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Featured Works: Essays from English 53

English 53 (Reading, Reasoning, and Writing) is a new course offered through the Bakersfield College English Department. English 53 prepares students, who are eligible for either English 60 or English 50, for English 1a. The following works were submitted by ENGL53 students.

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Article

Mandatory Vaccinations

Erin Carter

Erin Carter is a writer who likes to spend time with family and friends.

Disneyland, the “happiest place on Earth,” became the spotlight of news stories recently, but it wasn’t because of anything happy. On January 7, 2015, health authorities warned the public that a visitor to the theme park had measles. The disease spread quickly. According to a January 23, 2015, *Los Angeles Times* article written by Rosanna Xia, Rong-Gong Lin II, and Sandra Poindexter, “Of the 71 cases, 62 were in California with the rest in Utah, Washington, Colorado, Oregon, Arizona, and Mexico,” underscoring the rapid and far ranging impact of this preventable disease. Although many parents are against vaccinating their children, mandatory vaccinations for all students entering public and private schools must be strictly required in order to stop preventable diseases and keep society safe from debilitating, and sometimes deadly, diseases.

In order to understand the vaccine debate, it is important to briefly review how vaccines work. On February 9, 2015, Rose Garrett wrote an article titled “The Vaccine Debate,” appearing on Education.com. In it, she explains that a weakened, also known as a live vaccine, or an inactive form of the disease is introduced into the body, usually by injection. Consequently, the body’s immune system identifies and dismantles the disease, causing the development of antibodies and protecting the body from future exposure.

The knowledge and techniques of vaccines have been around for centuries. In “Should Any Vaccines Be Required for Children?” on ProCon.org, a nonpartisan, nonprofit website reports that “the Chinese used inoculation techniques against smallpox as early as 1000 AD and similar techniques were also used in ancient Africa and Turkey.” In the United States, a Puritan minister, Cotton Mather, recommended vaccination due to an outbreak of smallpox in 1721. The website goes on to explain that vaccination techniques became more advance when an English physician and scientist, Edward Jenner, introduced a smallpox vaccine using cowpox in 1796. Over time, the continued development of the vaccine was used for two centuries, and eliminated the disease. Scientists and physicians, such as Louis Pasteur and Jonas Salk, created and refined vaccines to prevent rabies, typhoid, cholera, diphtheria, tuberculosis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella and others - all of these debilitating and, at times, deadly illnesses (ProCon.org).

The success of immunization was so paramount that the U.S. government became involved. ProCon.org reports, "On July 1, 1902, Congress passed *An Act to Regulate the Sale of Viruses, Serums, Toxins and Analogous Products* (also referred to as the *Biologics Control Act*), which was the first legislation to control the quality of drugs, specifically the quality of vaccines." During the early to the middle 1900's, more and more states began to employ mandatory vaccinations for children attending public and private schools.

The preventive care of children, especially immunization, has had a profound effect on society. In his article appearing in *The Ochsner Journal*, "Childhood Immunization Controversies: What Are Parents Asking?" Daniel R. Bronfin, M.D, acknowledges, "Smallpox has been eradicated, while diseases such as diphtheria, polio, and congenital rubella are virtually nonexistent in North America. Other life threatening conditions such as measles, Haemophilus influenza type b [Hib], and pertussis have been dramatically curtailed to the point where families no longer fear their devastating effects." Unfortunately, these fears are starting to reemerge as many parents opt out of vaccinating their children because they believe that vaccines can cause catastrophic side effects, such as autism and paralysis. According to ProCon.org, however, the associate organization of the United Nations, Shot@Life emphasizes that vaccines protect 2.5 million children from preventable diseases each year. The website report goes on to say, "The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimated that 732,000 American children were saved from death and 322 million cases of childhood illnesses were prevented between 1994 and 2014 due to vaccination." Clearly, these numbers illustrate the value and importance of childhood immunization.

Another concern for parents who are against mandatory vaccinations is that they think the ingredients in the vaccines are unsafe. Thimerosal, for example, is an organic mercury compound that has been used as a preservative in the MMR vaccine. Many parents believe it causes autism in some children. In fact, in a 1998 study, researcher Andrew Wakefield established a link between the MMR vaccine and autism. Garrett reports, "Many parents, both in Europe and the United States, began to refuse the vaccine for fear of an autism link, and many still believe that the MMR vaccine bears some of the blame for their child's autism. These parents say that they have observed the same pattern: their child was a normally developing one-year-old, but after the shot, symptoms of autism, such as disinterest in social interaction, began to manifest." Medical researchers, however, found that the occurrence of autism appears at about the same time as the MMR immunization. Moreover, the British General Medical Council investigated Wakefield's study, and he was subsequently convicted of "four counts of dishonesty and twelve counts of abusing developmentally disabled children used in his research. Since 2010, he has been barred from practicing medicine in the UK" (Garrett). Moreover, in an October, 2011, *Health Communities* article, reviewed by Stanley J. Swierzewski,

Ill, M.D., "the Institute of Medicine issued a report demonstrating that thimerosal does not cause autism." Since researchers continually refine vaccines in order to make them safer and to reduce children's potential exposure to harmful ingredients, the use of thimerosal has been reduced and even eliminated in vaccines for infants and young children. Moreover, regulating agencies such as the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and the CDC require "up to ten or more years of testing for all vaccines before they are licensed" (qtd. in ProCon.org). To be sure, the continued monitoring of vaccines by the FDA and the CDC results in continual refinement of vaccines.

As with all medications, there are potential serious side effects with vaccines, but they are quite rare. One of the possible side effects of the MMR immunization is a short-lived decrease in a person's platelets. Platelets control bleeding, and without them a person sustaining an injury could bleed out. In an informational article, "Vaccines: The Reality Behind the Debate," found on Parents.com, Kelly King Heyworth emphasizes that this occurs "in 1 in 30,000 children, but 1 in 2,000 will die if they get measles themselves." Another vaccine with possible side effects is the DTaP immunization. Heyworth goes on to say, "The DTaP vaccine can cause seizures or a temporary 'shocklike' state in 1 in 14,000 people, and acute encephalitis (brain swelling) in 11 in 1 million. But the diseases it prevents - diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis - are fatal in 1 in 20 cases, and 1 in 10 cases, and 1 in 1,500 cases, respectively." Indeed, the chances of having a severe side effect from these vaccines is minimal in comparison to the likelihood of death when actually contracting these diseases.

Another critical consideration for mandatory vaccinations is the idea of herd immunity, otherwise known as community immunity. Herd immunity protects the greater population from outbreaks of deadly diseases. Researchers have determined that 92 percent to 94 percent of the population needs to be immunized against preventable diseases in order to maintain the herd immunity. According to Karen Kaplan's article, "Study Links Disneyland Outbreak to Low Vaccination Rates," which appeared in the March 17, 2015 edition of *The Bakersfield Californian*, other experts calculate that a 96 percent to 99 percent immunization rate is needed for herd immunity. As a result, individuals who are not vaccinated because of age and health issues depend on community immunity so they can avoid getting diseases that can be prevented by vaccines. ProCon.org points out: "A January, 2008, outbreak of measles in San Diego, CA resulted in 48 children who had to be quarantined because they were too young to be vaccinated and could not rely on herd immunity to keep them safe. In 2011, 49 U.S. states did not meet the 92 percent to 94 percent herd immunity threshold for pertussis (whooping cough), resulting in a 2012 outbreak that sickened 42,000 people and was the biggest outbreak since 1955." In the case of the recent Disneyland measles outbreak, researchers from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston's Children's Hospital conducted a study using a mathematical model to determine what the vaccination rate had been at Disneyland and

identified the vaccination rate would have been between 66 percent and 81 percent (Kaplan). The research team concludes, "Clearly, MMR vaccination rates in many of the communities that have been affected by this outbreak fall well below the necessary threshold to sustain herd immunity, thus placing the greater population at risk as well" (qtd. in Kaplan). Locally, based on the California Department of Public Health records, from the Silk website, California-vaccination-rates, all Kern County schools during the current school year had 93.9 percent of enrolled students who were up-to-date with their vaccinations. This percentage falls short of the herd immunity recognized by the researchers from MIT and Boston's Children's Hospital. Surely, mandatory vaccination policies are for the well-being of the majority.

Despite the statistics, parents ask the question: Is natural immunity better for my child than immunizations? Many parents think it is safe not to vaccinate their children, citing their belief that natural immunity is far better than unnatural vaccines. Even the medical community agrees that obtaining immunity naturally is more effective. In a 2013 article, "Childhood Vaccines: Tough Questions, Straight Answers," the Mayo Clinic staff agrees, "A natural infection often provides more complete immunity than a series of vaccinations - but there is a price to pay for natural immunity. For example, a natural chicken pox (varicella) infection could lead to pneumonia.... A natural mumps infection could lead to deafness. A natural Hib infection could result in permanent brain damage." If parents only realized what these infections potentially cause, maybe they would reconsider their stance on not vaccinating their children.

Related to this notion, is the atmosphere of complacency surrounding the anti-vaccination movement. In other words, the successful advancements and availability of vaccines have brought about the near disappearance of once common diseases. In a 2003 abstract published in *Annals of Health Law* titled "No More Kidding Around: Restructuring Non-Medical Immunization Exemptions to Ensure Public Health Protection," Ross D. Silverman of the Illinois School of Medicine writes, "The benefits of mandatory childhood immunization were obvious when there existed the threat of community members contracting, deadly, naturally-occurring, debilitating diseases, such as smallpox and polio." It is true that vaccines eradicated smallpox and nearly eradicated polio in the U.S., but immunization-preventable diseases still exist. Therefore, vaccinations are needed. As ProCon.org puts it: "The CDC notes that many vaccine-preventable diseases are still in the United States or only a 'plane ride away.' Although the paralytic form of polio has largely disappeared thanks to vaccination, the virus still exists in countries like Pakistan where there were 93 cases in 2013." A person can contract this disease without signs for years, and in our globally mobile world, polio could easily return to the U.S. Another example involves missionaries and measles. In 2014, a non-immunized group of Amish missionaries in the Philippines were exposed to measles and brought the disease back to the U.S. Consequently, 155 people in Ohio contracted the disease (ProCon.org).

