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The fight against global warming is heating up.

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# The Spectrum

◆ e cineribus et ad astra ◆

JANUARY • VOL. 39, WINTER ISSUE

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Not just from *Star Wars*!

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There is snow in this photo.  
ONLINE SOURCE

## Is Consulting "Selling Out" or "Buying In"?

By ANJALI RAMAN '20  
Editor-in-Chief

In open-concept offices atop the buildings that compose the skylines of America's most famous urban areas, Patagonia-clad employees crunch numbers via Excel spreadsheet, Yeti cups of coffee at their sides.

Despite the caricature of corporate life they produce, consulting firms provide an alluring image of post-graduation employment to many undergraduate college students. After all, consulting is nothing more than a series of puzzles waiting to be modeled, figured, and projected to death. Consulting, specifically management consulting, requires firms to help third-party companies to implement more efficacious business practices. In essence, companies hire consultants for advice to bridge the gap between the company's area of expertise and its end goal. An automobile retailer, for example, could enlist outside consultants to aid with the acquisition of a foreign auto parts company, a merger outside the breadth of a company focused specifically on retailing and producing automobiles in American markets. Consulting firms—the most prominent of which are arguably McKinsey, Boston Con-

sulting Group (BCG), and Bain & Company—boast client lists spanning from large commercial corporations, to investment firms to governments and governmental agencies to non-profit organizations. Employees work on either a yearly or an hourly basis, though for fresh college grads, an hourly salary and schedule is more typical.

While consulting firms do serve a worthwhile purpose, they are shrouded in layers of deserved moral ambiguity, to the point where recent college graduates who seek employment at any such firm are seen as "sell-outs." In exchange for rather lucrative compensation (for a bachelor's degree), consultants, even at the entry level, can work on projects of significant socio-political importance; McKinsey recently signed a \$2 million contract with Customs and Border Protection to aid ICE in its border detention efforts, even suggesting that ICE should cut food and medical spending for detained immigrants. Meanwhile, officials in top consulting groups have been tied to strings of white-collar crime. The financial incentive to participate in ethical and legal gray areas contributes to this idea of selling out; after all, many argue, the value of a college degree is in some way to help the

world.

Yet consulting is not necessarily an evil, a profession to be scorned. Separating, for a moment, the morally reprehensible actions of some consulting firms and employees, consulting is essentially just advice based on curated data. Just as academia and research post-graduation enables recent college grads to search for solutions and knowledge, consulting is really just a data-driven approach to the same outcome. Consulting isn't "selling out"; hopefully, for college grads, it's "buying in" to the solution-oriented mindset that's celebrated among other fields.

A major benefit for pursuing consulting fresh out of college is that it allows for a pause to ruminate upon any future aspirations. Because consulting requires applicable, analytical skills as opposed to rigid ones, it's conducive for individuals of varied college backgrounds while also not limiting an individual's potential to experience different subjects; consulting firms hire students from a range of disciplines not limited by data-driven majors, and for students who haven't decided their majors, consulting offers the unique opportunity to explore different companies. Additionally, initial consulting contracts for employ-

ees are typically only two years long, the perfect amount of time to earn a salary while meditating on future career choices. The fast pace of projects also means students get exposed to different companies and their platforms in quick succession. Perhaps it can be perceived as selfish, but there's nothing inherently immoral about looking to expand a career.

Further, recent grads who enter the world of consulting have the potential to rectify the immoral actions of the firms as a whole. Data will always be data, but their application lies in the individual mind of the consultant. If the general refrain is that students fresh from college are most equipped to "change the world," then perhaps joining a sector in most need of reform is the truly moral choice; consulting is the chance for America's corporations to gain fresh college perspectives and fix their problems. Seeking generous compensation, additionally, isn't morally wrong. The median starting salary for consulting jobs to individuals with a bachelor's degree is \$83,610 per year, whereas the median compensation amongst all professions with a bachelor's degree is \$50,390. For many college graduates, especially from historically underrepresented...

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# Intro

## Letter from the EICs

By SERENA HAN '20, KIRTANA KRISHNAKUMAR '20, ANJALI RAMAN '20  
*Editors-in-Chief*

In just the first few weeks of the new decade, the world has already found itself embroiled in numerous moral debates. From Qasem Soleimani's assassination to the Oscars' lack of diverse nominees, we know that morality will remain at the heart of every heated discussion in the decade to come.

With that 2020 foresight, we encouraged writers to pursue past and current controversies in the Winter Issue, and they've delved into the morals of scientific discoveries, TV shows, business

practices—the list goes on. And while we expect our readers to disagree with at least one or two, if not more, of these articles' stances, we hope they'll leave armed with new perspectives.

It seems our perspectives have shifted too; as seniors, we tackle our same roles here at The Spectrum with our eyes set—not only on the next issue or even the next year—but more broadly, on the future.

So, here's a thought: that last paragraph was plagiarized from our former Editors-in-Chief. Do you want to write an article about our morality? Please do.

See you on Thursday!  
Serena, Kirtana, and Anjali

## The Spectrum

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## For the Record

By MICHAEL CHENG '20  
*Managing and News Editor*

**Sports:** *MIAA proposes alignment overhaul:* New statewide tournament format would replace regional classifications in most sports.

**Town Government:** *Voters approve new fire station, reject sewer expansion:* Town Meeting attendees allocated \$9 million for a new fire station in North Acton, while defeating a proposed sewer expansion in West Acton.

**Community:** *Kmart closes:* KMart parent company announces plans to shutter of the KMart location at Kelley's Corner; a town proposal to purchase the property failed at Town Meeting last April.

**Nation:** *Democratic Primaries begin February 3rd:* The Iowa Caucuses kick off a highly-anticipated primary season, but many leading candidates will

be busy with Senate impeachment proceedings, which begin this week.

**World:** *Australian forests on fire:* A historic wildfire season in Australia has killed 28 people and forced thousands more from their homes.

### Looking ahead:

ABRSD's Family Learning Series invites "slow tech advocate" Janell Burley Hoffman on January 14th

25th annual Community Service Awards Night to be held on January 23rd

Term 2 (and Semester 1) ends January 24th

Annual Trivia Bowl hosted by AB Girl Up/UNICEF/Human Rights on February 28th

Proscenium Circus' A Matter of Life and Death debuts March 6th-7th

If you would like to submit an item for our next issue in March, email us at thabspectrum@gmail.com

# College Board Introduces AP Classroom for Teachers

By ANJALI RAMAN '20  
*Editor-in-Chief*

Beginning the 2019-2020 school year, education conglomerate College Board created a new set of policies and resources regarding the administration of Advanced Placement (AP) exams. Originally conceived to provide opportunities for high school students to pursue college credit before matriculating to a university, AP courses typically involve year-long engagement in a rigorous class that culminates in a cumulative exam in May.

Among the changes instituted this year is an increased fee and compressed timeline from 2017. Rather than the traditional early-February deadline, the College Board hastened the timeline for AP exam registration, requiring payment for exams on or prior to November 15th to avoid late fees. AB students had to pay \$100 per exam and upwards of \$140 if they incurred a late fee, market. Additionally, the College Board hastened the timeline for AP exam registration, requiring payment for exams on or prior to November 15th to avoid late fees. Especially for seniors who concurrently apply to college and balance AP classes in the fall, this earlier deadline means that with the exception of a few universities, seniors will not know where they will attend college next year; especially as more universities forgo accepting high AP exam scores for credit, seniors may be paying exorbitant prices for exams for which they may never receive any benefits.

Most striking among these changes, however, is the introduction of a new resource for teachers and students alike: AP Classroom. AP Classroom is a website that stu-

dents gain access to upon registering for their exams. In addition to a timeline and course information, AP Classroom also hosts certain resources designed for exam preparation. AP Biology teacher Mr. Mathieu notes that the introduction of AP Classroom is likely because "schools have increasingly been moving to digital curriculum resources and 1-1 device models," and this allows College Board to "stay current." For AP Biology, Mr. Mathieu explains, the Course and Exam Description (CED) "provides all of the learning objectives and science practices that may be addressed on the exam" including a "suggested unit sequence for the course." It does not, however, "have any specific lesson plans."

Similarly, Mr. Kaczinski, an AP Literature and Composition teacher, notes that the College Board "outlines certain skills for reading/writing;" a significant difference between the materials in the CED for the two courses, however, is that "content is teacher driven" in regards to the works of reading and poetry that achieve these skills in AP Literature. At AB, Mr. Mathieu explains that the teachers "use the CED to develop our curriculum and our units address all of the AP Biology learning objectives and science practices," but they do not "follow the suggested unit plans" in favor of the thematic units designed at AB. These differences between the curriculums for the two courses can largely be explained by the differences between the objectives of each class: while the AP Biology exam is more rigidly focused on applications of biological principles, the Literature exam mostly requires critical thinking, the predominant skill developed through

the course of the year.

While the resources on AP Classroom available for both courses also vary, they do appear to tailor to the unique needs of each class. Mr. Mathieu uses "a test bank of AP questions and Personal Progress Checks" to design online quizzes and printed tests. Mr. Kaczinski uses the "published sample questions from different parts of the exam" to practice the skills necessary for success on the AP. Because of the heavy curriculum focus of the AP Biology class, the sample questions are perhaps more relevant to everyday class; Mr. Kaczinski explains that because the "materials published are geared towards practicing the exam," they are used for "exam prep" while "the main objective [of class] is to enhance critical reasoning," and in doing so, prepare for the exam free from the confines of a strict lesson plan. Both teachers do note the convenience of some features on AP Classroom. Mr. Mathieu utilizes the "assign" feature "designed so that teachers select what their students see" to assign homework quizzes and has plans to assign the Personal Progress Checks closer to the AP exam. Mr. Kaczinski appreciates that there are "teacher-use only materials not readily available" online, meaning teachers may assign source materials for the exam.

As is customary with any new online platform, Mr. Kaczinski notes that "the functionality of the site is not necessarily intuitive." Additionally, Mr. Mathieu worries "that the new CED and Personal Progress Checks are being interpreted by some, based on online and biology conference discussions, as a required sequence that everyone is supposed to follow," which is not the case. He suspects that his misinterpretation may

mean that teachers "won't approach the course creatively." He also wishes that "the progress checks could work more like the test bank where [teachers] could mix and match learning objectives," allowing for more customization of AP Classroom to suit individual classrooms. Nevertheless, Mr. Mathieu appreciates that "AP Classroom was released with a reorganization of the learning objectives, so it is much clearer for teachers how

to approach the course," which has "made the course much more accessible to teachers."

As teachers continue to use AP Classroom in conjunction with set coursework, students may interact with materials tailored to reflect the course they are taking. While there are certainly differences between the resources available for different disciplines, they appear to reflect the various objectives of each AP class.

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# News

## Sunrise Acton and its Fight Against Climate Change

By MICHAEL CHENG '20 &  
PRISHA DAYAL '21  
*Spectrum Chief Staff*

Sunrise feels the need to save the world, even if the world stands in their way.

Before a Copley Square rally held on the first Friday of December, students from AB's Sunrise chapter (they call their chapters "hubs") raise awareness in East Commons. Armed with a trifold-poster and a few dozen leaflets, these activists eagerly make their case.

Interest from passersby is relatively sparse, but the half-dozen members there during first lunch don't seem to mind. Gathered around their cafeteria table, they're already planning the next move; they've decided to move on from their signature sidewalk chalk, as it turns to slush. About halfway through the period, a Sunrise member points to a pair of maps on their poster, showing the effects of sea-level rise on southern Louisiana. Sila Inanoglu ('20) slams the table three times: "It loses a football field of land every hour!"

This sense of impatient indignation comes up time and time again when following Sunrise. One of the most common refrains among Sunrisers is, "We have eleven years," a reference to the UN report that recommends substantial action by 2030. The movement features this slogan, prominently in chants at rallies, on social media, and on posters around the school.

Nowhere is this indignation louder, though, than at the climate strikes held

every few months. And while raising awareness can be valuable in its own right, in many ways, a strike is the short-term culmination of Sunrise Acton's various outreach efforts. As Sunrise Acton press leader Sophie Cooke ('21) noted, "we chalk to get people to come to the strike, so that's how we would gauge our success."

If we use turnout as the gauge, Sunrise Acton's greatest success was at the September 20th strike, which brought out approximately four dozen AB students and over seven million worldwide. For Cooke, what sets Sunrise apart from other environmental organizations is this sense that they are "building [a movement] from the ground up."

"[W]e're... making politicians aware... that [climate change is] something that a large percentage of people who are about to become voting age or who just turned voting age are going to care about. So they need to respond to that if they want to continue to be in office."

Sunrise's frustration with the political establishment and the older generation extends beyond party lines. Sunrise Acton was founded after Inanoglu and Emily Richardt ('20) grew frustrated at the Democratic National Committee for ignoring climate questions during the July presidential debate. Meanwhile, Sunrise rose to prominence nationally with a 2018 sit-in outside the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a protest headlined by newly-elected representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cor-

tez.

Sunrise is frequently associated with the Democratic Party's younger, progressive wing led by Ocasio-Cortez. This is not just due to age; Sunrise is at the forefront of pushing for a Green New Deal (GND), an ambitious plan to "achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions, create millions of good, high-wage jobs, invest in infrastructure, secure clean air water and food, and repair and prevent the historic oppression of frontline and vulnerable communities."

The GND is based on a view of the climate crisis centered around the role of corporate greed and structural inequality; a recent tweet by the national movement likened the fossil fuel industry to "a modern extension of settler-colonialism." Meanwhile, the consequences of climate change "more strongly affect minority groups who are least responsible for it," explains Cooke.

"The great thing, I think, about the social justice aspect is that it is really important in the scheme of politics and political action...because it's not just like, oh, there are some polar bears dying. It's like, there are people who are going to die, and you need to step up as a politician and take action."

