

Writers Place Awards 2022

The Writers' Place Awards is pleased to announce this year's winners of the Writers' Place Awards. Before I do, a big thanks to the judges, without whose help none of this could happen:

Laura Cruser
Valerie Fazel
Elizabeth Hamm
Heather Hoyt
Kathrine Keller
Sean Moxley-Kelly
Jeremy Meyer
Lynette Myles
Cecilia Savala
Seher Shah
Jennifer Waters
Heidi Willers

2022 Writers' Place Award Winners

ENG 101

1. Mal Stepaniuk, "Moldable Plastic: Barbie, Society, and the Everywoman" (Instructor: Kathrine Keller)
2. Masaran Keita, "Ain't Free" (Instructor: Alexandra Comeaux)
3. Kaylee Courtney "To Grams, with Love" (Instructor: Andrea Rivers)

ENG 102

1. Cole Camacho, "Oculus Quest 2 Review" (Instructor: Kathrine Keller)
2. Erin Hildick, "Should We Hate Online Learning?" (Instructor: Laura Cruser)
3. Caleb R. Patterson, "Rhetorical Intentions in *Democracy and Education*" (Instructor: Ernesto Velasquez)

ENG 105

1. Serena Sabbara, "The Problems with Child Welfare Services in Arizona" (Instructor: Kerry Fine)
2. Elise Hanretty, "My Friend Ana" (Instructor: Corri Wells)
3. Benjamin Millet, "Aerospace Engineering Academic Cultural Analysis" (Instructor: Sean Moxley-Kelly)

ENG 107

1. Mainak Sahu, "Prevention Is Better Than Cure" (Instructor: Daeun Shin)
2. Valeria Duran Garcia, "My Italian Independence" (Instructor: Daeun Shin)
3. Devajith I Subramoniam, "The Gender Wage Gap In US IT Industries" (Instructor: Daeun Shin)

ENG 108

1. Vanessa Pecly, "The solution to an unhealthy life-work balance in Tarkenton Companies" (Instructor: Valerie Fazel)
2. Luca Avolio, "A Proposal for Ameliorating Gang Violence in the London Borough of Lambeth" (Instructor: Valerie Fazel)
3. Wanhe Gu, "Improve the barrier-free passages problem of the Xinghe community" (Instructor: Valerie Fazel)

WAC 107

1. Guoji Li, "Be a Giant of Action" (Instructor: Sarah Hynes)
2. Jingyi Li, "A Review of *We are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*" (Instructor: Sarah Hynes)
3. Eunhyo Kim, "Rhetorical analysis of Safran Foer's book, *We are the weather*" (Instructor: Sarah Hynes)

ENG 217

1. Isabel Gutierrez, "A New Home" (Instructor: Valerie Finn)
2. Rebecca Kittridge, "I Take a Bath in my Childhood Home" (Instructor: Valerie Finn)

** Click on the left dropdown menus to see the winners who agreed to be published here. **

Moldable Plastic: Barbie, Society, and the Everywoman

by Mal Stepaniuk

When you think of a doll, the first thing that's likely to come to mind is Barbie. When you think of the name Barbie, you likely think of the doll. The two are so intertwined it would take real effort to think of anyone else with the name that even comes close to Barbie's fame. But that image of Barbie in your head-tall, blonde, and beautiful-has changed a lot over the years. Over the course of her 62 years on the market, Barbie and the society that made her have pushed and pulled on each other, each influencing the other over the years. Barbie is a time capsule of the American woman, a unique intersection of what society values and what women want. Barbie's story is a story of fashion, dreams, and the changing world around her.

Barbie Gets a Makeover

Barbie's looks and her myriad of careers are perhaps the two best known things about her. Barbie's appearance has gone through minimal change over the course of her life, with most of the changes happening in the latter half of it. However, in the beginning, Barbie's appearance was a radical departure from the popular dolls of the time. Dolls pre-Barbie were much younger, babies that girls could pretend to care for (Ford 1). Barbie from the beginning has been much older, a woman in her late teens (or occasionally her early twenties). This is partially because of the doll she was based on and partially because of her creator's own desires for the doll.

Barbie's origins lie in Bild Lilli, a German doll often given out as a gag gift. Lilli was based on a sexually promiscuous comic-strip character, so her appearance in plastic matched. When the creator of Barbie, Ruth Handler, brought a few of the dolls home with her and modified them into Barbie, her face changed but her body remained the same (Latson 1). When giving an interview in 1977, Handler said this was because "If [a young girl] was going to do role playing of what she would be like when she was 16 or 17, it was a little stupid to play with a doll that had a flat chest. So I gave it beautiful breasts." (Latson 1).

Barbie's face would change in 1971, though it wouldn't be until the 2010s that her body would follow. Barbie originally wore a side glance instead of the direct stare she's known for today (Fig.



Fig. 1. "1959 Teenage Fashion Model Barbie." *Mattel, Inc.* Source: Barbie Media.

1).

When the women's liberation movement caused social norms about women's assertiveness to begin to change, Mattel released Malibu Barbie who stared straight ahead (Piñon 28).

Since Malibu Barbie's release in 1971 (Fig.



Fig. 2. "1971 Malibu Barbie (w/towel)." *Mattel, Inc.*
Source: Barbie Media.

2), very few Barbie dolls have been released without forward facing eyes, and the original side glance has largely fallen into obscurity. This change is an important look into how Barbie and society shape each other. Barbie's glance was originally a social given, but as times and norms changed, Barbie changed with them.

Barbie dolls have gone through some minor changes over the years, such as skin colored underwear being added to the doll itself sometime in the 90s and small changes to waist and breast size with the release of Really Rad Barbie in 1998 (Piñon 10). However, the second major change to Barbie's appearance truly occurred in the 2010s. Several studies have been conducted over the years on Barbie's effect on children, including at least 2 on careers and 2 on body perception. One study from 2016 on the latter found that young girls internalize the idea of a thin body being ideal when exposed to Barbie. The type of exposure didn't matter, the effect was the same if Barbie was on paper or if a girl was playing with her (Rice et al. 1). Another older but more well known study from 2006 found that when girls as young as five were exposed to Barbie, their satisfaction with their own bodies went down. The study did not find an effect in girls age 7 and a half to 8 and a half, however the conclusion goes on to say that this may be because the thin ideal has already been internalized at this age (Dittmar et al. 29, 40). A thin body being an ideal body is an idea that has been rooted in American society for decades, and one that Barbie's figure seems to impress on young girls. This is likely due to Barbie's status as a role model, someone for young girls to look up to.

In 2016, petite, tall, and curvy Barbie were released, bringing the total number of Barbie body types up to 4 (Dockterman 2). This change is a critical point in the history of Barbie's appearance, since her body has been criticized since almost day 1 for its proportions. Children learn about their world through play, and the toys they play with shape their thoughts about themselves, others, and the

society they live in. The decision to create a curvy Barbie is the culmination of over 50 years of societal change and growing mainstream acceptance of the body positivity movement. The introduction of these new body types is recent, so only one study on how they affect young girls' body perception is readily available. However, Barbie influences society as much as society influences her. A girl playing with a Barbie that looks like her is bound to have a positive influence on that girl's self-esteem. A doll girls could imagine their future with was Handler's original goal, after all.

Careers and Controversy

Barbie's career history is as informative to look at as her appearance history. Barbie's had over 200 careers, with her first being a teenage fashion model. While her first few jobs were fairly feminine (singer, ballerina, fashion designer) she quickly got ahead of the curve by becoming an astronaut in 1965. Since then, Barbie's been in almost every field possible, showing young girls that they can be anything from a superstar to a CEO (Barbie Media). The bumps in the road of Barbie's career history really begin in the 1990s, and most controversies she's had can be traced back to a single doll.

The first of these controversies is likely Barbie's most famous and starts with the release of Teen Talk Barbie in 1992. This Barbie would say four random phrases out of 270, one of them being "Math class is tough". The American Association of University Women took a stance against the phrase in a report, and Mattel offered a trade-in for anyone who owned a doll who said it (The New York Times 2-4). While trying to foster an environment where girls could imagine any future for themselves, Mattel was also telling them that math was hard and that shopping was fun in the same breath. While "I love shopping!" (another phrase said by Teen Talk Barbie) (Ford 16) is a normal phrase on its own, putting it next to "Math class is tough" paints a different picture. When spoken by Barbie, the girl that little girls look up to, the impact is truly seen. Not only was Mattel telling girls that math was hard, they were also sending the message that Barbie, the ideal woman, thinks math is hard. If you want to grow up to be like Barbie, you have to think math is hard. That's not something to be taken lightly when Barbie has the kind of influence she does.

This controversy was big at the time and wasn't confined to news articles. The best example of this is a 1994 episode of *The Simpsons*, "Lisa vs. Malibu Stacy". In the episode, Lisa Simpson gets a talking Malibu Stacy doll, but is disappointed with her phrases (including "Don't ask me! I'm just a girl"). When Bart agrees with Stacy's sexist language, Lisa voices her fear that:

Millions of girls will grow up thinking that this is the right way to act. That they can never be anything more than vacuous ninnies whose only goal is to look pretty, land a rich husband, and spend all day on the phone with their equally vacuous friends talking about how damn terrific it is to look pretty and have a rich husband! ("Lisa vs. Malibu Stacy", 00:07:26-00:07:40)

Lisa tracks down the creator of Malibu Stacy and together they create a new doll that says empowering phrases. On release day at the toy store, however, all the girls except for one choose a Malibu Stacy with a new hat over Lisa's doll.

Lisa Simpson is a cultural icon in her own right, one who has a history of being passionate about feminist causes. This is especially true in the 1990s. During this era of *The Simpsons*, Lisa is the moral core of the show, speaking her mind and challenging the status quo. She's a character meant to point out the flaws in society and steer her family in a more activist direction. If you're a company whose aim is to empower women and you've crossed Lisa, you definitely messed up somewhere. Going from a Barbie saying math is hard to a storyline on one of the most iconic sitcoms of all time just shows how influential Barbie is. She impacts little girls everywhere, real or fictional. When Barbie talks, people listen.

Barbie's second controversy both its own and a continuation of the first. In 1997, 5 years after Teen Talk Barbie's release and 3 since "Lisa vs. Malibu Stacy", The song "Barbie Girl" was released by the Danish band Aqua. The song was massively popular, becoming a hit single and making top music charts (Mattel INC. v. MCA Records INC. 3). The lyrics were not kind to Barbie, especially with the

lines "I'm a blonde bimbo girl, in a fantasy world/Dress me up, make it tight, I'm your dolly" (Mattel INC. v. MCA Records INC. 13). The song's release, message, and swift popularity can be charted back through the last five years. Mattel had been trying to empower girls, but Barbie's math troubles had been haunting her. Public perception, as seen in the *Simpson* episode earlier, had changed. Barbie was more of a dumb blonde than ever, whose interests began and ended on the superficial level. "Barbie Girl" is the other side of the coin in terms of media representation of social perception. While "Lisa vs. Malibu Stacy" took the position of people pushing for changes to Teen Talk Barbie through Lisa's actions, "Barbie Girl" takes the public's view of Barbie and runs with it. With a poppy beat about America's most iconic bimbo, "Barbie Girl" was both the product of and helped solidify the public's opinion on Barbie in the late 1990s.

Mattel didn't want it to stay that way. In 2000, three years after the release of "Barbie Girl", Mattel filed a lawsuit against MCA Records Inc. for using the Barbie name and image. They claimed that the use of Barbie in the song was infringing on their trademark rights to Barbie and hurt their brand, and demanded compensation for U.S. sales of the album. The judges found that the portrayal of Barbie in the song was fair use, since it was a comedic commentary on Barbie and not Barbie herself (Mattel INC. v. MCA Records INC. 39). With the final advice in the opinion "the parties are advised to chill" (Mattel INC. v. MCA Records INC. 47) the case was dismissed in July 2002, a decade to the month after Teen Talk Barbie was released.

In ten years, Barbie went from thinking math was hard to being brought to court. This long chain of events springing from one voice line drives home the importance of Barbie's image on her perception. The perception of Barbie as nothing more than a dumb blonde has existed and clashed with the perception of Barbie as the ultimate empowered woman for as long as she's been around. Barbie's consistent image is the ideal woman, and which of the former two perceptions wins out determines what the latter perception means.

Barbie's third controversy comes as her careers have become more STEM-focused in the last decade. Now confident in math, Barbie has taken on jobs like game developer and robotics engineer. However, it was her career as a computer engineer that became well known. A computer engineer Barbie was released in 2010, and the book "I Can Be A Computer Engineer" was published a few years later. In the book, Barbie is depicted as always needing two men, Brian and Steven, to help her code. She even says in the book "I'm only creating the design ideas, I'll need Steven's and Brian's help to turn it into a real game!" (Grisham 3). The book received widespread backlash and was quickly pulled from Amazon. It also led to a website called Feminist Hacker Barbie, where you can rewrite the sexist pages of the story (Grisham 8). Once again, Barbie's controversy made it beyond the news cycle, this time into a website. Modern access to technology made it much easier for people to have their voices heard this time around, as the website wasn't made by a big company or activist group. As Barbie becomes more modern, so does the way society interacts with her. Using computer engineering to voice discontentment with computer engineer Barbie is just one way Barbie's careers and controversies have changed over time.

What Makes Barbie, Barbie?

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Barbie's ascent to iconhood is how the person she is has changed. When Barbie was created in 1959, she had a full name, age, hometown, and career. She was an individual. These facts about Barbie haven't really changed over the years. Barbie's full name is Barbara Millicent Roberts, she's in her late teens, and she's from Willows, Wisconsin (Ford 1). But if her last name has been Roberts for 62 years, how come almost no one knows it? The answer is simple: She lost it when she became an icon.

Barbie the icon is a reflection of the ideals and standards for women, and the name Barbie pulls it all together. Barbie is whoever the person playing with her wants her to be. To one child she's a sporty soccer star, while to another she's an inquisitive journalist. In these thousands of interpretations, there's no room for Barbie to be herself. This carries through in the Barbie direct-to-video movies. The first few, starting with *Barbie in The Nutcracker* (2001) are retellings of classic fairytales with Barbie as

the lead. Eventually, these expand into original fantasy movies, and *Barbie in a Mermaid Tale* (2010) is complete with a hero's journey. In all of these movies, Barbie isn't Barbie. She's Clara from *The Nutcracker* or Merliah in *Mermaid Tale*. Barbie's brand since almost the very beginning has been versatility. Anything that grounds her has been cast aside. She's the everywoman, and not every woman is from Wisconsin.