The scientific facts in favor of mandatory school vaccinations are potent and clear, but science takes a back seat for many parents opting out of immunizing their children. Certainly, parents of children who can't be vaccinated because of serious medical conditions, such as cancer or compromised immune systems is a legitimate reason for exemption. In these cases, a school district can approve medical exemptions with a medical doctor's signed consent. These exemptions are nominal, and such children rely entirely on herd immunity in order not to be exposed to preventable diseases. In Kern County Schools, for example, Silk's California-vaccination-rates reports that of the 10,647 students, only 0.8 percent qualify for a permanent medical exemption.

Another kind of exemption is for religious reasons. There are several religions, such as Christian Science and, historically, Jehovah's Witness, that do not believe in vaccinations. For Kern County schools, the religious exemptions are few, accounting for only 0.3 percent. Many states have granted religious exemptions for quite some time, and in the 1970's, nearly all states had legislation that offered religious exemptions. However, there was a range of details as to what compromised a religion. Silverman writes, "A minority of states limit their religious exemption to those who belong to 'organized,' 'recognized,' or 'established' religions. However, as a result of the Conscientious Objector cases arising out of the Vietnam War, most have removed such language from their statutes. Some states now scrutinize a petitioner for religious exemption to determine if the applicant's beliefs are 'genuine and sincerely held,' while other states merely require submission of a form, or an affidavit, stating opposition to vaccination based on religious grounds." In such states, obtaining an exemption is truly effortless.

The majority of exemptions granted to parents is for philosophical reasons, ranging from fear of vaccination reactions to not believing the government should intervene in a personal medical choice. For Kern County schools, these account for 1.8 percent of the total exemptions (California-vaccination-rates). Because of the Disneyland measles outbreak, recent activity in Sacramento suggests a reform to the vaccination exemption laws. According to a *San Jose Mercury News* article, "Measles Outbreak: Vaccination Exemption Would End Under Proposed California Law," by Lisa M. Krieger and Jessica Calefati, Senator Richard Pan, D-Sacramento, and Senator Ben Allen, D-Redondo Beach, introduced Senate Bill 277 that eliminates personal belief exemptions. Additionally, Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, D-California, want state health officers to do away with religious exemptions as well. In 2012, California's Governor Jerry Brown signed AB2109 which supported parental rights to choose to opt out, but it also attempted to tighten the process by having health officials council parents seeking exemption for personal beliefs about vaccinations and signing the application form. In the Bakersfield City School District, for example, Deborah K. Wood, RN, MA, Coordinator for School Health and Neighborhood Support Programs, indicates that parents seeking exemption must "go through

an education process and discuss the risk and benefits with either her or her assistant.” After that, all parents need to do is sign a personal belief or religious belief form. In response to the introduction of SB277, Evan Westrup, Brown’s spokesman said, “The governor believes that vaccinations are profoundly important and a major public health benefit, and any bill that reaches his desk will be closely considered” (qtd. in Krieger). Currently the bill is going through the process to become legislation and faced its first Senate hearing on April 8, 2015 (KERO News).

When it comes down to it, a strict mandatory vaccination policy is not only an essential health issue, but it is also an economic concern. Comparatively, the expense in terms of time and money for vaccines is far less than what it costs for a parent to care for and treat a sick child. Time taken off work is especially of concern for preventable infectious diseases. For example, infectious diseases have varying time frames for how long they are contagious. ProCon.org reports, “Children under five with the flu are contagious for about eight days, and according to a CDC study, cost their parents an average of 22 to 73 hours of wages (about \$222.00 to \$1,456.00) and \$300 to \$4,000 in medical expenses.” They further emphasize, “A Jan. 2008 outbreak of measles in San Diego, CA resulted in 11 unvaccinated children catching measles and a resulting net public-sector cost of \$10,376 per case (or, \$123,523 total) due to emergency vaccination and outbreak response.” Indeed, a mandatory vaccination policy provides society with a tremendous health benefit and an economic benefit.

Is a mandatory vaccination policy reasonable? With the safety of vaccines, supported by scientific evidence, our society must stand firm in supporting a strict policy in order to save our children from these debilitating and deadly, once rampant diseases and preserve herd immunity for the few who can’t receive the immunizations and for future generations. All children entering public and private schools must be vaccinated.

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Literary Criticism

And They Lived...

Justin Gapper

Every night children around the world sit wide-eyed before bedtime to hear the tale of the handsome prince and the beautiful princess who fall in love, and are destined to live happily ever after. The age old story of the perfect man and perfect woman finding one-another and living together in harmony has become a staple of human expression on the mystery of love. In many ways, these tales paint a portrait of what infatuation and true love may feel like. There is no denying that humans have accomplished incredible feats inspired by their passionate feelings and emotions towards members of the same or opposite sex. However, at least in the context of our modern society, these seemingly quintessential depictions of what true love is, or should be, are incredibly false and one-sided. They do not do justice to the Cinderella who labors to pay for her child's college fund since her cheating prince left her. Nor do they account for the middle-aged Beast who lost his job and is struggling to tell his Belle that the palace has been foreclosed upon. Poet Anne Sexton grapples with this notion in her poem "Cinderella" that questions the assumed perfection of love that fairy tales espouse. While fairy tales are entertaining in that they give a fantastical view of love, they are not an accurate representation of true love itself.

In Anne Sexton's "Cinderella," Sexton uses the famous story of princess Cinderella as told in *Grimms' Fairy Tales* as a method of satirizing the vision of love all fairy tales hold true. In the first three stanzas, Sexton regales the reader with stories of impoverished or generally unfortunate individuals who, through a stroke of luck, find riches and implied happiness. To understand Sexton's reasoning behind these "diaper to Dior" (Sexton 208) examples, it is important to note the last line of the first, second, fourth, and last stanza that reads "That story" (Sexton 208). Sexton is expressing and subsequently poking fun at society's strong familiarity with these rags-to-riches love tales. Although these sequences rarely unfold in the way she describes, these are the stories of life and love that society is most accustomed to reading. She then goes on to tell the story of Cinderella as told in *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. However, as she tells the story, she maintains the same air of sarcasm she expresses in the beginning. The events are not gilded in fairy tale dust rhetoric but rather in a stark portrait of reality. The "ball" is referred to as a "marriage market" and the prince is described as feeling like a "shoe salesman" (Sexton 208). It is almost as if Sexton is telling the story while rolling her eyes at its entire premise.

The final stanza of *Cinderella* gives the most insight into Sexton's intended artistic expression through the poem. As she describes Cinderella and the Prince after the ball, falling in love, she paints a seemingly optimistic, yet truly bleak picture of their lives together. On the surface, the

two characters are happy. Why wouldn't they be since they have found everything they had ever hoped for in one another? Cinderella has been rescued from her life in poverty and the prince has found his beautiful maiden to spend his life with. Yet, this is not the way Sexton describes their life. Instead, she views this life as a sham; a facade that the two lovers uphold since this perfection is what society believes true love to be. Rather than living life to its fullest potential, the two are now merely "dolls in a museum case" (Sexton 209) with fake smiles pasted on their faces. Sexton artfully creates the thought in the reader's mind that perhaps something in their life and love is missing. What happens between "love at first sight" and "happily ever after?" Life happens, and the evidence of love through what life throws at those in love is what is woefully missing from these fanciful tales. They are never bothered by life's every day unpleasant experiences yet neither can they fully enjoy the beauty and happiness of love.

Sexton's ending to the poem provides a powerful message regarding her perception of love as described in fairy tales as it applies to the modern world. Sexton is essentially saying that love is never perfect, and if it were, it would not be worth pursuing. When looking at the statistics of relationships in America as an example, one finds that love is most certainly not as cut and dry as expressed in the tale of Cinderella. A 1990 poll regarding the rate of divorce in the United States reported that for every two marriages, one would end in divorce ("U.S. Divorce Rates" 3). This does not lend a tremendous vote of confidence for those who wish to find fairy tale love if half of those who claim to possess the feelings of love do not even stay together. When the poll was taken again twenty-four years later in 2014, it showed a tremendous decline in the rate of divorce. On the surface, it would seem that people are moving more towards finding who they are meant to be with, and love ultimately prevails. This is not the case. Researchers found that the reason for the sharp decline is simply because far fewer people are getting married. Interviews with non-married, cohabiting couples revealed that most of the individuals found the prospect of living with the same person for the rest of their lives as daunting and far too difficult to be feasible (Holohan 4). Apparently many other couples also do not wish to "argue over the timing of an egg" (Sexton 209) for the rest of their lives, but are not willing to forever paste on a smile either. Although the state of marriage in the U.S is incredibly disheartening, the state of childbearing, another byproduct of love, in the U.S is equally as abysmal. According to CNN correspondent Jon Lemon, over twenty-nine percent of white, fifty-three percent of Hispanic, and a staggering seventy-three percent of black babies had been born out of wedlock. Also in the same poll, nearly forty percent of those births resulted in a single parent household (Jacobson 4). It may be safe to say that for the most part in the modern U.S, fairy tale love does not exist.

However, this does not mean that love has become obsolete in our modern culture, and in fact, the opposite is true. Sexton's poem reiterates the notion that love gains its importance and

meaning specifically because of the struggle it entails. If it were as easy as going to a ball wearing a beautiful dress and leaving a slipper, love would be commonplace and unspectacular. This fantastical view of love is most likely a contributing factor to why humans in modern culture are so fearful of getting married. Many are searching for a fairy tale version of matrimony that simply does not exist. It is the fact that couples are willing to endure the arguments, boredom, and momentary unhappiness that gives love its value. Anyone can put a smile on their face and pretend everything is fine when it isn't, and if one chose to do so, they would probably live a blissful life. The catch is also living a life of ignorance and neglect. There is no denying that if two humans are brave enough to search for the mercurial and ever evasive life of true love, they have to be prepared to work for it.

The question still remains of what really happens to the prince and princess who fall madly in love with such ease. Are these tales we have come to hold so dear useless and devoid of all meaning and should they be disregarded in the modern era? From the perspective of Anne Sexton, I think not. To love another person with the passion seen in these stories should be an endeavor all who search for love should strive for. There is an inherent whimsical and fantastic nature surrounding the whole idea of love itself. However, it is a certainty that attaining this dream comes at a price. It requires the hefty toll of heartache, growing old, and yes, the occasional argument over making breakfast. One can only hope that when the dust settles and the struggle has ended, the prince and princess find themselves even more in love than they were at the ball for having endured the trials of life together.

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Behavioral Sciences

The Tell-Tale Skull

Alisia Sanchez

This work was nominated by Professor Dana Heins-Gelder.