After the resolution was introduced in Congress by Ocasio-Cortez and Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey, conservative lawmakers slammed it as a socialist wishlist, preferring to solve the acknowledged problem of climate change through private innovation or clean-energy subsidies. The GND

resolution quickly failed in the Republican-controlled Senate, with a vote that Democrats called a "stunt." According to Reuters, Democrats contended that the fourteen-page resolution, which is short on specifics, is not meant to be considered as a piece of legislation, but rather "designed to spur debate."

In many ways, Sunrise spurs debate. That isn't to say that they aren't thinking about the specifics: just last Thursday, Sunrise hubs nationwide voted to endorse Bernie Sanders and his climate proposal in the Democratic presidential primary. Sunrise Acton spends most of its time making a case to strike-goers, but of the students who spoke to us at the September strike in Boston or March walkout here at AB, hardly any of them focused on the Green New Deal. As Hwan Huh ('20) put it on the commuter rail platform in September, "it's definitely going to be the problem of our generation. And I think it's better that we all start now rather than wait until we start noticing the problems."

Speaking on behalf of Sunrise, Cooke welcomed more casual participants, or those with different political views; what's more important to her is making their presence felt to politicians. In that endeavor, they have found each other.

Speaking about the power of a strike, Cooke remarked that "When you're in a group of people that big who all care about it so much, you don't so much feel like, oh, me not recycling, something is going to hurt the planet. You're not focused on those smaller things. You're

focused on the fact that we have a huge group of people who really care about something."

What holds this huge group of people together is not just the Green New Deal. It's a passion for "real change" and a willingness to fight. It's a growing impatience at decades of inaction, at home and on the world stage. What brings this crowd together is a sense that "we have 11 years"—and it's better if we all start now.

Sunrise Acton is already looking ahead to the next major strike, on Earth Day in April. Just this past weekend they announced a formal Sunrise Club at AB, a designation which gives them more freedom to advertise on school grounds.

The Green New Deal has now been endorsed (in one way or another) by every major Democratic presidential candidate; at the national level, Sunrise has unequivocally made their presence felt. But for Sunrise, in Acton and across the country. This is the fight they've been asking for, petitioning for, chanting on the steps of the Statehouse for. This is the fight they got.

People from all walks of life are riled up about climate change; people on all sides are riled up about the Green New Deal. For these next eleven years and counting, Sunrise wouldn't have it any other way.

*For those who are interested: AB alum Varshini Prakash, executive director and co-founder of the national Sunrise Movement, will speak at the Willard School Auditorium in Concord on Jan. 21st, from 7:30-9:00.*

## Taking Initiatives to Improve Mental Wellness at ABRHS

By ADITYA RAMAN '23  
*Spectrum Staff*

Recently, ABRHS initiated an effort to develop new practices geared towards promoting mental health and helping students achieve academic success and overall well-being. The administration has sent out several surveys since 2016 to gather feedback from students and adults about the academic environment. The responses led to changes in many aspects of AB life, specifically changes aimed at alleviating stress. After enforcing these new policies the past few school years, the administration sent out a survey once more to chart any effects these policies may have had on mental wellness among the student body.

The initial surveys in 2016 asked about student happiness, feelings of safety, and support systems within the community; they also touched upon more tangible topics, including homework load, midyears and finals, and school start times. While most students felt comfortable at school, the educational expectations and the start time seemed to cause excessive stress for many. Because it's harder to pinpoint the few students who were struggling and help them specifically, the school chose to make changes that affected the the student body at large. Both mid-years and finals were removed to reduce the intense studying and stress associated with high-stakes assessments, while the overall homework load was reduced to ensure students experienced less stress associated with constant daily assignments. In addition, the school start time was pushed back half an hour so students could sleep longer and focus more during the day.

With these changes in place, the school conducted a new round of surveys the school conducted last

spring. This survey, nearly identical to the one from three years prior, allowed the administration to easily compare the responses and gauge the effects of these initiatives on students lives. According to the recent survey, the number of students facing stress-related problems such as headaches and fatigue dropped from 84% in 2016 to 74% in 2019. Further, compared to an average of six and a half hours of sleep each night in 2016, the current average is seven hours. Still, only 5% of AB's students sleep nine hours or more a night as recommended for teens by the National Sleep Foundation. An additional interesting finding of the survey was a list of words that students would use to describe the school. Among the top words submitted were "stressful," "competitive," and "challenging" in both 2016 and in 2019. While the initiatives decreased stress symptoms and increased sleep hours on average, their impact on student perceptions of the academic environment are relatively minor. Furthermore, the words associated with the school have not changed for the better, indicating that students perhaps do not feel a change in the school's atmosphere.

The general trend of the survey responses reflects many individual students' thoughts. We asked senior Nitika Iyer ('20) about her thoughts on the high school's environment. She strongly believes that there is a stress culture at AB because "people feel the need to share their grades" which causes unnecessary pressure because they "are constantly comparing themselves to their peers." When students compare their accomplishments to those of others, they can easily feel discouraged and develop low self-esteem. When considering how the changes affected her individually, she thought that "pushing back the start time

has helped." While some students have taken advantage of the later start time, according to the 2019 survey, students have not been getting any more sleep, likely because they go to sleep later than they did when school began at an earlier time. While she may agree with the change in start time, Iyer does not think that "eliminating midyears and finals has helped student wellness" because "in life, there are going to be stressful situations which are mimicked during midyear and finals week." Iyer also said that stress is not necessarily a bad thing and that it can be "extremely beneficial and [motivating] if used correctly." Instead of removing all sources of stress, she recommends that ways of handling stress should be taught more thoroughly to AB students. This approach would be easier to accomplish than trying to fully ban the sharing of grades and the comparing of oneself to others.

While the current situation may not fully reflect the administra-

tion's aspirations, there has been an improvement in the last couple of years, where students were in a much worse environment according to AB alum Sindhura Devalaraja ('16). Calling the atmosphere "toxic," she saw that other students "were caught up in the competition to be the best" which led to an unfriendly classroom and school environment. Interestingly, she also said that "teachers wanted their classes to be difficult for people to pass" and "were happy when the average test grade was low." Furthermore, Devalaraja says that "each class would usually assign two hours of homework a night," and although the school tried to have "homework-free weekends," there would be enough homework assigned for Tuesday that students would need to do work on Saturday and Sunday anyways. The administration attempted reforms even before 2016, but, similar to the more recent ones, they had little to no effect.

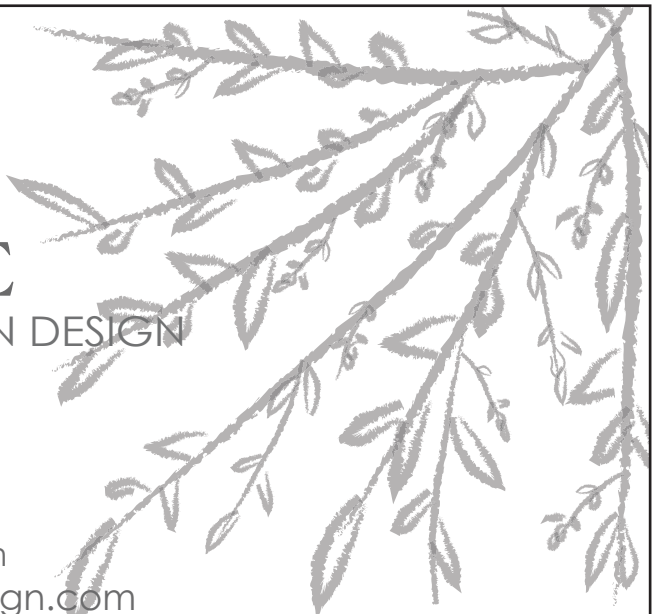
Regardless of the initiatives' suc-

cess, it is good to see that the school recognizes the student body's stress and mental health problems and that they are trying to improve it. Student competitiveness is something that the faculty cannot control, so focusing on what can be changed to reduce student stress was a wise decision on their part. Unfortunately, the initiatives that have been put into effect have only led to minor improvements over the past three years, which seems to be the pattern for every change made in the last decade or so. Whether AB needs to create new reforms or just needs to wait for the full effect of the reforms to take place, significant improvements on the mental health of ABRHS students are still in development. As time goes on, it is becoming more apparent that eliminating all stress for students may not ever yield any significant effects; instead, ABRHS should consider teaching ways to manage stress, which can benefit students long after receiving their diplomas.



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# News

## The Future of the Acton-Boxborough Quiz Bowl Team

By ANUSHKA WANI '21  
Publicity and Finance Manager

Every Tuesday and Thursday, students gather in Room 256W. If you walk past, you'll hear the whoops and cheers of excited students or the ominous shouts of "Neg-5!" Walking past one of their afternoon practices, I couldn't help but wonder what was getting them all riled up. To fulfill my curiosity, I wandered into a meeting to get the full Quiz Bowl experience.

In a typical meeting, team members push together a group of desks and set out the buzzer system that they treat with respect and reverence. The members gather around and simulate a tournament environment, with Quiz Bowl leader Basil Sousounis reading questions from the treasured packets. The other members are divided into two teams and then, the fun begins. Questions are read and tension builds as the members scramble to buzz in and shout their answers at the acting moderator. As the members continue to answer correctly, they congratulate each other, throwing around phrases like "what a GOAT" and "NICE." But even when a member answers incorrectly, the positive attitude doesn't cease.

Instead, they boost each other up with encouraging words like "next time" and "oh so close." After an hour of fun and occasional conflict from "rage buzzing," participants are left with a sense of contentment. According to Quiz Bowl captain Chris Sousounis, this atmosphere creates "[a] positive feedback loop. All you have to do is just try it out, see if you like it. And if you like it, maybe you'll come back."

The love of trivia was exceedingly clear; Chris describes Quiz Bowl as a place for members to "come together and bond over this like, really idiosyncratic love of obscure knowledge." Meanwhile, Basil sees it as an opportunity to "extend [his] enthusiasm" for academics and beyond.

"Look!" he says, gesturing to the meeting around him, "We're reading pop culture packets right now. This is what we do. We're not just about academics, and we're definitely not just about memorization, or being smart. Like Quiz Bowl's not a smart-kid club. Quiz Bowl is just a club where you can go and learn about whatever you want to learn about—and have fun."

Quiz Bowl is currently diligently preparing for the national high school tournament in May,

but they still make sure that the joy of trivia is not lost amidst the hard work. Basil despises strategies based on rote memorization, preferring to think of Quiz Bowl as a game of "skill and anticipation." The meetings are designed to give the exposure and practice that the players need, without having to resort to dreary study methods. Basil commented on a fellow teams study methods, saying "Some poor child on Boston Latin said that he reads four hours of Wikipedia everyday. And he said that on live TV, so I was pretty sad for him." Instead of, er Wikipedia, Quiz Bowl relies on online practice servers, such as Protobowl and Quiz DB, along with bi-weekly meetings to motivate and prepare players, placing an emphasis on simulating tournament conditions while fostering community spirit. "At practice, we're always working in teams in groups" says Chris, "[you have to] trust your team. You have to be able to trust that your teammates will know the answer. Good teamwork skills like that, I feel you can't really get at a lot of other academic clubs."

Basil agrees that this laid-back camaraderie is what sets Quiz Bowl apart from other more "pompous" academic teams, such as Science Olympiad and Aca-

ademic Decathlon, aka SciOly and Acadec. In the middle of one of our interviews, Basil got into an argument with a Science Olympiad member, remarking that "SciOly doesn't care about their freshmen. Quiz Bowl really cares about their freshmen and sophomores." Unlike other academic clubs, which run on inward competition, Quiz Bowl "[has] very little inward competition," notes Basil. Even when choosing members to go to Nationals, "at Quiz Bowl we don't let you study or work hard, just so you can be told that you can't go to a tournament, [you] can't go to states, [or you] can't go to Nationals." Quiz Bowl tries to build the best team they can by attending more tournaments and letting their newer members compete so that, as Chris says, "they aren't getting bogged down with all the better players...so they can get...a better feel for how to compete as a set as a team unit." In general, Quiz Bowl tries to be as inclusive as they can, even in the process of recruiting new members. If you want to join Quiz Bowl, you can just walk in and join. According to Chris, "everyone has the capacity to do well in Quiz Bowl. You just need to put in some effort."

All the effort the team has made has definitely paid off. Two years

ago, AB scored in the top 10% in the nation. However, it's not only tournament results that are on the mind of Quiz Bowl members. With Basil's departure looming over the team, it's been an effort to try and gather more members who can stay and maintain the team's momentum. Last season was mostly a rebuilding year after the loss of many seasoned seniors; the current members want to avoid that situation this time around. When asked about what goals he had for the club, Basil focused on "[wanting] to keep that success going. But also [making] sure that [they] don't focus only on [their] top players and [losing] sight of keeping the club successful year after year." More than anything else, the captains want Quiz Bowl to become a more well known club, a club with a definitive place in the school, a place for trivia lovers to bond in years to come.

Basil is hopeful: "If you're looking for a club that is fun, is competitive and is successful, and will accept you and help you become better. become smarter, become faster, a better thinker, a better logician, a lot of different things, you know. You want to join Quiz Bowl because Quiz Bowl has all of that. Ready as soon as you walk in the door."

## Research Club: Supporting the Scientific Process

By RIYA SHAH '22  
Spectrum Staff

Last year, a friend and I attempted to create a project for the regional science fair. As biology nerds, we were ecstatic to be coming up with our own experiments, breaking away from the structured labs in school. However, after the first few weeks, we became unmotivated, unproductive, and confused about what our next steps would be. Although we were initially excited about the experiment, we couldn't follow through with our ideas or create a succinct goal. Starting off with a concept may feel easy, but developing it into an entire project can be a huge challenge.

