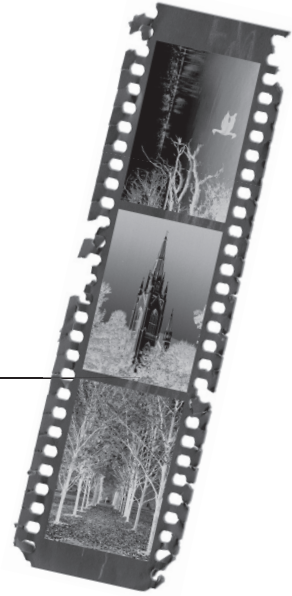
Pan's Labyrinth, a 2007 release from the Spanish cinema, mixes the elements of a fantastical fairytale with the harsh realism of the Spanish Civil War. Balancing realism and fantasy, director, writer, and producer, Guillermo Del Toro, affirms a distinctly human reality defined by fear and danger. Del Toro presents a world full of complicated moral obstacles. This reality is complimented by a visual aesthetic that wavers between brutally honest violence and extraordinarily creative detail. Despite some critics' opposition to Del Toro's unflinching style of visual storytelling, *Pan's Labyrinth* proves successful. This is primarily due to the film's genuine understanding and applicability to the human experience and its visually challenging artistic design.

Del Toro's story begins with young Ofelia arriving to her new step-father's mill, which doubles as a fascist military stronghold. Exploring her new home, Ofelia discovers the mill's ancient labyrinth and the magical world inside it. There she meets a faun, claiming to be a custodian to the Underworld Kingdom. The faun believes Ofelia to be the reincarnation of the Underworld's lost princess and is consequentially obligated to aide her return to her kingdom. Ofelia is given three tasks to prove the true identity of her reincarnated spirit. While she struggles through this series of treacherous tests, she must also live in the strange household of her new stepfather, Vidal. Vidal is the cold, psychotic and violent leader of the soldiers stationed at the mill. He is disdainful of Ofelia's imagination, and Ofelia is equally appalled by his unquestioning cruelty characterized in his ruthless pursuit of the anti-fascist guerrillas in the surrounding terrain. Losing her mother to a troublesome pregnancy, Ofelia befriends Mercedes, an affectionate head servant, and soon discovers Mercedes' double identity as a mole, who is aiding these guerrilla troops.

Secretly, Ofelia confronts grotesque monsters; meanwhile in real life, Ofelia faces the horrors of being orphaned and neglected under the harsh brutality of Vidal. She quietly balances her fantasy life with her own sad reality, finding refuge in Mercedes' friendship. Further complication ensues when Mercedes' duplicity is revealed, and Ofelia is also implicated in the scheming. Under threatening watch, she must escape into her

own imagination. Ofelia, carrying her newborn brother, steals away into the labyrinth for her final task. Inside the maze, the faun bids Ofelia to sacrifice an innocent, her infant sibling; Ofelia refuses. The angered creature immediately abandons her, leaving her alone to face the quickly advancing Vidal. The cruel man swiftly shoots and kills Ofelia, reclaiming his son. In contrast to the realistic ending of death and destruction, in the fantasy world Ofelia's royal spirit is finally allowed to triumphantly return to the Underworld, having passed the final test by spilling her own blood to save her brother. In the real world a retributive justice is administered, the guerrillas killing Vidal and Mercedes taking charge of Ofelia's brother.

Despite this depressingly realistic ending, *Pan's Labyrinth* gleaned success by telling a story that rings true to the human experience. While the grotesque violence of the film may make the story seem remote from the audiences' lives, the film's themes speak to the truths of human existence. The environment of perpetual fear that Del Toro creates is merely theatrically exaggerating the trepid nature of human existence. Even for people who have lived in relative freedom from adversity, fear is a pervasive quality of temporal life. One could easily take a Hobbesian stance, insisting that human beings must inherently be suspicious of one another. This ubiquitous trend is easily spotted in newspapers that are filled with stories of neighbors suing each other, murders in gang fights, and wars between nations. Del Toro's work parallels this world of fright, setting his story in wartime of the Spanish Civil War, in a violent family dynamic incited by a neglectful and abusive stepfather, and in a dangerous fantasy world of menacing creatures and tasks.