SUFFOCATING! It is unbearably suffocating being buried so deep underground. And the darkness... Quiet and devoid of a glimpse of color - Oh! It is the blackest black there is!

I lay motionless for what felt like an eternity under cold and unfamiliar soil that felt heavy and firm. The only feasible companions, aside from the occasional burrowing earthworms, were my dreadful thoughts, their whispers echoing in circles without a single purpose. I nearly grew mad! But mad, I am not. Oh, on the contrary, I am well collected.

The sound of a shovel fiercely hitting the ground above me is all I heard at first, followed only by the thud of dirt landing elsewhere. Moments later, I heard them again, and again! Soon, they became repetitive. I heard these sounds continuously for hours, hauntingly unsubsidizing and only growing louder and louder. It did not take long for me to realize that I was being cautiously discovered! Oh! The tic-tocs of a clock could not have been more torturous!

I felt the soil that bound me gradually release me. I am unable to express to you the joy I felt. I suppose it was ethereal. I felt delicate and light! I anticipated, with very, very little patience, the prospect of existence - I wanted nothing more than to be alive!

I cannot tell you the man's initial purpose. The sudden sound of silence may have been his moment of hesitance. I feared he had changed his mind! I would have begged him if I could but to speak, I could not, let alone yell. This moment of silence, though it felt eternal, did not last for long. Soon, I felt a pair of cold, trembling hands caress me. Finally! I was alive!

I know you must wonder how a man such as myself is able to tell his own tale. It is true, after all, I have no beating heart. The truth is, I suffered postcranial loss prior to my burial. I can tell you very little of this, however, for I have no recollection of it. Fragments collected from a gravel pit at Piltdown, East Sussex, England, I only know that I was contrived and reconstructed in the winter of 1912.

Yes! Perhaps, it was recognition and acceptance the man longed for. Perhaps, it was not. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps, it was *his* head that was the case, not mine. Very rarely was it

questioned then. Now, you'll find it is a little too late for examination. Surprisingly, it is my own cranium that outlived his.

Slowly, very slowly, I felt the pain of a headache ease its way down to my jaw, pounding so hard, I could almost hear it... muffled.

I felt the warmth of bright lights reach me, a pair of pince-nez spectacles slipping down the bridge of a most prominent nose. It was this nose many also wondered about, but again, very little questions were asked. His reputation and his word were both equally as prominent.

Again, I heard muffled sounds but these were not the sounds of a pounding headache. No, these sounds were voices, eager and reticent. When they became clear to me, I understood the two men were discussing my appearance. It was unquestionably one to please.

And so, my existence, though nearly forgotten, lingered in exhibition as evidence of human evolution for over four decades - until one man rightfully exposed me, of course.

No. I am neither angry nor upset, for one thing remains perfectly clear to me: my existence is eternal. I am *Eoanthropus dawsoni*, after all - the great Piltdown hoax of the twentieth century.

Please, feel free to call me Piltdown Man. I assure you, you'll remember me.

Sociology

Factors of Socialization Responsible for the Development of Personality Traits

Chase Gause

Chase Gause is majoring in the field of social sciences and hopes to mediate tensions between people of different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds in America one day. He recognizes that all characteristics of our self are dictated by the experiences we've been through and the information we've been exposed to. The resources we have available to utilize can alter how we respond to circumstances, and Gause thinks it is the wrong approach to judge others for their actions, as they were probably exposed to that behavior to have learned it in the first place. So he implores anyone in this field to take an approach of compassion and understanding before choosing to condemn them, as they were socialized to be the way they are. People need rehabilitation if they hope to achieve reintegration into the system, not for us to ridicule them.

Unbeknownst to us, our identities have been molded to a high degree by societal forces outside of our control. Individual identity is not measured by any particularly unique characteristic, but rather is more of a collage of how we have reacted to various stimuli. Also, we identify within many different groups, and play various roles within those groups. This makes someone unique for the fact that no two individuals have had the same experiences, or choose to respond in quite the same manner. Often we think we are in control of the trajectory with which we have been journeying through life, but any number of events may alter our sense of self. Seeing aggressive tendencies portrayed in masculine role models most prevalent in this culture, and in feeling so opposed to behavior I was witnessing; I find that I have adapted more androgynously in my gender ideology. We are continuously being imprinted on by the dramaturgical plays being performed around us every day, whether we desire to integrate the behavioral change or not, slowly parts of us are transfigured by the flow of life.

I would say the most impactful event in my life that decidedly guided which of the two gender schemes I would structure my characteristic and behavioral conceptualization of being human upon was hearing my parents fight in my youth. It was always very one sided between them, with my dad instigating the situations, and he has a particularly venomous, as well as, demeaning way of yelling at someone. My mother for my whole life has spent at least twelve hours a day bedridden from a multitude of extremely rare back diseases, which I believe became burdensome upon my extremely extroverted and party oriented dad. The most impactful of these incidences was a day when my mother was sleeping, and to my understanding, my father had had a bad day and came in deciding to project his work related issues on her. Hearing my dad so verbally abusive made me a very meek person, it made me

view power over others as a terrible quality, and, by association, anything competitive in nature. In retrospect, I can see this as a point where I had begun to establish a role of victimization, drawing negative circumstances toward me periodically. This must have been a breaking point for my mother, as well as a turning point in the way I viewed my dad as a role model; for after this incident my mom moved back in with my grandparents and my parents divorced. From then on, to my mid-teens I would be raised by a very introverted and conservative mannered side of my family. I learned from them that true power lies in compassion shared, and kinship formed with others; I have found joy instead in egalitarian measures. This view of anything I could associate with my dad's impression caused me to really rebel against any institutions which I thought similar; I began to shun my majority identity in this culture for quite some time. I think a lot of people respond to experiences similar to mine by getting very angry, and becoming destructive of the environment around them. I believe I responded in a normal manner with the environmental conditions, and resources that became available to me. If someone had the opportunity to be in a loving family after that kind of incident they would probably end up fine, but I would understand how someone trapped in that hatred would become destructive. I didn't avoid these feelings either, I just chose to become self-destructive instead of lashing out at the external world, so I think I responded similarly to most choosing to vent through sadness instead of anger. However, what sets me apart is I have worked through my pain and overcome my hatred to a point of redemption. Many don't have the same opportunities, and many don't make it back out of embracing the destructive essence of our nature. I am glad to have friends and family who have reminded me of a path of love instead. The greatest sources of socialization in my life would have to have been media, particularly video games when I was younger, as well as some key role models in my family, and the religious indoctrination they extended to me. My cousin Michael and my grandmother Flo were probably two of the biggest influences of my character in some of the most crucial stages of my development. My cousin fulfilled the role of an older sibling in my life, so I looked up to him when framing my interactions with society, my personality was always a prototypal mirror of the positive characteristics I saw in him. I find that my general demeanor and mannerisms mimic my memories of his behavioral style opposed to the general other. He conditioned me to follow the majority of norms I was to abide to day to day, but his methods of conveying these teachings were through punitive means, and often I was bullied by him like a sibling should according to our cultural schema. Through most of my childhood he would punch me if I did something out of societal standards of normalcy. He would always consider it to be toughening me up to the world, and through his perspective I'm sure he desired to shelter me from having to go through the social fallacies in a public setting that he was made to. I believe to this day I have become very mindful of my actions, behavior, manner of speech, and how I phrase things because of his stringent bullying. Also, another agent of socialization I experienced as a kid was through video games, and sometimes particularly violent ones. I would assume exposure to

aggressive role templates in videogames would cause me to become a tough, regimented, and aggressive individual; however, it seems to have manifested the opposite effect. Luckily, I had agency in the matter of how I responded to this stimuli, and I was able to recognize the foolishness of these hyper masculine personality characteristics. I was kind of repulsed by these attitudes in the world, and I feel it pushed me to become more introverted and passive. I experienced the negativity associated with these aggressive tendencies in people and in media, and from these experiences I decided to stop it with me, and in turn to always avoid causing any distress in another individual. I feel if I hadn't gone through the event of him physically and psychologically harassing me, I probably would have engaged in fighting and name calling in my adolescence; to have been more a part of other initiatory male rites. I think I am unique in my response to the teasing, as instead of continuing to channel the pain and negativity into the world that was given to me, I saw it as a reason to never harm another being. I have met others I would say have been through similar societal conditioning and hazing, and desire to play high contact sports and join the military, which is the last thing I would want to do. Currently, I would never even kill a fly, instead choosing to release it so it may live on. I lean toward Eastern schools of thought such as Buddhism, which reinforce my character and have helped to structure my beliefs on these matters. Without my cousin to try and push me to fight with him and get angry, I think I would have developed different values and become more indoctrinated in the cultural expectations of the Colonialist mentality. I imagine I would have been a very competitive and aggressive individual trying to become superior over others, as this is the model for the highest attainment of success in America. Being subjected under the rule of another for years of my life, I always try to fight for the powerless around me now. I try to nurture and be a caretaker for my peers, especially those whom I feel are being ostracized in the group, or those who are being subjected to the domineering personality of another who won't give them a chance to speak. In knowing what it is like to be the victim under such circumstances, I always try to remind everyone that we are all of equal importance here on this earth and all have a duty to fulfill. When I am present in groups of friends, I try to maintain the balance of power, so that stratification and hierarchy doesn't manifest and oppress anyone. Also, with correlational research showing aggression linked to violent videogame playing, I would have to say I am an outlier on that one. I see most of my friends getting angry at each other playing, and becoming very flustered from losing, so I can see where the concept is coming from. This behavior is absolutely ridiculous in my opinion as we started out playing a game which, by its nature, is an activity meant to produce enjoyable feelings. My response to videogames is not typical as I feel I am relaxed by it where others seem to build up steam. So instead of the bullied becoming a bully myself, I feel my response has made me a pacifist in almost all areas of conflict that arise within my life. To this end I am grateful that I went through such conditioning in my youth, as I have hardly ever gotten into an altercation with another human being. On the other hand, I would say that my grandmother's presence in my life has

done much to frame my conceptualization of reality. She was one decisive agent that would impact my way of thinking tremendously, or rather I should say her conveyance of the Christian belief system. She was a leader both in spiritual communities and resided as a matriarch over a vast family network. To this day I embody many of her characteristics, holding some of her values very high in my life like compassion and wisdom. She taught me many lessons on how to behave and respond to adversity that would arise in my world, acting as a spiritual mentor throughout my days as a youth. To my childlike mind she was a conduit of universal wisdom teaching me how to conduct myself in a moral and ethical manner. My grandma was responsible for my strong emphasis on the spiritual nature of the universe, and that has impacted how I conduct my patterns of thought today. My goals in life are to one day be as joyous and content as my grandmother was, so I will always try to embrace the essence of who she was on this earth. She helped me to understand and formulate a goal of what it can be to be a loving and strong person. I have been instilled with the mentality that everything in life is secondary to becoming an ethical and righteous being, to love all as if I were them. While having a religious background I also feel there are hindrances to my logical capacities as an effect of this exposure as well. The lenses of my ego through which I view reality will always be tinted with a mystical haze, breathed to life by the stories of my grandmother. While not aware of most of it, I can tell even to this day that a strong part of my values are based on the framework of Christianity, even if I choose to not identify with these aspects of myself. However, this has posed issues when deciding how I feel about ethical concepts and has made it troublesome at times for me to think critically as well.