You've probably heard about the "Scientific Process" since elementary school, but putting it into practice, especially on your own, can be really difficult. Taking on a science fair project is a big commitment and a lot to put on your plate; however, if you follow through with it, it builds the necessary skills to succeed in your career even after high school. Those who are successful go on to make a difference in all sorts of fields, and pave the way for more revolutionary scientists. To provide guidance for the process of coming up with an idea, conducting research and sharing your work, a new club has sprouted up this year: Research Club.

Research is like an onion: it has layers. From the beginning of time, our curiosity and innovation has built layers upon layers of knowledge, and the onion continues to grow. Research is the building block of societal growth; without it, our society could not thrive or advance. Ritvik Pulya, cofounder of the Research Club, noted that "in every field, research is the foundation. Without it, we can't keep moving forward." Most people would agree. We take advantage of the benefits of research in our daily lives. Technology, medicine, business and almost every other aspect of our lives have been assembled

over generations of research and testing; science has proven itself, yet we still see our fair share of anti-vaxxers, flat-earthers and climate change deniers slowly creeping their way into society. Why? According to *Scientific American*, there are two types of thinkers. Type 1 thinkers tend to tap into less tiring cognitive processes when faced with a problem, while Type 2 thinkers look for more cues in the environment. The problem arises when the "easy way out" is insufficient. It is during this kind of conflict when people choose opinion over scientific research, which can lead to ignorance or irrationality. Thus, it is important to work towards being Type 2 thinkers in order to help societal progress.

For those who tend to practice more statistical and analytical thinking, you might thrive as a researcher. However, it's hard to get started on your own. A lot of people have had similar experiences as I did, where an idea fell flat without guidance. Antara Pal, cofounder of Research Club, explains, "When I was doing my own research, I was super lost....I didn't really have any mentors or guidance, but working with a teacher helped the process for me, and I wanted to be that type of leader for other students." Students need guidance and encouragement to articulate their ideas. Antara describes her role in Research Club as "helping people with their communication skills, presenting their works, and overall helping people to be creative and add their perspectives to the scientific world." The club also supports group projects alongside individual pursuits, providing an opportunity for teamwork and bonding between members of our community with similar interests. Teams are often helpful in tackling complex and important problems. They often produce better work because they take on more ambitious projects, bring complementary knowledge and apply diverse research

methods, although the benefits of teamwork extend far beyond the laboratory.

Clubs like Science Team, Envirothon and BioBuilders have already found their niche in our AB community. What makes Research Club different? Antara says that "Research Club is more about doing your own experiments and being innovative and creative, while other STEM clubs are more based off of textbook knowledge and they are more information based...Research Club is about creating your own ideas and being original." Although each project requires previous research and background knowledge, each experiment is interactive and unique. People learn in many different ways: visually, audibly, etc. However, for many, hands-on and visual learning can lead to increased retention and better problem solving skills. As Antara admits "[I] had a very textbook level knowledge of science, like [I] knew the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell, but research is more abstract." Moreover, the cofounders believe that presenting one's work at a science fair, for example, can have a huge impact on one's abilities and general skills. According to Ritvik, "it's really about creativity and it helps me with comprehensive skills and thinking outside of

the box. Sometimes you get stuck with these problems and you have to work your way around it. It applies to life because there will always be obstacles you need to find your way around." Research is all about problem solving and learning to improve what you have. By giving students the opportunity to compete in MSEF, the Massachusetts Science and Engineering Fair, Antara and Ritvik are spreading the benefits of these events with the rest of the AB community.

It's pretty well known that an

interest in STEM is prevalent in our community. For now, the club is trying to raise awareness about the science fair to those who have not heard about it. In the future, however, Research Club aspires to foster research as a concept, "for fun... For doing it just for the sake of doing research." Research is more than just science fairs—it's a form of play. Most importantly, it's a way of improving our overall understanding of science around us and using that knowledge to positively impact the world.

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# Morality

## AB Budget Changes

By MICHAEL CHENG '20  
Managing & News Editor

(News article)

After a year of program expansion enabled by favorable budgetary conditions, ABRSD is moving forward with what Superintendent Peter Light referred to as a “modified level-funding budget.” A level-funded budget, whereby the district maintains the current level of educational services while accounting for changes in enrollment and staffing costs, allows the district to minimize its impact on taxpayers in a year where it has already asked for (and received) the funding to build a new consolidated Gates-Douglas elementary school complex.

The Superintendent’s recommended budget, which is due to be formally presented on Saturday, January 25th, still anticipates a 3.3% budget increase in line with the past few years. Fixed costs associated with salaries and benefits, which together constitute over 80% of the district’s expenditures, are primarily driving this budgetary allowance. The projected personnel numbers, including the cost-of-living adjustment, may be subject to change, as the school is currently negotiating a new three-year contract with the AB teacher’s union.

While the budget does not fund any additional salaried positions, it creatively fulfilled certain high-priority requests (hence the modified level-service budget). For example, the current administrative data manager at ABRHS will become an academic dean, a promotion offset by decreasing the furniture budget by \$23,000. Another \$15,000 reduction in the furniture budget will lighten the full teaching load of Phys Ed Department Leader Mr. James. Through this sort of budgetary prioritization and rearrangement, as well as the measured use of financial reserves, the district is making a concerted effort to reduce its impact on taxpayers.

One of the most contentious

topics in the budget discussions this year has been the possibility of implementing universal all-day Kindergarten. All-day K, which is currently offered alongside a traditional half-day option, asks parents for \$4500 in annual tuition. The vast majority of districts in the state offer tuition-free all-day K, and about 80% of the Class of 2032 opted for the full-day program. Although the school has provided scholarships to some low-income students, many school committee members saw this arrangement as a fundamental issue of equity.

Completely eliminating tuition for this upcoming school year would add about a million dollars to the operating budget, and some have found the literature surrounding all-day K’s effectiveness in improving student outcomes to be mixed and unconvincing; when AB looked at its own data, it found large fluctuations year-to-year on whether full-day students were more prepared in the spring.

Another crucial factor in this consideration is the possibility of increased state aid as a result of the recently adopted Student Opportunity Act (or SOA). The SOA sought to update the state funding formula originally passed in 1994 to support modern-day educational need. The 1994 law attempted to make schools across the state more equitable by allocating more funds to poorer districts. As a result, AB’s state aid has been stagnant over the last few years (since by law it cannot decrease), but the SOA’s commitment to increased educational funding is forecasted to change that, with the only question being how quickly and by how much. Implementing tuition-free full-day K would speed that timeline along, but even so, the district forecasts that an uptick may not be in store until 2024. In the meantime, the district is being a bit more conservative; it has used \$180,000 in reserves to reduce tuition by \$750, with further phase-outs expected in the next few years, once the state funding situation has gained a bit more clarity.

## Ivory Towers in Higher Education

By BELLE HU '22  
Spectrum Staff

Many people dream of attending an Ivy League university, but those who succeed rarely realize the foggy realm they are about to enter. These prestigious schools, which tend to emphasize humanities and the liberal arts, often promote an “ivory tower” mindset: students focus on intellectual pursuits that matter little to the average person, distancing themselves from real-world problems.

While ivory towers may be rooted in egalitarianism, they foster a learning environment that focuses on issues irrelevant to the very communities they seek to help. They can cloud one’s judgement, prompting students to view their credentials with hubris and entrench themselves in their alma mater’s aloofness about the world.

In addition, wealth often plays a role in selecting which students can attend an ivory tower to secure better connections for future jobs; for instance, wealth enables people to pursue extracurriculars and gives them the resources to get into these colleges. Individuals lacking the platform or ability to enact change through an ivory tower education may have experienced these problems but have no prestige to enforce a solution. An ivory tower education alone may not be enough to enact change and often needs lived experience in conjunction to be effective. Although credentials from a prestigious university garner support for a cause, a lack of experience on part of the individual can inhibit their progress because they are disconnected from the communities that they want to help. Nevertheless, an ivory tower platform can propel people towards change by being an ally to an oppressed community, which is better than taking no action at all.

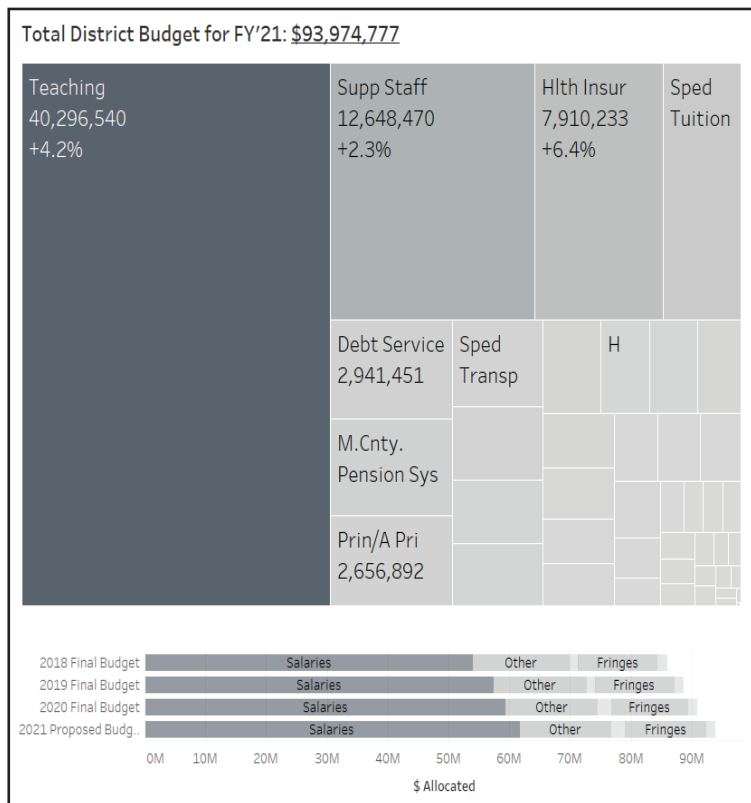
Granted, everyone may not feel fulfilled when fighting for justice. A current-day example presents itself in Pete Buttigieg, mayor of

South Bend, Indiana and a top Democratic contender for the 2020 presidential election. As a Harvard graduate and a Rhodes Scholar with bachelor degrees in history and literature, he holds impressive qualifications that enhance his platform and ability to enact change. However, these accomplishments were no help in connecting him with crucial African-Americans voters, most evident when he failed to address the racist practices employed by the South Bend police; Buttigieg, despite his myriad of skills from an ivory tower, still core problems in his own community.

On the other hand, activists often try to publicize their grievances to bring about change, but their lack of a platform and connections lessens the impact of their message. Despite having lived the issues they seek to alleviate, these activists have limitations in their ability to enact change. For instance, the water crisis in Flint, Michigan highlights how advocacy falls short without the publicity that comes with ivory tower connections. The lead-laced water prompted a huge health crisis, killing twelve people and exposing inhabitants to Legionaire’s disease. Although residents participated in mile-long marches to push for clean water and tested eight hundred samples of lead in water, state officials denied the seriousness of the problem for months. It wasn’t until Michigan’s governor finally

announced that the city would switch to a different source that the city began to gain enough attention and resources to clean their water. The people’s attempts to communicate urgency initially failed because they could not be heard, whereas the governor already had the necessary platform but took no immediate action. This event demonstrates how without ivory tower connections, the state failed to immediately address the people’s crisis. While it may be true that the protests and advocacy for cleaner water gradually led to change, the extended waiting period emphasizes that immediate action on an issue requires an ivory tower platform.

Although it may be better if an ivory tower education could directly benefit the community, people with this type of education can still enact change by understanding the problems of the communities they seek to help. Thus, the problem lies not in the ivory tower and the platform it provides, but in the detachment between these students and societal issues. Overall, it is crucial to have a balance of support when advocating for change, with a mix of people that have influence and people who understand the solution—groups with a platform contribute necessary publicity and credibility, while those with experience can connect to and understand the community. Ultimately, a variety of groups must collaborate on a movement to ensure its success, effectiveness, and legitimacy.



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## Virtue Signaling in Discussions

By SOPHIE ZHANG '22  
Spectrum Staff

Society is immersed with signals, easy ways to denote meanings. A green light means go; red means stop. Harvard implies intelligence; Gucci indicates affluence. Likewise, by bashing Fox, one exhibits liberal and progressive values. In a 2015 Spectator article, British journalist James Bartholomew popularized the phrase “virtue signalling:” to advertise one’s virtue through empty actions solely to prove moral superiority and boost reputation. The virtue signaller claims to have deep concern for an issue. However, the concern is mostly disingenuous, only serving to augment their vanity. Many call out virtue signallers for their hypocrisy since they never take actual action to uphold the morals that they supposedly support. However, dismissing virtue signalling altogether ends discussion and encourages dogmatism.

Many people disregard virtue signalling because of its vain nature. In reality, it is so intertwined with society that we can never totally remove it. Differentiating insincerity from pure morality is nearly impossible. According to psychologists Drs. Jillian Jordan

and David Rand in a New York Times article, “even when people are unobserved—and thus have no incentive to signal their virtue—their sense of moral outrage is influenced by their desire to be seen positively by others.” We don’t just seek external validation from others; we also feel obligated to be, and act, like a good person. Especially online, every post and text is intentional. Everyone virtue signals, wanting to portray their best selves or at least aversion that conforms to moral values.

When virtue and disingenuity are blurred, is it still moral to call out virtue signalling? Calling out virtue signalling itself is virtue signalling: an attempt to appear above the absurdity when they only fuel the competition for moral superiority. Furthermore, doubting everyone’s sincerity leads to a dismissal of their ideas: their opinions are judged as invalid compared to our own. We promptly ignore virtue signalling and become annoyed, ending any further discussion on the topic and reinforcing dogmatism. Moreover, rejecting others’ “fake” morality also fuels our pride. Discrediting their opinions can help take back some power.