However, like everything else about Barbie, the modern update has made some changes. This time, it's given her some individuality back. There's been efforts in the last decade to give Barbie continuity: a personality, a story, something to say as herself. This is most clearly seen in *Barbie Vlogs*, an animated YouTube series by Mattel where Barbie talks directly to the viewer. No characters, no story, just Barbie being herself, something she hasn't done in a very long time. With vlog titles like "My Room Tour!", "Time Capsule Reveal: A Letter from Younger Me!", and even an interview from *People* magazine, Mattel is clearly trying to create a consistent image for Barbie. But this image isn't just an old Barbie with good 3D animation, it's one with a modern and approachable feel. This version of Barbie is on YouTube, a platform used by the same young girls who play with physical Barbie dolls. And with a biweekly upload schedule since 2015, this version of Barbie can talk about problems girls face (examples include "Sorry Reflex" and "Barbie and Nikki Discuss Racism") and major world events ("Making Sense of a New Routine" is about moving online due to COVID-19) all in one place. These vlogs are short and to the point (most are 10 minutes or less, and many are under 5), and deliver good information. They have a personal tone and strive to be relatable to kids by making Barbie, her friends, and her family relatable people who have highs and lows just like anyone else. This version of Barbie is the most recent, and *Barbie Vlogs* is still ongoing. Whether or not this Barbie with a set personality and a life motto (P.A.C.E., Positive Attitude Changes Everything) (Barbie Vlogs) will stand the test of time remains to be seen, but she is an interesting chapter in the story of a doll whose personality has largely been given to her by anyone but herself.

Barbie's impact on society, especially young girls, is undeniable. Public perception of Barbie has gone both ways throughout the decades, and she's been the subject of many careers and controversies, but she's been Barbie through it all. She's endured and adapted to everything thrown her way, and she'll continue to evolve with the times, just like she's done before. Simultaneously one woman and every woman, Barbie is a person, a doll, and a brand, but most importantly, she's an icon.

Annotated Bibliography

Barbie Media. Mattel, <http://www.barbiemedia.com/images/archive.html?sort=4>.

Accessed 24 November 2021.

A webpage with many photos of Barbies throughout the years. Not all Barbies and years are included, but the website provides a good starting point into some of the careers Barbie has had in her 62 year life. Includes images of older Barbies with the original eyes and Barbies of various media sources. These include Barbies from direct-to-video movies and Barbies modeled after real people. Also includes an image of the first Barbie, Fashion Designer Barbie, and the first Barbie without the side glance, Malibu Barbie.

"COMPANY NEWS: Mattel Says it Erred; Teen Talk Barbie Turns Silent on Math." *The New York Times*, 21 October 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/21/business/company-news-mattel-says-it-erred-teen-talk-barbie-turns-silent-on-math.html>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

This article from The New York Times in 1992 reported on Mattel's response to the Teen Talk Barbie controversy. The article talks about how Teen Talk Barbie was criticized by The American Association of University Women for her phrase "math class is tough". Mattel responded by offering a trade in for a different Teen Talk Barbie that didn't say the phrase if someone owned one that did. This article is from the time of the controversy and shows how it was widely publicized from the start.

Dittmar, Helga et al. "Does Barbie make girls want to be thin? The effect of experimental exposure to images of dolls on the body image of 5- to 8-year-old girls." *Developmental psychology* vol. 42,2 (2006): 283-

92. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.535.9493&rep=rep1&type=pdf>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

This study from 2006 took a look at how 5 to 8 year old girls' body perception was affected by Barbie. The girls were either shown a Barbie doll, an Emme doll (a doll with a U.S. size of 16), or no doll. The

study found that desire for a thin body went up and personal body satisfaction went down in younger girls exposed to Barbie. Older girls did not have an immediate negative impact on either factor after being exposed to Barbie. The study concluded that Barbie can have a long lasting effect on girls' self esteem from a young age. This study is important in understanding how Barbie's body has affected young girls and why the addition of new body types matters.

Dockterman, Eliana. "Barbie's Got a New Body." *TIME*, January 2016, <https://time.com/barbie-new-body-cover-story/>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

A cover story from *TIME* magazine that does a deep dive into Barbie's new body types. This article about the history of Barbie's body, Mattel's reactions to criticism over the years, and how the new body types came to be. It charts out how Barbie has been criticized for decades but only started to make major physical changes when consumers started buying other dolls (such as Bratz). It also includes a reference to the 2006 study on how Barbie exposure affects young girls.

Ford, Toni Marie. "The History of the Barbie Doll." *The Culture Trip*, 6 October 2016, <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/articles/the-history-of-the-barbie-doll/>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

An article from 2016 providing a basic history of Barbie. Barbie's history is grouped by decade, providing a quick recap of Barbie's biggest releases and controversies. The article also includes important information about what dolls before Barbie were like and facts about the original Barbie (full name, birthplace, etc.). These facts help show how Barbie was different from dolls before her and how she became different from herself later on (facts that were important to her becoming trivia not many people know).

Grisham, Lori. "Engineer Barbie has computer problems. Call the boys?" *USA Today*, 19 November 2014, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/11/19/computer-barbie-help-technology-sexist/19264459/>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

This article from 2014 tells the story of one of Barbie's more recent controversies, the *I Can Be a Computer Engineer* book. It has direct quotes from the book, as well as two reviews showing public opinion of it. The article also includes a link to a website that allows people to rewrite the book and remove its sexism. This article shows public opinion and response in a way other controversy articles could not due to the rise of social media. It's also useful for pointing out exactly what is wrong with the book and the message it sends to its young audience.

Latson, Jennifer. "The Barbie Dolls Not-For-Kids Origins." *TIME*, 9 March 2015, <https://time.com/3731483/barbie-history/>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

An article by *TIME* magazine about the doll that inspired Barbie, Bild Lilli. The Lilli doll was a German gag gift toy based on the comic-strip character of the same name. Lilli was a sexual character in her comic strips, and the doll was made to match. Lilli became Barbie when Ruth Handler brought some of the dolls home and modified them after her daughter saw some on a trip to Switzerland. This is an important look into where Barbie comes from and it provides a starting point for Barbie's appearance, which has gone through several changes over time.

"Lisa vs. Malibu Stacy" *The Simpsons*, season 5, episode 14, Fox, 17 Feb. 1994. *Disney+*, <https://www.disneyplus.com/video/a4153020-a361-466d-8c1e-dfdc32f43501>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

An episode of *The Simpsons* originally airing in 1994. One of its storylines follows Lisa Simpson as she becomes dissatisfied with a talking Malibu Stacy doll's phrases. This is *The Simpsons* take on the Teen Talk Barbie controversy that happened two years earlier and involved some Barbies saying the phrase "Math class is tough". The episode provides commentary on the perception of Barbie at the time through Lisa, a moral character who fights for causes she believes in and the audience is meant to agree with. It ties back to the real-world image problems Barbie was facing in the 90s.

Ninth Circuit, United States Court of Appeals. "Mattel INC. v. MCA Records INC." *FindLaw*, <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-9th-circuit/1260576.html>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

The opinion written for the decision in *Mattel INC. v. MCA Records INC.* This court case was between Mattel and MCA Records, who produced the song Barbie Girl. Mattel claimed it was copyright infringement and harmed Barbie's image. The case was dismissed after the judges found the song Barbie Girl to not be an infringement on Mattel's Barbie trademark. This case ties into Barbie's

perception issues and while the case and its decision took place from 2000-2002, its roots can be traced back to the 90s and Teen Talk Barbie.

Piñon, Natasha. "She's a Barbie girl, in a new world." *Mashable*, 23 December 2019, <https://mashable.com/feature/barbie-diverse-inclusive>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

An article from 2019 about Barbie and diversity over the years. Includes sections on Barbies of different races and cultural backgrounds, Barbie's body, and new additions and changes to the brand in the past few years. Overall a good look into Barbie's visual history and recent inclusivity efforts (most notably the Fashionista line of dolls), some of which were not mentioned in this paper. Also includes the reason for the change in Barbie's eyes, an important but often overlooked part of her history.

Pistor, Julia, creator. *Barbie Vlogs*. Mattel, 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5BsRI9zFaeSKIL4XD-pdGHGbIRvkfe8S>. Accessed 24 November 2021.

A vlog series by Barbie herself released biweekly on YouTube since 2015. These vlogs feature Barbie talking directly to the viewer about various topics. What sets this apart from other Barbie media is that Barbie is a person with distinct personality traits, unlike in the movies where "Barbie" is often someone else (such as Meriah). This vlog series is also unique because of its subject matter. Barbie vlogs about things you would expect her to, like fashion and internet challenges. However, she also touches on topics like bullying, racism, and quarantine. This version of Barbie isn't afraid to get serious and discuss issues real-life girls are facing.

Rice, Karlie, et al. "Exposure to Barbie: Effects on Thin-Ideal Internalisation, Body Esteem, and Body Dissatisfaction among Young Girls." *Body Image*, vol. 19, 2016, pp. 142-149. *ProQuest*, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2016.09.005>. Accessed 24 November, 2021.

This study published in 2016 wanted to find out how Barbie affected body image. To do this, the researchers took 160 girls ages 5-8 from Australia and exposed them to Barbie in different ways. The results showed that girls who were exposed to Barbie in any way internalized thin bodies as ideal more than girls who were exposed to a control. However, the study did not find any immediate connection between Barbie and dissatisfaction with the girls' own body. This is an interesting source to include since Barbie has been criticized for nearly her entire existence for her unrealistic proportions. Given how toys can shape childrens' idea of the world and themselves, it's important to look at how Barbie is affecting them.

Ain't Free

by Masaran Keita

From its founding, the United States has had a tense relationship with the Black community. The country has a reputation of being one of the wealthiest in the world, but the sad reality of this status is that it was achieved with Black slave labor. Enslaved Africans were used on plantations, picking crops such as tobacco and cotton. Ultimately, this exploitation was the main source of America's riches. Neither slaves nor their descendants were ever compensated for this labor and after the abolition of slavery, institutions set by the American government kept Black people in an inferior place in society so that the community was continued to be seen as "lesser" by White America. These institutions included Jim Crow laws and segregation alongside commonplace displays of disregard for Black life, such as minstrel shows and the normalized lynching of innocent Black Americans. Today, there is a rhetoric of Black Americans being considered lazy and being deserving of misfortune due to their inability to let go of this history, despite the fact that Black Americans are still disproportionately

affected by the inherent racism in America's modern institutions. Contemporary artists who are affected by this issue use their art to make statements about this treatment. In his 2015 song "For Free?", Kendrick Lamar uses lyricism and visuals from the song's music video to portray the parallel between America's relationship to the Black community and the relationship between a gold-digging woman and her average hard-working male counterpart.

The video begins with a medium shot of a Black man on the second story of a mansion playing the saxophone part in the intro of the song, next to an American flag (Lamar). The camera tilts down to introduce the characters of the video, the main of which are Kendrick Lamar, the "Bad Bitch" and Uncle Sam, because they are in the foreground. After this introduction is the title slide of the video in which "For Free?" is written in constitutional script font (Lamar), further alluding to the idea that the foundations of America are to be kept in mind when considering the relationship exhibited in the video. The dialogue of the video starts with the beautiful woman berating her partner on the phone, repeating the phrase "You ain't sh*t (Lamar)" after listing what she perceives as Lamar's failings (Lamar). Lamar represents the Black community in this song and the woman is a personification of America, specifically in the sense that she is unappreciative and underwhelmed by Lamar's performance in their relationship. She says to Lamar, "Walking around like you God's gift to Earth, n*gga, you ain't sh*t, You ain't even buy me no outfit for the Fourth" (Lamar) which in the context of the relationships means he isn't spending enough to satisfy her. Lamar is expressing here at the beginning of the song that he as a Black man feels that he is relentlessly reproached by America and that the institutions of the country are telling him that despite his accomplishments, he isn't doing enough for America to be worthy of its bounty.

He then refutes America's assertion by interjecting "This d*ick ain't free" (Lamar) at the start of his verse. He suddenly appears from behind a screen door with his face pressed against it, and when the beautiful woman turns around to get away from him, he appears again and startles her (Lamar). His constant reappearance no matter where the woman turns is symbolic of the fact that the Black community is a part of America and cannot be ignored. In reference to the relationship, Lamar is telling his girlfriend that the benefits of being pampered do not come for free. The woman had previously slammed Lamar for not spoiling her with items such as 28-inch Brazilian hair extensions, and he responds, "You lookin' at me like it ain't a receipt like I never made ends meet, Eating your leftovers and raw meat, This d*ck ain't free! Livin' in captivity raised my cap salary, Celery, tellin' me green is all I need, Evidently all I seen was spam and raw sardines (Lamar)." He is expressing here that he feels that while America has been fine dining, he and the community have had to settle for leftovers, even though as an American, he should be given the same opportunities to thrive as others as per the American Dream. Lamar is used to living in struggle, and due to that experience, he won't let himself go back to being used without compensation, like America had done in the past with the enslaved. The woman in the video has been filmed in many different rooms of the mansion, wherein she is interrupted by Lamar while doing mundane things, like washing dishes or bathing-- reminding her of his resolution of not being used for free. There are quick flashes of statues of Jim-Crow-era black servants, and Lamar himself replaces one of these statues with a smile on his face when the woman walks by (Lamar). He is seemingly mocking the statues and continues to follow the woman while saying "I need forty acres and a mule, not a forty ounce and a pit bull, b*llshit (Lamar)." In this line Lamar is referring to the first of many broken promises made to Black people after their emancipation; freed Black families were promised land to aid in building their economic status but were never given so. His mention of a "40 ounce and a pit bull" refers to stereotypically "ghetto" images of Black people possessing 40-ounce bottles of beer and rowdy dogs. Hearing this line along with seeing the statues communicates the ubiquity of racist rhetoric in society. The historic repetition of these images in American media has been used to attempt to keep Black morale and achievement down, but with his chant of "This d*ck ain't free" and his unrelenting following of "America", he shows his audience that he, and his community, will not be used as a means for their oppressor's success.