The Cause and Effect of Deviant Behavior in Individuals

Maya Moore

Maya Moore is a 19 year old English major currently in her second year at Bakersfield College. This work was nominated by Professor Deborah Tinoco.

Many people hear the term "deviance" and think of a 15 year old kid tagging a liquor store or stealing something from the corner store with their buddies. Of course, deviance can range from something as benign as dying your hair a bright color to something as tragic as murder. Some of the most dangerous deviance, in my opinion, is the everyday deviance of today's youth against the patriarchal society that we live in.

Most in this country have committed deviance at some point in their lives. Many people commit deviance just by existing; LGBTQ+ people, people of color, disabled people, homeless people, mentally ill people, and women all commit acts of deviance just by waking up in the morning. Women in positions of power are deviant, women who freely show emotion and aren't apologizing for it are deviant, even women that choose not to wear a bra in the morning are considered deviants to society. Plainly put, anybody can be, and most likely is, deviant. The more conscious forms of deviance are the ones we fight for. Feminism is one of the biggest forms of deviance that someone can adopt in their lives. Even as much as a year ago, people considered feminism as a dirty word that conjured up images of angry, man-hating butch lesbians who wore flannel all day and didn't shave their armpits. Thankfully, feminism has become so much more mainstream and widely accepted by so many that we as a society have been able to completely redefine what it means to be a feminist. While most people realize that feminism is a liberating movement about equality, there are still a vast majority of people that can't move past their completely false notion of the angry anti-male lesbian stereotype, so much that men have come up with the term "meninism" as the antithesis to feminism, claiming they fight for "men's rights" but do little more than harass women online. By being a feminist, you're publically declaring that you do not support the current way of life that puts all those that aren't white men at the top while the rest of society fights for scraps, and if that's not a textbook form of deviance, I don't know what is.

Deviance is so important for someone to grow into their own person. If nobody ever committed a deviant act and followed someone else's rules their whole life, they wouldn't know how to think for themselves. Having opinions makes you deviant, but it also makes you an intelligent person capable of independent thought. If you allow someone to tell you how to dress, how to speak, what to believe, how to act so you don't cause waves, then you're not really living your

own life, you're allowing somebody else to. Parents have ideas of how they want their children to live their lives, and often let their expectations known very early on. There's nothing wrong with wanting to make your parents happy by studying a certain subject in school or going down a certain career path, but it's so important to find out if you're doing it for you parents or if you genuinely enjoy the life you're building for yourself. Deviance against your parents' wishes might hurt their feelings, but if you don't assert yourself and your needs above all else, you'll spend your entire life trying to please someone else and won't know what to do when there's nobody there to tell you what to do. Parents won't always be around forever, so children need to learn certain deviance early on to prevent them from leading an wholly unhappy life.

People in positions of power tend to do whatever they can to keep their power, the same goes with deviance. The people that benefit from society's norms are the ones who try their hardest to punish deviance. White men realize that the minorities of the world are just about fed up of being belittled and treated as second class citizens, so they try to do all they can to keep people of color down so the status quo isn't disrupted. Marginalized people, however, will give their lives to disrupt that status quo so their people can rise up from their actions. The Stonewall riots were led by the poorest and lowest of the LGBTQ+ community: transgender women, women of color, prostitutes, and drag queens, but they paved the way for the gay rights movement that has just this year legalized gay marriage. Many advocates are killed by the very people they're rebelling against, never seeing the fruits of their labors but knowing that they're doing what is best for future generations. With the prolific death of black people in America, the phrase "Black Lives Matter" has become a mantra of hope and solidarity across the black community showing that they won't be treated like animals, that their lives are worth something and the police can't kill black people without being held accountable in some way. People all over the country and the world have participated in rallies and protests after the gruesome deaths of their black brothers and sisters, much like the gay riots in San Francisco and the civil rights marches of the past. Unfortunately, like those marches, it quickly turns from peaceful protesting to an all out war zone between the protesters and the aggressors, in this case the police. However, one thing we have today that our predecessors didn't is widespread media. Now, cops are held accountable for their actions because the whole world can find out about their actions in a matter of seconds. Much like the riots of the past, people of power claimed that "violence solves nothing!" However, it seems like violence is the only way change can be paved. People aren't going to allow injustices to be committed in their lives without a fight. Their deviance, and the deviance of all activist past has helped to shape the world we live in where gay people can get married in all 50 states, where black people and brown people and Asian people can use the same bathrooms and eat at the same restaurants as white people. While people might claim that there's no use in fighting The Man, history says differently. In some cases, fighting with all you've got can change the world.

I definitely feel very strongly about deviance because I'm part of many marginalized groups that wouldn't have any power if it weren't for past deviances. Being an outspoken mentally ill Latina feminist would have gotten me arrested or institutionalized, if not killed if it weren't for the deviance of the outspoken mentally ill Latina feminists before me. Growing up poor also shaped me into the societal deviant that I am today. Seeing friends living lavish lives while my family was barely above the poverty line opened my eyes at a very young age to the stark difference in the classes. It made me want to do everything in my power to make sure nobody ever felt as humiliated as I did, or went days without eating because there just wasn't enough money for school lunches that week. Once a person goes without something they never thought they'd have to give up, it gives them perspective that they never knew they needed. Most people don't know how awful it feels to be poor because they've never seen their parents break down over fear of eviction. Most people don't know the fear of being kicked out of the house for their sexuality because their sexuality is what's expected, or what's "normal." Most people don't know how it feels to be terrified of interaction with other people because of anxiety. Most people don't know how it feels to see cops routinely target and kill their friends because of the color of their skin, but some people do. Some people live every day with these burdens on them, these fears in their lives. These are the people that fight the hardest so that nobody else every feels the way they do. The people who commit deviant acts as a result of their upbringing know how it feels to be looked down on and are determined to put an end to it however they can.

Deviance has an automatic negative connotation in most respects. In many cases, deviance is an illegal activity such as grand theft or murder. The more risky deviances are the ones that challenge the way of life that we currently know. The deviances that challenge the wealthy, white men in charge are more dangerous because history has shown that they work. Deviance is proven time and time again to be necessary for growth as a person and growth as a society, and some deviant thoughts should be fostered so they can grow and bring about change.

Norm Violations

Sara Schmidt

This work was nominated by Professor Deborah Tinoco.

Citizens of a society are expected to adhere to certain societal standards; an expectation of each citizen to follow society's guidelines on how to behave and interact is called a social norm. Social norms establish order, dictate what is acceptable and what is not. Each set of norms is based on a society's values. According to Henslin (2015), "...values are the standards by which people define what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly." Because cultures and subcultures are so diverse, a person will not find two exactly alike and neither will he find two society's norms to be identical. Norms can differ depending on geographic location. Different social situations call for different norms; for example, it is expected in a library for people to remain quiet while at a festive celebration a person would be expected to mingle. There are two types of social norms: folkways and mores. Folkways are loosely enforced cultural norms or customs that are not strongly enforced, while mores are tightly woven fundamentals that if violated it would be considered taboo, resulting in possible numerous negative sanctions. "A person who steals, rapes, or kills has violated some of society's most important mores" (Henslin, 2015). Sanctions are reinforcements of behavior; peer related reactions significant to representing cultural values and norms. I conducted a field study where I observed two norm violations and committed one, analyzed the data and drew my own conclusions based on my observations.

The norm violation I performed was a violation of personal space. In Bakersfield College's cafeteria, I would find a table with a single occupant; instead of sitting across from him, like I normally would, I sat in a seat right next to him. I did this three times.

The first time, I sat down next to an average male with Hispanic demographic. Immediately after I sat down, he scooted his chair inches away from me, he slid his backpack to the other side of him away from me, and he corrected his posture. He did not make eye contact with me. I engaged conversation with him but he did not engage back. For instance, I asked what his major was; he answered my question but did not reciprocate. His replies were short, simple, and to the point. He seemed uncomfortable that stranger was talking to him. When I discussed this with a friend, he pointed out that men sometimes get nervous when a pretty girl talks to them. However, he may just be a shy, timid person that greatly dislikes having their personal space violated.

The second time, I sat down next to a blonde Caucasian female. When I initially sat down, she did not seem bothered. She was not shifting, nor showed any signs of discomfort. When I engaged conversation with her, her face seemed to light up and she was jovial in conversation. She asked as many questions as I did and it was like we were friends having a casual conversation, although we just became acquainted. She was very open and vibrant, outgoing and charismatic. Her reaction was opposite of the first subject's reaction, although the situation the same. Perhaps she had a sanguine personality so she was naturally more outgoing. Her reaction also could be different because of her demographic, a blonde white girl.

The third time, I sat down next to an average Caucasian male. I did not get a chance to engage in conversation with him because seconds after I sat down, he moved to another table. Maybe he was having a bad day or just didn't want to be around people. Perhaps he was offended when I violated his personal space.

It is interesting that in all three instances, the setting was the same: we were in a crowded college cafeteria, and while there were many seats to pick to sit in at the nearly empty table, I decided to sit directly next to the only other person at the table. But not one reaction was alike. When a social norm is broken, most people feel embarrassed, nervous, fearful, or confused on how they are expected to act. As a people, we look to society for clues on how to behave and interact with our peers. We crave acceptance in social situations and fear rejection and humiliation.