Moreover, people measure oth-

ers’ sincerity by how grand their display of virtue is when, in reality, all actions matter. Most cannot afford bigger acts of charity such as volunteering or donations. They may be busy with work or struggling to pay rent, but even small actions can have big impacts. Shunning virtue signalling easily makes people too scared to share their opinions. Discussion ends, preventing the freedom of expression due to individuals’ fears of being called out.

On the other hand, concern for virtue signalling may become true virtue later on and create change. Although the initial intent may be duplicitous, real education and action can still occur. Expressing these ideas instead of discrediting them, as well as researching and exploring the impacts, would create a dialogue about these issues. Indeed, people should always keep in mind that they can do more than just virtue signal; for example, they can convey their morality through volunteering, donations, or simply put, effective action.

In general, virtue signalling can be toxic, but continuously calling others out for it is even more so. Instead, we must spur more discussion by not dismissing others’ ideas.

# Morality

## The Moral Philosophies and Ethics of *The Good Place*

By JESSICA ZHANG & SOPHIE ZHANG '22  
Spectrum Staff

We all love TV, right? It's the perfect way to take a break from studying and immerse ourselves in vapid, yet addictive dramas whose characters care for little more than athleticism and sexual attraction. While these TV shows have been the networks' bread-and-butter, programs like *The Good Place* are building a new wave of meaningful and thought-provoking shows. The show tackles ethical conundrums as it follows its four main characters—Eleanor, Chidi, Tahani, and Jason—through their experiences in the afterlife.

According to the show, the afterlife comprises of two realms: the Good Place and the Bad Place. Humans gain or lose points while on Earth based on their morality—if they don't accumulate enough points to get into the Good Place, they are sent to the Bad Place. Despite being told this by Michael, the so-called architect of their afterlife “neighborhood,” the main characters find themselves reassessing their moral standards. Through their revelations, *The Good Place* evaluates the balance between pursuing happiness and upholding morality, explores the social aspects that affect our ethics, and ultimately forces its viewers to consider their own morality. (Warning: spoilers ahead)

Why should we be moral? While Eleanor never questioned her immoral behavior on Earth, she starts reflecting on it when

she realizes that she was accidentally put into the Good Place. To avoid being discovered and being sent to the Bad Place, Eleanor decides to change, so she asks Chidi, a philosophy professor, for help. By at least attempting to become a better person, Eleanor assumes that she deserves to be in the Good Place, regardless of her past. This concept is called moral desert: if you perform a good deed, you think your action should be reciprocated or rewarded.

Unfortunately, that expectation of reward outweighs the positive effect of the initial good deed. Eleanor soon realizes this and reconsiders her own actions. The selfish motive behind her attempt to change actually compromised her morality. For this reason, Eleanor and the gang are sent back to Earth later with no memory of the afterlife to determine whether they could become better people without moral desert. Michael ultimately interferes with this test by nudging them together because he knows they can help each other become moral. Hence, the question of whether they could have become moral without this interaction remains unanswered.

However, Michael's guidance demonstrates that people can be convinced or taught to emulate moral behavior. In general, one's surroundings and friends affect moral development. Tahani, for example, always considered herself moral for raising large sums of money for charities. However, she did so only because she wanted to

become more famous than her sister, with whom she had a long-standing competition. Tahani struggles to realize how this desire for attention made her selfish and inconsiderate until she takes Chidi's classes on philosophy. Eventually, she recognizes her mistakes and learns to care more for others, even going so far as to make amends with her sister. Her experience demonstrates that with the help of others, we can become better people, something often more difficult to accomplish alone.

Unfortunately, becoming a “better person” in and of itself is no easy task. Chidi struggles with this the most as he wonders how people should balance morality and their own—or others'—wellbeing? For instance, followers of Kantianism hold themselves to very strict guidelines on how to live: they must never lie, steal, or break a promise, regardless of the situation.

Attempting to follow this doctrine leaves Chidi grappling with a moral conundrum when Eleanor confesses that she does not belong in the Good Place. Promising to keep her secret, it physically pains him when he is forced to hide the truth. However, he knows that if he reveals her secret, he'll be the reason why she gets sent to the Bad Place. By teaching her, he finds an uneasy balance because he's helping her become more ethical, which could make her actually earn her spot in the Good Place.

However, Chidi struggles with even the simplest decisions on Earth because he constantly

searches for the moral truth. For example, when his best friend asks him for his opinion on a pair of expensive, hideous cowboy boots that he'd just bought, Chidi can't choose between lying that he likes them and hurting his feelings with the truth. In an even more mundane situation, Chidi wants a blueberry muffin, but he just learned that migrant workers are abused to harvest the fruit. So can he indulge in a blueberry muffin? While Chidi struggles with these conundrums, he learns that in the time spent choosing an option, he hurts his relationships with his indecisiveness, annoying his friends by taking so long to make the “right” decision. Eventually, we find out that this is how Chidi loses “morality

points.” Despite his constant attempts to pick the more moral option, Chidi's inability to make a decision frustrated his friends and prevented them from enjoying themselves around him. The show suggests that ethics shouldn't be confusing—a good intention and a positive action is all people need to be moral.

*The Good Place* explores the various ideas and philosophies of morality, opening our eyes and encouraging our own exploration. As we enjoy an entertaining show, we can also pick up complex concepts and think about their application in our own lives. *The Good Place* analyzes so many different ways of morality that people follow but in practice don't actually work, so it argues moral subjectivism.



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The *Good Place* offers many perspectives on morality.  
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## How To Maximize Good Through Effective Altruism

By JESSICA ZHANG '22  
Spectrum Staff

Life is tough. Maybe it's an obvious statement, but life's overbearing toughness impacts every individual differently. One of the enduring questions of philosophical debate is asking what we can each do about it.

Throughout history, people have donated and volunteered, aiding those who were in need of charitable acts. But how should donors choose amongst the thousands of causes? We are emotional creatures, driven by passion and personal experiences, so it's natural to take action based on what we know and care about. Nevertheless, a movement called effective altruism, founded by philosophy professor William MacAskill, essentially encourages the complete opposite of this. If somebody's beloved dog were to die, they would most likely donate to an animal shelter rather than to cancer research, which perhaps never affected their life. However, effective altruism seeks to use data to maximize the amount of people being helped per dollar, with little regard for the morality of the intentions behind it. This way, contributions are more effective, hence the name. While effective altruism sounds beneficial on the surface, it should not be an absolute rule.

Examining the philosophy's roots, effective altruism is based on principles of utilitarianism. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart

Mill founded this concept, which focuses on maximizing the results of our benevolence and totally disregards personal reasons. Utilitarianism is a hedonistic theory—it encourages us to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Essentially, effective altruism is about maximizing the happiness of all individuals in a society through data and research; in this pursuit, “all lives have equal value.” Moreover, according to the Effective Altruism website, “If you earn the typical income in the US, and donate 10% of your earnings each year to the Against Malaria Foundation, you will probably save dozens of lives over your lifetime.” Effective altruism pushes people to generate the greatest impact, which is considered a larger measurement of morality according to its philosophical principles. This movement centers around using resources to help others in the most effective way.

Effective altruism can be beneficial in many ways. First of all, it pressures people to go against their own selfishness and to help in the most effective ways. With effective altruism, donors would be encouraged to donate more money assisting those in need without any personal incentive, but rather with a general sense of duty based on the principles of utilitarianism—they would want to create the greatest, most positive impact. Peter Singer, an Australian philosopher, stated that people achieve this sense of fulfillment from donating according to

effective altruism. This sensation may not have been an the primary motive that drove people to help, but helping others is inherently rewarding nonetheless. Tying back to utilitarianism, this fulfillment also comes from knowing that you helped as many people as you could. Ninety-six percent of donors in a sample study said that they donated out of conscience and a feeling of obligation to the rest of society. Furthermore, effective altruism promotes non-discrimination and supercedes biases, since it is based on research. For example, when Notre Dame burned down, “individuals, companies and institutions had donated or pledged... about \$950 million, to rebuild the damaged cathedral,” because it was so embedded in people's hearts. How-



Effective altruism disapproves of the cathedral's excessive funding.  
ONLINE SOURCE

ever, this money could have been used for more urgent causes, such as regional poverty.

Effective altruism may seem extremely beneficial to society, but it takes away the humanitarianism of donations and pits charities against each other. According to a study, 75% of people said that they donated because they felt passionate towards the cause. Effective altruism would take this incentive away because it only focuses on maximizing good, not people's intentions. Plus, helping some people, even if it is considered the lesser option according to effective altruism, is still helping people. By pitting charities against each other to determine which deserves a donation, some are invalidated. Moreover, effective altruists encourage people to

pursue a well-paid career, such as jobs in finance, to donate more. This essentially means sacrificing a major part of your life for others; it takes away your autonomy. A line must be drawn between personal happiness and charity. Furthermore, what effective altruists don't consider is that there are other ways of measuring one's morality, since they only focus on the consequences. Centering charity only around the results effectively transforms donations and volunteer work into a robotic motion instead of a heartfelt action.

Effective altruism seeks to be a universal principle, but it can't possibly encompass every situation. Situations are variable, and people must adapt to them, not follow a single unyielding rule. How can we judge which charity or cause is better to donate to? Effective altruism may not be necessary because it is important to donate to something you personally care about—that is the foundation of any charity. Maximizing good is beneficial to a certain point, but taking away the humanity of charity is stripping it of its very essence. We must find a way to level the importance of personal connections with the benefits and impacts of data-based philanthropy.

Charity is always good, and whether we should do it effectively or not has both favorable and unfavorable sides. Nevertheless, the most important thing is that we balance the intentions with the results.

# Morality

## Ctrl-C Ctrl-V: Moral Drawbacks of Therapeutic Cloning

By AISHA KARIM '23 & EMILY XU '23  
*Spectrum Staff*

When you think of cloning, you probably picture Dolly the Sheep or scenes from Jurassic Park. However, the cloning shown in popular culture is not the only type. Rather than duplicating an entire organism, therapeutic cloning creates stem cells to cure genetic diseases. The nucleus from a patient's cell is inserted into an egg, and after it gets fertilized, it divides into cells that can become any type of body cell. While the science of therapeutic cloning itself could revolutionize the medical sector, this invention may also cause harm to women involved in egg production, enable companies to offer fake services to profit, and perpetuate the immoral class divide.

Since therapeutic cloning requires female eggs, women could be put in harm's way if the science becomes too widespread. To collect the eggs necessary for the development of stem cells,

scientists need to recruit women to produce embryos. However, mass-producing embryos would be unethical and harmful for the women involved. The process of obtaining these gametes is a laborious and expensive operation, as the hormones necessary to induce ovulation often cause ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome, where the ovary becomes swollen and painful. Developing embryos to grow into fetuses only to harvest stem cells from them is generally considered immoral too because the fetus would be unable to grow into a human. The production of eggs would in and of itself create an ethical conundrum, but the harm that could befall the women providing these eggs creates even more cause for concern.

Apart from just hurting women, an uninformed use of therapeutic cloning could have severe medical consequences for patients as well. Therapeutic cloning works in tandem with gene therapy by replacing faulty cells with stem cells, which can cure a patient's genetic disease. The DNA would match the patient's own perfectly, so

there is no risk of the body rejecting the cells. However, the science isn't fully developed yet, and this method cannot cure every genetic disease. Many aren't aware of the potential risks and limited capabilities, so fake companies are able to prey on desperate people by offering to perform therapeutic cloning. These corporations are run by people who don't have proper qualifications or FDA approval. In some cases, the stem cells aren't even functioning, which poses a danger to patients. Injecting dead stem cells into the body could block blood flow and lead to a stroke. Families that are looking into cures for their loved ones may stumble upon websites advertising treatments for various diseases and end up paying thousands of dollars to a scam. Companies are taking advantage of innocent people for their benefit despite the immoral implications, and the problem will only be exacerbated due to the science's high costs.

On top of all these risks to participants, therapeutic cloning would widen the class divide

too by increasing lifespans—but mainly for the rich. The procedure could cure genetic diseases and prolong lives, but due to its costs, it would only be a viable option for the upper class. By increasing the lifespans of wealthy individuals, therapeutic cloning would inadvertently provide the rich with yet another economic and social advantage: the ability to work longer without the concern of old age. Meanwhile, the lower class would continue to struggle with genetic diseases and a lower quality of life.

Subsidizing therapeutic cloning may solve the numerous issues that come with it. If the government were to offer subsidies to companies working on therapeutic cloning, it would become more accessible to the masses and would slow the growing divide between the wealthy and poor. Governmental support would also help control fake companies' manipulation of desperate families. The government would be able to regulate business that could harm innocent lives. However, subsidizing therapeutic cloning would not

resolve every problem. It would be harmful to the women producing the gametes because having a government-endorsed program would enforce the idea that producing large quantities of eggs is safe. The opposite is true—a high rate of egg production could cause ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome.

At first, therapeutic cloning may seem appealing; after all, who wouldn't love curing genetic diseases, creating organs, and lowering the rejection rate of transplants. However, as this complex science develops, more issues will arise. Questions regarding morality, such as the origin of the eggs needed for these procedures, are hard to ignore. Fake stem cell companies could trick unknowing families into spending thousands of dollars, and the lower class may not ever be able to benefit from therapeutic cloning. Maybe one day all of us will somehow be modified by therapeutic cloning. Until then, it is our job to view these developments with a critical eye.

## The Cost of College, for the Rich

By KATHERINE LEE '23  
*Spectrum Staff*

What if, one day, in the blink of an eye, you became a soccer champion? Or a devoted rower? You didn't even have to do anything—no sweat, no grit, no effort. Poof! You are a star athlete. This is exactly what happened to two girls when their college applications seemed to describe lives that weren't theirs. It cost hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions of dollars for their parents. And the result was acceptance into some top notch schools, such as Yale and USC. A dream come true? Or fraud?

