

Getting the fluff out of your writing

Journalism that matters to you and your reader

the plan

- you're going to talk some and make a few new friends.
- we're going to look at some features and op/eds.
- we're going to give you a recipe for how to write articles that your readers will actually read.

group talk

- difference between events and issues.
homecoming is an event. drinking at homecoming is an issue.
- talk in your group about events and issues. but you are really trying to get to the issues.
- what matters to you? it probably matters to your readers too.

talking time

- get up.
- form groups of four with people that you don't know. everyone should be in a different group.
- share an article that was in your paper that made a difference - that people talked about. OR share an article that you think is one of the best articles you have read in your paper. OR share an article that you think needs to be written. OR share an article topic that you are afraid to write about.
- be ready to share out!

Features and topics

- Why does your topic matter? Is it relevant?
- Who will you interview? Ask around. Professional voice?
- Do you have enough sources?
- Do you have good questions to ask your sources?

How to get good quotes

- Can you get them to tell a story?
- Ask why. Don't settle for a yes or no.
- Questions are key

Piecing it together: Leads

- Make an outline
- What are the different points of your article?
- Start with a moment or an action from one of your sources
- Add a quote from your source to verify the story

example lead

*Lauren Jones knew what was going to happen when she invited the boy over. She knew that she was bored with her current relationship, and that this was something exciting - something different. She knew that they would not just be “watching a movie” at her house that September night. Jones was going to hook up with him.

She tried not to think about her boyfriend of five months that evening. Afterwards, she told herself she wouldn’t do it again. She attempted to erase it from her mind and move forward. But it wasn’t so easy.

“It was in the back of my head [when he came over],” said Jones, an Ann Arbor high school student. “I thought, ‘oh this is probably going to happen.’ But [after], I was sort of in denial. I tried to forget it.”

Piecing it together cont.

- go back to the source you started with, so people don't forget
- bring in your other points and sources that are relevant to each point

meat of the text

- **The other person**

It isn't just the cheater and their partner who are affected by the disloyalty, though. The third person also has to deal with the guilt. Katie Roberts, an Ann Arbor high school sophomore, says she felt all around used and scummy when she hooked up with a boy who was in a committed relationship. "The next day it sort of hit me what a shitty thing I'd done, and I searched the girlfriend on Facebook and realized that she was a real person and I had done a really awful thing to her," she said.

conclusion

- back to why the article is important
- the bigger picture
- end with a powerful quote that summarizes the article

example conclusion

- **Moving forward**

Some wonder whether it is possible to move past the hurt and betrayal that cheating leaves in its path. Lieberman believes it is. “Sometimes forgiveness is just being able to talk through what happened, and why the other person did what they did,” she said.

For some, this has been easier than expected. Roberts believes that it was best for her to ignore the situation and move forward with her life. “I’ve tried to put the whole ordeal behind me,” she said. “I think we’re both more or less pretending it never happened.”

But for Jones, her mistake has had a lasting effect. She believes that love and trust are not to be taken lightly, and that one exciting night is not worth the wreckage that faithlessness leaves behind. “When someone puts their trust in you, don’t take advantage of that,” she said. “Because it’s a rare thing for someone to trust you completely. And it’s a rare thing for someone to love you for who you are. I think I had that, and I let it go.”

- bullet-proof
- transcripts

Me: What is your name?

Jake: Jake Dewoskin

Me: What is your occupation?

Jake: I am an IT consultant.

Me: What are the risks associated with sending a nude picture over text? Who has access to the picture besides the recipient and the sender?

Jake: Sure. Umm...you know the biggest concern there is that you don't know, you just don't know. Nobody knows. Whether it be across the cellular network, or a system like snapchat, there are a lot of intermediary organizations involved in the transmission of that information. Whether it be a cell company, or a company like snapchat, Snapchat's technology is a little bit new, as far as its integration into texting. But the big concern is that you sort of couldn't even develop a road map. You don't know who else potentially is involved in the transmission of that information. So, when you're sending an image, especially an image that could be considered, you know, inappropriate, the question of assumed level of privacy on the internet, and what users assume, is very often not what they're actually experiencing from a privacy stand point.

Me: What are the legal ramifications for sending a nude picture of a minor?

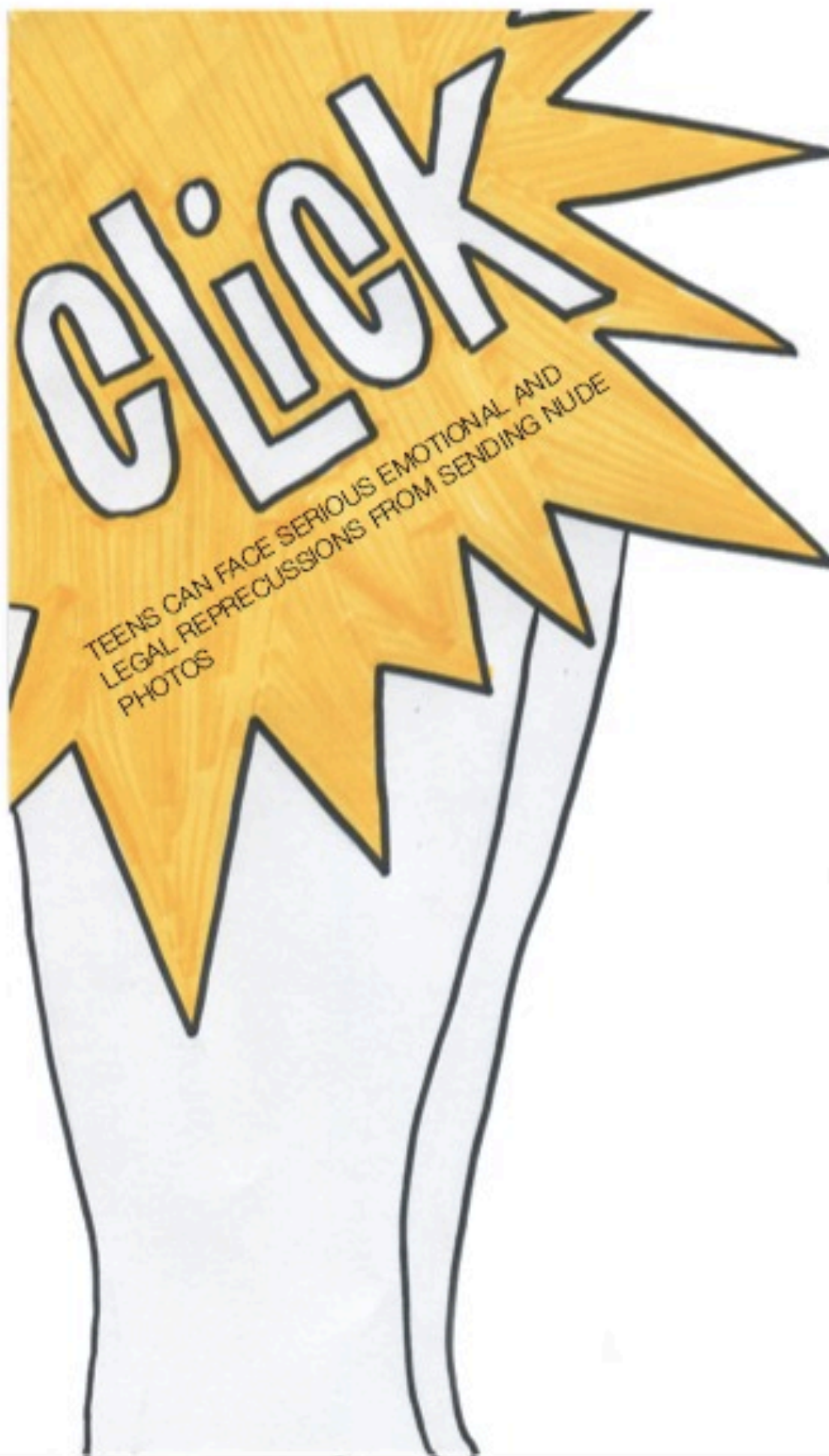
Jake: Well, the first and probably the most important is that exploitation of a minor is a state and federal crime. Transmission of inappropriate or explicit material of a minor across the internet is a particularly unfortunate crime for which, you know, state and federal authorities are aggressively pursuing. So, if you are transmitting that information there's a very good chance that, even as a teenager, you could get into a great deal of trouble. And, you know, a kind of trouble that you never get rid of it. It sits with you forever.

Me: What are people most commonly unaware of in their privacy settings that could get them into trouble?

Jake: You mean the privacy settings on the devices themselves?

Me: I mean the privacy settings for snapchat and social media sites.

Jake: Well, you know, there's this big question about intellectual property rights. When you, and I don't know if you saw the article a few weeks ago, the big stink about instagram and instagram claiming they had the right to sell the images that users uploaded. That creates a question of intellectual property rights. When you take a



madeline hulpert

brianne d'onnell illustration

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Anna Smith* awoke, startled by the resounding vibration of her phone. Upon reading the text, a million scenarios raced through her mind. "Anna please call me ASAP." A voice rang clear through the speaker, delivering some of the most unexpected, reputation-altering news that she had ever heard. It had been two months since she sent it. Smith, a high school student, thought that the contents of her nude photo had disappeared and the only one to lay eyes on it was the one intended recipient, but in fact, he had decided to pass the photo onto several of his friends.

"I immediately started crying. I was so scared to go to school the next day," said Smith.

More teenagers have started to send nude photos, unaware that they could reach far more people than the recipient. According to guardchild.com, 20 percent of teens have sent or posted a nude or semi-nude photo.

What teens may not be considering is that the spreading of these photos can result in serious emotional and legal ramifications.

"Girls feel like it has really ruined their lives," said Dr. Roni Cohen-Sandler, a clinical psychologist who has been featured in *Psychology Today*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times*. "They lose friends, they're humiliated, and they feel terrible about themselves."

THE MOTIVATION

What draws teens to send these photos in the first place? For one student at Community High School, her committed relationship is the motivation. "It makes him happy," she said.

students are taught the risks, but don't quite understand how it can affect them. "A lot of times, people don't think that the [recipient] will send it on; there's a certain trust, but I think it's naive," she said.

However, there is more than a social backlash that teenagers that sext could face. There are also potential legal ramifications when sending a nude image of a minor.

LEGAL PROBLEMS

Teens can get into serious trouble for sending explicit photos, due to its consideration as child pornography.

"Exploitation of a minor is a state and federal crime," DeWoskin said. He explains that the legal penalties could be much more damaging if the transmission of the photo is between a minor and a person over 17. "It is a felony and [the offender] will likely carry the sex offender stigma for a long time," he said.

The electronic paths that these photos follow and who comes across them in the process aren't always so clear, either. "The big concern is that you [can not] develop a road map. You don't know who else potentially is involved in the transmission of that information," he said. DeWoskin adds that there is a large variance in the amount of privacy that users presume they are protected by and the levels of privacy they are actually receiving.

He says that the resulting legal issues of a leaked photo could be permanent and life changing. "If you are transmitting that information, there's a very good chance that even as a teenager, you could get into a great deal of trouble, a kind of trouble that you never get rid of. It sits with you forever."



To some, it is purely for the exhilaration. "It was kind of exciting," another anonymous high school student said. "It was like breaking the rules, and I knew it was bad."

Dr. Cohen-Sandler speculates there may be other reasons for this behavior, though. "I think that people do it because they're very impulsive and they don't think through the consequences," she said. She adds that insecurity or pressure from a relationship could also be a cause.

Jacob DeWoskin, an information technology consultant at KDV in St. Cloud, Minnesota, sees a societal norm suggesting that a person's popularity is largely linked to how popular they are online. "In order to gain popularity, teenagers will do things that might not be in their best interest," he said.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

While sexting can be appealing, there may be compelling reasons not to hit the send button.

For some students, the emotional aftermath of a leaked photo is the most unfortunate consequence.

Smith says that the humiliation was the worst part. While she admits that it was her mistake, she never thought the photo would be distributed. "It was also embarrassing because I know that people have seen me naked," she said.

Dr. Cohen-Sandler reasons why teenagers take these risks, despite the apparent repercussions. "I think part of it is that when you're a teen, you think, 'oh those kind of things happen to other people, they're not really going to happen to me,'" she said. "You're kind of in denial until it does happen to you."

A student at Community High School shares this same view. She believes that

WOMEN AS THE TARGETS

Some suspect that the reaction of peers contrasts greatly based on which gender is sexting, and it seems that women may be taking the bigger hit.

Dylan Brown,* a senior at Pioneer High School, sees an apparent change in attitude. "If a guy [receives] a naked picture, it's like, 'Oh you're sweet!' But if a girl sends one, it's like, 'you're a whore.' [Sexting is] definitely different for each gender," he said.

Dr. Cohen-Sandler stands behind these opinions. She says that "the old double standard" is ever present in society's prevalence of sexting. "The repercussions are so much worse [for girls]," she said. While guys continued to "strut around school like big shots," females faced a much more drastic and emotional wrath, such as humiliation, vulgar labels and sometimes even an absence from school.

A LASTING IMPRESSION

DeWoskin says that if you wouldn't hang it in your high school hallway, you probably shouldn't send it. "Everything is permanent on the internet. Everything you do online, whether it be a tweet, or a Facebook post or a picture that you have sent, it leaves an indelible mark," he said.

For many, transmitting explicit photos into a technology where the image's path and viewers are unknown is something to take into serious consideration.

Smith says that in the end, her impulsive decision was not worth the embarrassment she faced. Her advice is to think about whether you have a good enough reason to send a photo. "Ask yourself if it's worth that risk, which I can tell you, it isn't," she said. **C**
*name has been changed

virginity lost

STUDENTS SHARE EXPERIENCES AND REGRETS ABOUT THEIR FIRST TIME HAVING SEX

eliza stein & sarah zimmerman

WILLIAMS

The date was 10/10/10. She was a freshman girl "hanging out" in her sweetheart's bedroom at a house void of parents. They had started dating six months before in middle school.

"We had talked about doing it but it wasn't supposed to happen until we had dated for at least a year, but one thing led to another and well, it just happened," said Julia Williams*. Williams was scared.

As she walked downstairs from her boyfriend's room, Williams felt sick to her stomach. She couldn't stop questioning pregnancy and felt that everyone would know that they just had sex.

"I remember every bit of it. I remember his face. We were both just so freaked out," she said.

Williams felt she had lost her innocence.

"Immediately, I didn't feel like a kid anymore because I did something bad. In terms of myself, I cried about it...this is what adults do," she said. The fear blew over quickly though. The next week Williams and her boyfriend had sex again.

"As I warmed up to it and continued to have sex, I started feeling more like a badass. I was one of the first in my grade to have it," she said.

Williams, now a junior in high school, has had 16 different sexual partners.

"I think because I started so early, in my opinion, and especially with my personality being so bold, I might put myself a little too out there sometimes," she said. Williams feels she would rather "have fun" and get "judged" than not have sex.

She has found sex to be a subject she can laugh about with her parents. Her mother took her to the doctor to get birth control pills six months after her first sexual encounter. She was tested once for STIs, which was negative. Her father wasn't pleased with the idea of her having sex at

what he considers to be an early age but continues to make jokes about it.

"They are like, 'Next time we want to meet the guy' I went on a date with this guy one time and my dad was like 'The hunt is better than the kill, make him work for it,'" said Williams.

After so much "kill," Williams admits that she enjoys sex more when it is with someone she truly cares about.

"There is such a difference when I have feelings for the guys but when I don't, I just do it for fun. A lot of times, I am hopeful that something will spark from it. It is better when it is consistent with the same guy."

Williams is happy with her current sex life but expresses regrets.

"I wish I didn't have as high of hopes going into [having sex for the first time]," she said. "I am glad though that I did it with someone that I was close to because I know that if it was a stranger, it would have been very uncomfortable because it was such a new experience."

BARNES

A hot tub, an eighth-grade boy, an eighth-grade girl, and no contraception. Scared of what had just happened, Josh Barnes* biked home after a night he soon regretted.

That night Barnes had lost his virginity to a girl he had known for the past four years. They were what Barnes described as friends.

"[I decided to do it because] I was a horny teenage boy and I wasn't really thinking with my head as to what it might entail in the future," he said. On his way home from the girl's house, Barnes started thinking about everything that could have gone wrong. While he was "freaking out" he called his best friend at the time, who was "all boy about it," by telling Barnes "it was sweet."

Barnes did not use protection when he had sex, and so he was worried about STIs and pregnancy.

"That was the first and last time that I did that [didn't use protection] because I just didn't want to have to go through that emotional stress again," he said. "It taught me a valuable lesson."

First he scheduled a blood test to be tested for STIs; then he had to make sure he had not gotten his partner pregnant. In order to schedule his blood test, he felt he had to tell his parents.

"Even though we haven't always had the best relationship I've always been able to tell them things. So I just brought it up," he said. First, he talked to his mom. After the initial "five seconds of awkwardness," Barnes felt comfortable talking to his parents about the situation and although he did not tell them that he didn't use protection, he figured they knew anyway.

Barnes regrets more than the lack of contraception.

"I later met someone who was my second who I wish I could have lost it [my virginity] to because I cared about her and I was with her for a long time," he said. Barnes told his girlfriend about when he lost his virginity, so she would know that she wouldn't be his first. She was understanding.

For Barnes, taking someone else's virginity was much different than losing his own.

"You have to be careful and often you aren't careful. It can get you in trouble. It's never gotten me in trouble, but sex is a very delicate thing. Virginity is a very delicate thing and there are a lot of emotions and hormones attached to them. You have to be conscious of the other person's feelings and too often the feelings are not taken into account," he said.

He made sure that he wasn't pressuring her in any way. It was her choice, not his. Barnes made a point to receive a sober yes from her. Finally, he made sure he took the necessary precautions to prevent against STIs and pregnancy.

"I think it's really important to lose your virginity to someone who you really love because it strengthens that

feeling and when you don't share it with someone you love, you don't really get to experience that," he said.

Although the girl he was in a relationship with wasn't his first, he likes to think about her as his first, because the sex had more meaning.