The first norm violation I witnessed was at the Bakersfield College GET bus stops. In society we are expected to dress a certain way in public: in a courtroom, citizens are expected to wear suits, women dress modestly with minimal cleavage, and close-toed shoes; it is expected to see a tourist wearing cargo shorts, binoculars, and a fanny pack. In public, rarely it is seen that someone is strutting around in their undergarments. Well, at the bus stop there is an elderly man, I see him quite regularly; he is always wearing pink or purple brief boxers with a jock strap. This man was strutting around in a Mattel pink boxer briefs. I caught myself staring, as I noticed many others did as well. This is a norm violation in our society. Not only is he wearing underwear in public, he is wearing feminine colors. This is a violation of the norm clothing etiquette. People were laughing or pointing at him as he walked past, making a joke out of it because this elderly man was violation a norm and the people around him felt uncomfortable.

The second norm violation I observed was in Bakersfield College's library. In American society we are very big on germs and cleanliness. This sick man was hacking, coughing, and sneezing but he wasn't covering his mouth. He was coughing on the people next to him, on his stuff, on the chair he was sitting on. It was disgusting. A few people made the motion to cover your

mouth with your elbow or hand when he was coughing. Most people stared or grimaced when they saw him. A few people moved away from the sick man. This is a personal space violation, because he was violating other's space when he was hacking his germs every which way. It's also about health, no one likes to be sick.

Social norms are essential to a society because it dictates guidelines on how citizens are expected to act in public settings. Norms reflect a society's core values and important fundamentals. When someone violates a social norm, it disrupts a natural order of things. We look to society to help guide us in the right direction. I have become more aware of people around me violating norms. I used to assume that the violators were strange or weird. Now I associate their behavior and label it as a social norm violation. My observations may yield different results in a different setting. For example, when I performed my violation I picked a college cafeteria. As a fellow student, I already established something in common with my subjects. But if this was performed in a mall cafeteria where I would have sat next to complete strangers, I predict a different outcome altogether.

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Creative Writing

Andromeda and the Milky Ways

Gabe Dorito

Gabe Pallitto likes to write pieces that usually involve music.

“You think they want another, Gabe?”

Matt’s words rang from the PA system into the corners of the dingy basement, then shot back through the ears of the 50 people crammed into it. The crowd responded with singular, shrill yell that crowds make when they think they deserve an encore. I gave a smirk, made a swift jab at the air, and responded.

“Fuck yeah they do, Matt.”

I started a bass line to a song Matt and I had played a million times before, but it sounded like white noise with the overlapping yells and cheers from the crowd. Matt smiled, and took the microphone while his hands pulled the sound from his guitar.

I love to wait...

I love girls with ex-boyfriends that they... aren't really over.

And I love New Mexico...

I love places I've never been.

I love the idea of places I'll never go.

I kept driving the rhythm while a wall of sound bolstered out of my amp. Matt broke into a solo, his guitar like spray paint to my wall. I never felt closer to my best friend than I did in moments like these. He was an airplane making its way over the Pacific, while I was the horizon, giving light to him and using my gravity to keep him anchored to the clouds. We met in High School, constantly trying to one up each other in every talent show or rally audition. We figured out our sound fit in to each other’s, and Andromeda and the Milky Way’s became our collective name. It’s like we married each other but got to choose the name we both took.

Matt finished up his solo and through some telepathic bond we both knew to look at the other, nod, and step up to the mic for the chorus.

So I'm swinging like a fist fight,

Concrete colored basement,

Alright, alright let's keep this clean...

As clean as you'd like...

And it probably won't get easier, just easier to hide

Prepare for an aching...the rest of your life...

Our lungs almost collided midair as we shouted them at the microphone and our eyes were glued shut while we let the song project out of our mouths and our hands. If it weren't for the two or so inches the microphone took up, we'd just look like a tall, skinny, dark haired bass player making out with a blonde guitarist whose muscles were visible beneath his shirt. The last few bars after the chorus started to die out and we both opened our steely blue eyes, mine looking down on his by a couple inches. The crowd was giddy and loud. We both calmly left the stage, not a word said after the last line of the song.

Backstage was a small room with a couch stained with alcohol, paint, permanent markers, and after show celebrations. We sat down, silence still dominating the conversation. I started chuckling, Matthew followed, and we grew into boisterous laughter. We let the excitement take us and we hugged each other like a couple that was about to have a baby, but one they wanted.

Over our school-girlish giggling, the door opened and two people walked in.

"Fucking fags" a girl's voice said in jest.

We looked towards the doorway where two girls who wore way too much black were entering. The taller one with longer hair, Evie, sat on Matt's lap and the shorter one with a lip piercing, Sera, wrapped herself in my arms. Laughing was replaced with the sound of lips meeting, eventually broken when I disconnected from Sera and asked,

"So how were we?"

"You guys were trash, stop making music," Sera said, eyes shut and anxious to get back to making out.

"Seriously though," Matt added, cutting Evie off in the middle of a passionate moment.

Sera and Evie were both a little harsh, but Matt and I learned to appreciate it and even like it. They were both from Los Angeles and their ventures in the big city regaled the two small town boys they met at the mall. Matt and I never lived in a big city, but we always wanted to, and Sera and Evie were the closest thing to Los Angeles in all of Bakersfield.

They didn't answer. They knew we wanted an answer, but giving it to us was below them. In private, Matt and I liked to call them "the succubi sucking our souls through our dicks." I'm pretty sure if we said it in their presence we'd only add on the collection of purple skin we'd started since our romantic ventures.

With the mood talking a calmer tone, we left the venue. We liked to loiter at parks after they closed to smoke and be loud. I always figured it was because smoking and playground equipment reinforced the mature-immature theme of a group of eighteen year olds, but I was probably looking too deep into it. I did that from time to time.

The night ended like any other. Parks, inside jokes, car rides, fast-food, the girl's dorm, sex, and cuddling until work or class got in the way of our post-high school angst. Like the song, it was something we'd done a million times. We all disbanded in the morning, our rendezvous in the late evening an unspoken plan we had learned to just expect. I kissed Sera, Matt kissed Evie, and we left their dorms together.

"I'm pretty sure, we were the best band there," Matt said, reading my thoughts as I wondered about last night's show. He lit two cigarettes, and handed me one. Unlike Matt, I was an on and off smoker, either cold turkey quitting or chain smoking like my Dad. Today I was my Dad.

"We had to have been. We we're the cutest ones there and that's like, 95% of what makes you a good band," I joked. We shared a laugh, even though I'm sure we honestly believed it. We were a little vain, but we always both believed conceit was a better word for confidence. We finished smoking, and both left for work.

I worked at the mall. It was a fitting job for an 18 year old community college music major. It was a record store owned by a big box corporation that was dressed up as a local mom and pop place. Genius, really. I put on some music from my iPod, and opened shop to watch teenagers drift in, look at CDs, and put them back and leave. Sundays were sick with people glancing over plastic wrapped CD covers and my coworkers had stuck me with a lonely evening shift. No problem. It would just be another day of watching the clock and tapping my foot to whatever was playing over the speakers. I let my eyes rest for a bit, as sleep wasn't something I was getting much of, and appreciated the Weezer album playing from the back.

Nothing kills a nap like the sharp, clacky thud of a plastic CD case on a granite counter. I looked at whoever was trying to buy it with more surprise than anger. Like, honestly, who the fuck buys CDs still? Rubbing the sleep from my eyes, I expected some old crusty punk dude who was still trying to convince the world that his music wasn't shitty or some 15 year old hipster girl who dug up her mom's Walkman and wanted to be "retro" and "vintage". Either way, I was going to be as pretentious and patronizing as possible. Being a huge douche to strangers was one of the few joys my job gave me.

Surprises were pretty scarce in my life. I had a schedule; I had a routine. I could probably tell you exactly what I'd be doing on any given day for the next month. I tried to do exciting things, like be out late or go to concerts, but even those slip into monotony when you do them all the time. It was like being a spider trapped under a glass, or a tire with no tread stuck in mud. I felt trapped. I didn't share this with Sera, or Evie, or even Matt because the last thing I wanted was for the people closest to me to think I was getting tired of them. Surprises were surprises because they caught you off guard, and nothing had caught me off guard like the angel that was waiting on me to buy CDs. She was wearing a white t-shirt with a really pastel sunrise covering most of the front and a brown skirt that wasn't frilly at all.

"...is that going to be it for you today?" I asked, trying to talk a bit slowly so I could buy more staring time.

"Yeah, that'll do it for me," she replied, pushing the words through her full red lips like a really sentimental letter being pushed through a mail slot. The red in her lips really popped with her white skin. She drew her debit card and handed it to me. I needed to make this last.

"So, you're names Indiana?" I asked her, pretending that the cash register was much more unresponsive than it actually was.

"Mhmm," Indiana answered, her fingers twirling her long dark hair. I was dragging this out and she probably knew.

"Cool. Just making sure you're not stealing someone's identity to buy CDs at the mall." My smirk made it apparent I was joking. She offered me a grin for my humor. I used that joke on maybe one cute girl a week and until now, never felt particularly bad for recycling a two year old ice breaker.

Untitled

Kalvin Gentry

I wish I could look deep within myself,
And see the person I am supposed to be,
because the person I want to be,
doesn't seem to be what society expects of me

Society wants for me
To be a good little working bee,
To work quickly and silently,
And fill the jar of honey.

honey I might add,
that I am not allowed to taste.
for the bigger bees in the hive,
consider it a waste.

after all, they are bigger,
and I am small,
so a little old bee like me,
shouldn't have much honey at all.

It's the way of the world,
Everyone tells me to accept it,
If you complain too much,
They'll just find another bee,
Who doesn't reject it.

Then you'll be out in the cold,
Ejected from the hive,
so just quit all the fussing,
and be glad to be alive.

So these are my choices,
Live my life and be
A good little working bee,
Or be who I want to be
And die hungry and free.

Charisse's Roaring Twenties

Karen Russell

Charisse's car was gone.

"Oh my god, my car is gone."

For a second, the shock made her sober. The timing was bad and made the loss seem personal. She turned to her right wanting to share this trial with another, but Ernest had taken a few steps back without her noticing and when she spotted him he was going for another. For the first time of the night, Charisse was able to get a good look at him. He had transformed into a sneaking, dishonest traitor who was conspicuously positioned right under a street light.