A change of pace in the video occurs when the personified America follows a silhouette. She follows the person down to the basement to find out that it is Lamar in an Uncle Sam costume, shoveling coal into the furnace of the mansion (Lamar). The figure Uncle Sam is a classic representation of the American government and the image of Lamar in his costume should seem ironic. It has been apparent that he is against the operations of the American government, but this appearance of him isn't traitorous; it's a representation of how Black Americans are the reason for the prosperity of this country and its government. Lamar in the Uncle Sam costume is a callback to how much of a staple

Black American's are to this country's origins, and the act of him shoveling coal into the furnace of America's house illustrates that even currently the black community is a staple in the upkeep of the country. In a rapid-fire fashion Lamar spits the ending lyrics of the song at the woman, while the flashing, stimulating lighting of the penultimate scene accentuates the fierceness of what Lamar is saying to her. The images of Jim-Crow era statues flash again and faster than before in sequence with Lamar rapping at the woman, with her running away again. The woman runs out of the house and when she thinks she has finally escaped, she turns to the sight of multiple Lamars running around the courtyard, who stop their various activities to stare at her (Lamar). His final line in this song is, "Oh America, you bad b*tch, I picked cotton and made you rich, Now my d*ck ain't free(Lamar)." In this scene, Lamar is cementing his theme of America being unable to avoid the Black community and their message. The video ends with an audio of the woman saying "I'ma get my Uncle Sam to f*ck you up, You ain't no king(Lamar)!" Despite his over a minute-long accosting of her to necessarily relay his rights in their relationship, she ends the conversation with a threat to get her "Uncle Sam" to destroy him as well as once again dismissing his value. Lamar's choice to end the video there signifies America's pattern of not listening to and attempting to resolve its issues with the Black community and simply using its power to get rid of problems that it does not want to hear about.

The "romance" displayed in Kendrick Lamar's "For Free?" music video is non-functional due to the fact that the woman seeks a transactional relationship with the man rather than a love-based one. She disrespects his manhood and undermines his worth, but the man does not stand for the abuse and maintains that he doesn't deserve to be put down or undervalued; he will not stand for it. This relationship is a metaphor for the past and present interactions between the United States government and the Black community. More black people are victims of police brutality, are put in prison, are below the poverty line, and are inequitably affected by many other social issues as a result of the American government's failure to recognize that its wrongs of the past still have an effect today and to make definitive efforts to right those all of those wrongs. Black labor built and continues to help build the success of this country, but disparities in treatment show that these contributions go unappreciated. The toxicity of the relationships will not allow either of them to carry on happily, and this fact could be a devastating one for the Black community.

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Oculus Quest 2 Review

by Cole Camacho

NOTE: due to the formatting and heavy image content, the paper has been published as a PDF to preserve the original design of the essay.

see the website

Rhetorical Intentions in Democracy and Education

by Caleb R. Patterson

Despite the historical usefulness or successes of democracy, the efficiency and ethicality of its systems and how they are practiced are consistently brought to question. Aspects of democracy such as power transitions or human rights protections have always been controversial. But what about education, prejudice, and their role in the democratic system? This is a topic discussed by Booker T. Washington in his "*Democracy and Education*" speech, where he argues the importance of education when engaging in civic duty. Using logical reasoning and some emotional appeal, this speech effectively communicates how injustices in education negatively affect democracy and the progress of civilization in the United States.

Booker T. Washington gave his speech at the Institute of Arts and Sciences in 1896 to an audience presumably composed of primarily white academics. In Washington's speech he discusses the critical role that education plays in creating an effective democratic system that functions to accommodate the needs of *all* citizens. Washington actively argues how an uneducated voter only helps to create a corrupted political system (which was occurring in the south at the time). In turn, he claims that the basis of this system should therefore be constructed by the decisions made by a well-educated populace. However, the inequalities in education between blacks and whites in America prevented this quality of democracy from being achieved. Throughout the speech, Washington argues how this inequality is unjustified and only hurts the quality of the country's democratic system.

The importance of education in a democracy is consistently the basis from which Washington builds his arguments through each section of his speech. Early on in his speech, he claims that "Not only are one half the voters ignorant, but, because of this ignorant vote, corruption, dishonesty in a dozen forms have crept into the exercise of the political franchise" (Washington). Here, he introduces his stance on an uneducated voter's effect on democracy and politics. Washington uses logical reasoning and facts to reinforce this claim and better convey the intentions behind his stance. In a segment of the speech, Washington also states, "The vote...that is cast for the highest and purest form of government is largely neutralized by the vote...whose ballot is stolen or cast in ignorance". This statement is asserted with both facts and apt rationale; in fact, a ballot that is stolen is obviously a neutralized vote or attack on the democratic system, but one which was made without sufficient knowledge of the political situation is a resulting degradation of democracy. Washington constructs arguments with a thought process such as this to effectively communicate his position and intentions to his audience. To further back his stance, Washington uses several other examples, including racial inequalities in education and their effects on democracy.

Washington explains how the education of whites is more financially invested in than that of blacks in the southern United States. He mentions that "Each colored child had spent on him this year for his education about fifty cents, while one of your [white] children...not far from twenty dollars" (Washington). He uses this as obvious evidence of the inequalities between blacks and whites in education. Staying true to his claim on education and democracy—and with this fact at hand—how can blacks possibly take part in the democratic system with the same level of knowledge as whites if their education is less valued? He is using this logical reasoning to further amplify the importance of educational equality amongst the populace if an efficient democracy were to be achieved. But, of course, its significance is being ignored if the investment in education is not equally spread throughout to the people who participate in the democratic system. His usage of logos in reasoning is important

because it reinforces his credibility, especially in the minds of his audience, which is mainly composed of white academics.

Washington does not only mention the disparities between blacks and whites in education, but he also includes the inequalities occurring between different classes. Similar to his analytical juxtaposition on financial investment in education between races, Washington also notes that "It needs no prophet to tell the character of our future civilization when the poor white boy in the country districts of the South receives one dollar's worth of education and your boy twenty dollars' worth...". Here he is bringing up the issues in inequalities between classes indicating that a poor white American is less educated than one wealthier. He is also reiterating how the presence of this educational gap will only prove to be detrimental to the future of the United States. Therefore, he goes on to state, "When you help the South you help yourselves..." (Washington), which is undoubtedly true if they want to prevent the continuous degradation of American democracy due to a lack of sufficient education. Washington constantly logically reasons that the role both blacks and whites of different classes play in the democratic process is crucial to American progression. Furthermore, Washington explains how education should be distributed on equal ground because this balance is necessary for determining the country's future as a whole.

Washington logically determines that since the relationship between black and whites are more or less intertwined in the country's destiny, then the practices of racially charged prejudice will only lead to inequalities that are destructive to America's future. Washington states that "We rise as you rise; when we fall you fall...There is no power that can separate our destiny". By saying this, Washington is emphasizing that the injustices aimed at blacks will inevitably boomerang to negatively affect the whites as well. This relationship between black and white Americans completely opposes the practice of racial prejudice because it's resulting inequality will always come at the detriment of both parties.

In his speech, Washington also discusses his logical reasoning that the practice of racial prejudice will only degrade the progress of American unity. Washington explains that "there is no mistake; you must help us to raise the character of our civilization or yours will be lowered..." (Washington). This statement also reconnects with the idea that the destinies of both black and white Americans are ultimately intertwined. However, here, Washington is rationalizing the importance of unity—a necessary aspect of any democracy or civilization. He is arguing that without the union of black and whites in striving to improve "*our* civilization," then we will only see the segregated deterioration of two civilizations acting in discord. Washington even begins his speech by saying, "It is said that the strongest chain is no stronger than its weakest link". This phrase is logically comprehensive. One's potential is limited to the most disregarded aspect of themselves. If all elements of a system are not used equally and in conjunction with one another, then it is only stifling its potential and is simply waiting to fail. This is a perfect example of how Washington effectively uses logos to reinforce the arguments of his speech.

Not only does Booker T. Washington prominently use logical reasoning throughout his speech, but he also attempts to appeal to the audience's emotions. Washington recalls a story he was told by a black cadet and his experience attending the U.S Naval Academy. The cadet's story is filled with racist acts of prejudice and mistreatment directed towards him. This story opened a window allowing his white audience to witness the experiences of many black Americans in his position. Washington is tactfully retelling this story to convince the audience of the emotional and physical suffering that burdens many black Americans. Retelling this person's first-hand experience also adds credibility to his argument; what the cadet went through at the academy only exemplified the issues of racism and inequalities in the country. These are issues that Washington continuously argues are negatively affecting American democracy. Towards the end of his speech, Washington also attempts to build an emotional appeal. He mentions how "we of both races in the South shall soon throw off the shackles of racial and sectional prejudice and rise above the clouds of ignorance, narrowness, and selfishness into...that pure sunshine" (Washington). Washington is using this optimistic point-of-view to influence positive emotions within his audience. This could potentially help persuade them of his ideas and make them more willing to receive the overall rhetorical goal of his speech. He also reinforces how overcoming these issues must be accomplished in tandem when he initiates with "we of both races." However, Washington's rhetorical tactics and stance on education and democracy are not immune to potential criticism.

Some might argue against Washington's reasoning that only a sufficiently educated citizen should participate in the voting process. If practiced, this could bar many citizens from determining the policy

of a system that governs them. This counter-argument would be misunderstanding Washington's intentions behind the speech as him pushing for a more exclusive democratic system. However, Washington's statement that a vote cast in ignorance only allows corruption of the "political franchise" to take place argues against this counter-argument because if educational resources are spread equally throughout the country—despite class or race—then an ignorant vote could never be cast to begin with. Ultimately, he wants every participant in democracy to have an improved knowledge of their political situation so that the overall product produced by the democratic machine is improved. In the realm of Washington's rhetorical strategies, his favored tactic to appeal to the audience logically instead of emotionally can be criticized as well. However, with the context of his audience (upper-class white academics), it would be far more effective to persuade them using logical appeal instead of an emotional one to avoid losing credibility.

This speech included many problems that the United States was (and still is) facing when it was given. Washington certainly makes sure to note the issues of educational inequality and the toll it takes on the progression towards a democratically adept citizen. He thoroughly explains how an uneducated citizen is detrimental to democracy and why every citizen should be granted equal resources to combat this ignorance. Although, there are obviously aspects of his speech that were controversial and could certainly undertake harsh criticism. But, throughout his speech, Booker T. Washington communicated his ideas effectively and logically. His usage of logical reasoning was evident in that he understood who his audience was and the issues he was confronting, which certainly benefited his speech's rhetorical appeal.

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The Problems with Child Welfare Services in Arizona

by Serena Sabbara

I. Introduction

As a child of divorced parents, involvement with Child Protective Services (CPS), or the Department of Child Safety (DCS), was not foreign to me nor my siblings. From an early age, I understood that its mission is to offer child protection and primary prevention as well as community health ("Who is DCS?"). But in 2014, CPS entered our home to question my family without warning. While our mother spoke with the caseworker, I was hiding behind the corner with my siblings and waiting intently. I had heard stories of how CPS separates children from their parents and wondered if we were next. Yet the trauma associated with unjustified separation between children and their parents is just one of the many problems with CPS. Indeed, the Arizona Department of Child Safety is flawed because it perpetuates racial disparities between White families and ethnic minorities, does little to remediate the disconnect between mental health and child welfare, and repeatedly violates policies in desperate need of reform.

II. Evaluation of the Department's Practices

Even though minority children are at a greater risk for abuse and maltreatment, they are at a disadvantage when receiving adequate representation and treatment in child welfare. According to the 2019 United States Census Bureau, American Indians and Alaskan Natives make up 5.3% of Arizona's population. Black people make up a similar 5.2% (United States, Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau). Latinos make up a larger 31.7%, about six times the population of both Native Americans and the Black community, which one can expect since Arizona shares a border with Mexico (United States, Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau). Despite representing almost half of those living in Arizona, these racial minorities are among the most vulnerable in the child welfare system. As systemic racism continues to rise and harm marginalized groups, health care, mental health resources, and domestic abuse services become increasingly inaccessible. Without access to these resources, children are much more likely to be involved with CPS. Poverty also increases the risk for child maltreatment. Unfortunately, however, minority groups, such as those mentioned above, experience "both disproportionate representation and disparate treatment in child welfare systems" (Bradley-King et. al 159). This statistic includes Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders (AAPI) as well. In other words, children of White families receive drastically different treatment than their ethnic counterparts. For example, these minorities "are less likely to participate in substance abuse treatment" and "less likely to describe treatment as helpful" (qtd. in Bradley-King et. al 169). It is no surprise then that children of Native American, Black, Latino, or AAPI parents run the risk of rereports and post-investigations. In a study comparing demographics and CPS involvement, researchers found that "families who receive post-investigation services are more likely to: have a youngest child that is Black" (Fuller and Nieto 49). Without proper care the first time, these families are left isolated and children traumatized in child protection services.

Also, when dealing with minority groups with strong cultural ties, such as American Indians and Alaskan Natives, child welfare services tend to uphold these racial disparities due to a lack of cultural competence. Native Americans are often discouraged from seeking child welfare services because treatment providers are not always knowledgeable about the traditions of indigenous cultures (qtd. in Turanovic and Rodriguez 418). According to the Arizona State Museum, there are 22 federally recognized tribes in Arizona. Each of these tribes has its own set of traditions and value systems. Some of them even "run their own child welfare systems" (United States, Dept. of Health and Human Services, Admin. for Children and Families). Additionally, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) prefers that American Indian children be placed with extended family members or in placements approved by the child's tribe (qtd. in Bradley-King et. al 163). Without appropriate definitions and training programs that provide caseworkers with this knowledge, child welfare services will often fail to meet the needs of Native American children and those of other cultural backgrounds, putting them at risk for rereports and subsequent maltreatment. Combined with insufficient treatment options, cultural incompetence not only harms minority families but also the reputation of the agency as well.

Furthermore, the mental health needs of children involved with CPS are often unmet, especially for minority children, exacerbating the separation between child welfare and mental health. In a study related to mental health among 700 Arizona children with incarcerated mothers, researchers found that those with Native American mothers are less likely to have their mental health needs met (qtd. in Turanovic and Rodriguez 415). Compared with families of other ethnic backgrounds, American Indian/Alaskan-Native families involved with CPS "also receive significantly lower levels of mental health services" (qtd. in Bradley-King et. al 165). These barriers may come as the results of high levels of poverty within Native American communities, suggesting that the costs of child welfare services inhibit many families from receiving the treatment they need ("Native and Indigenous Communities and Mental Health"). Out-of-pocket spending on healthcare in the United States is already disproportionately high for racial minorities. Indeed, because Native Americans have been "systematically exterminated, driven from their lands, defeated in war, and finally confined to desolate areas with little possibility of earning a living," they are more likely to suffer the consequences of poverty and have limited access to mental health and child welfare services (qtd. in Bradley-King et. al 163). Diverse backgrounds and varying income levels make it harder for CPS to reach many children in need. Thus, the intersection of child welfare, race, and mental health demonstrates the demand for a multifaceted approach that addresses the needs of all children, regardless of cultural background and socioeconomic status.