JENSON

It was the end of his freshman year and his ex-boyfriend was moving away. Joe Jenson's* dad was home. Jenson, openly gay, lost his virginity at his house, in his room, on the floor.

This moment came as no surprise to Jenson.

"I knew he was going away and then we obviously knew what was gonna go down," he said.

When Jenson told his friends that he had lost his virginity he received many gasps, but for Jenson "it wasn't anything life changing." Yet, he does feel that it may have changed his relationship with his ex-boyfriend in the future.

"I didn't feel different after it happened but I guess the connection between me and him afterwards. If he was still here I'm sure... it would have changed," he said. For Jenson hookups and relationships are very different. He believes that in an intimate relationship sex makes a couple feel different afterwards, but a hookup is just sex—it doesn't phase him in any way.

"You can lose your virginity more than once," he said. But Jenson regrets the first time he had sex.

"I feel like in a lot people's minds, sex is supposed to mean something, but it didn't really mean anything," he said. For Jenson losing his virginity was "no big deal."

BELL

The calendar marked their six-month anniversary. Then-sophomore Susie Bell* had started taking birth control pills a week prior, a condom was in hand and she felt she was ready.

ACCORDING TO A STUDY DONE BY PLANNED PARENTHOOD 55% OF TEENS AGES 15-19 WISH THEY HAD WAITED LONGER TO HAVE SEX

"I just had really strong feelings for him and things were progressing sexually anyways," she said. "I was curious just to see what it was like."

The condom broke. Bell took Plan B the following morning.

After having sex for the first time, Bell began to feel that there was an expectation to do it all the time. "It wasn't like I would do it when I didn't want to but there was just more stress over it especially when my parents found out. So it sparked a lot of arguments and it was very stressful because my parents didn't trust [my boyfriend and me] anymore," she said.

Bell's parents found out four months after her first sexual encounter and immediately took her to the doctors to get her off birth control. They told her it was due to health reasons but Bell believed they just didn't want her to have sex and felt this would stop her. It didn't.

Bell and her boyfriend continued to have sex weekly using condoms for protection and Plan B as needed. Bell said she learned her lesson on how to interact with her parents after they took her off birth control. "They never really gained my trust back to talk to them about anything. I eventually gained their trust back but I still lie to them all the time, obviously," she said.

Bell's parents called her boyfriend's parents to discuss the situation and agreed on stricter rules. Bell said her boyfriend's parents never thought they were condoning sex but just never asked about it. Bell's boyfriend's parents were more open about the idea of sex at a young age.

"They weren't openly telling me 'Oh yeah it's fine' but we would always do stuff at his house, because his parents would back off just as long as we were being safe. They said, 'You can tell us anything but we just don't want to be around when you do it,'" said Bell.

The relationship ended in November of her junior year after a little over a year. The following spring, she had sex again with a different boy.

"I wasn't in a relationship with him, but we had been hooking up for a while. Then I felt like since I had done it once, not that it wasn't a big deal with the next person, but I was just more comfortable with it," she said. "I wasn't as scared, I wasn't drunk or anything, it's just something we wanted to do."

Bell, now a senior in high school, has been dating him for over six months. She feels more comfortable talking about sex with him to avoid conflict than her previous partner because now she has the experience behind her.

Bell feels that sex is just a "bonus" in their relationship.

"I'm emotionally attached to him and I could do without it but it's something that's nice to share with him. It's really intimate. It's not necessary, but it's nice," said Bell.

After having sex with two partners, Bell only regrets one thing.

"I wish that I had more people supporting me. It's just harder because it's not that my friends didn't support it, they were just kind of skeptical, and they felt like I was pressured into it and I didn't have my parents so it was basically just like me and him," said Bell.

STAPLETON

Community High Health teacher Robbie Stapleton is required by the state to teach a comprehensive sexual health unit. Stapleton thinks that learning about anatomy, safe sex, STI testing, and the "nuts and bolts" of losing one's virginity are all equally important.

"I am troubled by how difficult it is to be mentally healthy, practicing safer sex, and coming to grips with all that means in today's society," said Stapleton.

Each year, Stapleton assigns her students to write a letter to their hypothetical child. In the letter they are to write about their decision-making about having sex. Stapleton found that this year, almost 100 percent of her students, directly or indirectly, said that great sex involves feelings and doing it with someone you respect and care for and sometimes even love.

However, Stapleton knows that is not the reality for everyone.

"I am told, sort of frequently, that people are not having sex under those circumstances and I think that creates a cognitive distance that is really hard to walk in the world with and that bothers me. What are you [students] supposed to do? Every message you get culturally is act like, dress like, want sex like, a whore or a racy person and yet if you do, you're a slut. And I bet that the mad students can walk is pretty narrow and a scary one."

Stapleton believes it is a "scary road" due to technology today.

"The way girls treat other girls is inconceivable to me. Girls are the hardest on each other. We need to be embracing each other and allowing each other to make mistakes and do do-overs. I got to [do do-overs] because there was no Internet then."

"The fact that half of high schoolers leave high school losing their virginity and half don't, has not changed much," said Stapleton.

Though the statistic hasn't changed much in the past 30 years, Stapleton thinks her students are part of a gen-

eration of immediate gratification.

"If you are not with someone, you want to immediately text them," she said. "There is no just wait and consider it. If people get horny, people think they need to act on it. No, you don't. It is one thing to practice safer sex physically but it's a whole other thing to practice it mentally. I think it is the harder way."

Stapleton is troubled by the way our society characterizes sex.

"For my money I would like everyone to wait until their frontal cortex is fully developed [to have sex] because you don't have to do everything at once but no, our culture says you do," she said.

BICKNELL

Bicknell Planned Parenthood Peer Education Coordinator Ricky Bicknell supervises and instructs a group of high school students who act as resources pertaining to sexual health for their peers.

When Bicknell first began his job, he was surprised about the number of women in the classrooms who felt "jaded" by the idea of having sex.

"I think it comes from the idea of being used. It may be more common than I ever thought to have sex for the first time without thinking about it from a holistic, long term standpoint," he said.

Bicknell understands why losing your virginity is important but also believes our culture and society puts a lot of emphasis on it.

"Ultimately, it's important because after that point, you are going to have [sex] on and off for the rest of your life and it is the beginning of exploring your sexuality," said Bicknell. Like Stapleton, Bicknell thinks it is important to be with someone you can trust.

Bicknell believes the term "losing your virginity" is not a positive way to think about the experience.

"I think it implies that you only have something special to give your partner the first time you have sex and that something is being taken from you," he said.

Bicknell thinks the idea of virginity is mixed up with heteronormative ideas of what it means to have sex.

"Like how do we even define virginity for [gay partners] if they are not having penetrated sex but it is still their first sexual experience. It still might be as meaningful as having vaginal sex for a heterosexual couple."

Regardless of your sexual identity and if you are both virgins or not, Bicknell believes sex should be fulfilling and a positive experience. **C**

**name has been changed*

SEXUAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Planned Parenthood

3100 Professional Drive
and 2370 Stadium Blvd
CALL 1-800-230-PLAN

Robbie Stapleton
CHS Health Teacher

CHS Planned Parenthood Educators
Sarah Zimmerman, Eliza Upton, Fernando Rojo, Isabel Sandweiss, and Mishka Repaska

Washtenaw County Health Department
555 Tower Street

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

A hormonal method of birth control to be taken after unprotected sex or when a regular form of birth control fails.

The sooner it is used after unprotected sex, the more likely it will prevent pregnancy. It can be taken up to five days after.

Anyone age 17 + can get over the counter and under 17 must have a prescription from a health provider

STI TESTING

If sexually active, one should be tested every six months

An evil addiction

by Alyson Halpert
illustration by: Quinn Burrell

Pioneer High School student Katherine Scott (names have been changed) did not go into Claire's with intent to steal the appealing pink lip gloss the counter. She intended to take her merchandise, pay for it, and exit the store.

But for some reason, Katherine took the lip gloss and placed it in her bag. She glanced at the sales associate who was preoccupied with customers and sauntered out.

That was the first time Katherine stole. It was the middle of eighth grade. Katherine turned to her friends with disbelief, held up the lip gloss and said, "I just took this, guys," and they laughed, because they did not know what else to do.

Katherine is one of many teenagers who have been enticed in some way by shoplifting. "You'd be surprised," she said, "how many of your friends have done it. People who you think are so innocent have done it. Even the workers do it. Everybody does it."

Terry Shulman is a shoplifting expert who has appeared on Oprah and other television shows, and wrote a book on shoplifting. He agrees with Katherine on some level.

"Over the last few decades, there's been such an increase in shoplifting across the U.S. -- including by professionals and gangs -- as well as an increase in employee theft and many other more severe crimes, it seems that we've become immune or desensitized to the 'little stuff.'"

Katherine continued to shoplift, and her friends started to join her. Together they came up with strategies to fool employees. In dressing rooms where employees count items, they shoved extra shirts into pant legs. In shops that had tags and codes, they found ways to snip them off and hide them in between the decorative cushions. Even though it was hard, they found ways to blend in. Katherine took because she did not have money to buy the things she wanted, and did not think she needed to pay the ridiculous prices asked of her, a common reason many shoplift.

She started to show signs of having a shoplifting addiction. Like smokers need to have a cigarette in between their fingers, Katherine and her friends accepted that they would take an item from the store whether or not they actually needed it. "You go and you assume, 'Oh, I'm going to do it again because I did it yesterday,'" Katherine said.



If Katherine did not have the money for something she wanted, she took it. As the pile of goods in her room grew, her parents became suspicious.

One day, Katherine went to Hollister with her little sister, Hannah. Katherine had taught Hannah the ways of stealing, and Hannah and her friends were eager to try them out. Equipped with money their mother had given them, they purchased some items and stole some items before heading home. At the door, their mother stopped them and asked to see the purchases.

Sweating and panicking, Katherine realized that their goods added up to about \$50 more than what her mom had given them. Partially seeing the truth, Katherine's mom asked them how they had so many things. Shoplifters sometimes dig deeper holes by lying about their stealing, and so did Katherine. She said her friend Brianna had lent her \$20 dollars, and told her mom that she had used her credit card on a few of the items.

Katherine's mom believed, or wanted to believe, what she was hearing. Katherine took the items up to her room.

Why did Katherine never get caught? She and her friends took items from Hollister, Abercrombie, Victoria's Secret and Claire's almost weekly. They were just teenagers, and by no means part of the shoplifting gangs major sales companies are so afraid of. They were not professionals. So how did they slip through the doors consistently and not get stopped?

Katherine thinks she knows why. "I talked to my friend who worked at Hollister, and he said they aren't allowed to stop [shoplifters]. It's this policy they have where if a girl needs a skirt for a party one night, that's just like thirty bucks. If you see her take it, don't stop her because it's gonna make her scared to come back the next weekend with her mom and spend hundreds of dollars there. They still put tags on [the items] because they don't tell people. They try to scare you."

Surprisingly enough, this theory actually has merit. "I don't find it hard to believe that a store has this policy for petty shoplifters, young shoplifters, first-time shoplifters or elderly shoplifters," says Shulman. "A WAL-Mart memo was leaked a few months back that revealed the world's largest retailer was going to stop prosecuting all first-time offenders under 18 or over 64 caught shoplifting under \$25 in merchandise."

WAL-Mart thought prosecuting these specific groups was not cost-effective. They wanted to focus on catching professional shoplifters and gangs of shoplifters, and investigating and apprehending their own employees for stealing.

That does not mean Shulman thinks this should be a policy. "I do not believe anyone caught should be given a free pass. I believe many people will continue to steal if this happens," he says.

However, even Abercrombie confirms Katherine's claims.

Abercrombie Assistant Manager, Sarah (she declined to give her last name because she does not officially represent the company) says that employees are not allowed to apprehend customers if they see them walk out with goods that have not been purchased and alarms

do not go off. "If we see someone with a skirt, we can say, 'Hey, would you like a nice top to

go with that shirt?' Then they know that you know that they have it so then they have the opportunity to give it back!" She explains.

But does this strategy work? According to Sarah, they have approximately 40 items leaving the store per week that are not purchased, and Abercrombie blames its employees for high quotas of loss. "Once the item leaves our store it's counted against our store because we should be watching customers, helping people, and making sure that they have good customer service so that they don't want to take the item," she says. If Sarah wants bonuses or special items in her stores, she must keep their loss per week quota low.

Sarah noticed one customer recently who placed items from the store into her baby carriage. She asked the woman if she planned to purchase the items, and the woman nonchalantly said "no," and left the store without the items. The problem is as Shulman explains. The woman could just as easily come back the following day and attempt to steal again, with no repercussions until she succeeds.

This policy often leaves management frustrated when they can do nothing to stop the onslaught of petty thievery. "It doesn't come down to a certain race, or a certain height or a certain body style. Everybody and anybody who can do it, does it. I don't understand why. Personally it makes me really upset. It's like this store is my home, all of these clothes are mine. You wouldn't go into somebody's house and steal from them," Sarah said.

Shoplifters do not see stealing from stores like Abercrombie and Hollister as stealing from someone's house. Katherine sees her shoplifting as "a little silent protest" of the stores she frequents, arguing that stores like Hollister and Abercrombie have prices ridiculously above their wholesale price. "I think they're too expensive for what I should be paying for a piece of cloth," she says.

Shoplifting expert Chris E. McGoeys says that it does not matter which store is a target, the act is still bad. "Many incorrectly feel or are taught that the large corporate retailer can afford the loss. If this sense of right versus wrong is lost in our society it is because of the failing of parents to instill these values into their children."

Katherine's mother had told her before, in sixth grade that she should not shoplift, but Katherine followed her mother's example rather than her words. "My parents are stupid," she said. "My mom used to tell me stories about how she used to shoplift all the time."

One day, almost a year after Katherine had first stolen from Claire's, she was back again with her friend Jordan. Jordan needed a necklace to go with her dress for the Sadie Hawkins dance, and Katherine was impatient. "Hurry up and take something," she told Jordan, and walked out of the store.

She was almost out when the sales attendant stopped her and started to search her.

"I don't have anything! What the f---, what is your problem?" Katherine screamed at the woman, because she wanted to appear innocent.

The employee continued to search Katherine, and then her friend Jordan, but found nothing.

"What the hell?" Katherine and Jordan yelled repeatedly.

The employee apologized profusely. "We were like, 'You're a douche bag.' And then we left. We had to make it look like we really weren't doing anything bad," Katherine said.

It was a near miss, but not near enough. Katherine did not stop stealing.

In the summer before 10th grade, Katherine's friend Brianna was shoplifting again, in the worst of places. Where Victoria's secret does not notice when shoppers put underwear into a bag and Abercrombie and Hollister barely take any measures to detect thievery, Von Maur is a shoplifter's nightmare, and most are smart enough to avoid it.

Brianna thought she could get away with a Kate Spade purse tucked firmly into her bag. Smugly, she walked towards the entrance and bumped straight into a large employee with a stern look on her face. Brianna had been caught.

"Oh, s---," she exhaled, and cried as employees took her to a little room. There was an estimated \$500 in stolen goods in her bag, from stores all across the mall. Every store came to reclaim their items, and the cops were called. They

could not reach her parents, so Brianna stayed in the little room for three hours. The verdict: 36 hours of community service. The worst part: Brianna had to wear the orange prison jumpsuits and the "saggy granny-style underwear" that had been used before.

"I'm never going to get in trouble again," Brianna vowed to herself. "You've caught me, I'm done."

After an estimated \$500 or more in goods, of \$10 shirts, tons of lip gloss and makeup, sunglasses, headbands, thong underwear and three bathing suits, Katherine was through as well.

"I guess I'm learning from her experience," Katherine explained. "She's grounded forever. When she started her community service, she was telling me how she might have to go to court, I just stopped shoplifting."

Katherine did not want her parents to find out she had shoplifted. She said she shares a trust with her mom, and tells her almost everything. "It was the one thing I couldn't tell my mom," she says.

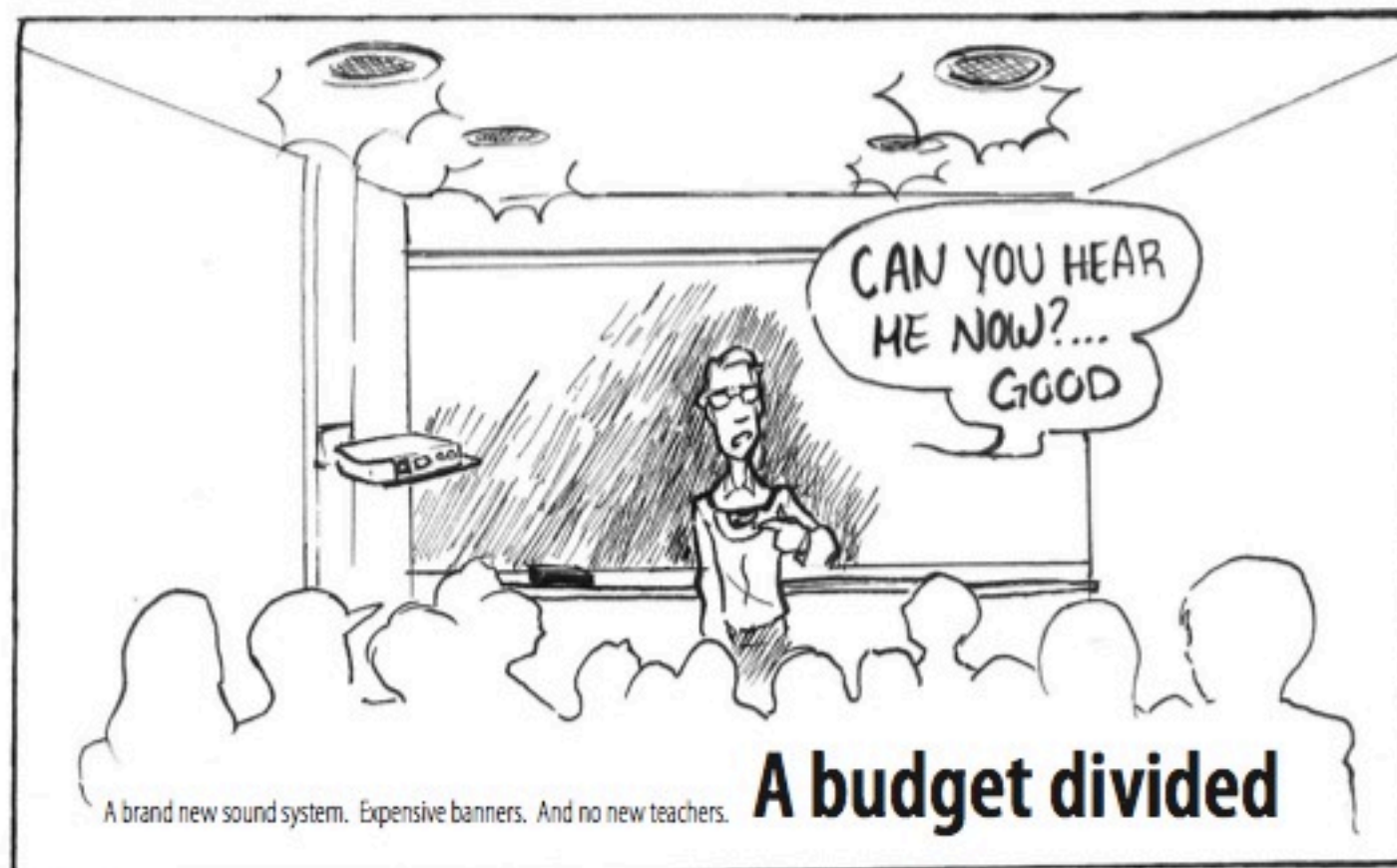
She thought it would be horrible to break that trust. "I wouldn't want to be that kind of daughter. Obviously they're always going to love me, but they won't have as much respect for me," Katherine said.