His open face told her that this was more than he had bargained for and that he had decided it was his right to leave her in the parking lot. But he had been caught and somehow couldn't explain to her why it wasn't his problem. So instead, he offered his phone and stood with his arms folded and his eyes down while she called the police.

She wasn't sure if Ernest said good-bye. After she handed him back his cellphone she stood in a daze trying to figure out an appropriate course of action only to be disturbed by the sound of his car accelerating eagerly down the road. Charisse arrived at the conclusion that it would have been too unpleasant to have to ask this suddenly insubstantial and, unfortunately, hand-picked man for a ride. She would rather walk. The town was small and although she had recently taken up residence, Charisse already knew her way around.

When she moved in and found out that a bar in town called Jerry's hosted an annual "Decades Extravaganza" the last week of summer where each night was themed after a different decade, she had placed more of her hopes in the festivities than she realized. To the town, the parties were an opportunity to enter an alcoholic dreamland in honor of the end of summer. But to Charisse the parties were a sign. It felt like Jerry's was holding them in her honor. She was the new arrival to the town and the first party, the one with the twenties theme, was the night before her birthday. The coincidences made her sure it would be a special night.

But Charisse hadn't been impressed when she walked into the bar. The decorations were skimpy and what was there looked out of place. No one had done their research; that was obvious enough. And no one cared that no one had done their research. Charisse had hoped to be enveloped in the golden glow of candle light and red-curtained stages the second she walked through the doors. She imagined that sparkling drinks would flow freely and the sleepy but happy music would invite an atmosphere of comely gossip. Something tastefully offensive that everyone could indulge in but also feel safe handling on their tongues. But it was a regular

bar. A grisly, wall-papered bar with an older woman on the stage handling the microphone like male genitals.

Before long, Ernest sat in the chair next to Charisse and, although he seemed a little dissuaded by the fact that she had obviously given her real name instead of something that mixed well with the smell of the twenties, he proceeded to schmooze her sufficiently. So much so that Charisse was ready to leave much earlier than she thought she would. She and Ernest walked out together with their arms linked.

And then he was gone. Maybe if she had told him it was her birthday he would have understood why he needed to stay, but then she might have had to confess her age.

She turned onto a new street and there it was. Her car was on the side of the road by the bus stop waiting for her, one wheel resting peacefully on the curb another creating an obstacle for the water in the gutter. She didn't give herself enough time to consider why her car was there. She just gratefully buckled her seatbelt, thinking the click of the metal was the most comforting sound she knew, when she saw the car was out of gas. She had forgotten to fill it up.

But a car out of gas seemed more bearable than a missing car. She wasn't thinking clearly, so she leaned over to her glove compartment to get her phone even though she only put it in there when it was dead. It was while she was reaching to open the small compartment that she got the fateful whiff of body odor. Her hand trembled and then fell on the seat overwhelmed. For a few minutes she sat flicking her headlights on and off. That was the smell of her Grandma Evelyn. It had a potency and strength to it that perfume manufacturers could only dream of creating. Grandma Evelyn could sit in a chair for twenty minutes and, no matter the material, her peculiar stench would be stitched into it for the rest of its days. Smelling it was like having your skin rubbed by an old hand that nobody wants to hold. It left goose bumps.

Charisse had first noticed it when she'd moved in and given her grandma a hug.

"Cheri, honey, it's so nice to have you here," Evelyn had said and opened her arms wide.

Charisse wasn't able to speak until they separated and she could refuel her fresh air supply.

"Thanks, Mammy. It's nice to have a place to stay for a while." Evelyn's eyes drooped slightly but sprang back up. Charisse thought that was odd.

"Don't worry, though! I'll only be here a couple of weeks at the longest." The smile drooped this time and Evelyn gave a quick, understanding nod. Charisse didn't understand.

"I'll try to stay out of your hair," she said in a light, friendly way. That was what all other roommates had expected of her. But Evelyn pouted slightly.

Charisse was confused. "Where should I put these bags?" she said, her tone becoming comically friendly.

Evelyn gave a half-hearted nod down the hall.

"There's a guest bedroom. It's the second to the left."

The room was immaculate. There were flowers in a vase by the bed where Charisse dropped her bags. A puff of body odor sprang from the creaky mattress.

From down the hall, Evelyn shouted, "Do you ever watch Jeopardy?"

Charisse told Evelyn she wanted to go to Jerry's that night. She planned to drop Evelyn off at the house of one of her old friends so that they could play Rummikub together, but the second Mammy sat in the car she started to snore. Waking her up wasn't a pleasant experience so Charisse left her in the car. The headlights went on and off as she thought. She felt ashamed. It had taken her too long to remember that her grandma had been in the car. But she knew where Evelyn was now, or at least where she was going. Some part of her must have understood that her grandma could be almost anywhere, but Charisse felt positive.

She must have taken the bus to Brentley.

Brentley was Evelyn's home town. It was a couple of hours away by bus and a few years ago Evelyn had gone to revisit the house she grew up in. According to her description, the family there now was delightful. She went to visit them at least twice a week and, when she was at home with Charisse, only talked about her visits with the Coopers. It was this information that made Charisse so sure that if she were Evelyn and found herself in an abandoned car with an empty tank of gas right by a bus stop she would go to Brentley.

The question was whether Charisse should go to Brentley and bring her back. Her analytical abilities were currently stunted, so she relied on her capacity to feel to work her way out of the situation. And what she felt was guilt. So she boarded the next bus to Brentley with the hope that this gesture, selflessly taken upon herself for the sake of another, would be the showy act of redemption she needed to repair her relationship with Evelyn.

The bus's bright lights made her anxious. She found a seat, leaned her head against the window, and began to self-consciously assess herself. The bus breathed in and moved forward

and her head rattled against the glass. She was wearing a Roaring Twenties-themed flapper dress she'd found online that had plastic sequins all over it.

"That's not how dresses looked in the twenties," Evelyn had said aghast when Charisse modeled it for her, which Evelyn insisted she do.

"You were born in the thirties, Mammy."

"I know what they looked like. And it seems too tight. Are you comfortable in it, honey?"

She was also wearing high heels and although she hadn't put glitter on, she was somehow covered in the stuff. When she lifted her head to look out the window she saw that her hair had left a noticeable greasy smudge.

Charisse couldn't help but think that she and Evelyn were a lot alike, though. They both expected reasonable things from others. She liked to think they were optimists. The last of those who believe in common human decency. Which made it all the more unfortunate that she had let Evelyn down. She had set out that night with the purpose of forgetting her grandmother for a while. And now Evelyn knew that.

Charisse rarely set herself up in this way. She didn't like feeling ashamed. It was why she spent so much time in the guest room. It was true she didn't go out of her way to help Evelyn, but she also didn't ask anything of her and made a point of not being any trouble. And she thought it would be detrimental to Evelyn if she started relying on her. She would be leaving soon. Her mom had only said that Evelyn had a room open. Not that her eyes would be so full of expectations.

She felt a hand on her shoulder. She looked up startled, trying to focus her eyes and for a second she saw a pitiful Ernest standing ashamed in front of her with his eyes down. But it was the bus driver coming to rouse her.

"You said you were heading to Brentley? We're here."

The sun hadn't come up yet, but the world was noticeably less dark than it had been half an hour ago. Charisse didn't know for sure what time it was, but the fast changing color of the sky made her positive that the clock had passed midnight and that it was officially her birthday. She thanked the driver and stretched her body thinking that the soreness in her muscles, the nausea, and the grumbling headache she felt probably rivaled the discomfort her mother had experienced thirty years ago on this day.

She knew where to find the Coopers' house. Living with Evelyn made it impossible to not know where to find their house. Charisse's head was too fuzzy for her to notice and be grateful for the fact that no one was up and about this early on a Sunday morning. She decided to take off her heels while she walked and made a mental note to put them back on before knocking at the Coopers' door. The texture of the sidewalk didn't bother her numb feet and she thought of the owners at Jerry's and how wise they were to not include the thirties in their "Decades Extravaganza."

She rang the doorbell at the Coopers' and stared down while she waited, forgetting her high heels, bouncing and testing the wood's flexibility under her bare feet. The door opened but the dark screen concealed the opener's identity. There was no greeting. Charisse guessed it must be a child and leaned over to meet their eye level even though she had no idea how tall they might be. Her body felt natural bent over. Her cramped midsection pulled her down.

She tried to mimic the voice of her elementary school teacher, but it had been so long since she'd spoken that her "Hello," sounded gravelly and strained. She cleared her throat and tried again.

"Hi, I'm Evelyn's granddaughter. Is Evelyn here right now?"

The child didn't say a word but opened the door and Charisse followed her into the kitchen where a woman wearing a yellow apron was making pancakes.

"Mom, Grandma's granddaughter is here," the child said.

The mother looked up startled and said, "Evelyn, you have a granddaughter?" before she realized that this was rude. She blushed, partly for her blunder, and partly for the sad state Charisse was in.

Charisse wanted to look dignified, but the sweet smell of the pancakes did not mix well in her head and she was overcome by a swell of nausea and had to ask if she could use the bathroom. The woman nodded with a tight face and gave directions. In the bathroom, Charisse emptied her stomach into the toilet and then saw herself in the mirror for the first time since she had turned thirty. She looked worse than she'd thought. The make-up she had so carefully applied to specific parts of her face had leaked so that eye shadow had somehow found a way to her chin and lipstick was on her earlobe. She tried her best to clean her face but only realized after that she had dirtied one of the Coopers' beautiful white monogrammed towels. She inspected herself again in the mirror and had never noticed before how gray her skin was.

When she exited the bathroom she found Evelyn facing away from her, eating pancakes at a dining table. As Charisse got closer she saw that Evelyn's hair was slightly damp. She was in a

white monogrammed robe and looked fresh and pure. She smelled clean. Charisse tried to put her hand gently on Evelyn's shoulder, but startled her. Evelyn looked back at Charisse as if she'd seen a ghost. Then Charisse saw pity enter Evelyn's eyes and the thought suddenly occurred to her that maybe Evelyn had run away.

Charisse's remaining composure crumbled. Hollowness began scraping out her insides and chased the ruins of pride up through her neck and they came out disguised as words.

"It's time to go home, Mammy."