Parents doing everything possible to get their children into a good college isn't a new idea. Of course, parents want the best education and future for their kids. Now more than ever, higher education seems mandatory. It's almost a rite of passage, especially for children of the upper class. College is seen as the next phase of life, where children transition into adulthood and gain newfound independence. There are many examples of these types of glorified ideas causing immoral actions, such as unreasonable pressure on kids when it comes to school or sports. However, I'm going to focus on how money can play an unethical role in the glorified idea of college acceptance.

One example of bribery includes the recent infamous college admission scandal involving forty-four people, including actress Lori Loughlin from Full House and Felicity Huffman of Desperate Housewives. It was an elaborate scheme where wealthier parents could increase their kids' chances to attend some of the most elite schools in the nation. Huffman, for one, arranged for a test proctor to correct her daughter's SAT test in secret after her daughter had turned it in. As a result, Huffman's elder daughter received a score of 1420 on the SAT, which was 400 more points than what she had on her

PSAT. Huffman then planned to enact the same scheme later on for her younger daughter. As for Lori Loughlin, she and her husband arranged for their two daughters to be designated recruits for USC crew team for \$500,000 in order to make her children's resumes more appealing to the admission's offices, despite the fact that neither of them had any rowing experience. Each of these actions warrants time in prison along with staggering fines. However, one could argue that the intent of these parents was only to do the best for their children; only by following through with these actions did they lose sight of what was moral.

There seems to be a deciding factor in the process of acceptance: money. In the past, celebrity Dr. Dre, the cover name of the popular headphones company Beats, boasted about his daughter's acceptance into USC, and the notion that she had gotten in on her own merit. Although this may be partially true, fans were quick to point out the 70 million dollars in donations he had made just two years before, the building on campus named after him, and the fact that his family had quite the business reputation. The family had, in some way, guilted the university into acceptance. People acknowledge that Dr. Dre's daughter got in with an unfair advantage. But they simply

overlooked it, because the donation bettered the entire college community. In addition to this, having a lot of money isn't an immoral thing in and of itself, but it does create an unfair advantage over those who don't. Donations are just one example, but the wealthy can also afford to pay for expensive tuition.

So, here's the issue. The adult generation wants what's best for the next generation, and without a doubt, education is a large component in the equation. This is indisputable. Wealthy people have concluded that all it takes is a few hundred thousand dollars to buy whatever they want, an SAT score, an athletic background, and acceptance to a prestigious university. Although one can argue that it isn't unethical for the rich to use their money for their own benefit; it's the process of how people get there that muddies the waters of morality. Public donations are essential to support the mission of universities. If that's all the donation does, then that's perfectly fine. An act of philanthropy benefits the majority. However, there is often an assumed quid pro quo—an understood acceptance for the donor's children, and their children, and their children, and so on. Nevertheless, there is an obvious distinction between the public donation and private bribery. The latter is selfish, limiting, and illegal—enough said.



Wealth can influence college decisions.  
ONLINE SOURCE

## Amazon Goes Green

By JULIE CHEN '23  
*Spectrum Staff*

As people start to focus more on corporate activity in societal contexts, they start to ask questions about the moral responsibilities of massive corporations. The idea that such companies have roles other than maximizing profits is being quickly adopted by consumers. For instance, many organizations are pressuring large corporations to become more eco-friendly and improve working conditions. While corporations are indeed motivated by profit, social pressures can persuade them to change their policies to meet the public's changing demands, thus retaining favor among consumers.

One company that plans on adopting eco-friendly energy policies is Amazon. In early 2019, the massive e-commerce enterprise announced its commitment to a long-term renewable energy project with the intention of running on 80% renewable energy by 2024 and 100% renewable energy by 2030. Prior to this announcement, Amazon had failed to meet green-energy regulations by withholding information on their energy usage. Meanwhile, Dr. Tim Smith at the Minnesota Institute for Environment speaks to the ability of Amazon to promote sustainable living among its consumers, serving as a role model of sorts. Smith noted the importance of Amazon's declaration: "When one of the largest companies is saying [climate change] is real and human activity causes it and here is what we will do, it is exceedingly important and they deserve credit." The societal praise of Amazon's decision is sure to bear positive effects on the company's reputation. However, renewable energy is generally more costly, which would hurt the bottom line. But when a large

and well-known company is producing substantial revenue, their focus should not be on maximizing these profits but instead, to serve their environmental obligations.

In contrast to their environmental initiatives, Amazon is currently experiencing backlash from the working conditions at their warehouses. Workers describe it as "brutal," and some are even urinating in trash cans to meet deadlines. These warehouse employees resort to strikes in order to get their voice heard. Although businesses can save money by ignoring poor conditions, treating workers like machines detracts from their reputation. On Amazon Prime Day last year, warehouse employees staged strikes to protest inhumane working arrangements. Many people also attempted to boycott the unofficial holiday as a way to side with Amazon employees. If Amazon modified their methods, they would gain public approval by acknowledging the demands of their consumers. This acknowledgement gives companies the opportunity to enhance their reputation because customers know that their products come from a trustworthy source.

The public's concerns for environmental issues and unfair worker treatment have pressured leading businesses to reform their policies. By doing so, companies can improve their reputations and expand their influence on society as a whole. As Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos said regarding his company's environmental policies, "We're done being in the middle of the herd on this issue—we've decided to use our size and scale to make a difference." The decisions and actions of large corporations that recognize their consumers' opinions not only benefit the community but also promote the companies themselves.

# Morality

## Universal Morality in Cameroon

By MAYENLI COMFORT '23  
Spectrum Staff

Humans, no matter how close, feel isolated from one another. Whether culturally, linguistically or religiously, there are many differences that can inhibit our understanding of one another. However, at their core, humans are the same. The set of moral principles that influence the way we think and react may differ slightly among cultures, but there are still universal standards of behavior. The concept of "universal morality" is a testament to human similitude in both thinking and feeling. This article will focus on three of these universal ideals and examine how they are taught to the people of Northwestern Cameroon, called the grass fielders, in comparison to Western families.

What is universal morality? It is a set of ideals that are held and agreed upon by different people across time to be appropriate behavior. These ideals include deference to superiors, helping family, and respecting others' property. The grassfielders are a typical group of West Africans and share morals and values that have been preserved in West Africa through the ages. They were once animist but now are pre-

dominantly Christian. In general, they live in villages and small towns within the Northwest region and in the major cities of Cameroon.

The first "universal" moral ideal is deferring to superiors, which include elders and people in charge. The grassfielders, like many other people, believe in reverence to elders and leaders. As people age, they gain more respect. The West is no stranger to this idea, as it too honors the insight that the elderly have to offer. This is evident in our choice of leaders, where the average age of US presidents is 55, and that of senators is 61. Despite similar form, veneration in the West and among the grassfielders differs quite a bit when it comes to who to respect. People in the grassfields are expected to respect any elder—be it by two years or twenty. Meanwhile, Westerners tend to pay more respect to those who are significantly older than them, or hold immense authority over them like teachers or bosses.

The second ideal is helping family. Family, an institution at the very core of society, has been valued globally. The grassfielders are no exception: family is an essential part of life. Cameroonian piety begins at an early age where children are expected to assist their parents in daily activities. Like my mother al-

ways tells me, "If you can't help me now that I need very little from you, what will you do when I'm old and can't fend for myself?" Piety and dues owed to family are also practiced in Western cultures, where whole days are dedicated to parents. Mother's and Father's days are holidays where children give gifts and appreciate their parents for all their support. In some homes, children relieve their parents of responsibility by doing chores. Though in different ways, both groups cherish parents and families.

The last ideal is respecting others' property. Whether it be taking away material property or intangible concepts like virtue and integrity, disregarding others' belongings is frowned upon. In Cameroon, stealing can result in punishments as severe as death. This ideal is similar in the West, as evidenced by its most common religion—Christianity. The Ten Commandments state, "Thou shalt not steal," affirming the view that stealing is seen as sinful. Thus, both societies see theft as a highly immoral act.

Despite being separated geographically, the grassfielders and the West utilize similar moral standards. Our morals, therefore, are the ultimate proof of our similarities and our shared humanity.

## Social Media Morals

By NEHA SARAVANAN '22  
Spectrum Staff

Social media has captivated billions of young people since it burst onto the scene in the early 2000s. Nowadays, the majority of social media users fall between the ages of 13 and 34, and although most sites forbid users younger than thirteen, it is alarmingly easy for younger users to circumvent these regulations.

The main concern with social media is the problematic messages it can promote, especially to younger, more impressionable users. Social media is full of superficiality; posters only show what they want outsiders to see. The resulting divergence between reality and what is shown on social media is something that many ignore, eventually leading to fallacious goals and unrealistic standards which can have drastic influences on mental health: rates of depression and anxiety have gone up significantly in recent years.

However, social media can also facilitate the widespread exchange of ideas. Movements such as the Arab Spring and March For Our Lives used social media to create political momentum. Through social media, organizers of movements are able to provide updates

to those involved.

Social media allows people to express themselves and spread any personal forms of content, including hateful, misleading or unrealistically glamorous messages. Ultimately, though, it is up to the individual to determine whether the benefits of social media outweigh myriad costs. On one hand, people rely on social media for mass communication in a rapidly-changing world, but unrealistic standards threaten the mental health of younger users especially. The morality of social media lies in its influence, and its influence lies in the hands of its users. Social media offers the chance to spread ideas to millions of people; it is up to the user to choose what they want to post, like, share, Tweet, Snapchat, and more.



Smartphone apps can be harmful. ONLINE SOURCE

## Selling Out, Cont.

By ANJALI RAMAN '20  
Editor-In-Chief

...groups, earning this salary is a way not only to bring a unique and worldly perspective to immoral situations while earning a living wage that enables career growth, but to earn a comfortable wage. Judging the morality of a profession based on its participant's desire to make money seems unfair. In most professions, from politics to religion to education, there are corrupt individuals bent on making money, yet becoming a senator or a clergyman is not "selling out."

This is not to say that I condone

any of these consulting firms' reprehensible actions; I simply believe that labelling a twenty-two-year-old a "sellout" isn't a fair representation of many college students' motives. This label, I think, is more representative of the at-times unfair moral responsibility with which we task the youngest, most-equipped members of the workforce. While more established members of the workforce may continue to participate in "sell-out" actions, new members are held to a higher moral standard. Our complacency about different generations' moral responsibilities, perhaps, is what needs to be re-examined.

## Enforcing Morals in High School

By AUDREY MAXWELL '21  
Spectrum Staff

Although the school system teaches children basic morals at a young age, it neglects to acknowledge students' changing incentives to do right or wrong in higher education. Without moral guidance and support, students resort to immoral action, which could be otherwise prevented.

Everyone has experienced a time-out for disrupting the class, being mean to a fellow classmate, fooling around—the list goes on and on. The teacher viewed your actions, whatever they were, as "bad," so they punished you for them. This system of punishment educates you from a young age to view certain actions as "bad." Although the threat of punishment might not necessarily stop you from repeating the action, you now recognize that it is looked down upon. This system also works for positive actions. If a certain action earned you praise or acknowledgment, you seek to continue that action in hopes of being praised again. Accordingly, school teaches young students to base their morals on punishment and reward.

Elementary school emphasizes positive values, including honesty, integrity, and teamwork, over more disagreeable deeds like cheating or bullying. However, once adults assume children adequately understand right and wrong, the outright teaching of morals declines after elementary school. The system of punishment and reward alters as well: punishments become increasingly severe, while rewards become much more intangible. Students are presumed to have certain levels of maturity and responsibility that allow them to act morally even without a guaranteed reward. However, given that the human brain does not fully develop until the age of twenty-five, students should not be expected to stick to their morals without any external incentives.

The true problem lies in students' motives to go against their

morals. For example, if a student feels like they cannot complete or succeed on an assignment, their adolescent brains do not have the capacity to consistently choose the moral path. Instead, they might plagiarize or cheat in order to complete the assignment. The threat of punishment if they are caught is enough to dissuade some students from cheating, but it does not encourage moral growth. If a student is caught cheating, the consequences in some extreme cases could hurt their chances of getting into college. Even with this possibility, many students cheat, either due to lack of motivation to do their work, confidence that they won't get caught, or the belief that they don't have any other option. The threat of punishment in itself is not

enough to discourage the action.

However, some teachers offer a certain number of late passes that a student can use if they cannot complete their homework. Solutions along this line of thinking provide students with options other than cheating. If they forget to do their homework one night, they can use a late pass and hand it in the next day instead of copying their friend's homework to get credit for the assignment. Taking away incentives to cheat is the key to promoting moral growth. The outright teaching of morals does not automatically ensure maturity in students, but the addition of late passes for homework, writing conferences before a paper is due, or other measures could help students stick to the moral path.



How can teachers prevent students from cheating? ONLINE SOURCE



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# Forum

## Morality in *Joker*

By SUPRIA SHROFF '22  
Spectrum Staff

(Mainspread article)

As many people know, the movie *Joker* came out a couple of months ago, premiering in thousands of theaters and bringing in nearly \$100 billion at the box office. As comics and reviews took over the internet, fans flocked to their nearest AMC, eager to watch the movie.

*Joker* offers the backstory of a popular villain and his transformation into the enemy of our favorite superhero, Batman. Arthur Fleck, the main character of the film, works as a circus clown and has a condition that makes him laugh uncontrollably in moments he may not want to. In the streets, on subway cars, and even at his own workplace, he is often mocked, abused, and misunderstood. After years of torture and bullying, he resorts to violence to defend himself. While Joaquin Phoenix portrayed Fleck brilliantly and the incredible special effects brought the story to life, many have questioned whether this is a moral way to portray mental illness, and whether we should feel empathy for a killer.