Her experience speaks for many people who believe the only productive way to stop shoplifters is to apprehend and stop them. "I do think stores should drop that little policy [of turning a blind eye to theft] they have, if they really want to stop shoplifters," Katherine agrees.

"They should know people are going to steal if they don't protect their stores."

SHOPLIFTERS do not see stealing from stores like Abercrombie and Hollister as stealing from someone's house.





bysonkalpert's
rothglazer
illustrationbyquimburrell

In Craig Levin's fifth block analysis class, there are five students crowded at nearly every table and several do not have textbooks. However, they can hear Levin clearly because he uses the latest technology installed in Community High School, Phonic Ear's Classroom Amplification System.

Do the benefits of having a high-tech sound system outweigh employing a new teacher to make that class size smaller?

Jason McKnight, a civics and Latin teacher at CHS, is frustrated that the school can spend \$6,000 on banners when he cannot get a \$300 set of dictionaries for his class. Why does the school need a banner to make the front of

the school appealing when it could have more supplies inside?

The Ann Arbor Public schools face a difficult problem when they allocate where money will go each year. There are actually two independent budgets, and it is illegal for money from the two to mix. One budget, the operating budget, pays for teachers, buses and maintenance, the other, the capital budget, is used for items like new buildings, banners and technology.

There is much debate over how these budgets should be funded and which fund is more important. What issue lies underneath the \$6,000 banners?

Separate but unequal

Peter Ways, Dean of CHS, in his capacity as Administrator for Technology Services, has had to deal with numerous complaints from Ann Arbor residents that the money could be better spent. He is extremely concerned that the complexity of this issue be fully understood.

"There's a fundamental misunderstanding as to what's possible and what's not," Ways said. He explained that the operating budget is funded exclusively by the state government. The only way for it to increase is for the number of students in

the district to grow. This is regulated by Proposal A, passed in 1994.

However, the capital budget can be increased by local ballot initiatives, which are quite easy to sell here, he said. In 2004, Ann Arbor voters passed a bond that gave the district approximately \$205 million to build a new high school, renovate existing schools and install new technology. Ways said that lawmakers convinced the public that developments were a good idea and would attract more students because the new bond would solve overcrowding at the high schools. In a way, besides completing its named priorities, the capital budget also serves as a utility to increase the number of students by enticing them into the district—a sort of advertising fund.

Ways wishes the operating budget could be raised directly instead of spending money on the other budget, but not every administrator in the district agrees with him.

Glenn Nelson, Board of Education secretary, says new technology is a good way to attract young high-skilled, high-education and high-income parents to the city who want to send their children to a top-notch public school system. It is ideal for the Ann Arbor Public Schools to be able to say that their buildings are not overcrowded and employ the latest technology.

Some students at CHS do not approve of the advertising strategy, saying that the money could be spent on more important expenses.

So far the sound systems do not appear to have made a huge impact. "I haven't been paying much attention to them," sophomore Dean Parrish said. "The teachers don't seem to be using them much." Junior Rachel Siegfried added, "It's cool how they let people hook up their iPods in the hallways."

Proposal A

In 1994, debate centered on cutting taxes, and Reaganomics were in full swing. According to a Michigan Education Policy Fellowship Program report, some districts had as little as \$3,400 per child while others had as much as \$10,000.

Proposal A was crafted as a remedy for this inequality and to lower taxes. Districts would no longer have to raise their own funds locally, but would receive them from the state on the basis of the number of students enrolled.

The proposal passed, but after six or seven years education funding decreased drastically. It was then that administrators of wealthier districts such as Ann Arbor began to oppose Proposal A. "If the state would fund education more appropriately, then something like Proposal A would be desirable," Nelson says. Now, he says, wealthy Ann Arbor residents are almost able to fund their schools independently, which would save the state money. He explained that if the district could attract entrepreneurs and professionals who would pay high taxes to the state, funding would increase statewide and thus help other school districts (that is, the percentage of taxes given to education).

The effects of Proposal A are controversial. The idea of equality in school districts sounds good, but in practice most high-income districts want to succeed individually. Most educators across Michigan are not happy about the current state of funding. Ann Arbor Superintendent Todd Roberts says of Proposal A, "It's not working [to provide adequate funding for the school districts]. It probably never was." He says that the real value of the per-pupil funding is declining because of inflation.

There were some positives aspects of Proposal A: it succeeded in lowering property and income taxes. It slightly decreased the gap between richer districts and poorer districts.

Lobbying for change

The more a community unites, the stronger the message. I feel like this administration could do more bridge building and less wall building.

Jason McKnight's first teaching job was in Admore, Oklahoma for a district called Plainview. He was fresh out of college and did not know anything about budgeting and schools. In Admore, the teacher's union was not strong

and there was not as much money to distribute, so the administration and teachers worked together to allocate funds where they needed to be most.

In the fall of 2002, McKnight moved to the Ann Arbor Public School district. He enjoyed better pay and noted the huge quality increase in the education system from his former job. However, he also noticed high expectations from the public.

"This district tends to ignore efficiency," he said. "There is no strong business model." McKnight added that teachers and students expect funding for luxurious items like shuttle buses and consulting services, and that the district has a hard

time saying no.

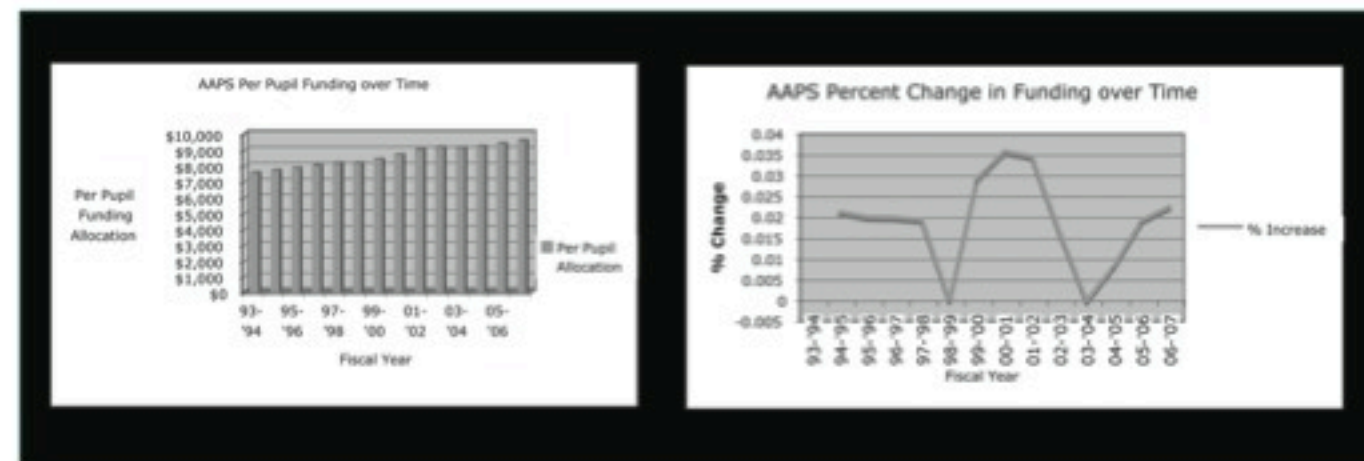
Unlike Plainview, McKnight notices a difference in the way administration and teachers treat each other in Ann Arbor. He says because of the strong teacher union and lack of state funding, there is an unspoken divide between the two groups. This frustrates him because he wishes that teachers, administration and the public could join and lobby the state for adequate funds.

"The more a community unites, the stronger the message," McKnight said. He added, "I feel like this administration could do more bridge building and less wall building."

District representatives regularly pressure state legislators to repeal or modify some of the conditions of Proposal A which prevent the district from raising more money locally, says Board of Education Vice-President Irene Patalan. Superintendent Roberts, however, says that at the local level there are really no ways to get around the budget partition. The district has tried to save money on long-term maintenance expenses that would fall under the operating budget by spending the money on replacing old facilities and equipment. This summer, the capital budget paid for the replacement of several windows at Community High School that will make heating more efficient, thus shaving money off the operating budget.

Proposal A does not prevent the district from raising money at a county-wide level, though this is much harder to pull off. Washtenaw County voters as a whole can approve a transfer of tax dollars to the operating budget. Patalan says that the district meets with leaders of the 11 school districts that make up Washtenaw County in order to get their approval. In this process, timing is important. If several districts have recently passed expensive bonds on their own, they are less likely to support a county-wide millage.

The state of the Michigan budget leads to difficult decisions, like choosing which teachers not to replace when they retire and how much money can go to buying new textbooks. "I think it really used to be simpler," says Patalan. "We'd fight about things like the color of the t-shirts. Now we're fighting for our lives."



Dying

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Young girls all over America have been told
for too long they must follow an anorexic
standard of beauty.
This must change.

The day after Christmas her freshman year, Jane (whose name has been changed) looked at herself in the mirror and vomited into the toilet.

"I was kind of chubby and, you know, [at] Christmas you eat a lot. The day after I was like, man, I totally hate myself right now. So I just started to throw up what I was eating," she said.

After that one day, Jane purged again, and again after every meal. The first week, she got scars on her hands from the acid in her stomach, and had to wear gloves so none of her friends or family would suspect she had a problem.

For 16-year-old Jane, it was the beginning of an endless struggle with the eating disorder bulimia, a condition where the victim feels they are too fat, and binges (eats) and purges (vomits) in a cycle to lose or maintain weight.

Bulimia and anorexia, the two major eating disorders affecting teens today, are more prevalent than some might think. In fact, 5% of all teenagers have some kind of eating disorder. That means that one out of twenty high school students struggles at some time during their adolescence with how much to eat or throw up.

Rachel Seel, who has a Ph.D in psychology and specializes in eating disorders said that many things can bring about an eating disorder. There's never just one factor: cultural factors involving the media and pressures that we have in our society such as the media communicate that we should look a certain way. Family can be a factor if teens get negative comments about their bodies from their parents, or are encouraged to go on diets. Sometimes teens who are involved with sports or activities that demand thinness, such as ballet or gymnastics, can be at risk. There's also the impact of their own personality- are they obsessive compulsive?

"It also can be partly genetic, but nobody understands what the cause is," Seel said.

Lida Atheam was fifteen when she started her risky eating habits. She was under stress at school; she liked a boy who told her she had a big butt; "it was always something."

"Some people overeat. I didn't, when I was stressed. One day at school when I was about sixteen, one of our secretaries at the school said, 'Oh, Lida, you look really good, you look like you've lost weight.' And that for me was when [the anorexia] triggered," she explained.

One major problem with the nature of eating disorders is that unlike cancer, or diseases that are more out of control, the victims of eating disorders see the problem but often times don't want to fix it.

"I realized what was going on," Lida said, "I kind of recognized what was happening, and that day I decided if I look good losing a little weight I'm going to look even better if I lose more."

However, just like diseases such as cancer, the longer an eating disorder goes untreated the deadlier it becomes. If untreated, 20% of teens with major eating disorders die. With treatment, the number is much lower, at 2-3%.

"The illness just gets so much more entrenched into... how they see themselves and who they are. If you catch it early, it's much easier to change," Seel said.

Even the possibility of death doesn't usually deter victims in the early stages of an eating disorder. Jane, who had learned about eating disorders in health class, still decided to continue purging.

"Right from the start I knew it was going to be a problem. But I thought that the weight loss would kind of balance the [negative] health side affects," she said.

Lose weight she did; within the first month of starting to purge, Jane lost 40 pounds. She thought it was "awesome," and kept throwing up with more and more frequency.

Eating disorders often continue for many months, even years, without being noticed and treated. Unless the weight loss is drastic, victims can stay under the radar for as long as they want. With Jane, a few of her friends commented on her weight loss, but none of them ever guessed that she had been throwing up to lose her weight - and her parents contributed to the problem.

"They would say, 'Lose more weight. You look good now, don't get fat again, and lose more weight,'" Jane said.

They also told her not to purge, which confused Jane more. She made more of an effort to hide it from them- with a mild Obsessive Compulsive Disorder as an excuse; she'd take showers after dinner and throw up while the water was running.

Jane's story is another example of a situation in which an eating disorder can, and did, develop. Rachel Seel says she sees unhealthy environments like that all of the time.

"Sometimes when I really feel strongly that they're not being treated well at home, and they're having a really hard time, sometimes I just want to take them

I would like to stop because it's unhealthy, and I'm kind of forcing myself to stop. But I also don't want to get fat.

Jane

home and take care of them, but I can't do that," she said.

Victims can also take a strange pride in having their eating disorder. When Lida was 16, she made a pact with her friend to skip breakfast and lunch, and eat small dinners with their families, "so they would see we were eating." And then they would see who lost the most weight.

"She gave up on that agreement, she couldn't really do that, and I could, and I felt like, wow, I'm really special because I can do this and she couldn't," Lida said.

Because of this pride, even teenagers whose eating disorders are found out don't necessarily want to get rid of their disorder- even though they know it hurts them.

Jane told one of her friends, and soon her problem was out.

"People [who] know ask me, why do you do this, don't you know it's bad? Well, of course I know it's bad. I can't make them understand that it's really a choice; it's not like a disease. I don't view it as a disease," she said.

Essentially, victims of eating disorders do not see themselves as victims. So when friends try to help, it can have a negative affect. And as they become more and more isolated, they dive deeper into unhealthy habits.

"It becomes their identity. It feels really scary [to give it up] because that's the thing that they think they're really good at," says Seel.

Jane's friends tried to get her to stop her eating habits- to no avail.

"I told them I couldn't [stop.] Which is partially true, and I told them I didn't want to, and that they were just making me unhappy. And eventually they would give up," Jane said.

The obsession leads victims to do things they wouldn't do normally. Jane decided that she wanted to start school as thin as possible. So the day before school started, she walked downtown and purchased a box of laxatives, and took one more than the recommended dosage, in what she calls one of her more "stupid-ass" decisions.

"It was the most painful experience ever," she said of her first time taking laxatives. But she "was skinny the next day," and a month later she tried it again, slowly becoming addicted to another dangerous behavior. "I got a little hooked on them. Right before a big occasion when I had to wear something tight or if I felt fat one day, I would just pop a few, and it worked."

Billie Ochberg, who worked at an inpatient adolescent psychology unit in Cleveland, has seen weirder behaviors. The setting where she worked was very much like a dormitory, and the girls would all do their laundry. One girl, named Lucy* believed that if she did her laundry after someone who wasn't thin, she would have extreme anxieties that her laundry was "contaminated."

In the end, she had to have surgery and a feeding tube inserted into her stomach. And, "Her parents had to force her into having that surgery," Ochberg said.

When Seel sees patients, she asks them what percentage of their day they spend thinking about anything having to do with weight, shape, size, food, or anything related during their waking hours.

"Most of them will say all the time, or 80% and then they're sort of sort of surprised themselves, realizing that it's taken over their whole lives," she said.

That's why it amazes her when victims are able to keep up straight A's. Many can't.

During the course of her anorexia, Lida switched schools four times. She explained that the discontent at her schools was a result of her disease. While her eating was within her control, her life was not. She barely graduated on time.

It's not just the mind-consuming thoughts of food that weaken victims of eating disorders. There are physical affects as well -to start with, the sickening feeling of hunger that Lida experienced daily.

"That hunger feeling, that feeling like you're going to throw up- that, a lot. Just, so hungry I was trying to swallow my spit to fill up my stomach," she explained.

Jane also felt the effects of her bulimia. As she threw up after every meal, she dealt with more and more problems, such as having weeks where she would pass out frequently.

"I get cold really easily. Especially right after throwing up if I stand up too quickly I get really dizzy," she said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

DYING TO BE THIN: CONTINUED

Sometimes victims of eating disorders will seek help on their own, but Seel said most times that's not the case—when they first come in, they're adamant that they're fine, that their parents are making them come, that they don't see anything wrong and that they like the way they look - or want to lose even more weight. "But underneath that the reality is that they're just very afraid," she said.

Nobody told Lida to go get help - she did on her own, after a dangerous wake-up call.

After high school, Lida went to EMU, and started drinking her sophomore year. This is actually quite common - according to Lida, 35% of female alcoholics have an eating disorder. Finally, one night she cheated on her boyfriend and realized her eating and drinking were out of control.