The lack of mental health resources within child welfare also negatively affects LGBTQ+ youth. Lauren Castle points out that 8% of children living in Arizona identify as LGBT. Although they represent a small percentage of Arizona's youth, "lesbian and gay youth in out-of-home care receive fewer mental health, substance abuse, and health services than nongay youth" (qtd. in Winter 138). These children are at higher risk for depression, bullying, and suicide, so their need for mental health services is much greater. However, CPS struggles with providing them with services and its caseworkers with adequate training. In fact, a study showed that "out of 64 new CPS employees trained in one state, 52% had neither social work nor counseling degrees" (Risley-Curtiss et. al 115). Without these services, LGBTQ+ are at greater risk for continued maltreatment and discrimination. For example, they are more likely to suffer parental and societal

disownment, both verbal and physical abuse, and isolation, thus increasing the disparity between queer youth and non-queer youth.

Limited mental health access does not only harm the children but the parents involved with CPS as well. Separated families are more likely to have trouble receiving treatment. Indeed, an Arizona study found that “the time necessary for effective treatment for such parents is often longer than the court-ordered time limit for family reunification,” putting mentally ill parents at a disadvantage (Risley-Curtiss et. al 107). This delay in action may worsen their condition. Parents or guardians who cannot be with their families often show signs of distress and discouragement. For example, when my father was not allowed to speak to me nor my siblings until after 6:00 PM one year, he experienced increased feelings of depression, stress, anxiety, and loneliness. Moreover, if children are separated from their parents, they are more likely to be involved in risky behavior and develop a mental illness. Unfortunately, many caseworkers have not been trained to conduct assessments related to the parent’s mental illness, which are needed to determine placement and parenting capacity (Risley-Curtiss et. al 107). Lack of training and delayed action thus contribute to a flawed system that traumatizes both parents and children.

Finally, the Arizona Department of Child Safety is known to repeatedly violate its policies. According to a report by the Arizona Ombudsman-Citizens’ Aide (AZOCA), a government agency that oversees any complaints filed against CPS, “on October 9, 2014, the Complainant alleged that the Department unlawfully interviewed her children without her consent.” According to the AZOCA, this action violates A.R.S. § 8-802(B), which states:

A worker shall not interview a child without the prior written consent of the parent, guardian or custodian of the child unless either: 1. The child initiates contact with the worker. 2. The child who is interviewed is the subject of or is the sibling of or living with the child who is the subject of an abuse or abandonment investigation pursuant to section 8-456. 3. The interview is conducted pursuant to the terms of the protocols established pursuant to section 8-817. (*Case # 1404174*)

Interviewing a child without consent is harmful because it infringes on the rights of both the child and his or her guardian. They have the right to withhold consent if they so choose. Unexpectedly approaching a child may also invoke fear in the child, skewing the accuracy and validity of his or her responses. Furthermore, interviewing without permission also hurts the reputation of the agency. The AZOCA points out “DCS’s ongoing non-compliance with A.R.S. § 8-802(B).”

III. Conclusion

The issues of child welfare create both financial and emotional problems for families in Arizona. Racial disparities give little priority to African American, Latino, American Indian/Alaskan-Native, and AAPI children, causing them to suffer prolonged maltreatment and increasing the risk of post-investigations. Also, CPS struggles with providing children, especially those within the LGBTQ+ community, access to mental health resources. The reputation of the agency is further compromised by repeatedly violating their policies, which has been made public by the AZOCA. For parents or guardians like mine, who have had to deal with the stress of gaining equal custody rights, these issues are only part of the problem. The Arizona Department of Child Safety thus perpetuates systemic racism, stigmatizes mental health for minority families, and fails to respect the privacy of its client system. Combined with high costs and potential biases presented in the court system, child welfare must be reformed to better treat children of all backgrounds.

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My Friend Ana

by Elise Hanretty

I heard about her long before she ever turned her toxic attention to me. I thought I knew who she was before I met her. I thought she could never hurt me. I thought I would never let her distort my thinking until all I was left with was a twisted sense of reality. I was wrong.

I was taught about anorexia and other eating disorders in my health classes every year in middle school and high school. I was told that it was an eating disorder where a person stopped eating in an attempt to lose weight. I knew that many people (especially teenagers) cared what other people thought of how they looked, but I didn't understand. It wasn't me. I was lucky enough to grow up without body image issues. Eating disorders may have been a threat to other people, but a young me tossed aside any warnings, foolishly assuming they wouldn't ever pose a threat to me.

It took meeting her to understand how wrong my impression of her—and most other mental disorders—was. She wasn't just a disorder that a few short sentences in a health textbook could describe. Clinical terms like "anorexia nervosa" couldn't capture what she was. She was Ana, my constant companion and my personal demon. She was my best friend and my worst enemy all wrapped into one.

She started out like the quiet kid in the back of a classroom. She didn't talk much, but when she did it seemed like she was the smartest person in the room. She seemed so docile and benign, and I couldn't see the harm that might come from listening to her. I was still the one that was in control,

and I assumed that I always would be. My relationship with food was never healthy, and Ana took advantage of that and told me what I wanted to hear. When I was depressed and couldn't gather up the motivation to decide on what to eat, she asked me why I bothered eating at all.

Ana hadn't developed into a full eating disorder yet, but she held enough sway over me to pose a serious threat. I was losing weight and couldn't gain it back because eating felt like it was too much effort. I cannot count the number of times I heard the words "just eat." I heard it from my family, from my friends, from my boyfriend. While their hearts were in the right place, the people saying these words didn't see how much stress they were putting on me. They made it sound so easy, but how could I "just eat" when Ana was at my side telling me it was better not to? She was right so many times before, and I trusted her more than the people that just cared about me.

Looking back, I know how wrong I was, but I also know that I wasn't the only one in the wrong. It wasn't entirely my fault that eating was one of the most stressful challenges in my life at the time. Everyone around me insisted I needed to focus all of my attention on "recovering" from a disorder I didn't even have yet. I became afraid of the subject of food altogether and isolated myself from a lot of the people that cared the most about me because I didn't want to talk about it.

When I got to college, I was on my own, and Ana became my lifeline. I was in a new place where I didn't know many people, and it was easier to focus on not eating than to consider what else was going on in my life at the time. I convinced myself that by restricting my eating, I was controlling one of the most vital parts of my life. I didn't know that I was actually handing the reins over to Ana.

Under Ana's guidance, life got worse than I ever imagined it could. I began counting my calories, which only served to highlight every slip up. No matter how much I restricted, it wasn't enough. When I went through periods of binging because I'd gone so long without eating enough, Ana would lash out, and I'd feel guilty for claiming I believed in her but failing to actually follow through on what she demanded of me.

Suddenly, I could see how what I ate was reflected in my body, and I hated the image I saw in the mirror. The only solution I could come up with was to get rid of that weight somehow. I would go to the gym and run on the treadmill for hours at a time, and people were proud of me because they thought I was being active and healthy. I should have been happy with myself, but I wasn't. I felt guilty. I felt like I was lying to everyone by pretending I was a happy, healthy person like them.

When I finally started focusing on recovery, it was a difficult process. I shifted between hating Ana and feeling like I depended on her to live. When she was by my side I felt happier, but when I tried to leave her behind I was left with more time to get wrapped up in other problems like my depression. I'd come crawling back to her, begging her to help me block out my other problems again even though I knew it was only hurting me.

I remember lying in bed one day after a binge and feeling nauseous. Although I ate too much, my stomach growled, hopelessly begging me to feed myself. I closed my eyes and hoped for sleep to come and quiet my spinning mind, but I couldn't stop thinking about how any choices I made felt wrong. When I didn't eat I struggled with hunger and irritability, but when I did eat I struggled with nausea and self-hatred.

Eventually I got out of bed and turned on my light before taking a seat at my desk. I pulled out the blue notebook I kept track of my calories in and wrote a letter to my future self. In that letter I wrote: "I know that in the moment what you're doing to yourself seems harmless, but it's not. I know you won't care because you are future me and you've gotten past this momentary pain, but please try? It only gets worse if it's not fixed and right now I'd really like it to be fixed."

So why didn't I get help? It's the same reason I hesitate to reach out for help with any of my problems, from ones as severe as depression to ones as minor as not being able to figure out a homework assignment. No matter how much I may struggle with a problem, I never believe that I need help badly enough to bother asking for it. I've had the same conversation with several people. It starts out with me reaching a breaking point and venting about how "This is stressing me out so much and I'm not sure how to handle it."

"You know, if you need help I'm here for you," they'll reply.

"I know," I'll smile, trying to reassure myself as much as them. "I can deal with it. It's not actually that bad."

Different people interpret the words "not that bad" in different ways, but in my experience they are just an excuse. When it comes to starting eating disorder recovery, many people need to overcome a common hurdle: their belief that they're not sick enough to start recovering. I felt it, and I know other people who felt it too. I came up with a thousand different reasons that I might not deserve help. I was deep enough into excuses that one of my recurring concerns was wasting a therapist's time, even though I knew it was their job to help people struggling like I was.

In internet culture, people joke about mental illness, making it seem like depression and other serious problems are issues that everyone deals with at some point in their lives. They are so normalized that Gen Z has text slang for wanting to kill themselves (e.g. "kys" for "kill yourself" or "kmn" for "kill me now"). While accepting mental illnesses is helpful for people struggling with them, giving people the illusion that mental illness is just a part of life may make them hesitate to get help when they need it.

The thought of facing a problem is daunting, especially when that problem seems like a common experience. It is easy to turn to denial instead because recovering from a mental illness isn't an easy task. I may not give Ana any sway over me anymore, but when she returns to whisper in my ear she is hard to ignore because I listened to her for so long. No matter how scary seeking help may seem, it's better than giving problems room to grow and get worse by pushing them away.

Aerospace Engineering Academic Cultural Analysis

by Benjamin Millet

Introduction and Summary

The culture of aerospace engineering is a loaded phrase. When hearing those two words together, most people are taken back a bit, shocked that anyone would want to do, much less succeed at doing, rocket science for a living. Images of no-lives in a room full of computers doing calculus for hours immediately come into fruition. They think of the poor 20 year old who stays up until midnight every night studying for their orbital mechanics final. Others might think of a show off who makes sure everyone around him knows that his major is *aerospace engineering*. The truth of what the culture really is has more nuance than this.

The culture of this field varies from student to student. To try to effectively communicate these differences, I have done interviews with several people. One is Dr. Takahashi, an industry veteran with experience from Raytheon, Northrop Grumman and more who has now settled into being a professor in aerospace engineering. I also interviewed Chance, a student working full time while pursuing his master's degree in the field. Finally there is Brooke, a freshman in interior design who recently switched from physics. I have also used the observations and experiences of myself, a freshman in aerospace engineering. After analyzing the information I have received, the reality of the culture of studying aerospace engineering has become more clear.

Aerospace engineering is more than just a major. It becomes a part of your life, part of who you are as a person. This goes beyond just time studying. If you choose this major, your community will start

to become more populated with other engineers and you will likely find yourself paying closer attention to the world of aerospace around you. You will better understand the dreamer mentality of the Wright Brothers and Neil Armstrong. And so by necessity, there is truth to the former stereotypes, aerospace engineers do spend long hours studying what feel like impossible concepts. Some come to enjoy telling others that they are an aerospace engineer, maybe a little too much. But there is more to the culture than this. The bonds you make with the people struggling with you and the skills, traits, and passion you gain in your college career is what the culture is really about.

Aerospace Engineering and Community

Working as a team was the most brought-up topic when conducting interviews with individuals involved in the academic scene of aerospace engineering at ASU. When asked what his normal method of studying was, Chance replied that he did "homeworks in a group setting." He went out of his way to emphasize that it was in a group, and this establishes how important teamwork is in aerospace engineering. Initially classes are more physics and math-based where the goal is to just learn the material, but as you progress into later classes the objectives start to center around large group projects. Frankly, aerospace engineering is too complicated and open-ended of a field to be individualistic, the best ideas come in working as a group to generate complex solutions to an equally complicated problem. There have been many times where being in a group has increased my understanding about a topic in a way that I couldn't have obtained myself. Professor Takahashi explained how senior-level design classes consist of being in a group with 7 other people and yourself for a year. This intensity of collaboration is far different than 2 month-long group projects in high school. Professor Takahashi similarly expressed how the bonds you make with coworkers after school are "not quite like being a military veteran, but it is on the way in terms of the kind of friendships and buddies you make over the years." This is a bold claim, but as someone who has worked with military contractors, Professor Takahashi has the right to make the comparison. And with a connecting statement that "life is senior design," these powerful words give an idea of what it means to build a network in aerospace engineering. Studying partners in aerospace engineering often form closer relationships than just people who learn together.

Your community outside of academics is also shaped by aerospace engineering. The whole reason I met Chance and was able to interview him is because we are in an aerospace engineering related club together. It is medium-sized with about 10-20 members, but the connections between members are strong. Many of the upperclassmen in the organization have been involved for multiple years and have bonded over the struggles and successes. Members become close enough that they want to do things like create an intramural sports team composed of members. The point here is that the people you have classes with become more than classmates. In terms of the workforce, Professor Takahashi noted that he felt it was harder to make friends outside the workplace. Indeed, after building a network, whenever he was out of town for the job he could usually find "a friend from some other place in my past that's living there working there and we go hang out." It is not uncommon to make friends at work and in school, but these sustained cross-border friendships are what makes the community of aerospace engineers so strong.

Passion for the Field

When interviewing Chance, I asked him what made aerospace engineering different from other disciplines of engineering. His response was simple, yet revealing, "Aerospace engineers are different from every other type of engineering because they specifically chose this major because it had something to do with planes or rockets. Stuff that flies." This brings me to my next point, there is a lot of passion in the culture of aerospace engineering. On my first day of my Intro to Aerospace Engineering class, Dr. Takahashi introduced himself and with that came the details of his industry experience. This created a spark in several students, and peers were raising their hands to discuss the world of aerospace engineering with questions about planes and aviation law for the next 20 minutes. This was not every student, but this level of excitement in a 100-level introductory class is not present in all majors. Individuals in this field are excited and eager to be studying.

Some students will choose their major for money, some because their parents told them to, but the individuals that thrive in aerospace engineering choose it because they get an image in their head of what they will be designing and building and the warnings of how hard math is or how confusing aerodynamics is melt away. They get their heads lost in the clouds.