Five Poems

Sabrina McCrocklin

Morning Chill

Woke up with the sun
It has barely warmed the earth
Winter chills the soul

One More Hit

There once was a boy from the lake
But the smile on his face was fake
His whole day revolved
Getting one problem solved
And everything else was forsake

His need was as loud as a roar
The perfect amount is: more
Both ears he would bend
Of all of his friends
Until he could finally score

The room around him was reeling
He laid back to look at the ceiling

He said with a grin

As he filled his syringe

At last, I am free from feeling

Thankless

I need a straw

My steak is still raw

And that one is far too burnt

Please bring me the bill

I need a refill

And did you know that it's my birthday?

Table 103 is upset

Their food's not up yet

And don't even think about asking the chef

At the bar waiting for ONE drink

As a family of four slowly sinks

Into my last big table

I need dressing and knives

And butter and chives

And the new table is ready to order

My party of nine

Thinks that it's fine
To ask to split nine ways

The smile on my lips
Is purely for tips
Someday I'll find a new job

Date Night

Matte red lips
Fluttering lashes
High heels and a pencil skirt
Your hands hold my waist

Spin me on the dance floor
Dip me, then kiss me
One last drink
Then help me into the car

I'm free as we float down the highway
Safe in your care
Your hand holds mine
So I don't float away

The beat of the music still thumping in my head
Gets my heart pumping too
I can drift forever in my haze
As long as you are there to anchor me

Love/Hate

My day just doesn't start right without you
Your taste lingers on my tongue long after you have already escaped me
I can smell your presence from across the room
Even the other side of the house

You excite me, then betray me
Until my only option is to come running back
I curse you at night for keeping me awake
Yet beg for you first thing in the morning

Even when you are cold
Even when you are bitter
I know all you need is a little sugar
And you will be exactly what I need

My strength

My rock

My encouragement

My coffee

Untitled

Sarina Orton

You watch the stars,

Feeling the pain

You hold it in

With nothing the same

You keep silent

Wanting to lie

You keep trying

Knowing you'll die

You keep fighting

To win a war

While you lose faith

In something more

Time means nothing

In the face of death

Angels and demons

Are waiting for your breath

-Rina

Untitled

Diego Sandoval

I love it when...

I get overtime and I commit

When...

The work I do can be simple or complex

When...

The love is more than enough but I learn to adjust

Cus that's the way out of my mental cuffs

I love it when...

I can smile and not care who sees me within

When...

I can walk and talk and it all synchronizes how I want it

When...

The weather is beautiful and the people match the vibe

And all we need is to actively coexist and coincide

I love it when...

I feel special just because I am who I am

When...

No one says anything cus all they see is confidence

When...

I pull through with hard work and diligence

When...

I get back for all the energy I've put in

FEATURED WORKS

Essays From English 53

ENGL53 (Reading, Reasoning, and Writing) is a new course offered through the Bakersfield College English Department. English 53 prepares students, who are eligible for either English 60 or English 50, for English 1a.

The following works were submitted by ENGL53 students.

Kern County's Unwanted

Raquel Gallegos

Opinion Section

The Renegade Rip

Bakersfield College

Bakersfield, CA 93305

Dear Editor:

As an active citizen in Kern County, I have noticed a serious problem that appears to be getting worse. Our community is developing an epidemic with stray dogs. Whether it is from them escaping or being abandoned by their owners, they are still ending up on the streets, and this is not acceptable. This issue needs to be addressed now, not later, because the only ones that are suffering and paying are these precious animals that did not ask to be here, as well as the taxpayers who will end up paying more as the problem escalates. I love animals and realize that they are unable to speak for themselves, so I hope to be their voice and try to bring awareness to this increasing problem.

My heart breaks every day on my way to school because I see at least three different dogs a day: some pregnant, some hurt, some dead, and all of them starving. Some strays may get lucky and find a person who is willing to give them a "forever home," but what about the rest of them that are not so lucky? Accidentally hitting a dog is becoming a much too familiar occurrence, but when they are all over the streets, running into traffic, they are hard to avoid. According to James Burger of the *Bakersfield Californian*, in his article "Kern's Throwaway Animals," he explains how, sixty-eight times a day, an animal loses their life. In one year, it averages to be about twenty-five thousand animals. Burger also goes on to say that three out of four animals picked up by animal control are dead within a week of arriving at the shelter, not to mention that the city will spend about \$738,000 to collect, hold, adopt, and kill these animals. Meanwhile, the county will also spend about 2 million more on the same problems.

Although it hardly puts a dent in the numbers, there are organizations that are stepping forward to try to help the situation. For example, Critters Without Litters is a non-profit organization that offers low-cost spay and neuter programs. There is also Marley's Mutts, an organization whose members go out to shelters and rescue dogs that are about to be put to death. Sadly, these dogs are not sick, nor are they vicious, but there simply is no room to house them all. Marley Mutts has also teamed up with Wings of Rescue, and other organizations, to fly hundreds of dogs and cats out of the state to give them a second chance at life.

The situation for strays is improving, but not fast enough. The county needs to get tougher on licensing, even if that means going door to door to do a census report. If there is no clue as to how many dogs there actually are, how can you fix the problem? I understand that this is a costly problem, but like Burger explains in another article, "Decade of Failure: As Kern Spent Millions Killing Animals, Key Solutions Went Ignored," "the best way to reduce shelter intake is to spay and neuter the pets producing unwanted puppies."

People act as though puppies and dogs are expendable. They get tired of one and just throw it out and go to get a new one, but the love and dependency that your child has for you is the same as a pet if not more, so pets are like our children, and you would not trade your child in for a new one, would you? The census that I mentioned earlier will allow Kern County to find these people who are doing this and make them pay a fee, as owners need to be accountable. Another issue with pet owners and animal control regulations is how people who love and take care of their animals are forced to give one up because you are only allowed to have three; however, one man who fights his dogs, beats his dogs, and trains them to attack stray dogs is allowed to keep his dogs. I have complained many times about this man, and I have personally witnessed his dogs kill three different dogs, each time getting out of their yard to attack. Animal Control explains how they cannot do anything because there is no proof. That is animal cruelty, but because I do not have pictures or proof, nothing is done. Just look at their scars: is that not proof enough?

In addition, the county and city going their separate ways on animal control is confusing and a bit of a headache. According to BakersfieldNow.com, a staff member explains how "the county said the city facility was inadequate, and the city said the county wanted to charge it too much to provide control services to city areas." Everybody needs to come together and look at what is best for the animals: nothing else should matter. In order to see any improvement, spaying and neutering your pets needs to be a law. If you want to breed, you must pay a fee and comply with other regulations, but they must also be accountable for all the puppies born. If we come together and enforce some laws, there can be a change. I am not saying it is going to happen overnight, but it is possible. All in all, my only concerns are for these dogs and their well-being. Whatever happened to "Man's best friend?"

Sincerely,

Raquel L. Gallegos

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Hero to Villain: The Question Within

Zechariah Maynard

Opinion Section
Roughneck Review
Bakersfield College
Bakersfield, CA 93305

Dear Editor,

The professional sports community is an extremely diverse group of individuals who come together to create an exciting area of entertainment. The community consists of not only players and coaches, but also the fans who provide the income needed to keep such a complex business thriving year after year. This entertainment usually is exciting because of the danger factors involved with professional sports: the hits, injuries, and harm that are caused to the people playing. My issue is not with the danger that is presented in professional sports -- I, myself, am guilty of taking pleasure in watching somebody getting run over at a hockey game. The issue I am presenting is a far greater problem that has stretched outside of the sports community and into the cities' streets creating a question that no one can seem to answer: why is the crime rate growing among professional athletes?

This may not seem like something to waste time out of your day to answer, but when you give the question some thought, you realize how common this problem is becoming. The crimes that the athletes have on their records are not what the public might consider small crimes.

Instead, we are seeing crimes that range from spousal abuse to drugs, and we have even seen some charged with murder. According to Michael McCarthy, a journalist for CNBC, athletes feel a sense of omnipotence that drives them to believe they can act recklessly and not get caught. Are these the kind of athletes that you want your children to look up to? These athletes who are considered role models by many should be taking responsibility for their actions. We are seeing these crimes not only in one professional sport: we are seeing this in all sports, and the players who are breaking these rules are not being given serious consequences deserving of their crimes.

The crime rate has gone up in all professional sports. Unfortunately, the only one that is being publicized is football even though we are also seeing similar crimes committed by athletes in

baseball, basketball, and hockey. For instance, Alex Rodriguez, a third baseman for the New York Yankees was suspended for an entire season last year due to using performance-enhancing drugs. Slava Voynoy, a defenseman on the Los Angeles Kings was released from the team for domestic abuse. Aaron Hernandez, a tight end for the New England Patriots, was just sentenced to life in prison without parole after being charged with murder. This is one scenario from each sport, but this barely scratches the surface. There are countless cases that you can look into for each sport that show the trend of these crime rates on a downward spiral. At what point will this issue be brought into light and handled before it gets out of hand?

Administration from the college website U.S. College Search Blog, recently published a survey, showing that in 2010, there were 507 arrests made of NFL players. This shows why the NFL is the most publicized.

As the crime rates continue to get worse, little is being done to prevent crimes from happening again. Players who have drug charges many times will never see a suspension, but rather see a minimal fine, even when they are repeat offenders. Only recently has one league started to stand up against such issues and only in a minimal attempt. In the NFL last season, there were two instances of this happening. Ray Rice, a running back for the Baltimore Ravens was suspended indefinitely after punching his then fiancée in an elevator and knocking her out.

As the season went on, and after several public apologies, fans started to become outraged that Rice was not allowed to play again. Rice later appealed the suspension and won allowing him to return to the NFL, as was reported by Jill Martin and Steve Almasy, CNN sports analysts. This was a very embarrassing attempt by the NFL to try and set an example of behavior that will not be tolerated. Allowing a player with such a serious crime to return to the league is problematic. It shows that the behavior will not only be tolerated, but it will continue to be accepted.

An instance on the opposite side of the spectrum was the case of Adrian Peterson. This was a case where Peterson disciplined his son by using a switch to spank his child. This immediately followed the Rice investigation, causing Peterson's case to be blown out of proportion. Since the league suspended Rice indefinitely, they felt the need to do so to Peterson as well. When Peterson's team tried to stand behind him, the public was outraged that the league would allow a person like that to stay with the team. Following public chastisement, the team released Peterson, pending the investigation. This, to me, is a bit hypocritical, if you think about it. How many of us as children were disciplined in the same manner that Peterson felt to be a necessary act to teach his child right from wrong? Regardless, in any case, the leagues should be showing consistency with every case that they have to deal with. Unfortunately, it has turned into the

opposite, and most cases turn into laughable bouts of inconsistency in which we all know the end result.