"When I did that, when I realized that I could hurt him like that, I knew that I needed to get help. And that was when I hit rock bottom," she said. "I realized at that time that it wasn't me. I had morals, and I was raised in a Christian home, and I was doing all these things that I never agreed with, but it wasn't me. I was sick, I needed to get help."

There are many options for help available to eating disorder victims; Lida went to EDEN, an acronym for Eating Disorders Education Network, and they sent her to a physician named Dr. Rosen, an MD.

He told her that she had an irregularity in her heart-beat - but that he was certain with proper nutrition it would be fine.

Lida was lucky. Severe cases of anorexia can result in hair loss, a damaged immune system, dehydration that leads to kidney failure- and in terrible situations, heart problems, low blood pressure, heart rate and body temperature, bad circulation, anemia, stunted growth- and even death, according to helpguide.org, a website that specializes on mental health issues.

Where Lida got help, Jane still disagrees that she even has an illness- she admits that a skinny person who looks in the mirror and sees a fat person might have a disease. But she claims that the actual actions surround-

ing the disease are always up to the victim.

The choice, for Jane, was to continue purging despite her worried friends' wishes.

"In every fat girl's head, there's always that thing where you want to get thin. That's my goal," she said.

Seel said that's the harsh inner dialogue that's coming through.

"They're always saying, you're fat, you're ugly, you're this, you're that, and you don't deserve to eat, and it's so frequent with them and so constant that they don't even notice that it's going on. It's not really them, it's the illness."

When victims of eating disorders do decide to get better, one of the more surprising things for them is how much they've been missing. As Lida continued to go to meetings at EDEN, and met twice a week with Dr. Rosen, she found that she had other interests than her disease- she liked swimming, and scrap booking, and fundraising to help other girls like her.

"It was surprising how quickly I was able to focus on things that interested me other than what I wasn't eating," she said.

And luckily enough for Lida, she was able to repair her broken relationship with her boyfriend. Now, they're married and have children.

Seel says the rediscovery of activities is common in recovering from eating disorders. She says that sometimes victims lose interest in spending time with their friends or family, and they won't come down to dinner. They'll stay in their rooms, refuse to eat, and avoid social activities with food. It's only natural that when victims recover, they realize that there's so much more than food.

Unfortunately, some people never recover from eating disorders. At some level, Jane knows that while her purging helped her lose and maintain a low weight, it still isn't a good thing to continue.

"I would like to stop because it's not healthy, and I'm kind of forcing myself to stop. But I also don't want to get fat," she said.

It is not as easy as wanting to stop without help.

"It's a hard habit to break. I'll try to break it sometimes and I'll go months without doing it, and then one

day I'll look at myself and just [think,] I'm really unhappy with who I am right now, so I go back to it," Jane explained.

Seel said that is the difference between really being recovered, and that the real goal is for the victim to have a shift in the way they see and think about themselves so that they don't face low self-esteem issues on their weight, shape and size. "Once they make that shift, that's when they're really better."

Like many victims of eating disorders, Jane isn't worried about the immediacy of her problem. "I'm going to be unhealthy for the rest of my life, probably. But I don't think it will result in death," she said.

Lida, who has now been a facilitator at EDEN for four and a half years, said that's the opposite message of she wants to get out.

"The worst thing that we want to portray at EDEN is that you can go through an eating disorder and end up perfect. A lot of times that's not the case," she said.

In the meantime, Jane still will not seek help from a therapist or school counselor. "I want to stop for myself, and I don't want to stop with their methods. And I don't want their supervision," she said.

Unfortunately, that's typical for eating disorder victims- they want control, and their eating is the only way they can obtain that. Seel acknowledges that recovery is hard, even for those who really want it. "The illness becomes a way for them to cope with things. It's just very hard for them to give it up because they feel like they wouldn't know what to do without it."

But she says that she has a piece of advice for someone worried about getting an eating disorder: Never start diets. Changing the way you eat and having a healthier lifestyle is fine, but a restrictive diet is never productive.

"It doesn't always cause anorexia, but anorexia always starts with that."

Meanwhile, Lida is continuing her work at EDEN to help people who do make that mistake - women like her who've dealt with eating disorders.

"I feel like there was a purpose to what I went through because of what I'm doing today. I think it's a part of who I am," she said.

Closer to home

Anorexia is a killer. We see disturbing images in health class, cringe every so often when we see a model as deathly thin as a starving child in Africa, and shake our heads when we read articles that show victims growing younger and younger. But for me, anorexia hits a little closer to home.

My mother, Julie Halpert, is an environmental journalist, a mother of three, a wife and a freelancer for several really important magazines. What I didn't know about her was that when she was my age, she suffered from anorexia.

As a teenager, Julie Edelson (her maiden name) was everything a parent could wish for - Miss Junior Huntington Woods, a straight-A student, a dancer.

"When I was dancing," she said, "I became someone else, got lost in the music."

Dancing wasn't all positive for her, however. Having to wear close fitting leotards and outfits combined with her own mother's struggle with obesity caught up with her. "I wanted to be in control," she said, and began eating less and less.

Though she didn't realize there was a problem, she was "dancing a lot, burning calories and not eating as much as I should have."

Living in a house where her mother would go on yo-yo diets wasn't a great effect on her, either.

"I would see my mother struggling and I would vow not to be like her. I would see her criticize my sister, and watch her, and want that attention," she said.

Slowly, the problem became more than nervous eating habits. My mom stopped menstruating for a year and a half, and went to the doctor. "He didn't know much at the time, nobody did, but he mentioned that my eating might have been the problem."

At the time, her weight was down to 85 pounds on her 5'1" frame.

"I was never scared," she said, "and I started to eat more." But the struggle continued for a few months, and didn't stop being a threat until college.

"I was away from that original environment," she said, and almost immediately put on ten pounds. "I understood how serious the situation was, so I tried my best

[to gain weight,]" she said.

It seemed she had put the issue behind her, but to this day, she said, "I do have an obsession with my weight," she said. It is something she accepts as something she can't change, monitoring her food and watching the calories. "I do try to eat healthy and exercise regularly." Now, she weighs in at a sufficient 105 pounds.

She does worry that her problem as a teenager might affect her children, and should. Anorexia is proven to be genetic; a daughter whose mother was anorexic has about a 10% of getting the disease themselves.

"I never talk about my weight in front of my kids," she said. "I do emphasize that they eat healthy and stay active."

She's thankful that today there is more knowledge about anorexia than when she was diagnosed. "The beauty of it is that there is so much awareness," she said. "I had a doctor who never knew what it was, or how to treat it, and today it's much better."

As she put it, "Times have changed," and for the most part, so has she.

Need help? Get help.

If you're struggling with an eating disorder, here are some places you can go to get help:

- **The Ann Arbor Center for Eating Disorders is reachable at (734) 668-8585. They offer meetings and support.**
 - **EDEN is available at (517) 404 6029. They also offer support groups.**
 - **Your school counselor is also a good person to talk to for help and support.**
- If you have a friend who is suffering, make sure to tell their parents!**

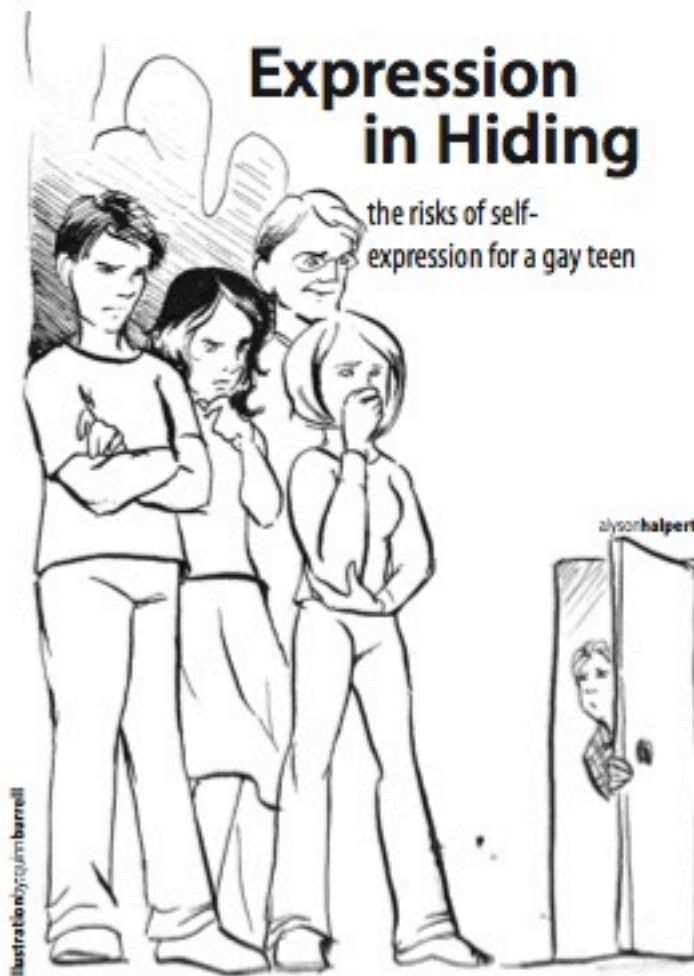


Illustration by Alyson Halpert

Expression in Hiding

the risks of self-expression for a gay teen

Yoni Siden, 17, was a freshman at Pioneer when the first piece of fruit flew by his head. At first he thought it was just "people being stupid, throwing fruit around," but soon it became apparent that the apples and oranges were aimed at him.

Siden says the fruit onslaught was intentionally aimed at him because he is homosexual. He is one of many high school students who struggle to get through ado-

lescence and deal with discrimination at the same time. According to the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), 64% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth say they feel unsafe at school. A total of 92% of LGBTQ youth report hearing homophobic remarks, and 84% have been verbally harassed, the group says.

An identity questioned

Siden has experienced harassment from the moment he entered the sixth grade. He did not yet know he was gay, but others suspected he might be. "There are things about me that play into a lot of these gay stereotypes," Siden explains, "the cadence of my voice, the way I carry myself, the things I talk about. People tell me it's even in the way I walk."

The second day of school in the gym locker room, a student approached him and asked his name. Siden told him, and the boy said, "Well, now we know who the faggot is."

The memory is still vivid to Siden. It was the first time he was labeled. He had not yet started puberty and realized he was homosexual, so he was very confused. "Being called gay is automatically a mark on somebody's head. It's something that's wrong about you, something that's weird about you," Siden said.

Siden continued to struggle as students isolated him and frequently called him "gay" and a "fag." "Middle school is hard for anybody, let alone for somebody who is relatively different in any way," he said.

Because of this, the journey to self-acceptance is often difficult.

Sterling Field, 16, is a junior at Huron High School. During middle school, he did everything he could to convince himself he was straight. "I thought [being gay] was kind of... not good," he said. He dated girls, tried to "get off" to girls, and thought about them a lot, but it did not work. Field decided to hide his sexuality.

At parties, he danced with women and pretended to like it. He avoided the topic of whom he liked, and often lied about his sexuality, which he felt badly about. He kept thinking, "What's wrong with me?"

Kim McKenzie, an openly homosexual staff member at Community High School, says this is common of teenagers who are "in the closet," or hiding their sexuality. "It's almost like having a secret," she says. "If you're not comfortable with your own sexuality, you

tend to push people away... you don't set up the bond you could with other kids." She explains that it hinders emotional and academic development and often relationships with parents.

Teens are also afraid their friends will be disgusted if they find out. "It is lonely... lonely and scary. A lot of the time you feel fake, because you can't be who you really are," McKenzie says.

Field felt the same way. "No one else was like this, or at least no one that I knew," he said. He tried to remedy that, and logged onto Myspace.com to make friends with some gay guys. Then, one of his friends told him she was bisexual. "She kind of dragged me out of the closet," he explained.

He told his dad and sister he was bisexual. Then they told his mom. She told Field he was attracted to men just because he was at the age where he was "so horny he would do anything."

Most homosexual youth view their feelings as legitimate, and see coming out as telling their friends and family about an aspect of who they are. "Without a doubt, it takes a lot to admit that you're different, that there is something that makes you legally inferior to other people, and socially inferior in many people's eyes," Siden says. "Just like an African American person cannot hide their skin color, an LGBTQ person can't hide who they are forever."

Discrimination

Sarah, 17 (her name and identifying details have been changed), jumps up from the table, returns with a Koran and points to a paragraph midway down the page: "What, do you indeed approach men lustfully rather than a woman? Nay, you are a people who act ignorantly but the answer of his people was no other except that they said, turn out Lut's followers from your town, surely they are a people that would keep pure."

The selection outlines an Arabic view on homosexuality, which is resoundingly negative. Sarah's family is from a Middle Eastern country where homosexuality is illegal and no gay rights exist. She has lived in the United States

LGBTQ Timeline

08 human interest the communicator

In the Bible

God tells Abraham that he intends to destroy the city of Sodom because of the residents' immorality. The two main views of his reason are the resident's inhospitality or their sexual immorality. The word sodomy refers to acts of oral and anal sex, considered homosexual activities, of the men in Sodom. God's condemnation becomes a central part of Western attitudes towards homosexuality.

6th and 7th Centuries

Homosexual desire is accepted throughout antiquity—in Rome and Athens for example. Some people see it as an opportunity to show their superiority since relationships involved a passive role (such as a boy) and an active role (such as a man in his 20s or 30s). Sexual exploits of Zeus, Hercules, and Achilles suggest that attraction to another man is a sign of masculinity.

1220's

Italian Catholic priest St. Thomas Aquinas says that the purpose of sexual activity is procreation, a mechanism designed by the Christian God to assure prosperity of the human race. He concludes that homosexual activity is a violation of God's design.

her whole life, and known that she is mostly attracted to women since her freshman year of high school.

Like many LGBTQ youth, Sarah was out to her friends but not to her parents. Teens keep this a secret from their parents for many reasons – some because they think their parents would not believe them; others because their parents would evict and disown them. The National Gay and Lesbian task force reports that 50% of teens who come out to their parents or guardians experience a negative reaction and 26% are told they must leave home.

Sarah is not the kind of girl who likes negative attention. Even though she has been going out with her girlfriend, Jennifer, for months, she rarely kisses her in public like other lesbian couples she knows. She says this would not be the case if she were with a guy. She introduced her girlfriend to her parents as a close friend, but they grew suspicious.

One day, Sarah and Jennifer went out to dinner. While they were out, Sarah's mom called and demanded to know where she was. Because Sarah knew her mom would not approve, she told her she was at school. Her mom, suspicious, drove to school and found her daughter was not there. "Are you dating Jennifer?" she asked.

Sarah conceded that she was, and her parents were furious. They said she could not see Jennifer anymore, and threatened to home school her or send her back to their country of origin. "They said, 'Oh, but we know you, that's not you,'" Sarah said, "they think I've been brainwashed or convinced by somebody."

For now, she continues to date Jennifer secretly despite her parents' wishes. Her parents check Sarah's phone bill to see whom she has been calling, so Jennifer blocks her number. Her dad drives to her school at lunch to make sure her car is in the parking lot. "They basically spy on me," she explains, "More than anything, I really wish my parents would accept it and let me do whatever I want."

Sarah says her parents do not believe she is homosexual.

"It sucks. When I grow up and have a

family... I want my family to know my background, and my parents. I want to be able to take them to [my family's country] and walk around with my wife."

However, she does not have any regrets. She is more independent and has acquired an "amazing ability to lie." The discrimination is worth the pain. "I like to live in the present," she said. "I love Jennifer, I love spending time with her, so why not enjoy myself?"

Other instances of discrimination pose more immediate threats. By the time Siden was a sophomore, he was used to people harassing him and calling him names. However, the negative feeling seemed to be growing. "I never felt [my homosexuality] was wrong," he said, "but I felt very troubled by what was going on around me."

He tried to leave school one day during lunch, and found a large truck was blocking his way out of the parking lot. Everybody in the car was looking out the windows, laughing and yelling, but Siden could not hear it.

If you're not comfortable with your own sexuality, you tend to push people away...

He took another exit, but took a turn and realized he was driving behind the same car, which had started to drive very slowly. Siden recognized the group of guys who were driving it, and saw a car full of their friends pull behind him. "It became clear that it was something malicious," he recalls. The car behind him, also large, started to speed up. "I found myself getting totally boxed in," he says. "If anybody accidentally hit the gas or slammed on the breaks a little too hard, if anybody slipped or pushed somebody else, that's the end of me."

His safety was compromised, so he took a sharp right into a church parking lot and lost the other cars.

The day he got back to school he was nervous. He knew who the kids were

and had a class with one of them. But like many teens who are victims of discrimination, Siden did not want to report the harassment because he feared retaliation. Walking from his car into the building early in the morning, Siden listened to the same group of students taunt him and yell slurs against "the faggot, the gay kid."

Siden no longer felt safe at Pioneer High school.

A common denominator

Experiences for LGBTQ teens range from immediate acceptance to violence and harassment, but one constant seems to be that teens trying to discover their sexuality in an intolerant atmosphere do not have an easy time.

Field became depressed in the December of his freshman year, the same time he began the process of coming out. The third week before school got out, he started to cut himself. After winter break, he tried to commit suicide five times with alcohol and pills. On Martin Luther King Day, he took 35 Benadryl tablets and was hospitalized for six hours. In inpatient therapy after, he told his parents he was gay, not bisexual. His mother cried for several days.

During his sophomore year, Siden revealed his sexuality to his parents and discontinued his relationship with his father. He suppressed his feelings of anger, shame and insecurity. Siden went to a psychologist and was diagnosed with a plethora of mental health conditions, including depression.

In the eighth grade, Sarah discovered she had a crush on a girl in her classes and got attached. She knew she could not be in a relationship with her, which hurt her. She thought she could never be with anybody she would love. She did not want to be gay, and did not want a life of discrimination and hardship. She became careless with pills, and took them frequently. One day she took the whole bottle, and hoped she would not wake up. She did. Later, she found she had triggered a liver problem.

Stories like these are common. Ac-

cording to SIECUS, 33% of LGBTQ teens reported suicide attempts, compared to 9% of all other students.

What is being done?

Siden thought that being homosexual would not be a big deal. "I wasn't really anticipating the reaction. I was told all my life that Ann Arbor is liberal... progressive and outgoing... Ann Arbor may be progressive and outgoing, but not necessarily towards LGBTQ youth."