With all the excitement that goes with being in aerospace engineering, the major will test your passion by forcing you to make sacrifices to succeed. The amount you have to sacrifice varies throughout your college career, and both Chance and Professor T noted that they still had time for hobbies, but at the end of the day being an aerospace engineer will have to be a priority over things that seem more fun at the time. Brooke highlighted this as a reason she left physics. When asked if she had to sacrifice aspects of her personal life when studying interior design, she immediately responded “not at all.” This is not saying that non-engineers care less about their major than engineers, it is highlighting that a non-engineer’s college experience is different from an engineer’s.

Chance’s experiences reinforce this idea. He remarked that he has spent a lot of time learning about aerospace engineering outside of class, going as far as to say that half of what he has learned has from outside the classroom. This does not mean that studying aerospace engineering will take up your entire day, if it did no one would choose it. The bottom line is that it might take up more than you think it will, and if you can’t find enjoyment learning the concepts and working with a team, it will be too much time.

The Rigid Nature of Aerospace Engineering

Learning aerospace engineering is very rigid in nature. Either a plane flies or it doesn't. There is wiggle room in how a plane looks or what its main features should be and creative minds will thrive in the brainstorming process, but when it comes down to it there are project specifications that must be met and the laws of physics constrain the infinite solutions from our imagination to a much narrower few in reality.

To contrast learning aerospace engineering with learning another major, Brooke’s perspective comes in handy. She notes that in physics you must accept that, “this is the facts, this is the physics, you have to study this, do the math ... cause this is how the universe works ... you kinda got to get it hon’, that’s just what it us” while with interior design you can “make it what you want with a client and make a space you both think is beautiful.” With aerospace engineering, you have as much freedom to design and create as long as it is within physical bounds, while with a non-STEM major like interior design, the only limit is your imagination.

Truth to the Stereotypes

There are an abundance of preconceptions about aerospace engineers. Popular ones are that they are super nerdy, that they have no time to do anything fun, or perhaps that they are pretentious. To say that these or any other stereotypes about aerospace engineers are universal in any way would be false, everyone in the major has their own experiences and are shaped differently. In a general sense, however, the truth to these claims have varying degrees of validity.

Starting with the nerdy stereotype, this one is particularly hard to address. The definition of “nerdy” varies from person to person and so the answer of whether aerospace engineers are nerdy is different to everyone. To attempt to answer the question, however, engineers are nerdy in the sense that they choose to study math and physics and use them for a living. Dr. Takahashi reinforces this idea when stating that “we certainly have to do math and we might well be nerds.” Immediately after saying this, however, he made sure to point out that “what people don’t realize is how social the existence of engineering is.” What he is trying to make clear here is that despite aerospace engineers enjoying math and physics, prompting many in society to call them nerds, they are still human beings who interact with other people normally. Each member of the field is different, but most are not the stereotypical geek that is portrayed in movies. Aerospace engineers are people who take on

mathematical challenges that most try to avoid at all costs, and that creates stigmas and preconceptions around them. These notions often dissipate when reality hits.

Arrogance is another stereotype that varies from engineer to engineer. When I asked Chance what he thought the perception of aerospace engineers is, he laughingly said "pompous... and I think that's the pride in it. We have an immense pride in what we're doing because we're so sure what we want to do." This contrasts to what Brooke had to say on the subject. Her thoughts are that "I think it genuinely depends on who's in the field... I think where that stereotype comes from is people who either do it for the money or for the passion... there's a little bit of 'we're such a necessity ha-ha' but at the same time if you genuinely love it I don't think you would go around being like 'I'm an engineer ya dee ya dee ya', there's a big difference between boasting and genuinely loving it." There is a lot going in these answers, and this complexity reflects the reality of the stereotype. There are always going to be those in any field that make sure you know what they do for a living and how awesome they are because of it. But for aerospace engineers, the pompousness that Chance believes is displayed might just be love for what they are doing, like what Brooke is saying. There is a fine line between explaining and flaunting, and each aerospace engineer will be on one side. There is no definitive answer, all that is for certain is that aerospace engineers take pride in what they do and some take that pride too far.

The hard work stereotype is the easiest to answer, every major in college requires hard work. If one major made sure every student had no free time, no one would take that major. If one major required no work and everyone got easy A's and high paying jobs, everyone would take that major. As I have said, aerospace engineers might have a few more long nights than other majors, but every college student understands and is going through the grind it takes to get a degree. I have seen engineering students nonchalantly go through classes while getting A's while an ecology major spends many hours to get a B on a final exam. No matter what major you choose in college, you will have to work for the degree.

Final Thoughts

There is no culture quite like that of aerospace engineers. It is rooted in going beyond human limits and taking to the skies and beyond. This vision is uniting, inspiring, and gripping. The culture of the workplace is a reflection of the drive of the individuals. People strive to become the legends that made regions thousands of miles away accessible in hours and made space travel a reality. I have said it before and I'll say it again, it is the passion that makes the major what it is. There are many other majors with students that take pride in what they do, but aerospace engineers have the resources to do things others cannot, and that means a lot. Choosing a major is a defining moment in anyone's life, and aerospace engineering in particular is not chosen with doubt. It can be challenging and ultimately too much for newcomers, but the community and love for what they are doing is what makes people stay.

Prevention Is Better Than Cure

by Mainak Sahu

It was a dream come true for a daydreaming student like me. Receiving an opportunity to study abroad in a country like the USA, is nothing less than a dream. However, it was a time for concern as well. I know my weaknesses, and a horrible one is my lack of self-control. Although I am always consciously aware of what's happening with me and my habits, I do lack the power to fix something if it gets out of hand. In the past, I have suffered a lot because of this but wasn't bothered enough to ever make the situation better. Never did I imagine that this weakness of mine would come back to haunt me in the very early days of my college life. It wouldn't have mattered if I was a small kid living under the protective umbrella of my caring family, but unfortunately, that wasn't the case anymore ever since I became an adult. It became my responsibility to take care of myself and handle the consequences when I fail to do so. Moreover, I was halfway across the planet from anyone I ever knew, which drastically increased my responsibility towards myself and made the consequences even more serious. Back at home, I could do whatever I wanted without any worries, but now I was in the US. Moving into college was a very exciting time. Just like any other exciting moment, I got a burst of motivation, and strong emotion of perfectionism kicked in. This time, perfectionism became overly strong and was followed by a severe fall in motivation. This in turn led to very sticky, unwanted situations and taught me an important lesson. It is not easy to be organized, but easy enough to mess everything up.

Everything was going according to plan until I lost control to video games. The first few days of my college life were going great. I was going to bed early, waking up early, keeping my room neat and clean, going timely to classes, and finishing all assignments on time. Unfortunately, this habit of perfectionism doesn't come naturally to me. By the end of the first week, I was already burnt out. Being perfect felt like a burden. A voice in my head kept asking, "Are you being true to yourself, or are you putting on a fake persona?" I was tempted to be freer, and there is only one thing that makes me feel free. "Man, I wish I could play video games all day. It sucks that there are only 24 hours in a day.", exclaimed my roommate. Suddenly, I felt a spark getting lit within me. I have always loved video games, so I just decided to take a break and play for some time. That "some time" magically turned into hours. I was still thinking rationally at that point, and so I decided it was time for me to stop. However, the habit of playing every night before sleep kept building up.

One day, I was so hooked, I played all night, even though I had classes early the next morning. I started playing at 9:00 PM on a Wednesday and decided to play until midnight. By the time it was midnight, I felt even more energetic. Tiredness was nowhere to be seen. At around one, my roommate before heading off to bed said, "Go to bed Mainak, you have four classes tomorrow.". I replied with a grin on my face, "It's fine, I will be going to bed soon.". I was so happy and felt so free that it was indescribable. However, I had a rational debate going on in my subconscious the entire time, should I head to bed or should I keep playing. Never did I come to a conclusion and neither side won, but always ended in just 15 more minutes of playtime. This endless cycle ultimately led to me playing the entire night in the dead silence and darkness of my room. The only source of light was the monitor shining brightly on my face, and it felt so refreshing and exciting. At around 4 in the morning, I thought to myself that it was too late to sleep now and I should just play till my class starts. The genius tactic worked, but I dozed off in all my classes that day. Could that experience stop me from repeating the same mistake? No, I kept pulling all-nighters again and again.

Slowly but surely, I started missing classes. I started making excuses and justifying my actions. Sometimes I even lied to my parents about attending classes, when in reality I skipped all the classes and slept till mid-afternoon. All these made me feel horrible. Lying to my supportive parents, skipping important classes, dozing off in front of professors, waking up in the middle of the afternoon, eating once a day or not at all, created a deep sense of regret within me. A simple phrase, "College is for fun." which reverberates heavily among students, resonated within me as well. This misunderstood phrase was the justification for my misdoings. It was getting out of hand, and I could feel the fear growing inside me. Some classes allow only a limited number of unexcused absences, and I was gradually approaching the limit. One day, my math professor forgot to hand out the attendance sheet. That news made me the happiest I have been the entire week since I skipped my class that day. In English class, I already had four unexcused absences. Unexpectedly my English professor was replaced and luckily that allowed me to get a fresh start with absences. That wasn't even such a bad consequence, since my unhealthy habit led to an absent class report on my college portal. Even worse, I ultimately had to withdraw from a class because I was about to hit 6 absences. Withdrawing is better than getting an "F". My college library stays open 24/7. One night I slept on the library couch because I was afraid that I would not be able to wake up the next morning for my Math Exam. All this felt too much and too extreme. Now I was dead set on fixing everything up before it was too late. That turned out to be an issue on its own.

Turns out it is much harder to fix unhealthy habits and takes way more effort than falling into them. I promised myself that no more staying up late, and set my priorities straight. After withdrawing from one of my classes I immediately registered in another class, caught up with my assignments and classes, and made up a proper schedule. It was a hard and boring process to get into a healthy lifestyle, but I ultimately did so. It took a lot of time and effort which was very necessary at the moment. If something goes wrong, and the need arises to drop out of college just because I wanted to play games, would be catastrophic. I learned a very important lesson, that prevention is better than cure. Consequences do not care about my feelings. When things feel out of control, don't lose hope, there is always more than one way to fix it.

The gender wage gap in US IT Industries

by Devajith Subramoniam

The gender wage gap is a socially unjust issue that has been existing in this world for decades. It is still prevalent across the world irrespective of the location, industry, job type, etc. This is a global

issue, which includes various industries. In this essay, I will focus on the US IT industries for further analysis of this issue. I conducted secondary research regarding this social issue to understand how and why it occurs in society. I analyzed some sources which include non-governmental organizations (e.g., the UN Women, Association for Women's Rights in Development, Womankind Worldwide, and Women for Women International) and news articles (e.g., The Republic, Bloomberg, and CBS news). After doing some research about this issue, I concluded that, although both male and female workers do the same amount of work in IT companies in the US, women are paid less compared to men. I could also argue that this is a socially unjust issue for the female workers in the IT industry in the US because, "woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity", said Mahatma Gandhi.

Based on my research, I could find out three main reasons for this wage gap. They are occupational segregation, vertical segregation, and ineffective equal pay legislation (Wikipedia, 2022, para. 6). First of all, I will talk about occupational segregation. This refers to a situation, where men are in higher-paid industries and women in lower-paid industries. This doesn't mean that the amount of work done in higher-paid industries is high as compared to lower-paid industries. This discrimination exists even in this present scenario. It starts from the first process of getting a job (i.e., job interviews). Women are denied the opportunity even if they are qualified enough to be hired, just because they are women. In 2020, women's annual earnings were 82.3% of men's, and the gap is even wider for many women of color, said Janelle Jones (2021, March 19).

Next comes vertical segregation. It is this phenomenon that, fewer women are working in senior, higher-paid positions as compared to men. Men are preferred over women for senior positions in the IT industry. However, they do the same amount of work. This is because of the usual social thinking that, men have a greater ability to bargain and are more competitive than women, reported from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Men are getting more pay just because of the higher-paid positions. Gender plays a key role in this sort of discrimination. Women are denied promotions to higher positions because of the above-mentioned reasons.

Following vertical segregation is the ineffective equal pay legislation. The Equal Pay Act of 1963, is a United States labor law, enacted by the United States Congress. It is a law that aims at abolishing wage disparity based on gender. The Equal Pay Act requires that men and women in the same workplace be given equal pay for equal work. The jobs need not be identical, but they must be substantially equal. Job content (not job titles) determines whether jobs are substantially equal, said the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In the beginning, there were strict consequences for breaking this law. Employers who violated these laws wilfully had to face fines up to \$ 10,000, imprisonment up to six months, or both. However, over time, the law has been weakened by loopholes, inadequate remedies, and adverse court rulings.

Further, I conducted surveys to know the general public's views on this particular issue. This included almost 100 people from all sorts of genders, people who are from the working class as well as non-working people (i.e., students), and people who were previously part of the working class (i.e., who are now enjoying their retirement life). Based on the survey I conducted, I found out that more than 90% of the people who took part in my survey strongly responded that this is a socially unjust issue and it is still existing in many parts of the world. According to them, this issue is not only affecting one of the genders in our society but the entire US economy. This is because the financial independence of the working class is a very important aspect of a healthy economy. Financial independence is not present among the working class, mainly based on this social issue. This makes women dependent on men to meet their financial needs. Therefore, women are not able to live a financially independent life. This negatively affects their morale. Ultimately this leads them to a stage in life where they are not able to lead a healthy and happy life. Moreover, it affects future generations adversely. Women's financial dependence on their husbands perpetuates the gender wage gap for the next generation. Children will grow up learning from what they are seeing. "For a healthier upbringing of the next generation, both physically as well as mentally, working mothers should be financially independent of their counterparts", said one of the participants in my survey.

The remaining percent of participants in my survey opposed the majority. Their say was that this is not a socially unjust issue. "Men should be paid more than women because men are superior to women," said one of the participants in my survey. I asked the participant, "why do they think so?" The reply was "that was what I was taught since childhood." Still, men are preferred for most of the leadership roles in several IT companies. Hiring managers in IT companies think that only men can

handle jobs that demand higher work efficiency, leadership skills, and overall financial management. Thus, this constitutes more of a male perspective on this social issue.

Taking into consideration of the government's perspective, they are telling that the institution is looking into this social issue seriously. They are taking the necessary steps to resolve this issue. This includes, raising the minimum wage, promoting transparent pay practices, increasing workplace unionization, and providing robust paid family and medical leave for workers, reported by White House (2022, March 15). They promise that this issue will be resolved. However, data shows that there are no changes in the wage gap between male and female workers. It stays steady even now. This shows that the government initiatives are not up to the mark. They are ineffective. Hence, the US government should urge quickly to find a proper and effective solution to this socially unjust issue. In 2022, the uncontrolled gender pay gap is \$0.82 for every \$1 that men make, which is the same as last year, reported by payscale (2022), an online media.