In closing, I would suggest that, as sports fans, we should begin to look at these issues that have been swept under the rug thus far. One person alone can push for change, but as a community, we can make that change happen. Sports are a form of entertainment that we all enjoy. We as members of this community should be making a push for positive changes that can better all of those that partake. The players of these sports should be held accountable just like citizens of everyday life. These players are paid millions of dollars, and when they sign their contracts they are agreeing to a level of professionalism that will be looked upon by many. Some will stumble, some will falter, that is to be expected as we are all people and people do make mistakes, but the trend should be ascending not descending.

Sincerely,

Zechariah A. Maynard

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Life Sentence

Iriana Pineda

Opinion Section

The Renegade Rip

Bakersfield College

Bakersfield, CA 93305

Dear Dennis Lehane:

The purpose of my letter is to open a conversation by answering your question, "When minors commit violent crimes, should they be treated differently from adults?" You asked this question in the article "When to Punish a Young Offender, and When to Rehabilitate," published on June 5, 2012 for *The New York Times*. However, the real question should be, "why should minors be treated differently from adults when they commit violent crimes?" I disagree with the majority of Supreme Court Justices who argued to abolish mandatory life in prison for juveniles who have committed murder. I honestly see the crime more than the age as the big picture, don't you? It should be on top of your head that there will be consequences when you do something that will cause trouble. Teenagers are not little children anymore, for they understand right from wrong. Minors are capable of knowing what their actions will lead to; therefore, they can do the time for it. Teens should be held accountable for their actions and be tried as adults.

People tend to defend the youth due to our brain development. They argue based on the massive loss of brain tissue that occurs in the teenage years. In the article "Startling Finds on Teenage Brains," Paul Thompson states, "Brain cells and connections are only being lost in the areas controlling impulses, risk-taking, and self-control..." "These frontal lobes, which inhibit our violent passions, rash actions, and regulate our emotions, are vastly immature throughout the teenage years." That may be true; however, I do not accept this argument because wouldn't all teenagers be killing? For instance, if this were the case, then teens from all over the world would be committing serious crimes at roughly the same rate, but they do not. I know I speak for many people when I say, "I am an 18 year old person and the thought of killing someone has never come across my mind, no matter how mad I have been." Why should one get punished less than the other whenever an adult and a juvenile commit the same crime? Overall, they made the same mistake; as a result, they should be tried as an adult.

The story of the teenager who murdered a couple and their unborn child in the article "Jennifer Bishop Jenkins on Punishment and Teen Killers" by Jennifer Jenkins published on August 2, 2011, disgusts me. The teenager reported to his friend, who testified at his trial, that he just wanted to "see what it would feel like to shoot someone." His reason is beyond ridiculous and I

am glad he got JLWOP (Juvenile Life without Parole): he highly deserved it. The female victim begged for the life of her unborn child as she got shot and so did her partner. She obviously suffered, and he did not care for her or her family. Can you imagine the misery the family went through when an immature teenage boy pointed a gun at them? In addition, he was very aware of his actions, yet he did not feel compassionate about what he was doing.

Thankfully, my family and I have never experienced any harm done to us. If something were to ever happen to any of my loved ones, I would definitely want the murderer in jail for life. Their age would not matter to me at all. What matters the most is for justice to be served how it is supposed to be. It would be very unfair that he/she only do a little bit of time considering we would never have a conversation with our loved one, get a hug, and never see them again. The victim's family goes through so much endless pain just because of someone's idiotic "mistake."

Someone who is willing to do vicious things such as murder, rape, or torture does not deserve freedom. The fact that they have done so much harm to someone at a young age makes me wonder how many more bad things they are capable of doing to innocent people in the future. Sure, you can always turn your life around and do great things as your life goes on, but we cannot always trust a criminal. We can say their life is pretty much over. Who would want to hire someone with a criminal record? I, for a fact would not want to be around them. I would feel frightened and insecure because I would feel like my life is at risk. For the safety of everyone, it is best for evil adolescents to stay behind bars. They need to learn to take responsibility of their misleading actions. Also, ignorance is no excuse whatsoever to break the law by doing brutal violations.

Teens should be accountable for their actions and be tried as an adult. There really are no good reasons for an adolescent to get less time when he/she made the same actions as an adult did. You say prison is too violent for young youth offenders. You have your thoughts messed up because prison is for people who are violent. One solution is for the juvenile to be tried as an adult, but to not be sentenced to an adult prison.

Sincerely,

Iriana Pineda

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A Thinner Blue Line

Mark Rhoades

Editorial Board

Roughneck Review

Bakersfield College

Bakersfield, CA 93305

Dear Editor:

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing”: it is strongly theorized that the Irish philosopher and politician Edmund Burke stated this during his lifetime. In order to make a better world, Burke warned that people would need to take action to make it that way. From our country’s turbulent founding, most Americans realize the need for action and of the dangers of inaction. We can recognize evil across the world, and we trust our government to stop it. We recognize dangers in our country, and we expect our local leaders to render them safe. When we see danger directly in front of us, we expect someone to make it go away: this person is the police officer.

The police officer is given power by the citizenry through elected officials. Officers use this power to enforce laws and confront evil on behalf of the public, so these confrontations invariably place officers in perilous situations. Officers must use the powers given to them to be triumphant; however, these powers are not given lightly. Prospective officers must attend paramilitary training academy for several months, which includes hundreds of hours of instruction and training focusing on ethics, the use of force, weapons handling, and the application of laws. After training is completed, officers are sworn to an oath of honor promising to never betray the public trust, to uphold the Constitution, and to hold themselves accountable for their actions. Recently, officers have been perceived of violating this oath by appearing brutal and dishonest and therefore creating disharmony between themselves and those they protect, which has caused some members of the public to become hostile and resent all officers for misusing their powers. It also brings to mind the question of whether police officers do more harm than good, but we must consider some very important elements before deciding.

Police officers are not normal citizens. Officers are employed and required to bear a heavy burden, as documented by United States Army Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman (retired), a former West Point Military Academy psychology professor and author. He is one of the world’s

foremost experts in the field of human aggression and psychology of combat. In Grossman's book *On Combat*, he conducted an interview of an unnamed retired U.S. Army colonel of the Vietnam War who separated people into three categories. The colonel observed that most of the people in our society are sheep because they are kind, gentle, productive creatures who can only hurt one another by accident. He added that there are also wolves, and the wolves feed on the sheep without mercy. Finally, he concluded that there are sheepdogs, and he described himself as a sheepdog because he lives to protect the flock and confront the wolf (180-181). Grossman summarizes the colonel's observations by stating that the sheepdog is "someone who can walk into the heart of darkness, into the universal human phobia, and walk out unscathed" (181). Citizens who strive to become police officers are sheepdogs. They have been born with or have created a personality that enables them to run toward the sound of violence and danger instead of running away from it. This simple distinction causes confusion and uncertainty between the public and the officer because they are not alike. It is difficult for citizens to understand that an officer's purpose lies amongst all the pain and danger of the community.

Police officers can be misunderstood or even abhorred by the public they serve, but it does not give officers justification to abandon their oaths. Grossman expresses this relationship between the officer and public by asserting that "the sheep generally do not like the sheepdog.

He looks a lot like a wolf. He has fangs and the capacity for violence. The difference, though, is that the sheepdog must not, cannot and will not ever harm the sheep. Any sheepdog who intentionally harms the lowliest little lamb will be punished and removed" (182). Another source corroborates Grossman's analogy. Danny Morrison of Bakersfield is a radio personality and a sales representative in the building industry. Morrison's article, "It's a Tough Job, but That Doesn't Get Police Officers off the Hook," was featured in the Community Voices section of *The Bakersfield Californian*, April 15, 2015. Morrison confirms, "as much as I feel sorry for your [the officer's] tough task of employment, you have to be held to a higher standard because you are the hired moral authority of our community. It is your job to enforce the law and not your job to emulate the thuggish actions of the lawbreakers" (17). Morrison continues, "if you can't absorb a constant barrage of verbal insults or maintain your professionalism after a multi-block foot pursuit, you need to seek other employment" (17). Grossman and Morrison are absolutely correct. Police officers who violate the public trust or disregard their oath should be removed from service and, depending on the circumstances of the violation, subject to lawful punishment; on the other hand, the public must not cultivate thoughts that all officers behave the same way.

When officers act in contradiction to their oaths, all officers are burdened with the same incrimination by the public. This lack of equity is unjustifiable. Officers are confronted by numerous and difficult issues each day they are employed. The Federal Bureau of Investigation compiles data and statistics from nearly 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States, and it publishes the information annually using a Uniform Crime Report. According to the report found on the Internet, there are more than 900,000 law enforcement officers serving a public of nearly 319 million citizens. This is a ratio of one officer for every 354 citizens. In 2013, officers responded to an estimated 1.16 million violent crimes. These statistics have taken their toll on police officers; as a result, there have been 20,538 officers killed since 1791. This equates to one death every ninety-five hours or every four days.

Undoubtedly, it is a very dangerous profession, and it is recognized by the highest authority in our government. In the Supreme Court Case of *Ryburn v. Huff*, officers were accused of violating a citizen's constitutional rights. On January 23, 2012, the Court decided that the officers had acted reasonably and asserted, "[t]he calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgements—in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving" (8). The Court further commented, "we have instructed that reasonableness 'must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight'" (8). Officers continue to work with the public's unjust denunciations despite the overwhelming majority of police officers having done nothing to warrant it.

It is clear that police officers are absolutely necessary in our daily lives and communities, even with a handful of officers acting errantly. There are deplorable incidents that are caused by officers' actions or inactions, but these factors must be looked at objectively and individually as they occur. Officers and citizens alike must heed the words of Steve Anderson, Chief of Police of the Nashville, Tennessee Police Department. In a letter to a concerned citizen, Anderson asserts, "the police are merely a representative of a government formed by the people for the people—for all people." The only alternative is one that is nearly impossible to imagine, but Grossman perceives, "if we went but a single generation without men (and women) who are willing to go out every day and confront evil, then within the span of that generation we should surely be both damned and doomed" (xxii). As citizens have been doing since the beginning of time, we must trust in and respect those who have been called and accepted to serve the public.

Sincerely,

Mark Rhoades