After the incident when he was run off the road, reactions were varied. Some people he told did not want to believe him, and told Siden he had misinterpreted what had happened. Others said it was only a matter of time before the smaller harassment escalated. A large number of people told him they could not believe anything like that could happen in Ann Arbor, to a friend of theirs.

He went to a close teacher and she sat down with him. "She told me, 'I don't know what to do. Nobody gave me a handbook of how to deal with these issues, especially when they fall on something as delicate as sexual orientation,'" he said.

To limit his time at Pioneer, he dual-enrolled at Community High School and Washtenaw Community College. He was sure CHS would offer him the accepting environment he lacked at Pioneer.

He gave a presentation for one of the health classes at CHS, and was surprised to read in one of the student evaluations, "Tell the faggot to stop acting like a bitch."

Immediately, the issue was dealt with by Robbie Stapleton and Dean Peter Ways, who was surprised to learn that being called a "fag" was routine for Siden.

The repeated situations turned Siden into an activist. He is co-president of the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) at Pioneer, and they are working on a large project, a district-wide climate survey. Siden wants school to be a safe and productive place for LGBTQ youth.

(continued on page 16)

1730's

Movement of churches' message to one based on "nature" has been occurring for the past several centuries. The Dutch mount an anti-sodomy campaign, along with other discriminatory campaigns, and execute as many as 100 men and boys.

1930's

During the World War II, LGBT are persecuted in Nazi Germany and an estimated 15,000 gay men are sent to concentration camps. At least 100,000 gay men are arrested. Nazis believed that homosexuality was potentially contagious. The number killed is unknown.

1950

During the Red Scare, Senator Joseph McCarthy suggests that gays are Russian agents. The McCarran Immigration Act says that aliens who intend "to engage in any immoral sexual act" is counted as a class "of aliens [that] shall be ineligible to receive visas and shall be excluded from admission into the United States." At this time the Surgeon General lumps homosexuality under the heading of "psychopathic personalities."

1961

Illinois becomes the first state to repeal its outlaw of private homosexual acts between consenting adults.

1973

The American Psychological Association decides that homosexuality is no longer a mental illness.

LGBTQ Timeline (continued)

1974

Elaine Nobel becomes the first openly lesbian politician to be elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. The U.S. Civil Service Commission issues new guidelines barring discrimination based on "homosexual conduct."

1979

Over 200,000 LGBT individuals have a march for their rights on Washington. The date becomes the starting point for National Coming Out day.

1986

In the case of Bowers vs. Harwick, the Supreme Court upholds the right of states to ban private, consensual gay sodomy.

1990

Restrictions on homosexuals through the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act are officially lifted.

1993

Transexual Brandon Teena is viciously murdered before he can testify in a rape case. His death sparks outrage as an extreme example of hate crimes against LGBT.

2003

US Supreme Court strikes down sodomy laws in Lawrence vs. Texas. Their decision rendered Texas' anti-sodomy laws unconstitutional. The law had discriminated between same-sex and heterosexual couples in determining criminal activity.

(continued from page 9)

At CHS, Ways says he is comfortable as a homosexual staff member but wants to create an understanding between students and staff and form a harassment policy so another incident does not take place.

McKenzie says the CHS CSA is working towards a middle school outreach program, a short presentation about homosexuality and coming out with situational role-play to help create safer environments from the start.

Field is proud that he can help others get through the coming out process as

president of his CSA. "I'm very happy that I'm gay," he says, "I wouldn't have it any other way."

Siden thinks the situation in Ann Arbor can be remedied, as can most situations involving homophobia. "Let's use that progressive attitude, that liberal attitude, to really make this an environment for LGBTQ youth which creates safety and security. Students should feel proud of who they are and be comfortable with who they are," he said.

Siden is convinced that all it takes to accept an LGBTQ youth is to get to know them. The summer before junior

year, he traveled to Israel with teens from all over the United States. They had all checked each other's Myspace and Facebook pages, where he had listed his sexuality. Everyone knew that Siden was gay from the moment he stepped off the plane, including a friend named Dillon. "Up until that summer, every other word in his sentences was 'fag.' Everything was 'so gay,'" Siden said of Dillon.

Siden sat next to Dillon at dinner one night, and the two of them bonded. Siden's friends told him that Dillon had not used the word "faggot" in

three weeks, and thought Siden was "pretty cool."

McKenzie agrees that exposure leads to understanding. "People are afraid of the unknown," she says, "When you are afraid of something, the first reaction is to say mean or derogatory things about it." She says, and Ways agrees, that students should learn about LGBTQ authors, and the history of homosexuality that dates back to Grecian times.

"People get over racism, too," says Siden, "It's not engrained in somebody's psyche to hate."

November 4th -- A step forward, step back for civil rights

What I have to say feels so obvious. It is a wonder I even must write it: All Americans should be equal under the law, and religion and state should be separate.

This was why, when I woke up on November 5th, I was shocked and disappointed to discover that our supposedly forward-moving society had taken a jolting step backwards. Proposal 8 had passed in California.

Proposal 8, the most heavily-funded measure in California on both sides, amends the state constitution to define marriage between a man and a woman. Measures similar to this one have now been passed in 30 states. The passage of the proposal will reverse the ruling of the California courts that states same-sex marriage is constitutional.

As the nation is celebrating the victory of our first African-American president, a large minority of Americans have been re-reduced to second class citizenship.

Something we should have learned a couple of decades ago is that separate is not equal, and it frustrates me that people do not understand that. Some of the most liberal people I know have told me they believe that gay people should have the same rights – civil unions and benefits that come with marriage – but not the actual title. To me, this harkens back to a time when African-Americans had to use separate facilities than whites– supposedly of the same quality, just different. Unless we have the exact same rights, including marriage, we are separated and reduced to something other than full citizens. Blame religion, fear; it does not matter. Denying gay marriage is a matter of hate and discrimination. It says so directly in the official language of Proposal 8: “Eliminates right of same-sex couples to marry” (*italics mine*).

When I expressed my anger that afternoon after one of the most liberal states in the union passed a law in favor of eliminating rights, friends were sympathetic. That’s no good, they said, but look – we just elected a president for change; I’m sure things will be better. They forgot or did not know that even our new President Elect is

not in favor of equality, which is ironic because his election is the result of hard work in civil rights movements. Because of his religion, Barack Obama is not in favor of gay marriage.

Mine is not a popular opinion, but I am not content with Obama’s support of civil unions only. Separation of state and religion states that nothing, including bigoted interpretations of the Bible, should affect the rights of our citizens. Clearly this constitutional value has not sunk in. Much like we look back on presidents who were not in favor of women’s suffrage and civil rights for black Americans, I can only hope that one day we will look at this and cringe, wondering how our leaders could deny minority rights so publicly – and in fact, for public approval.

Proposal 8 passed because of this same religious fervor and homophobia, playing to parents’ fears that their children could think being gay is okay. A frequent point made by Proposal 8 proponents was profiled in a commercial where a little girl approaches her mother and says, “Moen, guess what I learned in school today? I learned how a prince married a prince, and I can marry a princess!” A 36-second youtube.com video showed a baby playing with two dolls dressed in wedding apparel, a man and a woman, with the caption, “Marriage. It’s simple.”

The kind of homophobia implied in those ads, and the thinking behind gay-marriage bans – that some love is better than others, that homosexuality is a choice one makes with abandon, that children should not learn acceptance in schools – is what fuels marriage laws. To name anything else would be a farce.

As a lesbian and an American, it disheartens me to feel the apathy and homophobia of our nation echoed in these gay-marriage bans. I know that alone, gay activists will not be able to create equality. I will believe in change when all Americans want to protect basic rights, and when they understand that being able to vote away equality is scary and threatening not only to gays but to everyone. On November 4th, 2008, our country elected a black president. But in the fight for civil rights, we have so much further to go.



raising jordyn

The 36-hour labor was the easy part. She wasn't dilating. The drugs weren't working. The Pitocin, a drug to help her dilate, made her unconscious. She woke up not knowing where she was or who she was. Everyone was scared. Sixteen-year-old Kapree Smith was scared.

where there's a pill, there's a way

SOME STUDENTS TURN TO ADDERALL DURING THE MOST STRESSFUL WEEK OF SCHOOL

JEFF OH
cooper depreest photo

It's 7:56 a.m. at Community High School, and the students of Marci Tuzinsky's sixth block geometry class are gradually filling her first-floor classroom. Some have deep bags under their eyes from a sleepless night, some are frantically studying and some are just nervously waiting. All of these students are about to take their semester final, a cumulative exam that will make up 20 percent of their semester grade.

While some students study to prepare for finals, for other students this isn't enough. John Carter is a CHS student who has been using Adderall during finals week since his freshman year.

According to a 2005 study conducted by the University of Michigan Substance Abuse Center, over 25 percent of students at the college level were illegally abusing stimulants like Adderall. While there are no reliable studies for high school abuse, doctors and students from 15 schools with hard-to-meet academic standards estimate the prevalence to be from 15-40 percent.

"I only take ADD medicine when I really need it, which is during finals week," Carter said. "I generally have a hard time focusing and I procrastinate a lot so it helps me to focus and be very productive."

John has not been diagnosed with ADD and does not have a pre-

scription for Adderall, so he obtains it through a friend who has a legal prescription for the drug. From John's experience, this is the most common way the drug is obtained.

"It's not too hard to get," Carter said. "It's widely available and it's cheap . . . four dollars or so. It's much cheaper than marijuana or cocaine."

According to Alan DeSantis, a researcher who is a professor at the University of Kentucky, about 30 percent of students at the university, at sometime or another, had illegally used a stimulant such as Adderall, Concerta or Ritalin.

Despite its prevalence, the penalty for illegally using or possessing drugs like Adderall is steep. In the United States, it is a Schedule II drug (as is cocaine). In Michigan, possession of illegally acquired Adderall is a misdemeanor and the maximum punishment is imprisonment of up to one year and/or a fine of up to \$1000. In addition to the legal implications, drug counselors say that for some kids, the drug may act as a gateway drug to painkillers or sleep aids.

"I do not [know the legal consequences of using illegal Adderall]," Carter said. "I know it's illegal to sell." Adderall and other ADD drugs would show up as amphetamines on drug test. While Carter knew that employers tested for Adderall, he didn't know what would happen if he ever got caught.

John noticed other downsides to Adderall.

"When I take Adderall I get . . . super thorough, I double and triple check my answers," John said. "You waste a lot of time. In freshman year, I took a math test and . . . I ended up running out of time at the end because I spent so much time being thorough."

John also took the ACT while on Adderall, but felt better and even did better—by one point—when he took it clean.

John also doesn't like the way Adderall makes him feel physically.

"I really hate the effects that it gives me," he said. "It makes me feel weird and bad and uncomfortable."

CHS counselor Diane Grant has experience dealing with students who have abused Adderall.

"Just like anything, it's not the healthiest thing for somebody who's growing and changing," she said. "It's a very powerful drug."

Grant also was worried about the circumstances that could lead to Adderall use.

"What's going on for somebody that they would feel like they would need to use [a stimulant]?" she said.

Grant also talked about the procedure when a student is prescribed for Adderall.

"Even when people get it prescribed to them, it's a big deal," she said. "We have a school nurse

and she often will talk to kids whenever they need to just about what to look for when starting a medication."

Thus, Adderall, even when taken in the prescribed dosage, can have unintended consequences.

Grant said that she sometimes would talk with families when it was found out that their kid was using Adderall without a prescription. The conversations would usually include what warning signs to look for and resources that the families could utilize.

"Because experimenting is one thing, long term use is another thing, and covering up what's really going on is another thing," she said.

Despite these drawbacks, Carter still believes that Adderall is the best option for him.

"I could probably drink a lot of coffee but that's probably worse for my body than taking one pill of Adderall," he said.

While this may be John's opinion, coffee is much different than Adderall. There are health risks associated with taking a prescription drug that hasn't been prescribed to you. Withdrawal can lead to heart problems and psychosis, while prolonged use can lead to addiction, or even more tragically, overdose. **C**

**name has been changed*



beyond the binary

NOT EVERYONE'S GENDER IDENTITY FITS INTO THE CONSTRAINTS OF "GIRL" AND "BOY".

marl cohen

margaret whitler-ferguson illustration & photo

"CISGENDER" IS THE TERM FOR SOMEONE WHOSE GENDER ALIGNS WITH THEIR BIOLOGICAL SEX

Left or right. Right or wrong. True or false. Man or woman. In so many aspects, our society embraces the idea of a binary system: a choice of only two options. Gender is no exception.

But what if your identity doesn't fit into the neat little check-boxes of girl and boy?

For CHS student Shawn Williams* and the genderqueer community, gender is not a choice of two checkboxes; it is a spectrum on which one can choose a comfortable identity, whether it be girl, boy, neither or something in between.

Williams does not identify as a boy or a girl but as gender variant, or genderqueer. Because of this, Williams prefers to use the gender neutral pronouns "ze" or "they" in place of "he" or "she" and "hir" (pronounced like "here") or "thei" in place of "his" or "her".

"We all have ways that we don't feel comfortable fitting into gender roles, and so usually the kids who are genderqueer don't feel comfortable even with the pronouns that box people in," explained Chloe Root, who teaches History and Gender Studies and is the staff adviser to CHS's Queer Straight Alliance (QSA). "So if you can think of a way in which you don't necessarily match up with the ideal of whatever gender you identify with, then just think of that to the degree that you're not matching up with the actual pronouns that refer to you that way."

Though it gets more press in current times, the genderqueer community is not new to this decade. The term "genderqueer" gained popularity in the 90s, when people with gender identities beyond the traditional gender binary began coming out. Root, who attended CHS and graduated in 2002, was involved in the QSA during her high school years and recalls having genderqueer friends.

Contrary to popular usage, the term "gender" is not interchangeable with the term "sex". "Here's the old kind of cliché: we tell [people] gender is between your ears and sex is between your legs," explained Williams. "So basically, we use the term sex as your biological sex, male or female, or intersex, and...there's so many options for gender, it's basically endless. Gender,

we like to talk about on the spectrum, so on one side there's boy, on the other side there's girl, in the middle there's gender neutral, and basically people can decide where they fall on that spectrum."

Sometimes a gender identity is easier to visualize than to explain verbally. At a recent meeting of the QSA, Williams illustrated hir** gender identity by drawing it on the board. Ze** drew a straight line, with a G for Girl on one side and a B for boy on the other, then highlighted the space between gender neutral and boy. "[Gender identity] doesn't mean like a specific point; it can be like an entire portion that they feel like they fall under," explained Williams. "So, I kind of feel like I am between gender neutral and gay."

However, it took a long time for

actly what it meant. After the conversation, Williams Googled "genderqueer", not knowing that the search results would completely change hir identity.

"I came across a few sites and I started looking at them and reading, and I really understood, and it kind of freaked me out at first because I was like, 'Oh my god, these people are in my head. They get exactly what I feel,'" said Williams. "I finally found something that I actually feel comfortable with."

About half way through hir junior year, Williams started going by different pronouns in CHS's QSA and in Riot Youth, a group at the Neutral Zone (Ann Arbor's teen center) that creates a safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth (LGBTQQ) and their allies. At

name. "It's not like she's forcing any gender stereotypes on me, thankfully. She's very open with my gender expression. But I don't think she understands that it's not just gender expression, it's also my identity," said Williams.

Williams also has two brothers, but ze has not yet discussed hir gender identity with them. They still call hir "she" and "my sister".

"I don't mind when my family uses my legal name, because they always use it. It's just kind of hard for me because I'm constantly being told 'I'm a girl,' 'I'm your sister,' things like that," said Williams.

Root described the feeling for a genderqueer person when referred to by incorrect pronouns: "Just think about... if someone was talking to me and used male pronouns, it'd be weird... It's just that I don't identify as male so it'd be kind of strange if someone was always saying the wrong pronouns. It's not necessarily that I would assume the person was hating me or disrespecting me, it would just feel really uncomfortable all the time because that's not the way I identify," she said.

Currently, Williams has to endure this uncomfortable feeling often, as ze is not yet out to CHS staff members. Williams is in the process of writing an email to staff members, telling them hir gender identity and "explaining why when they call me a she and when they call me a girl...that it's really uncomfortable for me, and it almost feels like they're subconsciously forcing me into this box."

For Williams, one of the reasons it is hard to come out to staff is "because of the generation...being able to be open about your gender identity is definitely new to our generation, or at least that's what I've found." And because Williams uses gender-neutral pronouns, it is difficult for people to make the transition. "I think most of the staff are actually really accepting, but what can be tough is that it's hard to remember. So when you're first getting used to using a new pronoun, it's easy to slip up," added Root.

Besides the challenge of coming out to teachers, Williams' transition into openness has been relatively peaceful. Ze has never been bullied for hir gender identity, and has never been called



Williams, who is biologically female, to realize that identifying as genderqueer was a possibility. "It was something that wasn't presented as you had any options in life to make yourself feel more comfortable. It was basically like you're told you're this, so you must be that," ze explained.

Growing up, Williams always just thought of himself as a tomboy. Ze definitely was "not your typical stereotype of a little girl," but still identified as a girl.

Then, the summer after Williams's sophomore year, hir friend mentioned the term genderqueer in a conversation. Though Williams had heard the term in passing before, ze wasn't really sure ex-

the beginning of the year, Williams had begun going by the name Shawn* rather than hir female-identified birth name, and this helped the transition into a new gender identity.

Coming out to friends did not cause a lot of problems for Williams, as most of hir friends are involved in the queer community and most adjusted well to using the new pronouns. Coming out to hir family was more complicated.

Williams came out to hir mother on the way back from a college visit during hir junior year. Williams's mother has not adjusted to Williams's gender identity and the pronouns that come with it; she still refers to Williams as her daughter and calls Williams by hir legal



an offensive term to his face.