After discussing contrasting perspectives of different groups of people, I could strongly argue that this issue is socially unjust. According to majority of the participants from my survey, people should be paid equally for doing equal amounts of work. This should be done irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, job title, etc. I can argue that this social issue is still prevalent across many industries throughout the world. However, I think this socially unjust issue is more ubiquitous in IT industries in the US. Women in the industry are suffering a lot. They are still financially dependent on their counterparts. This pulls back the entire society from attaining financial independence. This ultimately affects the US economy. "Status of Women in the States," an online blog says that persistent earnings inequality for working women translates into lower lifetime pay for women, less income for families, and higher rates of poverty across the United States. "Women are losing thousands of dollars a month due to the gender pay gap. The pandemic may have made it worse" reported in CBS News (Sarah Ewall-Wice, March 15, 2022). To conclude, the gender wage gap in US IT industries is persisting and is not reducing a bit. Its high time that the US government should take strong actions against this issue and help the suffering female group of their country. By doing this, they can develop their country's economy too.

Writer's questions or concerns

1. Are the readers able to understand the different perspectives of the social issue presented in my essay?
2. Are the ideas clearly expressed throughout the essay?
3. Are the transitions appropriate for the above essay?
4. What are the readers' suggestions to improve my essay?

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The solution to an unhealthy life-work balance in Tarkenton Companies

by Vanessa Pecly

Although work is required to support people's lives financially and achieve their professional goals, an unhealthy life-work balance that lacks personal time can lead to chronic stress, the most prevalent health issue in the workplace. It seems like no matter how much people attempt for it, this balance appears to be unreachable. Their lives are constantly changing, which means that finding a flawless balance is incredibly tough. An unhealthy life-work balance is an issue currently affecting employees in Tarkenton Companies. The solution for the unhealthy life-work balance problem in Tarkenton Companies is implementing shorter working hours per week strategies, such as six-hour shifts and/or four-day weeks. These changes would significantly help employees avoid burnout, be more productive at work, and have a healthy life-work balance.

Tarkenton Companies can avoid employee burnout and turnover by implementing a shorter workweek. At Tarkenton Companies, employees from all departments might be suffering from burnout, a genuine and critical issue. According to the article, "Burnout is continuing to rise; is H.R. doing enough?" by Kathryn Mayer, a December study of 1,136 U.S. employees found that 76% of people were enduring worker burnout. Which researchers state includes signs of exhaustion, feeling hopeless, pessimistic or disconnected from work, and reduced job performance (Mayer). Notwithstanding the popular opinion that people function better in high-pressure work environments, employees that feel "checked out" can cost companies millions in lost productivity every year (Mayer). Furthermore, H.R. leaders in the study reported that burnout is responsible for 50% of their employee turnover. The cost of hiring replacements for these employees can also cost millions (Mayer). Therefore, the assumption of companies getting the most out of their stressed employees can be wrong; they might be getting less of their full potential and costing them money. Tarkenton Companies can avoid employee burnout and turnovers by implementing six-hour days, four-day weeks, or both. Employees could work six hours a day during a five-day week, get more work done, and avoid burnout. A Harvard Business Review article by Steve Glaveski reported on a study that found that top performer executives are 500% more productive when they are in the state of "flow" or "in the zone." The state of flow lasts a maximum of six uninterrupted hours per day. The article explains that the typical day of an employee is characterized by long meetings, unplanned interruptions, e-mails, switching between tasks, communicating, among others (Glaveski). In addition, an article in The Wallstreet Journal, "For Some Executives, Doing Less Means Getting More Done," by Alina Dizik, claims that multiple studies have found the key to being a productive leader is to do less without interruptions. Although the article supports the benefits of shorter workdays, it also claims that most executives do not know how to slow down and stay busy to keep up with appearances (Dizik). Although the labor unions fought to implement a 40-hour workweek in 1938, times have changed, and technology has made it easier for people to work fewer hours per week. However, most leaders are still attached to the past, even though it might be irrelevant to the present (Glaveski). If Tarkenton Companies implemented the six-hour day strategy, employees would be more productive and mindful of their time and distractions.

As employees, working parents struggle to try to balance their life-work efforts. The peer-review article "Feeling Pressure to Be a Perfect Mother Relates to Parental Burnout and Career Ambitions" by Loes Meeussen and Colette Van Laar studies how parental burnout was related to mothers feeling pressured to be perfect parents (Meeussen and Van Laar). Sadly, working parents experience a

combination of employee and parental burnout. Furthermore, working mothers with lower life-work balance can lead to unsuccessful career ambitions. As women try to combine both roles, they may decrease their career objectives to fulfill the expectations of motherhood. Also, mothers with higher professional dreams can endure higher social pressure to be perfect parents because society expects women to prioritize family over work (Meeussen and Van Laar). The guilt of missing out on the critical milestones of their children due to their job can weigh heavily in their spirits. At the same time, before they became mothers, they were women with academic and professional dreams. Giving up personal and professional aspirations to become an unrealistic model of the perfect mother can lead to regret and resentment towards motherhood in the future (Meeussen and Van Laar). Allowing employees who are also parents to work fewer hours per week will enable them to spend more time at home attending to the needs of their children. They would spend less time during work hours worrying about their pending duties at home and trying to be in two places at once.

Additionally, according to a study performed at The Pennsylvania State University, working as a student in college is difficult due to the lack of time to study, sleep, and maintain healthy habits. Therefore, the educational performance of working students is affected by their job demands (The Effects of Working While in School). Thus, allowing working students to work fewer hours per day or fewer days per week would allow them to focus on their education and careers without jeopardizing their family and academic responsibilities. Additionally, these employees could become significant assets for the company after successful graduation.

Elevated stress levels not only impact work productivity but also affect employees' personal lives. An employee with a healthy lifestyle is more likely to be more productive at work. According to Anna Coote, the Principal Fellow in London at the New Economics Foundation in the U.K., who has various publications in sustainable development, public involvement, working time, and gender equality, a 21-hour workweek can improve the quality of people's lives and better the environment and the economy. She suggests to start a slow but steady transition, from 40 hours to finally 21 hours per week. In the TED Talk video, "The 21 Hour Work Week", Coote shows graphics and statistics supporting the claim that countries that work more extended hours per week don't reflect more productivity than countries that work fewer hours per week. She concludes that by working fewer hours per week, people can cook meals, use alternative transportation, and invest in self-care and interpersonal relationships (Coote). Therefore, implementing a six-hour workday at Tarkenton Companies would significantly improve the quality of life of its employees and the overall morale of the company. A healthy work environment is essential for employees to do their jobs well.

Another alternative to ameliorating the conditions that make up employees' stress in balancing their work-life conflict; is implementing a four-day week. Andrew Barnes, Director of Complectus Limited, a company encompassing Perpetual Guardian and other trustee businesses, implemented that strategy. In a TED Talk video, "The Four-Day Week," Barnes talks about the trial schedule model he implemented in his company in New Zealand. The four-day workweek schedule changed the lives of his staff positively. The employees were the best they could be at work and home. In addition, employees could handle the workload more productively despite working only four days per week. Barnes also discovered that the time spent in nonwork-related activities was reduced to 35% of the time. He found that the job satisfaction, productivity, and overall wellbeing of his employees had never been better. Therefore he implemented his idea permanently (Barnes). By working 10-hour days, Tarkenton employees would still work 40 hours per week, meeting their full-time requirements and allow them to have an extra day during the week to attend to their non-work-related obligations.

Although Tarkenton Companies does not serve clients in person, the company has strict hours of operations from 9 am- 7 pm EST, Monday to Friday. Employees attend to clients, host meetings and training sessions for partners and clients throughout the week. By implementing the proposed solutions, Tarkenton companies could still meet these requirements and ensure the team continues to provide excellent service. Those meetings and training sessions are scheduled weeks in advance for most of the time. Therefore, employees can plan their schedule around those meetings to avoid missing any on the days they work six-hours shifts or are off. The Client Services team can implement the six-hour day's schedule by splitting the service hours into shifts. For example, half of the team can work 9 am to 3 pm and the other half 1 pm to 7 pm. These shifts would not include an hour break; instead, two 15-minute breaks during the shift. The 10-hour shifts would be different; all employees would have the same shift from 8 am to 7 pm, including an hour break and two 15-minute breaks.

The team would take turns rotating which days during the week they would take off, ensuring that at least six people are working every day on the days they are off.

The Client Services team currently has a scheduler that gets updated weekly by team members; they select which three days they work in the office and which two days they work from home. Similarly, the team can update the scheduler with what days they would work the six-hour shift or the 10 hour days. These strategies would not work if implemented simultaneously; the whole team would have to work under the same system to meet the current service standards. However, the team can pilot these strategies for a couple of months to determine if they work and select which one would be the permanent choice.

In conclusion, if Tarkenton Companies adjusts their expectations from a 40 hour week to a 32 hours-full time workweek or a ten-by-four schedule, the company can benefit in many ways. Ensuring that all of your employees are satisfied is essential. However, employee satisfaction is more important if those employees have direct contact with your clients. The mood they project can easily rub off your clients and leave them with a lasting impact on your brand. In the article "Chick-fil-A is one of the most profitable fast-food chains in the U.S. — here's why they're so successful" by Steven John, the famous Chick-fil-a fast-food restaurant reveals their critical strategies for their notorious impeccable service. The key to having such a service is to invest in employee satisfaction and development (John). An employee who feels valued and happy with their life-work balance would be more comfortable putting in the work and striving to achieve better results to contribute to the company's success, which they see as their own. If Tarkenton Companies cultivate a happy workforce, employees will help create a pleasant work environment and do their jobs more efficiently. Additionally, the company will have excellent retention rates and more satisfied customers, increasing profits.

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A Proposal for Ameliorating Gang Violence in the London Borough of Lambeth

by Luca Avolio

The borough of Lambeth, in the city of London, United Kingdom, is a vast area south of the river Thames and the Houses of Parliament. It is one of the most hit areas in the city for youth violence and gang affiliation. Lambeth youth, specifically, are at risk of gang involvement and knife crime, with communities suffering from a diminished quality of life, disrupted public spaces and corrupted neighbourhoods. One possible way to ameliorate the problem would be for the Lambeth council to reclaim the community's youth through the development of peer-based activities and educative programs that foster a sense of self- and community respect.

Gangs and youth violence are a well-known problem that affects many countries around the world. Gangs operate and behave differently as geography and local factors play a role into it. In fact, Densley argues that London gangs are less defined and structured, with peer groups engaging in recreational activities that soon become the lay ground for illegal actions (48). Moreover, youth violence and associated knife crime represent a *lambethised* problem that doctor Madhumita addresses in their report, highlighting risk factors such as unemployment, dysfunctional families, lack of community support and poverty (17). Murder is the serious, and of course, irreversible consequence of gang affiliation and knife crime, and Lambeth has seen an exponential increase in the last years. *The Financial Times* reports murder cases among the Lambeth youth in 2006, 2008 and a sharp increase in the years 2018-2021 (O'Doherty), a situation that has serious consequences on families, communities, and the youth most at risk.

To tackle this problem, an educational approach based on community support and tailored school programs would prove most advantageous for a disrupted borough as that of Lambeth, whilst also enhance the youth's ability to progress. Because the youth are often caught up in an endless spiral of violence, community programs that focus on combatting unemployment rates and create school initiatives could be a deal-breaker, as demonstrated by a successful strategy cited in *The Independent*. The newspaper suggests an educational approach in which "we consider youth workers to be as important as teachers in looking after the welfare of our young people. We need properly trained and skilled people who can make sure that we channel our young people's energy in the right way" (Umunna). This strategy has proved successful in Scotland where the number of homicides were halved in less than a decade (Umunna). In addition, *The Independent* further proposes that unemployment rates may be lowered "by increasing the provision of technical and vocational skills available to young people, rather than simply asking them to jump through exam hoops that might lead nowhere" (Umunna). If programs as those cited in *The Independent* were to be employed in Lambeth, murderous episodes in the area could decrease whilst also providing the youth with appropriate school support, critical development skills, and a better chance at escaping gang affiliation.

An educational approach, focused on school and community-based actions, would prove most beneficial for the Lambeth youth, as encouraging initiatives taken in other countries have demonstrated. A study conducted by *l'Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II*, in the city of Naples, Italy, focused on the role of families, schools and neighbourhood to address the problem of gangs. A sample of teenage participants was asked about gang affiliation and prompted to answer a questionnaire to identify gang-related risk factors. The results showed parental issues, anti-social behaviour, and community exposure to violence (8). It further revealed that, although prevention interventions should focus on different aspects of the problem, such as health-based initiatives, the focus should be on "school- or community-based approach that target the strengthening of adolescents' moral cognition" (15). The study also provides an example of a successful learning program called *The Equipping Youth to Help One Another (EQUIP)*, "based on positive peer culture, in which individuals feel responsible for each other and help one another" (20). The program is based on research that identifies a lack of social skills and development delays as critical factors in delinquent behaviour (youth.gov). Through a set of studies conducted on social skills, moral judgement, and institutional misconduct, *EQUIP* reported promising outcomes as the youth tested 1) demonstrated gains in social skills, 2) showed lower levels of misconduct and school absence, and 3) were less likely to engage in recidivist behaviour (youth.gov). If programs like those of *EQUIP* were to be introduced in the Lambeth community, they would, most likely, create a safe space where to foster the development of a positive, peer-based culture.

The youth suffer from a diminished quality of life that is the result of abandoned communities and difficult neighbourhoods. They lack the resources to create powerful social connections and enrich their abandoned youth with opportunities to develop and grow. Social innovation and community regeneration become, then, the foundations of educational-based approaches in which the youth most at risk of violence and gang affiliation may flourish and develop power relationships, vocational and practical skills, and foster a culture of positivity and respect. Satisfactory results have been achieved in another deprived and corrupted area of Naples, Scampia, where camorra clans control much of the territory and often encourage youth in forming gangs and engage in violence. *Piazza* (Square) is a civic association formed by the local community in which people, especially the youth, can gather and discuss various issues affecting the neighbourhood. The aim is to encourage dialogue, foster innovation, and reconstruct social relations that have been disrupted and corrupted by organised crime and a poor city planning (1). *Piazza* has grown and changed through the years and territorial factors have played a crucial role in it, however:

the most innovative and interesting result achieved by *Piazziamoci* has been that of successfully organizing a diary of cultural events, a civil network of social commitment and a series of collective communication tools within a hostile and disintegrated social and institutional arena. These three elements – shared cultural diary, network, and communications – have enriched the field of social relations, helped to check social exclusion and provided the basis for constructing a sense of local identity and belonging, especially among young people (De Muro, 13).