Let's backtrack a bit. *Joker* presents Arthur as a man with a clear history of mental health issues. He is prescribed many drugs for his condition and meets with a social worker frequently. The movie also depicts many scenes in which Arthur is mercilessly teased and attacked—in one scene, a group of teenagers beat him up in an alley. After a coworker offers him a gun, Arthur kills his rich teenage abusers, inciting discussions of class strife among fed-up Gotham residents. Reversed by the working class for this act, Arthur is invited onto a talk show but then finds out he's only there to be mocked. Arthur proceeds to kill the host of the show and holds people at gunpoint. While *Joker* clearly draws

connections between Arthur's past and his violence, the fact that he has a mental illness remains in the back of the viewers' minds. One cannot help but wonder: Is Hollywood trying to suggest that his mental illness makes him "crazy" and that it is the cause of his violence? If they are, the National Alliance on Mental Illness would argue otherwise: "Having a mental illness does not mean you are 'crazy.' And what this does is further feed the negative bias the audience may have toward people that have mental illnesses."

It is up to the audience to determine whether his acts of violence are due to his illness or due to the bullying he endures. Even though it might be a little bit of both, and even though the movie portrays the struggles of having a mental illness well, *Joker* makes Arthur's illness the apparent reason for him to commit such violent actions. As psychiatrist Vasilis Pozios notes, "The audience walks away associating Fleck's violent behavior, particularly the gun violence, with his mental illness." But this doesn't seem moral. Is it really fair to let the audience decide?

On the contrary, one could also argue that the *Joker* is a fictional movie and that it accurately depicts the struggles of one living with a mental illness. "But we need to remember this as fantasy movie about a comic book villain," says Joe Parks, a psychiatrist and medical director for the National Council for Behavioral Health says. "*Joker* is not a documentary about mental illness."

Ultimately, the movie's inclusion of a person with mental illness, especially in such a hit superhero movie, is a step in the right direction for Hollywood and DC comics. However, the way that *Joker* portrays mental illness and its seemingly direct link to violence can easily create a negative bias among a disproportionately young audience.

## The Problem With Advisory

By AMBER LI & EMILY ZHAO '20  
Chief Layout Editors

DING DING! "ADVISORY NEXT!"

Every Tuesday, I dread this noise. I trudge to my Advisory, sit next to... someone and... that guy from my history class two years ago. The teacher reads the required handout for the day, and we spend the next fifteen minutes learning that racism is bad. If you can relate, you're also anti-Advisory and agree that Advisory is bad.

Advisory serves two main purposes for our school: building community and creating dialogue about relevant topics. By randomly placing students in the same groups for four years, the administration attempts to create tight-knit communities. Students are encouraged to discuss topics such as mental health, racism, and privilege to increase their understanding.

But in our experience over the years, this rarely occurs. The randomization only hinders nuanced conversation. Personally, although I (Amber) appreciate the students in my Advisory, I know very little about them besides the fact that they play field hockey or come from Minnesota. Many students appear to feel uncomfortable expressing their opinions in front of strangers, especially if they're the only minority student mixed in.

The curriculum and time limit also restrict any conversation deeper than those stating that racism is bad and wokeness is good. Acknowledging racism and the "pyramid of hate" is definitely a good place to start, but the conversation needs to go beyond acknowledgement. Advisory teachers, many of whom aren't trained to lead discussions in their classes, are expected to preach a strict curriculum to students, which seems to prevent students from speaking up. They aren't given room to question, and in retaliation, some choose to completely ignore what would otherwise be valid lessons. For example, during the ADL

Pyramid of Hate lesson last year, one student in my (Emily's) Advisory disagreed with something a teacher said—hate crimes are more prevalent today than ever. The student argued that we live in a much more tolerant environment than in the past; but instead of opening up a nuanced discussion, the teacher patronized the student. They effectively did the opposite: the rest of my Advisory sat in silence as the offending student was lectured.

Advisory often feels like an act to show the school's "wokeness" rather than a space where students can discuss and develop their own understandings. Discussions on race and issues of privilege are often limited in the curriculum to the idea that problems exist; rarely does it venture into an area of discussion. When very real problems in the school environment occur, Advisory often feels more like a formality than an actual discussion; a checkmark to acknowledge that the school has at the very least, tried.

There's no perfect solution to the Advisory problem; otherwise, it probably would have been implemented. However, holding Advisory in English classes can be a partial solution to consider. In academic classes that meet almost every day for an hour, students actually get to know each other. This can be especially true for discussion-heavy subjects like English, where students already discuss Advisory-aligned topics such as racism or social dynamic, and their personal experiences with them. Speaking personally (Emily), I've always found a sense

of community (or at the very least a class dynamic) in my English classes that's unseen in my Advisory. When camaraderie is built in a class, students feel more comfortable sharing vulnerable experiences and discussing Advisory topics in a productive way.

However, we do acknowledge that levelled English classes aren't ideal heterogeneous groups. Additionally, implementation may be logistically challenging to minimize time taken out of English curriculums. Still, in our opinion, Advisory right now is virtually a complete waste of time taken out of all classes.

In any case, transplanting Advisory to another class might be too drastic of a change. A simpler improvement would be to adjust the role of Advisory teachers from lecturers to discussion moderators. This means no weird "required" curriculum packets or videos that often feel forced. We want a more open space for nuanced discussion that allows students to come to their own understanding of the topic. Regardless, this improvement doesn't change a fundamental issue—people don't feel comfortable enough with their Advisories to even have a discussion if it was offered.

Although these changes aren't perfect, we hope that Advisory can become a more welcoming environment that tangibly improves our school community. But if systematic change doesn't occur, students can still try to improve their experiences by pushing themselves to voice their opinions, even if the packet discourages it.



Advisory meets every Tuesday—in case you didn't know.  
ONLINE SOURCE

## Lawsuits Denounce Harvard's Anti-Asian American Bias

By ALICIA GU '23  
Spectrum Staff

On October 14, 2018, hundreds of Asian Americans gathered in Boston's Copley Square to protest against Harvard's admissions policy. Karl Zhang, a college professor from Fairfax County, was one of many there denouncing Harvard's alleged racial bias against Asian American students. He criticized the college for setting a "much, much higher bar" for Asian Americans when admitting new students.

This protest was sparked by the 2014 lawsuit against Harvard brought by Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA). They claimed that Harvard used racial quotas in its undergraduate admissions process, and favored other ethnic groups over Asian Americans applicants, thereby violating Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Harvard denies the presence of quotas, and defends its use of race as one factor in a holistic process.

Affirmative action's primary purpose is to increase diversity on campus by serving as an equalizer for underprivileged minorities. This policy is often necessary for maintaining enrollment for minorities—after California banned affirmative action in 1996, black enrollment dropped from 15% to 4% and stayed

in the single digits for years.

Although affirmative action benefits those at a disadvantage, Harvard's specific method of accounting for race shows implicit bias against Asian Americans. University President Lawrence S. Bacow claimed that Harvard would be a "dull" environment without affirmative action because students would not achieve the same success working among others with similar backgrounds and experiences. However, this generalization overlooks the diversity within the Asian American community. After all, there are several different traditions and customs from a multitude of ethnicities throughout Asia. Those from countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia have likely experienced numerous disadvantages, something unaccounted for by the general term "Asian American." High academic achievements do not always imply a degree of privilege; it can often indicate the student's hard work and dedication. A fair admissions process would account for personal experiences as much as it would place importance on racial diversity. Specifically, colleges should evaluate opportunity and an individual's access to certain activities. Such a holistic standard would not diminish particular students' personal experiences or achievements due to their race.

Contrary to their holistic ideals, Harvard evaluates applicants on a scale from one to six (with one being the highest) for academics, extracurricular activities, athletics, and a subjective "personal" rating, which unduly harms Asian Americans, according to the SFFA. They accused Harvard's admission office of giving Asian Americans the worst personality scores of any racial group, often without an in-person meeting beforehand. These scores dragged down their overall results despite high academic performance: only one in five Asian Americans in the top 10% of academic performers received a "2" or higher on the personality score. Reports find that Asian American applicants were 25% more likely than whites to be described as "standard strong" or "busy and bright," implying a lack of unique qualities warranting admission. However, Harvard could not have deemed these applicants "bland, or somewhat negative or immature" without an in-person meeting; these descriptions implicate the presence of the preconceived notion that all Asian Americans are reserved and too focused on academics.

These stereotypes have been coming into play as an increasingly important factor in the data-driven admissions process. Just as Presi-

dent George W. Bush coined the term "soft bigotry of low expectations" referring to the generalization of minorities who underperform, Asian Americans seem to be suffering from "harsh bigotry of high expectations" in recent years. Due to assumptions of Asian Americans being quiet and studious, they must pass a bar much higher for them than for other races. By examining the odds of admissions at 12 highly-selective institutions, a 2005 study from researchers at Princeton found that African-Americans "received the equivalent of 230 SAT points" while "Asian-American applicants face a loss equivalent to 50 SAT points." Even worse, Harvard has been using a controversial factor in admissions: a category called "demographic," which cuts down the number of admitted Asian Americans by 30% while boosting African American and Hispanic numbers. These factors put Asian Americans at a disadvantage, once again showing the harsh bigotry caused by racial stereotypes.

While Asian Americans have been being denoted for their intellect and high academic qualifications, legacy students are rewarded for their connections and high socioeconomic class. Harvard's preference for legacy applicants and athletes increases the proportion

of Americans while decreasing the share of Asian Americans and other minorities. This poses an obvious contradiction with Harvard's ideals that they emphasized during the lawsuit against the SFFA.

The law ruled in Harvard's favor; the judge concurred that accounting for race was necessary to achieve diversity. Yet Harvard's legacy admissions greatly contradicts these ideals, as white Americans are far more likely to benefit from them than any other race. The judge noted that they "disproportionately benefit white applicants"; 43% of Caucasians were admitted either for sports, family connections, or parents' donor potential, nearly triple the amount of legacy admissions for any other race.

Decreasing legacy admissions would benefit Harvard's attempt to increase diversity more efficiently and fairly than through penalizing Asian Americans. After all, the acceptance rate for legacy students is about 33%, compared with an overall acceptance rate of under 6%, taking up more slots than African Americans or Latinos. While Harvard claims there is no race-blind way to increase diversity, reducing legacy admissions, which disproportionately help white, privileged students while taking away slots from minorities, would be a start.

# Forum

## How Will the Music Industry Adapt to Social Media?

By SYDNEY PASCAL '22  
*Spectrum Staff*

With social media's rise in popularity over the last two decades, many industries have been forced to adapt to changing times. Specifically, the music industry has adjusted the ability for artists to grow and be unique by producing one-hit wonders and developing a specific genre of music that is more likely to have success. Most prominently, the recent success of TikTok—an app whose premise involves its users recording videos while dancing or listening to music—enables it to dictate viral aspects of the music industry today.

TikTok's algorithm is a key part

of how songs “blow up” and quickly rise to fame. The app attempts to promote all users, “famous” and unknown. Though all videos can potentially go viral, there are many trends that are created with various clips of music and can become exceedingly popular. For some of these tracks, almost everyone on TikTok will have seen at least one video with it. The idea that anyone can become famous draws creators to reuse popular songs in hopes of getting their videos to go viral. This further spreads the outreach of each trending song.

Additionally, the songs that go viral on the app have led to the breakout of many artists. One of the best examples of this success

is Lil Nas X. His song “Old Town Road” became a major trend on TikTok. He even credits the app in an interview with BuzzFeed, saying, “TikTok helped me change my life. TikTok brought my song to several different audiences at once.” Whether people used this song as a joke or they genuinely liked it, it became a huge success and boosted his career into stardom. “Old Town Road” played on the radio for numerous weeks and he gained a loyal fan base. Another example is Lizzo with “Truth Hurts.” Its catchy tune and very quotable lyrics also gave her instant fame.

But is this the same with other artists and their hit songs? As seen with Arizona Zervas, whose hit song “Roxanne” dominated the charts and remained stuck in many TikTok users' heads, it doesn't appear so. Many people have argued that his failure to gather a large fanbase stems from the uncanny similarities between his music and those of many big names in hip hop right now. Additionally, Zervas didn't release his song onto many streaming platforms, even when his song gained attraction. The key to fame

after a hit is gathering a fanbase who will immediately support you, which is hard when your song could become a distant memory once the trend has died. Thus, the algorithm creates a lot of one-hit wonders as well as instant fame for some lucky artists, creating an industry based heavily on chance.

Now, is genre an important factor for songs to go viral? Yes and no. Many songs that become popular are rap songs, as many dance trends go along with them. This is making hip hop much more mainstream, meaning that these songs are the ones topping the charts and playing on the radio. Along with the rise of hip hop, we are also seeing other genres become more favored in the music industry such as alternative and indie music. In addition, fewer pop music songs have become major hits. After an era of a few big names like Taylor Swift, Selena Gomez and Ariana Grande dominating mainstream music, we may now find a larger variety of artists sharing the stage.

Already, hip hop has entered the pop world, with Ariana Grande's recent album and her hit

song “7 Rings” drawing inspiration from hip hop. The number of genres that are becoming mainstream is growing, and it'll be interesting to see how popular tastes will change in the coming years. So far, hip hop and other genres seem to be quickly catching on, crowding out what's left of the sugar pop that defined the last decade. Spotify's most streamed songs exemplify this right now—rap, alternative, and pop songs all receive millions of streams a day.

The way users on TikTok follow trends is similar to where the music industry is going. Everyone wants their songs to go viral. Does this mean cookie cutter songs will become popular for each listener in each genre? While such questions remain uncertain, there's no question that the industry is changing fast. With the influence of social media, there have been both positive and negative factors introduced to the ever-expanding industry: a growing range of genres, but more difficulty for each artist to grow a fan base. Nevertheless, social media holds a lot of influence, and in the end, the music industry and its producers will have to adapt.



This program is supported in part by a grant from the Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

## Arguing About a “Bolivian Coup”

By MICHAEL CHENG '20  
*Managing & News Editor*

On the morning of Sunday, November 10th, I woke up to a passive-aggressive war in my Twitter timeline over the definition of a coup, featuring blue-checkmarked combatants such as Ilhan Omar and The Hill. Understandably, I was confused.