Still, Williams faces daily challenges. One is "the awkwardness of the bathroom and the locker room." Though CHS did build a gender neutral bathroom, a move that Williams called "awesome," the bathroom is not currently a comfortable place. "One, it's almost constantly locked, and two, it is scary in there...it's this big, echo-y white room...last time I was in there there wasn't a mirror," ze said. So Williams has been continuing to use the girl's bathroom and girl's locker room.

Luckily, this problem should soon be remedied. Dean Jen Hein explained that she is working with the school's staff of facilities on improvements to the gender neutral bathroom. There are plans to put in the mirror.

CHS is making strides with its gender-neutral bathroom and active QSA, and the small school environment is definitely an advantage for LGBTQ students: "I think because we're at Community I'm able to be open and not be afraid of being open...I feel like with our small school, it's a lot easier to know if you are getting bullied for this. You can tell other people, you can tell the staff, and they'll know that person," Williams said.

However, Williams is not sure if CHS is accepting for genderqueer and transgender students as it could be. In the last few years there have been incidents at CHS of bullying and harassment

towards transgender students. These incidents, to Williams' knowledge, were addressed by staff. For Williams, it is hard to know whether most people at CHS are really accepting, since, beyond the QSA, there isn't a lot of open conversation about genderqueer identity.

Root agrees. Although she thinks that CHS is a more accepting environment than many other schools, she believes that "it's still not a safe place to be trans, it's still not a safe place to be genderqueer, just because the world isn't really a safe place...for these groups...in terms of being trans and gender queer, there's still really a long way to go. And not necessarily because of any individual person in the Community, but because that's where society's at right now."

"...It's just kind of hard for me because I'm constantly being told I'm a girl, 'I'm your sister,' things like that."

According to Williams, the community of Ann Arbor as a whole also has a long way to go to improve its acceptance level. Ann Arbor does have helpful resources for LGBTQ students, such as the Riot Youth program at the Neutral Zone and QSAs or GSAs in almost every school. But for Williams and other LGBTQ students, this is not

quite enough.

"People always say 'Oh, this is such a liberal, accepting town'...but it could be better," said Williams. "I just feel like in our school system, a lot of kids still have a lot of bias, a lot of kids still...they're not educated on stuff, or I feel like there's a lot of opportunities for kids to be openly homophobic, openly transphobic, and nobody will do anything about it."

Both Williams and Root agree that the road to a more accepting CHS and a more accepting Ann Arbor will need to be paved by education. "I think a lot of it is just educating people about the vocabulary and about the issues that genderqueer and trans kids face," said Root. "And also just relating a little bit more, because I think that's the thing,

ze: used in the place of "he" or "she"

hir: used in the place of "his" or "her"

hirs: used in the place of "his" or "hers"

Riot Youth and the CHS QSA are working on spreading awareness about issues faced by the queer community. Last year, the QSA gave presentations to forums at the beginning of the year about understanding basic terms in the queer community. This year, the QSA is working on conducting a Q&A session with teachers about different gender identities. And through a program called Gayrilla Theatre, Riot Youth teens perform plays based on true stories of Ann Arbor LGBTQ students in order to educate adults and teens about the issues the queer community faces. "[Gayrilla] is really powerful, and it's really impactful, and I know that's definitely one thing that's going on that I'm at least hoping is making some sort of difference," said Williams.

On a more global level, Williams wishes that there would be less of a focus on the gender binary. "I think it's really important when people start realizing that not everyone's on the binary, that you can identify with other things...just in the recent few months I've known a lot of people who just came out as genderqueer because they realized the binary is not where they fit; they're trying so hard to fit but it's not them. So they come out and they feel so much better," ze said.

Overall, finding a comfortable identity beyond the binary has had an extremely positive impact on Williams' high school experience. "I feel a lot happier. I feel healthier about it. Because I'm not trying to be something I'm not."

Now, Williams is feeling these positive feelings into activism in hope of changing people's views on the gender-queer community. Ze said, "Now that I know who I am, I'm gonna fight for what I think." **C**

"name has been changed"
"Williams, like many other gender-queer people, chooses to go by gender-neutral pronouns. See key above."

IN 2008, RIOT YOUTH SURVEYED 1,102 STUDENTS FROM THE ANN ARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. 9.53%, OR 106 STUDENTS, IDENTIFIED AS LGBTQ.

WHILE COMMUNITY OFFERS A GENDER NEUTRAL BATHROOM, IT IS LOCKED WHEN NOT IN USE.

looking to be "liked"

TIME SPENT ON FACEBOOK CAN FACTOR INTO TEENAGERS' SELF-ESTEEM



**Natalie
Herschenson**
Sophomore

Q: How often do you update your status on Facebook?
A: Three times a week.

Q: Do people's status updates affect your self-esteem?
A: It depends on what it is. If it's something mean about my friend, it's gonna affect me. But if it's about something irrelevant, I won't really care.

Q: Do you post notices about your accomplishments?
A: Sometimes, so that people that I don't see every day know what I'm up to, and what I'm doing in my sport and stuff.

Q: How often you do you look at other people's Facebook profiles?
A: I creep quite a bit.



**Jonas
Gearhart-Hall**
Junior

Q: How often do you update your status on Facebook?
A: Once every two weeks.

Q: Do people's status updates affect your self-esteem?
A: Not really.

Q: Do you post notices about your accomplishments?
A: Yeah, usually, just to tell people.

Q: How often you do you look at other people's Facebook profiles?
A: Whenever they show up, or if I was talking to the person.

mari cohen
cooper depicts photos

Let's go back to the end of December for a minute. It's dark and cold. University of Michigan has promised to release its decisions for early action admissions, and Ann Arbor seniors are repeatedly checking their emails, biting fingernails and pulling at hair, waiting for the words "University of Michigan" to appear in their inboxes.

Once the emails arrive, no one has to wait long to find out who got accepted. Facebook news feeds fill with status after status celebrating acceptance after acceptance, plus the occasional admitted rejection. Seniors find the admissions decisions of their friends right in front of their faces.

The college acceptance dilemma—so post or not to post?—is just one facet of the multidimensional world of Facebook. As Facebook becomes more prominent in the lives of teenagers, it becomes increasingly common to see posts celebrating personal accomplishments, from college acceptances to sports championships to test scores. And as Facebook becomes a natural teenage activity, it begins to play a role in teenage self-esteem.

A recent study at Utah Valley University, which interviewed 425 students, found that the more people use Facebook, the worse they feel about themselves. Because of all the pictures of people smiling and having fun, Facebook often gives teenagers the illusion that they are not as happy as their friends.

Dr. Brenda Lepisto, an East Lansing clinical psychologist with an interest in the effect of technology on teenagers, explained that there are also studies that say that social media can help improve self-esteem, contradicting the Utah Valley findings. She believes that Facebook's effects can vary: "It's kind of different strokes for different folks. Different people feel differently about it. I've seen [Facebook] improve people's self-esteem, I've seen it break up relationships, marriages, and I've seen



people feel pretty left out, cyberbullied to some extent."

ACCOMPLISHMENT AVENUE

Dr. Lepisto explained that Facebook can feel like the ideal environment for posting accomplishments: "It is a way to communicate with a lot of people, and I think that when someone is proud of something or wants to share something or wants to portray a certain image, then putting that on Facebook reaches a lot of people."

Community High School senior Senait Dafa can understand why her classmates choose to post about college acceptances on Facebook. "When you get that letter in the mail, that moment's like, 'I made it, the past three and a half years of high school are actually worth something.' That moment's...so fantastic and I want to tell everyone I know," she said.

Dafa, however, chooses not to post about her own acceptances and accomplishments. She believes that such posts serve to create jealousy. "I know of people who were rejected from U of M in the first enrollment process when early action admissions were released and people who really deserved...to get in didn't get in, and I felt really bad. Because it's all over Facebook," she explained. "I don't want to be known as someone who got into 'this school, this school, this school, this school, this school.' It's just not me."

Dr. Lepisto explained that other people's Facebook posts can often be intimidating because they don't show all sides of the issue. "Facebook shows one face of a situation. It doesn't show reality. It doesn't show the rejections that that person got. That person may have wanted to go to Harvard, or Stanford...and so what you see is not necessarily the total picture of how someone feels about getting into Michigan," she said.

CHS senior Murphy Austin believes that posting about certain kinds of accomplishments is different than posting about others. He thinks that the nature

of the college admissions process makes it normal to share. "I feel like it's more communal...people are happy when other people get into colleges. So I feel like that's more of a positive thing to say, like 'I'm going to U of M, so happy and excited for next year!'"

Austin is less forgiving when it comes to posts about test scores. It can be hard for him to read them when he studied hard for a test but didn't do as well as the poster. "I feel like it's kind of unnecessary because there's no real reason to put on your Facebook that you got a good score on a test other than that others will see it and think that you're smart or think you're accomplished, rather than [you] just being happy with what you got," he said.

However, such posts can, as expected, improve the self-esteem of the poster. "I can imagine, if you get some pretty positive feedback about it, which most people do...it is meaningful for some people, I think maybe more so for teenagers," said Dr. Lepisto. "I think for some people it's a good thing, they enjoy it, they get a lot of positive feedback, it leads them to improve their feelings about themselves." But she added that "for other people it has exactly the opposite effect. They feel like they're the only person who didn't get in their first choice, or didn't get into a prestigious school or something like that."

CHS freshman Sarah McCuenach doesn't see a problem with posts about accomplishments on Facebook as long as it is done tastefully. "Facebook is kind of like a profile of your life, so what's the point of having one if you're not going to talk about your life? People follow you... I have friends who live in Boston; I'd love to hear when they've done well on something," she said.

PICTURE PERFECT

Posts about accomplishments, however, are not the only way that Facebook users promote themselves. The opportunity to upload photos to Facebook and "like" others' photos leads to



competition among teenagers as to who can post the most attractive photo and gain the most "likes." Teens often edit the pictures before posting.

McCurach said that she sometimes competes with friends to gain "likes" on photos, but that it's just for fun, isn't taken seriously, and "doesn't matter in the long run." However, she said that getting a lot of "likes" on a photo can improve her self-esteem. She thinks this is true for girls more than it is for boys. It frustrates her when people take the issue of Facebook "likes" too seriously.

CHS sophomore Abby Lauer harbors a similar sentiment. She gets a negative feeling when people post heavily edited pictures on Facebook. "You don't really see the real them, it's just a fake picture of themselves, and then they just get a million likes and then they feel really good about themselves but you just feel like, 'What is going on with this girl?'" said Lauer. She added that even the edited, unrealistic photos can spark jealousy. "It's probably not even real and they are probably actually a really nice person, but you just see the picture and the likes and you're like, 'Oh, I want that,'" she said.

A wider example of teens using Facebook to validate physical appearance comes with the "Most Beautiful Teen Contest" pages that surfaced recently. These competitions have teens post their most attractive pictures to the contest page to be judged. This often leads to teens posting suggestive pictures, and rude or creepy comments are common on the photos. One of the most prominent competitions made headlines when Facebook shut it down after a parent expressed concern. However, many similar pages still exist, continuing to invite teens to open themselves up to hurtful or objectifying comments.

Dr. Lepisto said that in addition to competing for the most attractive pictures, teens commonly post pictures of themselves partying with friends. "[People post] drinking and partying activities because people tend to post how much fun you're having, and then you have all these photos of people wasted, dancing, having a great time, and I think that does influence people who also want to feel that way," she said. "I think it enhances some people's self-esteem and it also makes other people think 'Gee, I want to have some fun, too. I'm not having any fun, I lead a boring life, this person probably goes and does this all the time.'"

Of course, posting such photos on Facebook means they can be seen by a wide variety of friends and acquaintances, and in some cases, even

potential employers or other viewers. Dr. Lepisto has read about how "as-nerds love Facebook pages because they can get all sorts of dirt on their opponents."

Still, this doesn't seem to dissuade many teens: according to Dr. Lepisto, teens view the consequences of sharing personal information and photos on the Internet differently than sharing them in real life. This helps explain why teens are often willing to brag on Facebook, even when they would not do the same in a real-life conversation.

"People post things that they would never say to a room of people or even maybe two or three people. They don't really understand that this isn't an anonymous kind of thing. I think we treat the Internet as something that is also an extension of us, or not real, or not permanent, or deprived of its meaning. But it's gonna be there. It's now there. It's posted," Dr. Lepisto said. "It's kind of a way of telling people things without really telling them. Without having to take the responsibility of really having said them. It's not like 'Yeah, I walked in and bragged about myself,' it's like 'Yeah, I posted it to my Facebook page.' It seems like it doesn't carry as much meaning in a way."

"It's not really that much different from what we see in a magazine...we see all of these glorified images."

She thinks that this false sense of privacy has worrying implications for the future. "When we don't have any boundaries about ourselves and our privacy, I think that can lead into all sorts of problems," she said.

Austin understands why it can be easier to post things on Facebook than to say them in real life. "I think it's that you're sort of disconnected with the consequences of what you're putting on Facebook. So you just type something in and then you post it, but then you don't have to see other people's reactions to it," he said. "You don't have to see what it actually does to people. But sometimes if it's a serious thing you end up seeing it later, like the day after when people are mad at you."

THE IDEAL SELF

While Facebook may invite teens to betray their own privacy, it also gives them an opportunity to create their own online persona, which can lead to higher self-esteem levels. A study recently published in the journal *Cyber-*

Psychology, Behavior and Social Networking reported higher self-esteem levels in participants who looked at their own Facebook profiles for three minutes than those who looked in a mirror or simply did nothing during the same time. A *Psychology Today* article attributed this to the fact that on Facebook, people can choose how to present themselves by deciding what to post and what to delete.

Dr. Lepisto's view is similar. "Trying out your identity and who you want to be can be done on Facebook. It's like deciding if you're going to dress this way or that way tomorrow, and kind of adopt this stance or values or appearance. You can do that online too, you know...with what you post, you can say something about your personality and try it on and see what it's like," she said.

In a September 2011 interview with the Indiana radio show Sound Medicine, Sherry Turkle, PhD, director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self, said, "On social media we present ourselves really not as we are, we present a performance of who we are. We do this very subtly; we don't really do this to deceive. It's just that every time you're asked on social media to present yourself, you present your ideal self."

You present the best self you can be, because the whole point of it, kind of, is to draw people to you."

Dr. Lepisto said that people can often look back on what they've posted and feel positively about themselves. "I can see looking back at your accomplishments and your friends and things that your friends have said to you if they were positive, you know feeling pretty good about that," she said.

However, Dr. Lepisto added that the ideal Facebook self can also create problems. People can post things about themselves that aren't completely true in order to make their Facebook selves look better. "Then you're building this persona that doesn't really exist," said Dr. Lepisto.

Additionally, building an ideal persona can negatively affect the self-esteem of others. In the Sound Medicine interview, Turkle explained, "So when other people are [presenting their ideal selves] and you look at what they're presenting, and you know who you really are, you kind of forget that you're doing that

too, and you compare who you are with all of these people who are presenting photographs and family vacations and extraordinary trips and times and you can feel bad about yourself, because you're comparing who you really are to the self that they're presenting."

Accordingly, the same study that showed that looking at one's own Facebook profile can increase self-esteem also found that participants who also viewed the profiles of others had lower self-esteem results than those who viewed only their own profiles.

STAYING AFLOAT

For Austin, the trick to beating the Facebook self-esteem blues is to not get too caught up in the world of social networking. "[Facebook] made me feel better about myself sometimes but worse about myself sometimes, too. Because there are times when it's like, 'Oh, look at all these people who "bleed" my status. I feel appreciated. And like people like me.' But then there are times when nothing happens, and you feel neglected," he said. "I think that at some point you have to realize that it's online. It really doesn't matter at all. And it's much better to focus on your actual interactions than your 'liking button' things."

Lauer's strategy is to use Facebook primarily to stay in touch with friends and family, rather than as an important extension of her social life. Facebook helps her keep in touch with friends in Israel, as well as her older sister in college. "If you use it as a social networking site, it will lower your self-esteem. If you use it as a way to connect with people you don't see everyday and check up on their lives, it connects people in a good way," she said.

Ultimately, Dr. Lepisto advises teens to remember that what they see on Facebook can often be illusions of perfection. "It's not really that much different from what we see in a magazine. You know, we see all of these glorified images of this, that, and whatever in magazines. Magazines can make people feel bad about themselves, too...just pick up a magazine and there are beautiful women and men in them," she said. She tries to help teens put what they see on Facebook into perspective.

After all, Facebook often seems like the real story—the story of who got into college when you didn't, or who was having fun with friends when you weren't. But as more and more of the teenage life becomes intertwined with social media, it's ever important to remember that the perfect story Facebook tells is rarely the full one. **C**

Like • Comment • Share •



aliza stein & brienne o'donnell
brienne o'donnell & cooper depreist photos

OUT OF HIS NINE
TATTOOS, DAVIS
ONLY REGRETS
ONE OF THEM:
THE INITIALS OF
A PERSON THAT
HE DOES NOT
ASSOCIATE WITH
ANYMORE IS INKED
INTO HIS UPPER
ARM.

24 PERCENT OF
AMERICANS
BETWEEN 18 AND
50 ARE TATTOOED

WHEN RECEIVING
A TATTOO, YOUR
SKIN IS PRICKED
BETWEEN 50
AND 3,000 TIMES
PER MINUTE BY
A NEEDLE IN THE
TATTOO MACHINE.

A life long mark is inserted through tiny pricks into the skin's top layer. A hand-held machine acting just like a sewing machine pierces the skin repeatedly and with every insertion, a scar appears. For a collection of students and staff at Community High School, their skin has been decorated by colorful images, some hidden, others in the open — a perpetual drawing — a tattoo.

ALIA PERSICO-SHAMMAS

A small boat holds a young girl sitting delicately on the edge. Since age fifteen, CHS senior Alia Persico-Shammas's skin has been garnished with this image on her body. That young girl on the boat is her mother as a teenager. When Persico-Shammas was 13, her mother died of cancer and on the second anniversary of her mother's death, her mother's picture was permanently inked onto her side. "I had just been thinking about it for a very long time and I just wanted to do something for her but also kind of really for me, to solidify that part of my life because I feel like when something happens like that, it is hard to believe it is real, so it makes it real for me and okay. I don't really want to remember my mom as sick as she was when she died; I want to remember her like the person she was.

the communicator

She was a really amazing person," said Persico-Shammas. She explained that in just that single tattoo, so many of her mother's characteristics that she adored, such as her wisdom, beauty and desire for adventure are visible.