An experiment as that of *Piazza* highlights the benefits of a strong community network and fostering environment where the youth are allowed to thrive and develop, effectively providing the necessary intervention to prevent gang affiliation and violent behaviour.

Of course, as De Muro explains in their article, an experiment such as that of *Piazza* has encountered several challenges and opposition from the Scampia municipality. The council, in fact, did not provide the associative network with the necessary funding to run the project but instead created their own project: *Piazza dei Giovani*. Although the two projects had similar names, their scope was different and only served to divert critical funds destined to *Piazza* to another network (9). In this perspective, the Lambeth council may decide that the best course of action is the one currently in development, that is, a health-based approach, considering the data in their hand, and simply disregard the possibility of a combined, multifaceted approach.

In conclusion, a more effective way to ameliorate the problem of gang involvement and youth violence in Lambeth would be, for the council, to reach out to communities, schools, teachers and families and work with them in approaching the problem from a socio-educational perspective; create peer-based activities, foster social connection and empower relations so that the youth will feel like they have a place in their community, are part of a network that cares for them and has an interest in their development and success.

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Improve the barrier-free passages problem of the Xinghe community

by Wanhe Gu

The Xinghe Community in Shenzhen, China, where I live, was completed in 2017 and the owners were allowed to move in. The construction of barrier-free passages has also attracted much attention. Barrier-free passages include elevators, slopes and other passages that are convenient for everyone to enter and exit. However, the community is located on half a mountainside, and elevators often need repairs and maintenance. People need to walk about 100 stair steps to enter the community. The slope of the community is relatively steep, and children are often scratched by bicycles. There are no corresponding safety measures beside the slope, and there are certain safety hazards. The passage of the underground parking lot is considered to be the most labor-saving passage to the community, because there is no need to go uphill, but there is no special pedestrian passage. The three barrier-free passages in this community cannot meet people's daily needs. This will cause greater physical harm and injury to the elderly, young people, and people with limited mobility, and will also limit their range of activities. The fundamental solution to this problem is to

redesign the barrier-free passage and make sure that the owner of each household knows the specific location of the barrier-free passage. If the Xinghe Property Management Office has sufficient funds to invite professionals to redesign the barrier-free passages and implement the plan quickly, the existing problems of barrier-free passages will be improved.

Before considering rebuilding barrier-free passages, it is important to consider why barrier-free passages are so important, even though they seem to be just a simple elevator or slope. Furthermore, as urban barrier-free passages designers note, "'Barrier-free' means that a building and its facilities can be approached, entered and used by persons with physical or sensory disabilities" (Barrier-Free Design). There are also express provisions for the construction purpose of barrier-free passages: "Barrier-free passages ensure that the disabled, the elderly, children and other groups who need to use it provide safe passage and convenient use" (Barrier-Free Design Guide). Therefore, safety and convenience are the two most important points of barrier-free passages. The design of barrier-free passages needs to be taken into account in the initial design of any multifamily building, but residents do not have a deep understanding of barrier-free passages, and they do not pay enough attention to the significance of barrier-free passages. Everything is only for aesthetics. As a result, barrier-free passages has not been able to play its maximum role. All in all, barrier-free passages is subtly affecting everyone who needs to use it, and how to maximize its utility has become the top task of every community public construction person in charge.

According to the current situation of the community, since the completion of the construction in 2017, there has never been a large-scale community rectification, only the location of flowers and plants has been changed. At present, the community has 9 residential buildings, each of which is slightly different. One building has about 48 floors, with 4 households living on the first floor, with a large number of residents. And according to the property report, the elderly and children are the majority who are active in the community every day. The role of barrier-free passages to the community is really great, and it is more able to prove the importance of re-building barrier-free passages. It takes about three months to rebuild the slopes inside the community, about two months to build the sidewalks of the underground parking lot, and about one month to replace the parts of the escalator. If the work is started at the same time, it will take three months to complete the work (Barrier-Free Design), but it can bring security to future life. Considering the long-term interests of the Xinghe Property Management Office and the residents of the Xinghe community, it is achievable to rebuild barrier-free passages.

Based on the approximate consumables of the Xinghe community's barrier-free passages reconstruction plan, I compiled a simple quotation to further analyze from a practical monetary point of view. In China, "a square meter of concrete is about 2.4 tons, and the price is ¥2000, about \$310" (How Much Is A Ton Of Concrete); "the price of an escalator with a height of 5 meters is about ¥150,000, about \$ 23,200; the cost of use is about ¥31975, about \$4950" (One-Year Use Fee Of Escalator) for one year. If the slopes and sidewalks are to be rebuilt, about 100 square meters of concrete will be used. "The price is about \$31,000 and does not include construction and beautification costs" (One-Year Use Fee Of Escalator). The overall cost is indeed a considerable expense, but considering the long-term benefits, the residents' living experience has been improved, which can greatly improve the reputation of real estate agencies and properties, and improve their competitiveness in the market. A good living experience for residents is strong commercial support for real estate agents and properties.

In order to get the residents' ideas, I chose to go to the public square of the community at 4:45 pm on September 25, 2021, Beijing time to randomly ask the residents what they think about the construction of barrier-free passages. Because the children in the community are all over from school around 4 o'clock, this is the time when the largest number of people gather in the public square of the community. My choices are divided into the following categories: students who can go to school independently, residents who need to pick up children, residents who use baby strollers, elderly people walking in the square, and security guards at the gates of the community. These types of people are the main users of barrier-free passages, and security guards are the most intuitive to see the usage of barrier-free passages every day. Among the 50 residents I randomly surveyed, 86% of people think that rebuilding barrier-free passages is a good thing to improve their quality of life; the remaining 14% think that the current situation is quite good. According to the security guard at the gate, the number of residents entering and leaving the gate every day is about 1,100, he saw 97% of

the residents using the elevator within a day, and only 3% chose to take the stairs. The number of users can most intuitively show the importance of barrier-free passages for residents of Xinghe community to travel. Rebuilding the barrier-free passages will not only improve the residents' good use experience of the barrier-free passage, but also increase the frequency of use of the barrier-free passages. The real feelings of users are the strongest evidence that can best reflect whether barrier-free passages are safe and effective.

Some people have put forward different opinions on the improvement of barrier-free passages. When I discussed the suggestions of rebuilding barrier-free passages in the community with the person in charge of the property, he thought it was not an easy thing to implement. The person in charge of the property believes that this will be an expensive expense first. Whether this fee needs to be paid by the real estate agent or the tenant is the most important question. Secondly, although it only takes about three months during the maintenance period, it will cause serious inconvenience to the lives of community residents. Not to mention the barrier-free passages to the community, the barrier-free passages within the community will also affect the residents' travel when it is built. For the property management office, rebuilding the barrier-free passages is not only a relatively large expense, but also more residents' complaints will be dealt with during the refurbishment phase. But these two things can be resolved. First of all, with regard to the issue of funds, from the approximate total cost given before, this large expenditure is indeed a bill that does not seem to be necessary to pay, but this bill should be analyzed in conjunction with future business expansion plans. The person in charge of the property should consider the future goals. The cost of rebuilding barrier-free passages is a necessary cost for the future development of real estate developers and property management offices, which can bring greater benefits.

Secondly, residents complain about inconvenience. That as long as the barrier-free passage is rebuilt for the purpose of making the residents' lives more convenient and efficient, the residents will give a supportive attitude. Although I and the person in charge of the property management have different opinions, he still agrees with my ideas and promised me that he will gradually improve the barrier-free access in the community based on my suggestions. As a resident, I will also support the decision of Xinghe Property Management Office.

In short, if the Xinghe Property Management office would rebuild barrier-free passages is a faster, more effective, and most cost-effective way to improve the practicality of barrier-free passages in communities and reduce the safety hazards caused by barrier-free passages. Good barrier-free passages will provide residents with a better and more convenient life, and can also bring the most effective publicity to real estate developers and properties. It is the best choice for the interests of both parties.

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Be a giant of action

by Guoji Li

I'm sure you see more and more climate change disasters in the news every day. So have you ever thought about how to solve climate change? I believe most people's answers are planting more trees, reducing factories' exhaust emissions, or choosing low-carbon transportation. These actions are all good choices, but they are not the most effective way to deal with climate change. Jonathan Safran Foer is an American writer who has written the book *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*. In his book, he discusses the issues between humans and climate change and the best way to solve them.

I totally agree with Safran's ideas in his book. In the first part of his book, he uses some facts and stories to explain why so many people chose to do nothing when they know about climate change. And then in the second part of his book, he uses some analogies and comparisons to tell the readers they must take action immediately and reduce human consumption of animal products. Finally in part four, by having a conflict with his own soul, he emphasized again that the only way to solve climate change is changing our eating habits.

In the first part of his book, he tries to explore why many people, including himself, struggle to do the right things to fight climate change. In "Not a Good Story", he writes, "Compounding the over there quality of the planetary crisis is a fatigue of the imagination. It is exhausting to contemplate the complexity and scale of the threats we face. We know climate change has something to do with pollution, something to do with carbon, ocean temperatures, rainforests, ice caps ... but most of us would find it difficult to explain how our individual and collective behavior is boosting hurricane winds by almost thirty miles per hour or contributing to a polar vortex that makes Chicago colder than Antarctica." (14) He tells many possible climate change factors like pollutions, global warming, carbon dioxide, deforestation...Humans cause all these problems, but at the individual level, it's hard to say what specific behaviors in our lives are causing these issues. He successfully explains why most people are struggling to do something right to fight climate change. People can't determine which of their daily behaviors lead to climate change, so they cannot make any changes. His readers might feel guilty and ashamed because most of them can read about climate change on the news, and they actually know about climate change, but they still don't want to make any changes. Safran could tell his readers directly the severity of climate change and ask them to take action immediately. I don't think it is an effective way because it can't make his readers feel the same way. Most readers will feel bored and even not willing to continue their reading. Safran's move in his book is a good choice because he successfully causes people to have the same feelings as him and realize climate change is destroying our planet. We can't rely on our descendants to save it, instead we need to make changes right now to fight climate change.

In part 2 of the book, Safran uses an analogy to warn people they must take action and make some changes to fight climate change immediately. He says in "Climate Change Is a Ticking Time Bomb", "Climate change is not a disease that can be managed, like diabetes; it is an event like a cancerous tumor that needs to be removed before the cells fatally multiply. The planet can handle only so much warming before positive feedback loops create 'runaway climate change'." He compared climate change to a cancerous tumor to explain the severity of climate change and why we need to make changes immediately because the damage done to the planet by climate change is irreversible, and we need to make changes before it spirals out of control. He could also tell readers directly we should do something to fight climate change, but I think that would not be an effective way. His readers might feel bored and wouldn't pay any attention to climate change, much less take any actions because it's hard for them to have the same feelings as Safran. I totally agree with Safran's view and I think he uses an effective move in his book. It's hard for me to take climate change seriously if I just read some words in general because it's in the news every day. Instead, by Safran's analogy, comparing climate change to the cancerous tumor, I can understand and realize the severity of

climate change. Meanwhile, I also pay more attention to climate change and start to make some changes in my daily life to fight climate change.

At the same time, in the second part, Safran does not directly point out the problem of human eating habits. Instead, he compares the past and present human behaviors to warn readers that our current eating habits are causing great damage to climate change. In "Our Eating Is Radical", he writes, "The current level of meat and dairy consumption is the equivalent of every person alive on the planet in 1700 eating 950 pounds of meat and drinking 1,200 gallons of milk every day." He compares the daily consumption of meat and milk today and in 1700. It is a huge difference and shows that humans are consuming much more animal products than they should. Through the comprehension he made, the readers can realize our consumption of animal products is radical. As a result, the readers might feel shocked and guilty when they first read these numbers. When I read this part, I felt guilty because I never thought I would consume so many animal products. Thanks to Safran's words, it makes me think about changing my eating habits to fight climate change. Safran has another way to express his idea, he could criticize people's current eating habits and tell the readers directly that they have to reduce eating animal products to fight climate change. This undoubtedly makes people feel angry and shamed. Overall, I think it is an effective move to readers because Safran uses a smart and more acceptable way to warn people about the crisis of climate change we are facing and tells readers we have to change our eating habits to reduce the consumption of animals products.

In part 4 of the book ("Dispute with the Soul"), Safran had an argument with his soul as many ordinary readers would do, to show what is the right action they should take. His soul says, "That's because we feel hopeful and are comfortable putting off the discussion." Then Safran answers, "No. It's because we feel hopeless and are uncomfortable discussing it." Finally, his soul asks himself, "Either way, it's hope that allows the subject of climate change to be eclipsed—in news and politics, in our lives—by more "urgent" issues. If you were a doctor, would you ask a cancer patient if he was hopeful?" Safran explains why people dislike discussing climate change because they feel so hard to find the solution and take action. Many people know climate change happens, but they just make some feelings rather than take action. Climate change is like cancer, and we can't expect it will be cured by doing anything. His soul contradicted himself to warn people not to be so optimistic and take action immediately to fight climate change. Safran has another way to express his idea; he could tell people directly what is the right thing they should do to fight climate change instead of finding excuses from their heart. I don't think it is an effective way because his readers can't have the same feelings and take any action. The fact is many people know climate change, but they make excuses for not doing anything. His readers might feel guilty and shamed and then they will be willing to take action. I totally agree with his idea, and his words have a great influence on me. He made me think and talk to my soul to introspect myself that I was unconcerned about climate change. I feel deep guilty and ashamed because I never thought about what is the right thing I should do for climate change. Meanwhile, I think his move is effective and makes me understand we should change our eating habits to save our planet.

From Safran's book, I understand why many people are reluctant to make changes to fight climate change even they know it is destroying our living planet. Fortunately, thanks to Safran, I realize we have to change our eating habits right away to reduce the consumption of animal products. I think everyone should read this book. Because nowadays, although many people know the facts and consequences of climate change, more importantly, they don't know the best way to solve it. I agree changing our eating habits is the easiest action for everyone in their daily lives to fight climate change. And I still believe if everyone changes a little bit rather than thinking, our planet will return its original beauty.

Safran Foer, Jonathan. *We Are The Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019.