What I eventually pieced together was that the Bolivian president, Evo Morales, had indignantly resigned following a suggestion from army chief Williams Kaliman stating that Morales should step down to restore “peace and stability and for the good of our Bolivia.” Morales was first elected in 2007, becoming the first indigenous president to serve in this poverty-stricken South American country. Morales and his Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party were populists primarily backed by the rural poor and indigenous communities. Morales, fortunately, delivered many of his promises. Under his tenure, Bolivia had one of the fastest-growing economies in South America. Nevertheless, once Morales called for a constitutional referendum in 2016 that would have allowed him to run for a fourth term, Bolivian voters narrowly denied him. Morales then proceeded to challenge term limits in the Supreme Court, which ruled that such limits violated Mr. Morales' human rights.

General Kaliman's call for the president's resignation came three weeks after the resulting election, which the opposition alleged was tainted with irregularities. In the midst of widespread rioting, Morales went on national television to call for fresh elections after the Organization of American States, an intergovernmental organization based in Washington D.C. released a scathing report alleging widespread election fraud and tampering. This was punctuated by a 24-hour period where election returns stopped being released before abruptly showing Morales' leading by the 10% margin needed to win outright.

Protests and counter-protests ensued. Where Morales' critics saw a popular rebuke of a budding authoritarian, his supporters envisioned an undemocratic coup backed by the

the US government's long arm. Morales's supporters say that the Supreme Court has the constitutional prerogative to interpret legal rights as it pleases, and suggesting otherwise would undermine the constitutional order. Detractors found the justices appointed by Morales to be profoundly illegitimate.

I am not in a position to tell you definitively whether what happened in Bolivia was a popular uprising or a CIA mission; however, the debate behind the possible transpiration of a coup is quite fascinating in and of itself. Because at its core, all a coup really is is a departure from democratic norms, and while it is no surprise when political factions denounce the opposition's actions, Bolivia can be seen as a stark example of how the definition of “democratic legitimacy” can be neatly re-written along partisan lines.

In theory, the Constitution should be clear about the bounds of legitimate government, but as we've seen in Bolivia's situation, there can be a disconnect between what is constitutional and what feels legitimate. This tension is more pronounced with political parties facilitating collusion between the branches of government, and it almost becomes an outright paradox when you are trying to alter the pre-existing constitutional framework as Morales was trying to do. Without an agreed-upon constitutional principle, Bolivia turned to other venues for settling the score, first through protests in the streets of La Paz, but eventually through intervention by the military general.

This disconnect, between constitution and democracy, is seen often in the US as well. In his provocatively titled 2015 essay *American Democracy is Doomed*, Matthew Yglesias borrows Mark Tushnet's concept of “constitutional hardball...moves that do not violate the letter of the law, but do trample on our conventional understanding of how it is supposed to work.” The original 2004 article details how Republicans were outraged by Democratic filibusters of Bush appointees, while Democrats such as Hillary Clinton and Harry Reid passionately defended the filibuster. Of course it was Reid himself

who in 2013 invoked the “nuclear option” banning federal-court filibusters to the ire of Republicans, and Republicans who then extended that rule to cover Supreme Court nominees, the year after taking over the White House.

Yglesias and others posit that this game of constitutional Calvinball is a natural consequence of increased polarization. As the two parties have become more ideologically disciplined, a greater emphasis has been placed on “winning” in decision-making, with the tactics involved being merely a means to an end.

That of course brings us to our own referendum about democratic norms, about in which situations we should remove a sitting president, and overturn an electoral mandate. You've likely heard many times that “impeachment is a political question,” and as the process has unfolded, that is increasingly evident. Impeachment is not about whether the president broke the law (although there is ample case he has) or whether a majority of Americans would like him to be impeached (FiveThirtyEight currently has that number at a steady 47%). Impeachment is about adjudicating a departure from norms, and thus even impeachment without removal is a statement for eternity that norms have been broken (although in the case of Andrew Johnson, it seems to be the Congress that broke them). To put the question another way, impeachment is, loosely speaking, a question of whether there has been a coup against the democratic institutions of the United States of America, and Twitter these days is littered with disagreements about the definition of a coup.

Unlike Yglesias, I'm not yet ready to write off American democracy as a doomed enterprise on its way to destitution. But we do need to look beyond the Constitution and decide for this generation what the ground rules will be. And then we have to stick to them, even if it means some partisan and policy sacrifices made along the way.

I won't tell you what those standards should be; I just don't want to be the one in a bar someday arguing about the definition of a coup, only after it has occurred.

## Countering China

By KIRTANA KRISHNAKUMAR '20  
*Editor-in-Chief*

At a 2015 campaign event in Bluffton, South Carolina, President Donald Trump claimed, “I beat the people from China. I win against China.” Even today, our president exudes confidence when he assures us that the People's Republic of China cannot possibly dominate the global stage, certainly not while the United States can oppose it.

It seems he's mistaken.

Well, partially, at least. In the president's mind, the United States' relationship with China is zero sum: either the United States, or China wins. However, it's far more likely that both countries will remain just as prosperous—China just intends to have more influence than the United States.

And certainly, the rising superpower is on track to achieve that goal. As Western nations grow increasingly isolationist, China's taking the opportunity to expand; specifically with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has partnered with other countries to recreate a worldwide “Silk Road.” China's economic growth could inspire other developing nations to expand too, leveling the global playing field. However, the nation's human rights violations and internal corruption instead make China a dangerous influence. Hence, the current superpowers must compete with the BRI and nudge China to re-evaluate its values and turn its ascent into an international asset rather than a threat.

Over the past few years, I've seen countless headlines documenting China's unethical tactics to secure power. The largest controversy involves the Communist Party's treatment of Uighur Muslims, something many countries have condemned but failed to change. The Party holds Uighurs in concentration camps, perceiving their religion as a threat to the Chinese nationalism that empowers the Party. The government has committed unspeakable crimes against Uighurs, and continues to do so despite the international backlash. Meanwhile, corruption runs

rampant within the Communist Party itself, endangering its citizens; it built unstable schools in the Sichuan earthquake zone, and allowed unsafe high-speed trains to run, both of which have led to countless deaths.

Yet China continues to extend its influence, partnering with over 135 countries for the BRI. It has invested trillions in these nations for infrastructure, creating an enormous trade route. The project itself is controversial; many countries find themselves beholden to China and unable to pay back the loans, further empowering the nation. Moreover, China will take its questionable values to these countries, enabling human rights violations on construction sites and hastily building unsafe structures. Finally, the whole project has dire environmental implications, and here, current superpowers may be able to intervene before it's too late.

Developed nations could harness principles of eco-capitalism, investing in more green technology and infrastructure in their developing counterparts, to compete with China. By offering these smaller countries another option to improve their infrastructure and energy conservation, China may be forced to rethink its values and production methods. In general, developing nations will suffer the most from climate change's effects and find it most difficult to distribute resources to their people. If offered an opportunity to both slow down global warming and improve their economy, they'll likely take it—especially when the other option, the BRI, is notorious for construction mishaps and could intensify climate change. The superpowers could benefit economically too, by recommending their companies install the technology. They'd also benefit by slowing down China's expansion, if not compel the government to adopt a more humanitarian approach.

And with this endeavor, our president might just get what he wants. Without favoring climate change over economic policies, as he feared, we can both “go with wind” and “have the capacity to do what we have to do.”

# Forum

## Movie Review: Elsa and Anna's New Journey in Frozen II

By SYDNEY PASCAL '22  
Spectrum Staff

Put on your warmest gloves and hat, and get your singing voice ready, because Frozen II is finally here! Frozen I came out in 2013 when I was a naive little ten-year-old, but not much has changed—I'm still belting out "Let It Go" sporadically.

As I walked into the movie theater, hyped to watch the long-awaited sequel, people were lightly chattering amongst the seats. Younger children (myself included) were bouncing with anticipation, and it was clear that we were all thinking the same thing: Will Frozen II be as iconic as the original? Will I leave humming the new tunes or still be hitting repeat on "Let It Go"?

Now, we are skating into dangerous territory. If you have not watched Frozen II and are planning to, DO NOT proceed unless you never want a warm hug again. You have been warned.

It was epic.

When the movie first started, I felt like I was going "Into the Unknown"! The seamless animation was otherworldly. When Elsa dove into the thrashing ocean, the whole audience tensed up as if they could feel the rage of the water too. From the tranquil scenery to Anna's fiery hair blowing in the wind, the work of head animators Tony Smeed and Becky Bresee really exceeded my expectations.

The sisters' journey begins with Elsa hearing a voice that lures her away from the comforts of her home. While she sings (I mean, how else would one express their feelings?), her yearn for adventure and change overcomes her fear of losing

her loved ones. Consequently, Elsa and Anna take separate paths, each discovering their own roles and true selves. Their experiences certainly appeal to high school students as we hurtle towards college. We all can relate to facing change and the contrasting fear and excitement that come with it.

Evidently, Frozen II had many opportunities to incorporate complex themes in order to appeal to their older audiences. While this sequel is undoubtedly more mature than Frozen I, some moments fall short of achieving a sophisticated message.

As the truth about her grandfather's betrayal strikes Elsa, she freezes to death from the guilt and the fear she feels. Elsewhere, Olaf (Josh Gad, Original Oratory Champion of 1998-1999!) and Anna search for Elsa in vain. When Elsa dies, Olaf, feeling woozy, grasps onto Anna. Understanding that his creator is dying, he gives one last warm hug to Anna before fluttering into meaningless snowflakes.

In this moment, the entire audience was silent with the exception of a screaming and crying kid in the corner (I feel you, girl). Honestly, when Anna collapses, alone and lost, I was pretty surprised at Disney's risk; the sudden deaths of two characters and immediate grief Anna tumbles into can be too much for the younger audiences. However, for older audiences, including myself and the gaggle of my sobbing friends sitting beside me, it was a brilliant and touching moment. And when Anna composes herself slowly, determined to fix her grandfather's mistakes, a Disney princess movie has never felt so empowering

and real as it did in Frozen II.

But, alas, the death was short-lived. I thought the whole movie was wonderfully composed—until we got to the end. Long story short, Elsa is resurrected? Unfrozen? Melted? (but more importantly, Olaf is alive) and Kristoff (who is missing for half the movie and suddenly reappears in a moment of duress) proposes to the new Queen of Arendelle, Anna. By bringing Elsa back to life, Disney establishes an unrealistic fantasy in which death is temporary and insignificant. While I understand that it is a movie directed towards kids, Elsa's resurrection kind of disappointed me. I felt betrayed and deceived. How could they rip out my heart, and then suddenly be like, hey just kidding? Elsa is actually alive.

Truthfully, their solution just felt extremely short and rushed. When Panic at the Disco's version of "Into the Unknown" started playing with the credits rolling, everyone was confused for a hot (or shall I say cold?) second. I left the movie theater a bit unsatisfied. Maybe this was Disney's way of keeping us interested in a potential Frozen III, or maybe they're just worried about the two-year-olds who probably had to pee by then.

Disney avoided other risks that had potential to convey a meaningful message. Since Anna and Kristoff were #couplegoals throughout the sequel, some people were a little disappointed that Elsa remained "alone and free" and very much a single pringle. Many fans, and even Elsa's voice actress Idina Menzel, hoped that Elsa would get a girlfriend. This would have been revolutionary for a Disney movie,

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especially because they are targeting a younger audience. By presenting a female love interest for Elsa, Disney would have been promoting acceptance for the LGBTQ+ community from a young age. However, at the same time, Elsa is a highly independent woman. She does not need to rely on anyone. Plus, I definitely like how the main focus is on sisterly and familial bonds rather than romantic love. For now, Elsa is still very much single and not ready to mingle, which is totally fine. Elsa and I can be forever alone with our twenty-three dogs and cats. Hah, beat that, Anna and Kristoff.

Finally, there is still one unanswered question: is there a new "Let it Go"?

Nope. I thought all the songs were amazing, especially Anna's "The Next Right Thing" after she learns of her sister's death, but nothing will ever replace "Let it Go."

Elsa does have another transformation song, "Show Yourself." While it is far more mature and entertaining to see Elsa experience yet another glow up (still waiting for mine), it is definitely not as catchy. A shame. I do think that Kristoff's "Lost in the Woods" was quite stunning as well, but I'm not sure whether its 90s-music-video-style scene made this song the best thing to ever exist or just plain weird.

All in all, Frozen II is another big hit for me. If you're up for Olaf's dad jokes and some strong girl-power moments, you should definitely go check it out. Even if you haven't watched Frozen I (what boulder have you been hiding under for the past six years?), go illegally watch it online (don't quote me when the FBI comes for you though) then get ready for the coolest (hah, get it?) one hour and forty-three minutes of your life.

## Against Grade-Centric Schooling at ABRHS

By CHRIS SOUSOUNIS '21  
Spectrum Staff

Grades. You've surely earned some as a high school student, and whether you're in class or on the toilet, chances are, you think about grades a lot. They pervade our high school experience—leaving us to wonder whether they help or hurt us. In theory, schools incorporate numerical evaluations that motivate us to learn course material and to gauge the progression of our learning. Of course, that's what grades are supposed to do, and it seems like a noble objective. Unfortunately, quantitative grading at ABRHS falls short of these two goals, and, perversely, these grades' omnipotence prevents an accurate assessment of learning. I outline these shortcomings of the AB grading scheme in this piece,

as well as its various yet frequently overlooked negative effects on students.

In short, here is the case against grades.