HANNAH LEHKER

The peony represents passion and intensity; the peony bud is for a pleasant future; vines mean strength and connection to self and others. The dragonfly with a bold shadow is finding balance. CHS junior Hannah Lehter recently got tattooed in early October of this year. Lehter's entire shoulder is covered in design. As she finally reached the legal age of 16 to get inked, Lehter jumped right on the opportunity. "I love it and wouldn't change any of it but some people can't believe it's real and like to scratch it," said Lehter. Her parents were more than fine with the idea as well. "My mom even came with me and got something done too."

LIZ STERN

There are three small dots, two on her waist and one in the center of her body. She had breast cancer. CHS teacher Liz Stern's story is different than most. Three years ago, for 30 consecutive days, Stern went to the hospital. She had to be perfectly aligned to the machine to make sure the radia-

feature

tion would miss her vital organs and target the cancer; the most efficient way to secure the place was to tattoo the location. "I didn't know that they were going to do that. I was just kind of lying there and they have this bottle of ink and they were like 'oh it won't hurt we just need to make markers,'" said Stern.

The dots, although small, are persistent reminders of what Stern had to experience. "I think that [radiation] is definitely something to go through and you know it's not an easy thing, so I think when you get on the other side of it, and three...five...ten years out; you're like this [tattoo] is pretty cool, I'm glad that it is over," she said.

KEVIN DAVIS

A bear claw, a lizard, and Mighty Mouse. Kevin Davis, a Community Assistant at CHS, currently has nine tattoos and those are just three of them. Davis, like Persico-Shammas, received his first tattoo when he was 15, and has continued to add to his collection.

For most of Davis's tattoos, it is more about the aesthetics than the meanings. Most of his recent tattoos have been designed by CHS students. "I usually find a nice art student and have them design one for me. I haven't had a specific connection to the student but I see some of their art and ask if

they want to design one for me," said Davis.

With the addition of the CHS student's artwork, Davis's potpourri of tattoos is growing and addiction is one of the reasons why. "If I wasn't addicted to them, I wouldn't have as many as I have. I have tried to stop, a long time before my last four. It is an expensive habit and you just have to find the right design that and say 'okay, yeah I want this permanent,'" said Davis.

The permanent aspect of tattoos does not bother Davis. "If I assumed that I could wash them off, I would never get them. They are a part of me now and I enjoy expressing a part of me."

TATTOO REMOVAL

But according to Teri McHenry, a Registered Nurse at a dermatologist's office, they don't have to be permanent. It is possible to "wash" them off — with lots of money, time, and possible side effects. McHenry says that her patients describe the procedure as "extremely painful and more painful than getting the tattoo itself. They say it feels like getting hot oil splattered on them, and they can't get away."

The pain also costs a lot of money. The removal of an image tends to be almost double the cost of the tattoo application. "The removal for a 2" by 2"



tattoo is \$99 per treatment and people can need between five to 15 treatments. You can do the math," said McHenry.

Although side effects of the treatment that McHenry performs are easy to avoid, if appropriate measures are not taken to avoid them, they can be painful. "In one [extreme] case, a patient popped his blister with something unsanitary and didn't use an antibiotic ointment as follow-up care and he ended up with sepsis, a blood infection, which was treated in the hospital with IV antibiotics," said McHenry. McHenry said that strong allergic reactions are also possible, as well as an internal itching feeling.

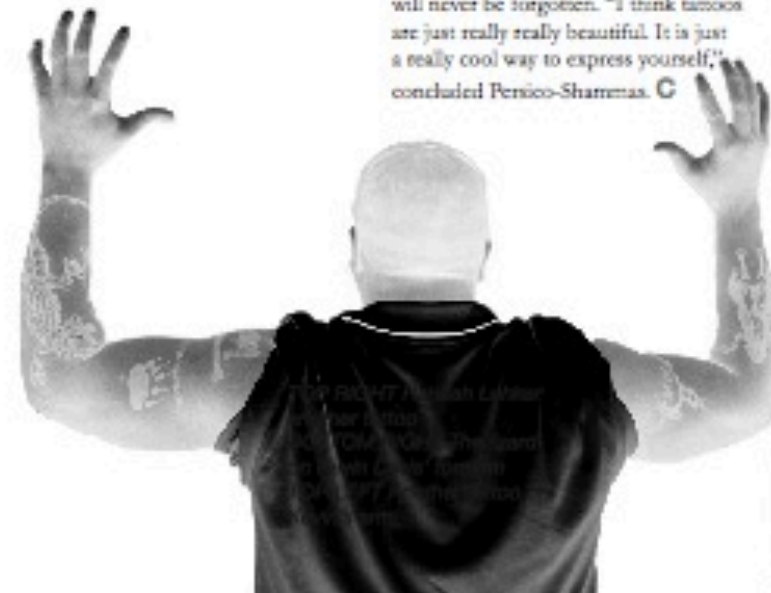
Even with some pitfalls, there are also advantages to getting the tattoo removed. "People's self-esteem and confidence is regained. They can live their life now as if that regrettable moment of getting the tattoo never happened. Every patient that starts this journey of removing their unwanted tattoo, wants it off yesterday, they can't wait until it is gone. This is when I remind them to have patience, their tattoo was put on to be permanent, and slowly we will get it off," said McHenry.

PARENT PERSPECTIVE

But for Matthew Graff, CHS parent, he hopes his children will not have to worry having to get a tattoo removed would never be the case. "While I do appreciate the artistry and the beauty of many forms of body art, my biggest concern is that I have seen fashions change. I would not want my own kids to make a choice based on a current trend that locks them into this moment," said Graff.

The past also holds a concerning effect on why Graff has chosen to not get a tattoo. "There is a troubling echo of the holocaust years, when many of my own family members were tattooed by the Nazis, in part as a deliberate decoration to religious persons. We went through that dark time and now our children willingly choose these marks - sort of weird," said Graff. Although Graff believes that if his children do decide to ink themselves after age 18, he won't admire their choices but respect them enough to keep on loving them.

Love is evident through the deliberate decisions to get a tattoo. Whether it be for a lost loved one or a personal story, a tattoo creates a visual imprint that will never be forgotten. "I think tattoos are just really really beautiful. It is just a really cool way to express yourself," concluded Perico-Shammas. **C**





CHS BOTH SUCCEEDS AND FALTERS IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE

madeline halpert

The weight of the thick packet excites the student as she carefully slides her thumb underneath the tongue of the envelope. With her dream school's address stumped on the front, her hands shake as she reaches for the letter. It's a yes or no question, and the answer's inside.

According to the counseling office, 90 percent of Community High students end up going to college the year after they graduate high school. This was no different for Cassie Stanler.

Leading up to this moment, she remembers the countless hours of work a night on time-consuming classes, like biology, when she was a freshman at Pioneer High School.

"I think there was a sort of self-sacrificing quality that I had at Pioneer," Stanler said. "You stay up late, you study, rigorously work in this way and that there's the idea that [doing] that would somehow bring you academic success, or a track that was more prestigious, or grades that were impressive."

This type of demanding work ethic often on display at the larger high schools has some students and parents wondering whether Community's more relaxed curriculum is as successful at helping students prepare for college.

Stanler graduated from Community in 2009 after transferring as a sophomore from Pioneer. She then attended Vassar College for two years before switching to the University of Michigan. Stanler said Community is what you make it, and admitted that she could have pushed herself to take more difficult classes.

Other graduates of Community feel similarly, including Jennie Scheerer, class of 2010, who currently attends Kalamazoo College.

"I don't think that Community challenged me as much as I could have been challenged academically, but I definitely learned a lot from my classes there," she said.

Scheerer said when she first got to college, "the workload was completely overwhelming compared to high school."

One element of the Community experience that students found to be useful in preparation for college was completely unrelated to its education: its counselors, and in particular, John Boshoven. Stanler says that Boshoven was thoroughly helpful in finding the right college, not just based on the reputation.

"One cool thing about John is that he places value on a college for the way of thinking or the way of teaching that suits you more than the prestige of the college," she said.

Lisa Raupagh, a graduate of Community back in 1983, agreed that when she attended Community 29 years ago, the counselors were supportive, despite the lack of help from her home environment.

"I did get some help from the counselors about going to an art school that was in California at the time," she said.

"They went out of their way to reach out to me, because that wasn't happening outside of school."

Boshoven says what helps him to be successful at his job is getting to know his students and different colleges'

atmospheres.

"What I want to do is be able to see the environment, meet some students [at the college] and say, 'Boy, that reminds me of you! I think you'd like the feeling,' after I get to know [the student] better at the junior conference," said Boshoven. "I'm hoping to be able to do a better match."

Scheerer wondered if the counselors at Community disproportionately encourage their students to look at smaller liberal arts colleges, and felt without a doubt that she was nudged in this direction.

"They definitely pushed me to look at smaller liberal arts schools, and sometimes I wish I explored more options. However, I now attend Kalamazoo College, and I'm so glad that I chose to go there," she said.

Even so, Boshoven disagrees with this opinion.

"I don't try to sway; I try to ask them what learning environment really helps them," he said. "Do they like the smallness of this school and the relationships that they have? Lots of students say, 'Yeah, I would love a school like this!'" Boshoven said that because of the students' preference for Community's small environment, they tend to appreciate smaller schools. Boshoven also estimates that about 40 percent of the senior class applies to the University of Michigan, a large, public college.

In addition, he says Community develops habits throughout high school that make them more successful in college.

"You know how to get to class without ringing a bell, because we don't

have bells, and they don't in college either," Boshoven said. "You know how to take advantage of the block schedule. That's how college is run. So you're doing some of the self-management things that [college faculty] wish their college students would do better."

Others, like Stanler, feel that learning how to approach adults and professors has been useful for college and in life.

"I think what Community does is give you these cultural relationships with adults, and it makes you comfortable communicating with people who aren't 18-20 [years old], people outside of that loop," said Stanler. "That's really important."

Most of the former Community students agreed that one important way Community contributed to their success at college is the level of self-responsibility practiced on a daily basis at CHS. Scheerer believes this to be true.

"Community taught me to be more independent, [to] integrate myself into a larger community outside my school, and connect with a wide variety of people," she said. "These are all things that have been useful to me in college."

Raupagh, who struggled with dyslexia in high school, believes that the self-responsibility she was taught during high school has influenced her entire life, and doubts she could've made it to college, let alone through high school, attending a bigger school.

"I was not just another sheep in the flock," she said. "I make my own choices and think about things and really also try to be a part of the community and reach out to others; [I'm] not just in it for myself." C

MINOR IN POSSESSION

A BEHIND THE SCENES LOOK AT THE EFFECTS OF MINOR IN POSSESSION CHARGES

sarah zimmanas & ruthliah greff

THE ATTORNEY

Assistant District Attorney Bob West has been prosecuting MIPs for the city of Ann Arbor for seventeen years.

"There has always been a law prohibiting the use, possession, consumption of alcohol by minors, and for as long as I've been here [an attorney in Ann Arbor] we have been prosecuting these minor in possession cases," West said.

The local police focus on campus parties, so the majority of the cases West prosecutes are from University of Michigan students.

An MIP is considered a criminal offense, but first offenders cannot face jail time, although they can be taken into custody. Most MIPs are given as a ticket on the street.

The most common option is the first offender program. The minor issued an MIP must issue a guilty plea to the court, which the court does not accept. This is a very significant detail, because if the court does not accept the plea then you are never convicted.

"So legitimately down the road, if anyone asks, you can say that

you have never been convicted of a crime. It means all the difference in the world," said West.

The first offender program usually consists of six months of non-reporting probation under the conditions that the minor attend an alcohol education class and pay 350 dollars to the court for their ticket. The class is another 100 dollars.

"If at the end of six months the court looks at the case and they see that you haven't had another alcohol related offense, the plea is set aside, the case is dismissed, and you're not convicted," said West.

However, for a second offense a different kind of probation can be issued with random breathalyzer and drug tests. In other counties within Michigan the consequences are more severe, but West said that in most cases harsher punishment is not necessary.

"My philosophy has always been that we bend over backwards to have people avoid getting criminal convictions for doing dumb stuff when they are young, because it's not anyone's interest to send

people out into the world with a degree from the University of Michigan and a criminal record," West said.

Although Ann Arbor's program seems relaxed compared to other counties in the state, West has a different theory.

"I wouldn't call it laid back. I would say there is a good amount of social work in this business, we're not dealing with bad people, these are good people who just screw up," said West.

In some cases, the problem is more than just a screw-up or a bad decision.

"We had a couple of young women who had enough MIPs to get sent to our sobriety court which is a two year probation with a lot of rigorous counseling and supervision. They just couldn't stop drinking," said West.

Enforcement on campus has been increased by local Ann Arbor police in the last few years has increased due to the rise in partying.

"I think the magnitude of partying has increased exponentially over the last decade. I see these mega parties every Saturday, 400-500

people, with a DJ's and sound systems, and kegs of beer on the rooftop with a hose going down to the ground. I see more and more of that. I don't know where it's going, but that is the direction it's heading. It's kind of frightening. I don't know where it ends," said West.

PARENT PERSPECTIVE

Rachel Johnson* still remembers the phone call from her daughter. One month shy of 21, her daughter had received a Minor In Possession (MIP) ticket at a football game on Central Michigan University's campus.

"Her birthday was in November, it was end of October and I was more angry at the law itself. If it had happened a month from then she wouldn't have been in trouble and it wouldn't have cost her anything. She went to court when she was 21," said Johnson.

Her daughter was a senior at Central Michigan at the time, and although Johnson thought her daughter was wrong to be drinking underage, she was optimistic that the MIP would not affect her

ACCORDING TO
ANN ARBOR'S
15TH DISTRICT
COURT THERE HAVE
BEEN 642 MIPs
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CALENDAR YEAR

daughter's future.

"It was very hard to be mad at her. Plus she was older, so she was going to do what she was going to do. It's kind of a typical kid mistake, you don't want it to affect them forever. As a parent that's the top concern, but that one was pretty hard to swallow," said Johnson.

It was a different story for her son. Johnson's son received an MIP when he was seventeen years old, and his consequences were more severe.

"It was serious, so we were mad. At that age I don't think kids recognize that it can hurt them later on, but as a parent you do know that," said Johnson.

Johnson's son qualified for a first-offender program. He went to a class on substance abuse to have the MIP expunged from his record. Even with the class, Johnson said she was still worried about her son getting another MIP.

"As a parent after that it was like, 'What are you doing this weekend, who are you out with?' We had to build back the trust," she said.

While Johnson was upset at the choices her son made that led to his MIP, she still felt reserved in disciplining him.

"There is the fact that as a parent, and as so many other parents have, who drank in high school, you almost feel hypocritical. Back in the 80's if you got caught with beer the police would dump some

out and say 'okay you guys go home' and then dump the rest in your trunk and that was the last you saw of it. I don't think I know anyone who got an MIP back in the 80's," said Johnson.

ONE COP, TWO BOYS, AND THREE TICKETS.

George*, Greg*, James*, Will*, and Jerry* were spending their evening in County Farms Park drinking alcohol. Not expecting any trouble, Jerry and Will headed to the BP Gas Station to cash in a lottery ticket and then take Will home. George, Greg and James stayed behind. Not soon after they had been left at County Farm Parks, they received a phone call from Jerry telling them the car wouldn't start. This was something they were used to, and knew it could be anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour before the car would start again, so they began to walk to BP.

"Just wait for us, it'll be alright," James said to Jerry. Their night ended up far from alright.

As they headed down Platt Road towards Washtenaw Avenue, the three boys saw a police car approaching towards them. George saw it and ran.

George was long gone before the police car saw Greg walking in front of a building as James walked behind the building. Seeing Greg, the cop pulled into the parking lot and called him over.

Then, seeing James, the cop called him over as well.

"He immediately jumps out of the car and tells us to put our hands on the car. He was really aggressive," James said.

The cop then started questioning the boys about how much they had to drink, but the boys denied everything.

"We weren't giving him back talk but we weren't trying to incriminate ourselves," Greg said. When asked to take a breathalyzer James was quick to deny it, but Gill started to say yes. So, the cop went into his car and got the breathalyzer. With that time to think about what was going on, Greg then realized he is not willing to prove to the cop that they had been drinking. Therefore, he denied the test as well.

The cop immediately handcuffed them, reached into their pockets, grabbed their ID's, and went into his car. After about twenty minutes in his car, he issued the boy three tickets. An MIP for James. An MIP and Cigarette charge for Greg.

What had started as a fun night at County Farms Park had not ended as a bad night in a cop car.

"I thought for a second he was taking us to the station to get processed but it was really just a ticket. He just handed us a little piece of paper and walked us up to the door," James said. Each boy (Greg and James) was driven

home separately.

"My parents were asleep so it's really quiet and weird. I just answered some questions, go in the basement and chill," Greg said.

"My parents were up and it was just kind of awkward, uncomfortable. It wasn't fun," James said. That was the end to their nights, but not their charge for MIPs.