Rhetorical analysis of Safran Foer's book, *We are the weather*

by Eunhyo Kim

To my knowledge, there are a lot of resources such as articles, books, and movies about climate change. However, I didn't find and read resources about climate change even though there were lots of resources about climate change because I was not particularly interested in climate change. What I learned in a high school class was all about my knowledge of climate change. In high school, my teacher only taught students about the truth and lots of facts about climate change. So, of course, we felt bored of the class, and almost all of the students lost interest in climate change. However, in a nonfiction book called *We are the weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast* written by Jonathan Safran Foer, an American writer, it draws the reader's interest in many ways. Therefore, this book tells normal people who know climate change but do not take action to improve it what actions should be put into practice. It is difficult to make people practice reducing animal product consumption which is one of the ways to improve climate change, but I believe the author will successfully achieve his purpose of writing this book using various moves that have not been seen in other resources before. I think his moves will greatly influence changing the thoughts and behaviors of readers, including myself. In particular, I think Safran Foer made amazing moves when he used examples that are indirectly related to climate change in the first part of the book and when he compares our current eating habits to the past in part 2. Also, I think he made effective moves when he gave us all the facts and data about climate change using bullet points and when he created a conversation with his soul to demonstrate his inner thoughts in part 4.

I think Safran Foer made an effective move when he describes the reasons why many people, including himself, struggle to do the right things to fight climate change using examples that are indirectly related to climate change in the first part of the book. For example, he writes "If we accept a factual reality (that we are destroying the planet), but are unable to believe it, we are no better than those who deny the existence of human-caused climate change-just as Felix Frankfurter was no better than those who denied the existence of the Holocaust" (21). Safran Foer looks at our thinking about climate change from a new perspective. In the first part of the book, specific examples that are indirectly related to climate change are compared to climate change. We knew that we humans were destroying the Earth. We just worry about climate change, but do not take effective action. Some people do recycling, plant trees to feel that they are doing something for climate change. I also thought I was far better than those who deny climate change before reading this book. However, all of the thinking and actions that we generally do mean "not believing climate change". The author points out that these general people's thoughts and actions are no better than those who deny climate change. The move Safran Foer makes encourages readers to look back on their actions. It also compares the story of Felix Frankfurter and the Holocaust to our thoughts on climate change, making his argument more acceptable in this quotation. Therefore, the target audience will feel sympathy for Safran Foer's story. However, I was very confused when I first read his book. Before reading this book, I started reading it knowing that the topic of the book was about climate change. But he continued to describe stories that were not related to climate change such as the Holocaust and World War II until the first part of the book was almost finished. When he revealed his idea at the end of the first part of the book, I felt a fresh shock. I finally knew why he describes lots of facts to explain climate change. It felt like a puzzle was being put together. He could have described his thesis directly at the beginning of the book as an alternative move. If he had shown at the beginning of the book that our actions have had little impact on improving climate change, he would have made the target audience feel guilty. Also, some target audiences may not be interested in the book. It is because the writer's thoughts that are too different from many people's thoughts may not attract the attention of readers. Therefore, I think the move he did make was effective. It makes readers more willing to make a change by first showing the indirect examples to the readers at the beginning of the book, forming sympathy, and then telling his idea later. Also, specific stories make it easier for readers to imagine in their minds.

I think Safran Foer made an interesting move at the beginning of part 2 when he compares our current eating habits to the past. He declines to pass explicit judgment on readers' individual eating choices. Instead, he asks readers to consider how their own eating habits and humans' effects on the environment, as a whole, contrast to humans' behavior in the past. In Safran Foer's words, "The current level of meat and dairy consumption is the equivalent of every person alive on the planet in 1700 eating 950 pounds of meat and drinking 1,200 gallons of milk" (83). This shows us that Safran Foer is telling us there is a growing animal products consumption. He compared the eating habits of the past and the present by describing specific figures. The seriousness of our animal products consumption is clearly shown by the past generation's expected amount of meat and milk. The move can make readers feel motivated to change their eating habits. This is because the huge amount of milk and meat levels make people who already knew they were eating a lot of animal products and people who didn't know they were eating a lot think again about their eating habits. It can give people an opportunity to compare themselves to the eating habits of people in the past. However, I was confused because I realized that our eating habits have changed more rapidly than in the past, but the figures he showed for the past generation were so large that it was difficult for me to imagine. I think it's because the units I usually use and the units shown in the book are different. He could have directly said that people's eating habits are terrible, and we can not over-reliance on animal products. The alternative move would have made the readers feel bad because readers can think that the writer is judging them. Therefore I think comparing our eating habits to those of the past generation was an effective move. The comparison he made will give the readers knowledge about the humans eating habits in the past and make them want to be like them. It gives us an opportunity to reflect while showing how we made climate change worse. In addition, the mention of past generations motivates our behavior to change.

I think Safran Foer made an exciting move in part 2 when he gives us all the facts and data about animal agriculture and climate change in a special way. He puts the facts in bullet points, instead of writing it like a normal essay. I think this was a quite effective choice for helping readers to understand the book. He writes, "•As they digest food, cattle, goats, and sheep produce a significant amount of methane, which is mostly belched but also exhaled, farted, and passed in the waste of the animal. •Livestock is the leading source of methane emissions" (94). This quotation shows the readers some of the reasons for climate change using bullet points. The move that he made in part 2 makes the target audience feel comfortable to read. It makes it easy for readers to understand the complicated contents of the book. Also, readers may feel the book as a presentation because this part of the book is organized like a slide we always use to present. For me, his move made me connect the contents I thought were abstract and hard in part 1 with the lots of facts in part 2. It helped me to understand the whole story flow. Furthermore, it made me think about what the writer intended to write like this, and it made me guess as if I were answering a quiz while reading. The move made me think a lot more about climate change than just reading a book without thinking. Instead of using bullet points in part 2, he could have written lots of facts in the form of articles or essays. This alternative move makes the target audience feel bored. Safran Foer gives a huge amount of facts to readers in part 2. If he just lists and explains these large amounts of facts, the readers will quickly get tired of reading and give up reading. Some readers will also complain that an author explains what they already know is too long and complicated. Therefore, I think the move he actually made would have been more effective than the alternative move. This is because it conveys a huge amount of information and accurately tells readers to realize the seriousness of climate change and their own problems.

I think Safran Foer made an amazing move in part 4 when he creates a conversation with his soul to demonstrate his inner thoughts. Safran Foer acts like common readers who know that we need to take action to improve climate change, but do not. The soul acts like the author of this book, "We Are The Weather", tries to change people's habits to improve climate change. This shows how it is hard for people to change their eating habits. He writes, "I've spent two years writing this book, trying to persuade as many people as I can to change their lives. Isn't that something? *Not enough*. What would be enough? *Change your own life*" (149). These quotations describe Safran Foer's internal conflict by drawing counterarguments with his soul. Throughout the whole book, he asserts that changing our habits can prevent the destruction of the planet, but in fact he also thinks that it is enough for him to tell people about it in a book. His soul encourages that it is not enough for him to write a book to get people to change their lives, and that Safran Foer himself should actually change his life first. The

move makes the target audience feel connected to the author's concerns. This is because the author describes the same idea with readers' concerns about changing their eating habits. Also, the readers can remember the conversation when they think about climate change even after reading the book. The conversation between Safran Foer and his soul is similar to the conversation between readers and readers' minds. Before I read this part, I started reading without seeing the title "Dispute with the Soul". At first, I thought that Safran Foer's Soul lines written in italics were Safran Foer's lines, and Safran Foer's lines written in Gothic were the ideas of normal readers. As I thought like this and read a book, there were parts that I did not understand. However, after reading this part and accidentally looking at the title, I was able to understand all of these conversations. And I sympathize with Safran Foer because he also felt changing eating habits is difficult just like we do. This shows how difficult it is to change our eating habits. However, this conversation even encouraged me because I felt that I wanted to succeed in that difficult thing rather than give up changing my eating habits. Instead of writing this part as a conversation form, he could have written his honest thoughts and feelings in the form of a diary. This alternative move makes the target audience confused. At the beginning of the book, he strongly argues that our eating habits should be changed. However, if he suddenly shows his honest thoughts in this part as a form of a diary, the readers would not be able to catch what the author really wants to say. Therefore, I think the alternative move would have been less effective than the move he actually made. This is because the author's sound of heart was shared with the target audience and he clearly conveyed what he wanted to say to the readers using soul's words.

I learned about the way of writing is as important as writing content from doing a rhetorical analysis of Safran Foer's book. This is because my thoughts on climate change, which I just felt bored in high school, changed completely after reading this book. The moves in this book captivated my attention and changed my attitude toward climate change. Safran Foer made amazing moves such as using examples that are indirectly related to climate change, comparing our current eating habits to the past, using bullet points, and creating a conversation with his soul to demonstrate his inner thoughts. Even with the same content, I could see how important it was to deliver the content to the readers. In particular, the move of using bullet points to convey various complex contents would be used later when I write an experimental report or article. As such, I believe that the move he created in this book will successfully change the attitudes of many readers toward climate change.

Works cited

Safran Foer, Jonathan. *We Are The Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*. PICADOR, 2019.

A New Home

by Isabel Gutierrez

I stared at my honey-olive curves in the mirror, dirty and cheap. Fingerprints and grime distorted the image before me, though not enough for me to find beauty in what I saw. My short stature accentuated the slight rolls that cradled my hips and waist, mocking the growing hunger in my belly. 400. That's the number of calories I had left for the day if I wanted to stay under 1000. Technically, I was supposed to be eating 1200 calories a day in order to maintain a steady decline in weight; at least that's what the app on my phone said. I picked it up and stared at the small blue line that terrifyingly inched its way to the end of my screen, indicating how much I'd eaten for the day. It still wasn't small enough. I wasn't small enough. I turned away quickly from the flimsy mirror, unable to bear seeing my own body filling it's small frame.

This is the image that would haunt my thoughts incessantly, my own mind exaggerating my proportions I'm sure. But I couldn't escape that picture of myself, the girl that didn't match the perfectly proportioned, curvy-just-enough, skinny girl the world expected me to be. I picked apart each feature of my body until that's all it was reduced to. A height of only 5 feet. Breasts that were much too large for my short body, a point that had been emphasized by many. My face very- well, Mexican; too round, no chin or alluring jawline. No picture perfect facial profile. This was Isabel, the Frankenstein conglomeration of a girl who just so desperately wanted to look perfect if she couldn't at least be perfect. And so my double life began.

The desire to be perfect was not a new beast to me. Much of my life had been spent preaching beauty in imperfection while expecting the contrary for myself. I recognized the permission I gave others to have faults and be messy and wild, fully embracing the entropy in it. Only, that messiness had no place in me or my already chaotic world. This was evidenced by the many people with such perfect expectations of me. My existence came from a grave mistake, therefore I must be a perfect atonement for such an error. My mother and father were never star crossed lovers, or even madly in love. I'd like to think that night of my unplanned conception was driven out of intense passion, uncontrollable, fiery love. Alas, it was not, but tainted by fear of rejection and the possibility of being alone. My mother assured me that she wouldn't have wanted it any other way if it meant she had her little girl. My father said nothing, ignoring this flaw.

And so I was perfect. Perfect grades, perfect composure, perfectly put together, complete with the satiny bow tied neatly around my ponytail. Perfectly quiet, never misbehaving. Never speaking out of turn, or much at all really unless it seconded the opinions of those greater than myself. Always doing what I was told, going above and beyond the average expectation. I was the happy girl, the girl mature for her age, the "big helper", a good girl. It was in these praises I constructed a whole identity to hide my own. But that's the thing about perfection, it leaves little room for anything else.

It's a painstaking process of brick and mortar, if only the facade were that sturdy. And so, one by one, I laid each brick meticulously in place, building walls much too high for any one person to scale. A refuge to hide myself and all my secrets. The higher these walls grew, greater became the work to maintain them. A perfect body, thin and feminine and lovely. Perfect, sleek hair, perfect skin. Perfectly dressed; showing just enough skin that they want me since no one wants to look old and frumpy. But not too much, that's slutty. You'll look like a whore and boys might get the wrong idea. No, just perfect. Perfectly good in that beautiful all-American girl way. So I tried to be, until perfect was no longer enough.

I should've known I couldn't keep the act up forever. I'd already gone through a deconstruction, pulled down walls brick by brick, seeing light for the first time. I'd already had that beautiful moment when I acknowledged that "perfect" wasn't perfect after all. I'd already confronted that dark void named depression and the frightening flashbacks of PTSD. I'd already proved that I was far from perfect and that I was ok with that. I'd already won. So why it took even more years to realize that the walls hadn't really come down, I do not know. All I knew was that the idea of perfection had seeped far deeper into my foundation than I had thought. It was hiding, rooted in myself in ways I'd never truly known. And without my knowledge, it was slowly making itself into every decision I made, down to the most basic of them: feeding my body.

With all my training and education, I was really good at hiding it, even from myself. I knew what behaviors to look for, what red flags one might see, and made sure any observable actions came right up to the line of scrutiny. I knew that a complete lack of eating would be very noticeable to the abundance of family around me, meals being a focal point of gathering. However, no one would notice if I didn't eat a roll this time. Or if my plate consisted of nothing but salad that would only end up half eaten anyways. No one would know that milk or juice never filled my cup, only water. In all the hustle and bustle of feeding time, no one would see the panic in my eyes when dessert was passed around. They wouldn't know that I was secretly calculating the number of calories I'd already consumed for the day and hoping there'd be some to spare. No one would notice me excuse myself to make my hands busy with cleaning dishes as an excuse not to eat, only to conveniently leave the kitchen without ever having taken a bite. Or maybe my worst fear would come to fruition, and that day I

wasn't strong or perfect enough to say no to the homemade bread mom had laid out with jam. And that night, I would have laid in bed secretly hating myself for being so weak.

Yet, despite the seemingly constant battle with my body, there were days I felt beautiful and strong. I thanked my body for nimble hands that flitted across the strings of my violin. I was grateful for legs that could take me up the mountaintop overlooking my house. I marveled at the possibility of conceiving a child, my womb nurturing and protecting the little life my husband and I would create. My breasts one day sustaining that child. I tenderly traced the stretch marks that had slowly crept across my thighs, knowing that one day more would adorn my body as a testament to all it had triumphed. I knew that this could never be if my body continued to shrink into nothingness, no longer a sustainable home for my precious babies to be. I knew that releasing the thoughts that had ensnared my body in the cage of my bedroom mirror would be no easy task. It would be a constant work to create a space as safe inside my mind as I hoped that baby would find in my womb. But that was no matter- for every day I fought, the sun would set on my perfect little paradise, engulfing me in darkness only to make way for the light of the stars.