> *...the film holds up a mirrored image of a dark reality. In doing so, it forces a self evaluation for audience members, who are frightened by the truth reflected.*

Del Toro also shows an understanding that much of our fear of others derives from fear of ourselves. As Nelson Mandela said in his 1994 Inaugural Address, "Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate, but that we are powerful beyond measure." Through our own self exploration we understand the vast human potential for good and ill. Not only do we dread others' dangerous potential, but we fear our own inclination toward evil and weakness. At moments when the audience sees an emotionless Vidal bludgeon a man to death with a bottle, we are confronted with our own aptitude for violence. We are provoked by the truth of Vidal's character that resonates within our own nature. Similarly, when soldiers and priests alike bow to the clear immorality of the fascist military, we are forced to ask if we would opt for compliance as well. If characters like soldiers and priests, typically emblematic ideals of fortitude, give into depravity, we must question our own capacity to resist what is clearly wrong when our societal role models cannot. In this way, the film holds up a mirrored image of a dark reality. In doing so, it forces a self evaluation for audience members, who are frightened by the truth reflected.

Pan's Labyrinth clearly challenges the audience's willingness to pursue morality. This speaks once again to a state of human anxiety. Nearly all would say that it is wrong to participate in or allow the torturing of hostages, civilians, and women as Vidal and his

troops do. But how many would risk personal survival to oppose the violence? How likely is the behavior of Ofelia, who saves a life at her own expense? This is the dynamic of fear that many of the film's characters experience. They, like all human beings, fear the consequences of doing right. But similarly, they fear the implications of finding themselves to be moral cowards. *Pan's Labyrinth* connects with such dilemmas of morality, relating to an identifiable terror.

These complex and poignant themes come in a vivid package. Del Toro not only presents an enrapturing narrative with intricate universals, but he also creates an incredibly visual display. The two worlds Del Toro creates are given equal visual attention. The realistic world of the civil war is graphically violent. Several scenes are exceptionally brutal with images of tortured hostages and even rudimentary amputation operations. Criticism for such violence can be negated because it is neither desensitized nor gratuitous. Instead, the violent scenes are each weighted with pain and cruelty, and each brutality is acutely perceived by the audience. Though hard to watch, the violent imagery is honest and unflinching.

Del Toro's fantasy world is equally vicious. The fairytale setting generally uses grotesque rather than directly violent images. The bizarre creatures that pervade Ofelia's fantastical world are praiseworthily unique. While the creatures are bizarre and often misshapen, the oddities play into their extreme detail. The beasts that Ofelia encounters are each characterized with their own aesthetic; in the case of the monsters, that aesthetic is both appalling and terrifying. For example, the second monster, an ogre that eats children, has the shape of a giant man. But lacking any manner of hair, the ogre has excess amounts of skin that sag and drag down in folds all throughout his body. Where his eyes and mouth should be are vacant, bloody holes. His long, claw-like hands have holes in the palm into which the monster can put his displaced eyeballs, allowing him to see. In a chase scene, his posture and stride comes off as torturously painful. The ogre is perhaps the most terrifying element of the fairytale. Yet the whole fantasy world that Ofelia explores has this extraordinarily visual essence of grotesque and enthralling detail. It is what gives the movie such a stunning imagery and makes it so hard to look away. Perhaps adverse to what would seem logically appealing, Del Toro's keen eye for intriguing, if not bizarre, aesthetics gives the film a truly distinctive quality.

Del Toro's distinctive style is what makes *Pan's Labyrinth* successful. In an intellectual sense, it appeals to universals of the human experience, mainly an environment of fear and the dilemma of morality. The dynamic themes of the film are enriched with vivid images that capture the audience. And, perhaps most importantly, Del Toro's risk in making a movie that is unique in its vivid presentation and enthralling plot allows this film to stand out. It is memorable not only because it is entirely different from any other movie, but also because it leaves the viewer pondering its suggested themes of morality, fear, and imagination.

Cover Photography

Dan Jacobs

In capturing these photographs, I desired to represent some of the most iconic, recognizable, and meaningful symbols of our University. In becoming a deeper part of the Notre Dame community, these places—from the Dome, to the Basilica, to the twin lakes—are continually forming deeper bonds and memories in our hearts which none of us ever will be able to let go. Here, I feel we each give a part of ourselves, our time, our energy, our dedication to this University, and in return Notre Dame gives us back even more than any of us are capable of investing. Through these photographs I sought to capture the essence of this sacred place from its beginnings with Father Sorin to the great University we all share today, hoping that both the memories and dreams it represents may remain strong for us and for generations to come.

Dan Jacobs plans to double major in Design and Film and to pursue a career in the media arts. He is a freelance photographer and designer and also shoots for *The Observer*.

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