For starters, numerical grades do not provide meaningful information about students' intellect or ability to learn. They do not reflect the amount of effort someone may have put into a particular assignment, the degree to which someone may have engaged in disingenuous academic practices beforehand, or how one's personal situation may affect their ability to study outside of school. These factors and many more can affect your term grades, but not a single one will ever be addressed on your report card. Numerical grades that translate to a C+ or an A- are inherently flawed because they cannot account for all the facets

of a student's life that affect how "well" they perform. As such, it is plausible to assume that grades are meaningless from the start.

Second of all, grades divert students' focus away from meaningful learning. In order to achieve higher marks in class, students are inclined to prioritize their grades above their thorough understanding of the material. Also, since grades artificially motivate students to complete academic work, their intrinsic or personal motivation to learn is co-opted and essentially diminished. As a result, students become less interested in what they learn—to the point where they only care about the material on an exam. Students intentionally learn less because doing so seems like the most efficient path to academic success, even if they otherwise would want to learn more. The current grading scheme at ABRHS actively promotes attitudes that place the importance of learning on the back burner.

Finally, grades enable cheating. Students are rational actors: they desire the most reward for the least amount of effort. Thus, many turn to cheating as an easier path to better grades. In fact, it is more than likely that if you are a high school student reading this, you have cheated at least once at ABRHS. That isn't a personal attack—it's just true. Consequently, if we were to remove grades in favor of a qualitative approach to assessment, there would no longer be any reward or incentive for cheating. All students would become accountable for their own

mastery of the material on an individual basis, and the resulting redesign of the course could place more emphasis on fostering a love of learning instead of a fear of bad grades.

It is clear that grades end up hurting students, but what is perhaps most surprising is how counterproductive grades are towards the goals they are supposed to achieve. As mentioned earlier, grades supposedly accomplish two major objectives: to motivate students to learn course material and to measure how well students have learned it. However, not only do grades curtail students' internal sense of motivation to learn in the long-term, they also don't prove that somebody has actually learned the material to begin with. Instead, they promote disingenuous academic behavior and raise student stress to unnecessarily high levels.

In terms of an alternative grading scheme, more qualitative assessments could provide a solution. Rather than assign number or letter grades such as "83%" or "A+," a qualitative-centric grading scheme uses words to indicate a student's progression and success in a course. Ideally, courses' goals would be standardized using a rubric, and how well students meet the rubric's expectations would affect what grade they received. Teachers would engage in more one-on-one discussions with their students, giving students plenty of opportunities to reflect on how well they feel they are doing. At the end of the quarter, students

could assign themselves their own grade.

AP Biology Lab classes already follow this style, where assignments are graded on a "complete," "partial," or "rework" basis, with a large emphasis on revising work based on teacher feedback. What's more, quarter grades are determined by a short paragraph where students explain why they deserve a certain grade. AP Biology Lab is a great example of a rigorous course that gets students to critically reflect on their work and then uses that reflection to assign an appropriate grade. In a qualitative-centric grading system, grades are not totally overhauled, but their significance is reduced so students feel less stressed and more comfortable.

A shift to qualitative assessments, though, has several limitations of its own. For example, incorporating a rubric to science and math classes, two subjects that historically have seldom used rubrics, may prove to be challenging. Also, teachers would need to devote more time to students individually outside of class, yet poorer school districts may not have the financial resources to pay teachers a higher salary for potentially increased work hours.

Overall, it's important that we deeply reconsider what role grades should have in our lives. Understanding how grades negatively impact us can not only change our perspective on the matter, but also encourage us to seek reasonable solutions to the challenges they create.

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# Off Topic

## Bart Baker's Post-YouTube Career

By EILEEN KOU '20 & EMILY ZHAO '20  
Layout Editors

Hello *Spectrum* readers! Music critics Emily and Eileen are here to give their review of China's rising star of patriotic singers: Bart Baker.

You may remember Bart Baker from a couple of years ago as a YouTube parodist sensation. He made tons of money posting high-production parodies of popular songs. But when YouTube recently changed its algorithm to prioritize advertiser-friendly videos, Bart's inappropriate parodies were left in the dust. He seemingly disappeared from the internet—until he got an offer from a Chinese company telling him he could go big.

Currently, Bart serves as a propagandist for Douyin, or Chinese TikTok. He makes English covers of Chinese pop and patriotic songs, and fans love his support of China and its products. For example, he shouts, "I love Huawei!" in a video of him destroying his iPhone. Bart is also learning Chinese—he prefaces his covers with "this song is FIRE, but check out Ba Ge de feng ge" (Brother Bart's style) and ends them with "wo ai ni zhong guo" (I love you, China).

Although Bart Baker's story may sound a little absurd, we make no mistake when we say that we rate his glorious music a 10/10.

Bart Baker truly touches us like no generic pop artist does. These days, it's so hard to find good music—the radio is flooded with Taylor Swift, Nicki Minaj, and Justin Bieber. But while most modern music is shallow and materialistic, Bart's music concerns the condition of man. He is not afraid to ask the hard questions, such as "How many things in this world, sadly,

have become lonely?" Moreover, he confronts conformity within society, lamenting that "every day, others' ways we copy, mind rattling on repeat, woahhh." It's not difficult to recognize that Bart's music is rich in complex social commentary.

Bart admits to using Google Translate to create English versions of Chinese songs; the product is an original style that breaks free of archaic traditions such as "grammar" and "sentences that make sense." Bart Baker's lyrics are as elusive as they are poetic and beautiful. The meaning of lines such as "your pub has beaten me to the ground" or "up down five thousand years like Liusha, entering veins of China" are purposefully left ambiguous, leading to a wide variety of interpretations.

But why has Bart chosen to use broken English in his songs? Well, one can theorize that it symbolizes humanity's collective, broken heart. And most importantly, he aims to incorporate both Chinese and English into his lyrics to touch the hearts of all audiences.

Specifically, we'd like to share a few of our favorite songs. One of my (Emily's) favorites is Bart's

"Come On Fight Against The War Babe." The musicality is incredible, and the guitar perfectly complements Bart's inspiring lyrics. He compels us to continue "pushing to the forefront" because our "trump card is insane." His lyrics about "thousands of warriors" proudly evoke Chinese martial tradition. Bart Baker is the CCP patriot we aspire to be.

Sometimes his lyrics tell a most lovely story:

On a hill two brothers play  
Atop the hill a goose lays  
A stream flowing underway  
Both of the brothers say



Bart Baker, rising Douyin star  
ONLINE SOURCE

Stream is wide and goose is white

I can't tell if the goose crosses or if river crosses instead

These are Bart's translated lyrics for a rap song. The playful rhymes work beautifully with the catchy beat of the music. Forget Margaret Atwood or Li-Young Lee; Bart's cleverly crafted lyrics are at the pinnacle of 21st-century poetry. Fans of Bart Baker—us for example—fall blissfully into the hypnotic rhythm of the rap as vivid images of frolicking brothers and a goose sitting peacefully atop a lush, verdant hill of grass appear in our minds. My (Eileen's) favorite line is "on a hill two brothers play" because I also have two brothers who like to play. When they play, there is no such thing as silence or peace, which perfectly parallels the chaotic wording of Bart's lyrics. After all, the best kind of song lyrics are those that the listeners can connect to.

If you'd like to check out Bart's work (which you should), we recommend finding a compilation of his Douyin covers on YouTube.

## Love Nest: Anime Ver.

By JULIA KUANG '22  
Spectrum Staff

Hey guys! It's Dr. Kuang back at it again with another issue of Love Nest! For our special ~Winter Issue~, there's only one topic fitting for us to chat about: VALENTINE'S DAY! To all of you "single and ready to mingle" people out there, it's time to get your game on. It's officially LOVE SEASON!!!!!!

Q: What's the difference between a secret admirer and a stalker?

Wow. That is a pretty hard question to answer. To be honest, they're pretty similar in the aspect that they're secretly into you (in one way or another...). But let explain the obvious difference with a little analogy. The secret admirer is like the tiny hamster-like girl in webtoons or anime (yes, that's the kinda person I am, and yeah I'm really outing myself on the school newspaper) that go like "o-omg... senpai... i really l-like you <3!! Plz accept my love?? uwu" y'know? And a stalker is like Yandere-chan. For all you uncultured swines out there, Yandere-chan doesn't hit up Senpai directly, but instead follows him directly to his house and threatens Senpai's sister with a knife, yelling "HOW DARE YOU STEAL SENPAI'S LOVE FROM ME! HE'S MINE!" even though it's just Senpai's sister. Yandere-chan then braces her courage and goes up to Senpai like "o-omg...Senpai...i really l-like you <3!! Plz accept my love?? uwu" and Senpai is like "Um no. Ur crazy and you just murdered my sister. Freak" so then Yandere-chan is like "w-well...IF I CAN'T HAVE YOU, NO ONE CAN!" and she goes on to brutally stab Senpai like Brutus did to Caesar. In both cases, it was done out of love (for

Senpai and for ROME!). Hope this helps in settling the differences! So, in the spirit of Valentine's day, if you are secretly admiring someone, I implore you to seek them out and maybe, just maybe, ask them to hang out with you. And if you happen to be a stalker who actually got through reading this trash, you should check out a therapist ASAP. \*\*\* yo if ur a weeb, hmu and we can talk about demon slayer and bnha together lol

Q: My girlfriend focuses too much on school. I want her to focus on ME. Help.

Hmm. There is no problem in focusing too much on school, since it'll probably help her out in the future. But in all honesty, if it bothers you that much, you should talk to her about it. Maybe you two can have study dates or something. Think about the big picture: study dates will help keep the relationship together because y'all can hang out and spend time together, but even better, you can learn more and be an intelligent, law-abiding, society-improving citizen!!!! YAY! We ALL want that, don't we?

Q: Are you from China? Cuz I'm China get your number!

Haha. That's a good one. Unfortunately, I'm not going to give you my number. But if I was anyone else, maybe I would've, because that is one effective pick-up line. 100% approve. On the other hand though, you could totally use my school email, 22kuangi@abschools, to contact me and perhaps give some question requests because honestly, I bet my friends are tired of my Instagram polls begging for more questions.

That's all for now! Happy Valentine's Day guys :)  
-Julia <3

## VSCO is love, VSCO is life

By PRIYANKA CHIDAMBARAM '23, HARSHINI MAGESH '23 & NAKISA RAZBAN '23  
Spectrum Staff

It was a regular morning and you walk out of your math class discussing your latest strategies in Clash of Clans with your bros. Little did you know that your life was

going to change... forever! You pull your black hood over your head and as you approach a small group of girls, you get startled by the loud bashing sound of metal on the floor, followed by "AND I OOP, I DROPPED MY HYDROFLASK-SKSKSKKSKSK." You look up and suddenly it all makes sense. The oversized tee, the metal water bottles... before your very eyes is a VSCO girl. As one of the girls picks up her Hydroflask, she bends over and part of her sleeve pulls up displaying a velvet scrunchie. "OH NO" you think, "have I fallen into the VSCO boyfriend trap?" This brings up some hard existential questions such as, "I thought I was an e-boy?" and "Can I be both a VSCO boyfriend and an e-boy?" You become close friends and then decide it's time to take your relationship to the next level and ask Ashley to prom. You spend many nights thinking up the perfect promposal, then it suddenly hits you in the head like a pair of Birkenstocks. The next day you

whip out a beautiful C1 filter poster with the words "WILL YOU AKSKSKSKEPT TO GO TO PROM WITH ME?." Ashley lets out a delighted "YES! I do akskskskept!!!" Then, Ashley tells you that she has a proposal too. "I started a "Save the Turtles, will you donate some money?"

"Umm, I don't really like sea turtles" you answer, "they kind of give me the creeps with their puny heads and gigantic backs, plus, they look way too much like Minecraft Creepers to be considered cute." Ashley's bottom lip begins to quiver, and you realize your mistake.

"Oh Ashley, I..I didn't mean that! It was a... umm... A joke!" Ashley is already sobbing home and you feel like total rubbish. The next day as you settle into advisory and start reading the school newspaper, a question in "Ask Dr. Love" hits a bit too close to home. I guess you were an e-boy inside all along. And their relationship was history. Just like Tumblr girls.

By EMILY HILTUNEN '22  
Spectrum Staff

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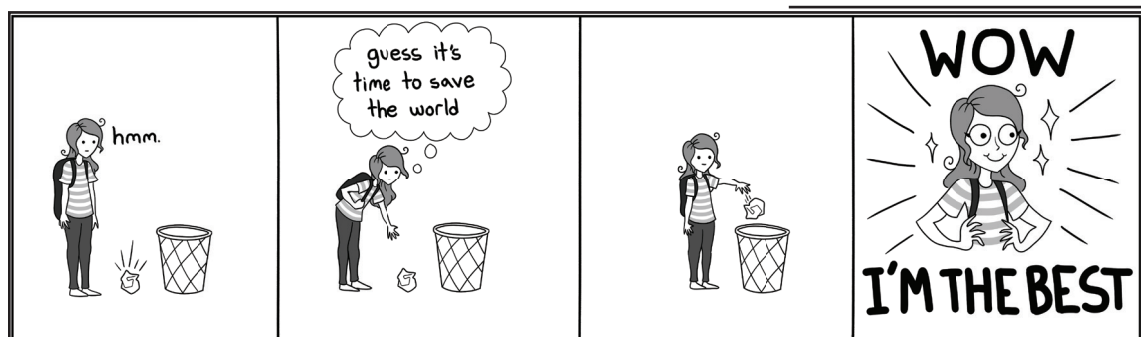
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## A True Eco-Warrior



## A Playlist for 2019

By RITIKA KOIRALA '20  
Spectrum Staff

- Reckless - Arin Ray
- Trina - Smino
- Breathe - UMI
- Location - Dave ft. Burna Boy
- Photosynthesis - Saba
- I'll Kill You - Summer Walker
- Shadow Man - Noname ft. Phoeenix, Smino, & Saba
- Navajo - Masego
- Backyard - Kota the Friend
- Ice Cream Girl - Tobi Lou



Photosynthesis - Saba  
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