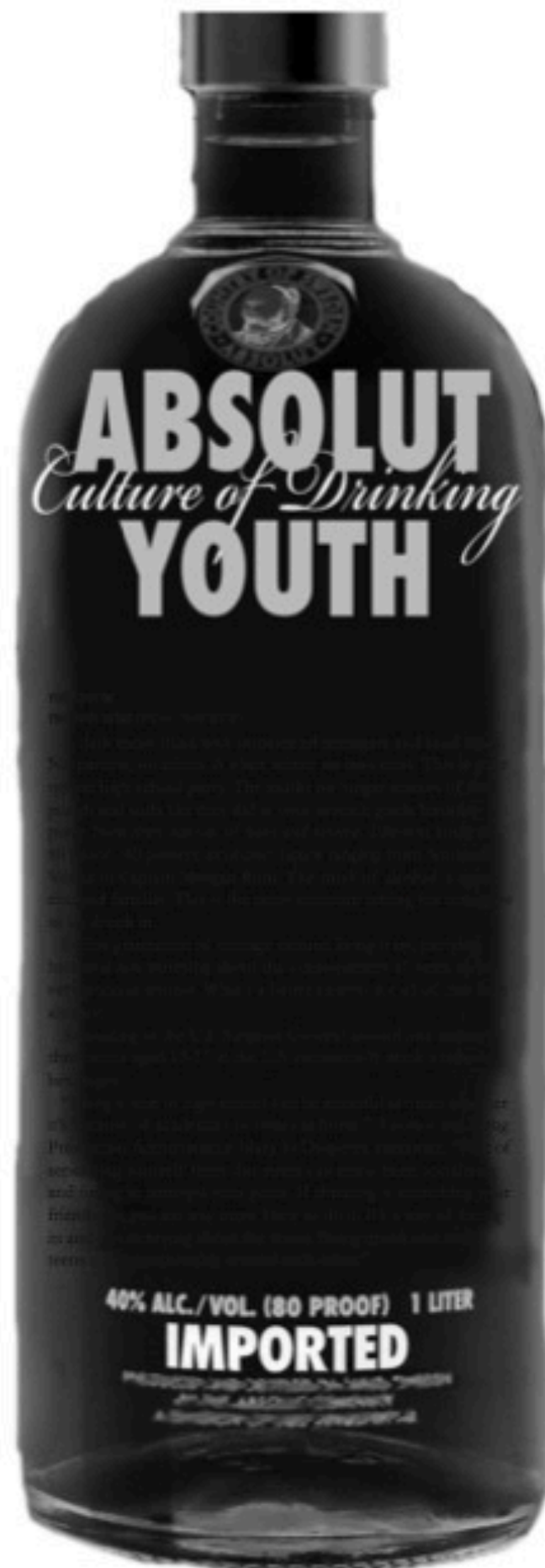
Two weeks later the boys had to go to court. They were in a room full of students, mostly college, with the same charge. James and Greg were two of only six high school students charged with MIP's. After admitting they had been drinking, the boys qualified for the 1st offender program. After six months if they don't have any other alcohol charges then it will be off their records, after they attended an alcohol abuse class as well.

Their night didn't turn out as expected, but it gave them a chance to reflect on their choices.

"I definitely learned that cops don't need anything to come get you. If they just see you walking around and they want to stop you, they will. They don't need a reason," James said.

"I kind of realized that I was chilling with a pretty volatile friend group and so when we are doing stuff like the stuff that got me in trouble I don't participate," Greg said. C

*names have been changed



"The ethanol molecules are water soluble and compact," said Desperex. "This allows them to get into your bloodstream and into your brain. Once the ethanol reaches the brain, it causes the brain to release dopamine, also known as 'happy cells.' The excessive release of these cells is what causes people to feel happier when they're drunk and often more confident and outgoing."

Teens go to drastic measures to obtain alcohol.

"Fake IDs, stealing from their parents' supply at home, and buying it from college students are all common ways for teens to get their hands on alcohol," said Desperex.

When teenagers drink, they almost always do it to get drunk. The most efficient method of doing this is through binge drinking. Binge drinking is the large consumption of alcohol in a short amount of time that will make the user heavily intoxicated. It is the perfect way for teens to get very drunk very fast. However, it comes with many negative effects. Nausea, fainting, vomiting, and alcohol poisoning are all very real risks that can easily occur if someone drinks too much in a short amount of time.

The effects that alcohol can have on a teenage body and mind can be detrimental. The average age that most teens begin to drink is 16 years old, according to the U.S. Prevention Alert.

"Since the brain is still developing during your teenage years, alcohol can cause changes in how it functions," said Desperex. "It has the tendency to cause negative changes in at home behavior and in some cases academic performance. It's not uncommon to see teenagers start to develop bad behavioral problems as a result of alcohol."

Using alcohol can make someone more emotionally distressed when they're sober and can increase the severity of any preexistent emotional problems, which is why some teens start to rely on alcohol to help them deal with their emotions. Teens who drink also have a much higher chance of becoming alcoholics when they're older. In addition to the mental effects, some of the physical effects include decrease in muscle mass caused from the mass dehydration commonly found in a hangover, destruction of brain cells, and damage to the liver.

Most teenagers know that underage drinking is illegal and bad for your health. So why do so many still choose to do it?

"Sadly enough, it has almost always been part of the social scene in high school. If you're at a party and trying to suck up the courage to go talk to that cute girl, drinking some alcohol to help

boost confidence and calm your nerves all of a sudden doesn't seem like a bad idea at all," said Desperex. "It helps teenagers relax and makes them feel more outgoing and confident than they normally would be. Another pressure to use it is if people around you are using it. Peer pressure is the number one reason to why teens start drinking in the first place. They simply want to do it to feel good and to fit in with their friends."

The cost of feeling good comes with large risk and danger. Almost a third of teen drivers who died in car accidents had been drinking. Drunk driving has become a widespread issue all over the world.

"When alcohol is in your brain, the molecules bond to glutamate receptors. Glutamate receptors are what stimulate the brain's thought process. When enough of these receptors are blocked, your thought process becomes slower and disoriented. Alcohol also has the tendency to make people act in risky ways. The combination of these two traits is what makes drunk driving so dangerous," said Desperex.

Drunk driving is considered a serious crime in the U.S. If convicted, drivers often have to pay large fines of usually between \$2000-\$7000, and they can receive DUIs and suspensions on their licenses. In some cases, they can even face jail time. While the consequences of drunk driving are harsh, it doesn't help police find drunk drivers on the road. On average, drunk drivers usually only get caught after their 80th incident of drunk driving. Through the years, Desperex and other drug and alcohol prevention officials have tried their best to inform people about the risks of drunk driving in hope that they won't do it.

Each year more than 5000 deaths of teens are linked directly to drinking. Legislators in Michigan realize the danger of teens and alcohol and do their best to set up policies and laws around the state that could help prevent these deaths. One recent establishment was a 2011 Michigan law that prevents teenagers with their level one graduated licenses from driving between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. unless it's from a school-sanctioned or work-related event.

While at first it received harsh criticism from the young community, the law has definitely proven to be effective. Since it was established, it has brought down the number of teen car accidents by 40 percent. Desperex and others who are deeply concerned about the effects alcohol can have on teenagers hope that as time goes on, more effective laws like these will be put into place. C

take notice



LOCAL HOMELESS HAVE FOUND A COMMUNITY AT CAMP TAKE NOTICE

ella bourland communicator web staff
photo ella bourland

Just west of M-14 and down a cleared trail off of Wagner St in Ann Arbor, there is a cluster of tents in the middle of the woods. This camp, Camp Take Notice, is a community for homeless people.

Jackie Starkey has been a resident at the camp since June 18, 2011. Starkey retired early from her hospital job to watch her grandchildren in Saline. She lived with her daughter for seven years, but when the babies grew up and things got hectic, Starkey took the hint and moved out. "And naturally I had sold everything when I moved in with them, so that left me without [anything]. I didn't plan very well, let's put it this way," said Starkey.

With nowhere to live, Starkey turned to the homeless shelter in Ann Arbor: "I had called before I left a very comfortable living situation [at my daughter's] ... and I said 'What do I do?' [They said:] 'Well just come down to the shelter, they'll do an intake, we'll get you a place to stay.' When I walked in there, I did exactly what they told me to do on the phone. He looked at me and said, 'We don't have a place for you to stay.' And I go 'Great! So where so you want me to sleep? City Hall? Bus station? Cop shop? ... Where should I sleep?'" Instead of giving Starkey an answer, an employee at the shelter gave her a bus token and directions to Camp Take Notice.

Most people might consider an indoor shelter more comfortable than living in a tent, but Starkey feels secure

at Camp Take Notice. "I think we've established such a group of trust ... I feel totally safe here," Starkey said.

It is understandable why Starkey feels so protected at Camp Take Notice. The camp follows a set of guidelines to keep residents safe that are outlined in their entry form, which requires a name, signature, emergency contact, and cell phone number. The form goes over offenses that will result in immediate expulsion, including theft of any kind, blatant drunkenness or inebriation, drawing police attention (except in the case of an emergency), and posses-

"He looked at me and said, 'We don't have a place for you to stay.' And I go 'Great! So where so you want me to sleep? City Hall? Bus station? Cop shop? ... Where should I sleep?'"

sion of weapons.

However, if a resident of the camp fails to follow more common guidelines, including maintaining peaceful presence of oneself and clearing up after oneself, then the resident will obtain a strike. If the resident accumulates three strikes within six months, the person will be required to leave the camp for a period of time determined by the camp leadership.

Every Sunday after the camp enjoys a donated dinner, which is open to the public, the residents of the camp come together for a meeting. "Everybody pretty much shows up. As an incentive, we give out bus tokens," said Starkey.

To keep things running smoothly at the camp, the meetings address a variety of subjects, including possible rule violations. Starkey gave some examples of what they discuss. "If somebody was drunk and unruly, if some things come up missing, and if [someone's] not taking a dump in the woods in the right spot," she said.

It is also important to keep the camp running in order because the residents are technically trespassing on Michigan Department of Transportation property. "But yet they recognize us. So they're they kinda like, they're not kicking us off, they're not throwing us out ... as long as every thing's okay, then they're pretty much, [at least] right now, okay," said Starkey.

A lot of the food seen at the camp

is a product of church donations and individual donors. Peggy Lynch, a missionary, brings down a breakfast for Camp Take Notice residents every Saturday morning. Every Saturday afternoon, lunch is provided by Diane Brandt. Brandt, although she is not affiliated with any organization, fixes 50 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

In addition to finding food, another essential thought lingering on a homeless mind is winter. Michigan winters are harsh, and living in the woods would only intensify one's outlook on the colder months. Starkey is planning on braving the cold Michigan winter and staying at Camp Take Notice. Starkey is planning on "winterizing" her tent. "What they'll do is they'll give out winter boots, winter sleeping bags, blankets, ... heaters, ... all the equipment to winterize your tent," Starkey said. She is keeping a positive outlook. "It's gonna be cold. It's okay! It's doable! You learn to dress in layers. It's just like when you were a kid and you went outside to play in the snow, you dress in layers. Good boots, double socks ... it's hard work being homeless," said Starkey.

Brandt sees that hard times bring the people together. "Well, you know we're all going to do what we have to do, right? If there's anything good about these economic times ... it might be that we're encouraging people to share and to think more about the people that don't have anything," Brandt said. **C**

Op/Ed

- What is Op/Ed?

OVER 1 MILLION
PEOPLE
WORLDWIDE
HAVE SEEN "MISS
REPRESENTATION"



ruthie graft

"Miss Representation," a documentary by Jennifer Siebel Newsom, uncovers a glaring reality we live with every day but fail to see. The movie explores the dangerous effects that social media, the film and television industry, and magazines have on young women.

The most staggering statistics in "Miss Representation" have to do with how teenage girls view themselves. Seventy-eight percent of girls hate their body by the time they turn 15, depression rates in the last ten years have doubled for teenage girls, 65 percent of women and girls have disordered eating habits, and 17 percent cut themselves. Cosmetic surgeries for 17-year-old girls have quadrupled from 1997 to today. These are not just numbers. The people that these statistics represent are our classmates, friends, sisters and ourselves.

Change begins with awareness. "Miss Representation" aims to do just that. It is a much needed call for reform in

the communicator

education for women, as well as for men. It features many successful and influential women including former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice and news anchor Katie Couric. The movie stresses the importance of young women seeing themselves as intellectuals, thinkers and creators.

We are bombarded with hundreds of advertisements everyday. Are they simply trying to sell us a product, or is the product inconsequential? Is the real objective to sell us a mindset that we are not good enough, to make us into more eager consumers? The media constantly reminds us that we need to be fixed. Yet it is often the media that gets the most fixing: the majority of the advertisements we see in magazines have been airbrushed to perfection.

The media gives young women an unrealistic standard of what beauty truly is. Today's average model weighs 23 percent less than the average woman, and has a crew of professional make-up artists and hairstylists ensuring she appear flawless. Research done by the Media Awareness Network indicates that exposure to airbrushed models in print advertisements is linked to depression, loss of self-esteem and the development of unhealthy eating habits in young women.

Here is one of the many shocking statistics in the movie: in one week the

columns

average teenager watches 31 hours of TV, spends ten hours online, listens to 17 hours of music and watches three hours of movies. That is a total of 61 hours of media consumption per week. Absorbing that amount of media each week has a significant impact on the way young people think about themselves and the world around them. The biggest, most influential and most-consumed media by teenagers today is television.

Things haven't always been this way. In the 1980s, television was much more controlled than it is today. Any scheduled programming before 9:00 pm was regulated to be "family friendly." The Reagan administration de-regulated much of television by increasing the number of channels available to viewers and dropping the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) guidelines for the amount of advertising that could be broadcast. This had a major impact on the TV industry. Cable channels began to compete for viewers attention by doing bigger, better and in many cases more shocking things to increase their ratings. From then on, a gradual shift from culture-based to entertainment-based programs began.

Today, the fastest growing and most degrading element of television is reality TV. On popular TV shows such as The Bachelor, America's Next Top

Model and The Swan, women are often seen as "bitchy," catty and overly-sexualized. In a society where media is the most persuasive force shaping cultural norms, the collective message that young women and men overwhelmingly receive is that a woman's value and power lie in her youth, beauty, and sexuality—and not in her capacity as a leader and intellectual.

The movie highlights this lack of women in leadership positions in our government. The United States of America ranks 90th in the world in terms of female representation in national legislature. Women make up 51 percent of the population of the country but comprise only 17 percent of congress, 3 percent of fortune 500 CEO's and hold only 3 percent of clout positions in telecommunications, entertainment, publishing and advertising. All of these statistics show how out of control the problem of women being misrepresented has become.

Things need to change. The next generation of women cannot grow up thinking that the way they are being represented now in the media and in government is okay. Women need to know from a young age that they are capable of doing great things and that the way they look does not define them.

C



opinion

cooper depreist photo

MICHIGAN DOMESTIC PARTNER BENEFITS BAN DENIES EQUAL RIGHTS

communicator staff

"Governor Snyder, we need to talk."
"We guess you weren't as tough of a
nerd as we thought you would be."

These are quotes from a radio ad campaign that was launched in Michigan the first week of February. The campaign, created by the Equality Michigan Pride Political Action Committee, charges Michigan governor Rick Snyder with failing to live up to his campaign promise to be "one tough nerd."

On Dec. 22, 2011, Snyder signed House Bill 4770 into law, which bans health care benefits for domestic partners of public employees; employees can now only extend health care benefits if they are married to their partners. This affects state and local employees, including public school teachers.

Snyder and other legislators call it a "cost-cutting" measure. The law's supporters estimated that it will cut \$8 million a year in health care costs, within the context of a \$46 billion state budget that Snyder signed in June.

Though it may be important to cut costs, this method broaches worrying issues of inequality. Same-sex marriage is illegal in Michigan; this is spelled out in a 2004 amendment to the state constitution. Therefore, gay and lesbian state employees are completely unable

to extend benefits to partners, as they do not have the choice to get married.

This is why the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan announced on Jan. 5 its decision to challenge the law in court. The ACLU's case is that the law deprives same-sex couples of their right to equal protection under the law. The Ann Arbor City Council unanimously voted to support the ACLU in the case.

At the forefront of the lawsuit are four couples, including former CHS Dean Peter Ways and his self-employed partner, Joe Breakey. According to the ACLU website, Ways and Breakey, who have a young daughter, are now considering leaving Michigan since Breakey can no longer get benefits.

This demonstrates that the law also has worrying economic implications. The last thing we want is to give people a reason to leave Michigan. This should not affect employees of University of Michigan and other public universities, since, according to Snyder, public universities are granted autonomy by the Michigan Constitution and are exempt from the law. However, the removal of benefits could deprive our state workforce of valuable employees and our school systems of great teachers, like Ways. Driving people away from

Michigan will also lose taxpayer money.

However, The Communicator is most concerned with the core of the issue: with the law in place, same-sex couples are denied equal rights. The Michigan government has offered an incentive that requires employees to jump through a certain hoop—marriage. However, by law, the government does not allow same-sex couples to make the jump. We consider this to be unfair.

People may wonder why it is so important for gays and lesbians to have official marriage; why can't a domestic partnership suffice? This benefits ban is exactly why. Until Michigan same-sex couples can affirm their commitment with marriage, the government will be able to deprive them of benefits and target them in other ways. Gay couples will not be guaranteed the full rights that straight couples have until they are also allowed the fundamental right of marriage.

With House Bill 4770, Snyder had a chance to protect same-sex marriage couples, provide further incentive to stay in Michigan, and prove that really he can be "one tough nerd." Instead, he denied gay and lesbian couples further rights, and demonstrated exactly why it is so important to legalize same-sex marriage in Michigan. **C**

snap, crackle, pop: the war on women



julia devarti

We live in the twenty-first century. In the past 100 years, our country has witnessed several waves of feminism. First the Nineteenth Amendment gave us the right to vote; then issues like equality in the workplace and in athletics were addressed. And in 1973, the landmark Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade* gave women the right to choose to have an abortion.

After all this amazing progress, though, it seems as if our country is now trying to pull itself backwards. In the past month alone, I have witnessed far too many politicians supporting ridiculous amendments and bills that are trying to recreate values from the 1800s, and even before then.

First it was the Blunt Amendment. This amendment — attached to a highway bill, though its relevance there is still unclear to me — would have allowed health insurance plans and employers to deny coverage for “specific items or services” if the coverage would be “contrary to the religious beliefs or moral convictions of the sponsor, issuer or other entity offering the plan.”

Though it was not specific to any procedure, it was clearly targeted at women seeking abortions, birth control, and/or contraceptives. It’s ridiculous that so many people could support something that so blatantly strips women of their rights.

And then a university student, Sandra Fluke, came before an all male congressional committee to speak in favor of contraceptive coverage. In response, right-wing radio host Rush Limbaugh called her a slut and a prostitute. She was accused of asking her insurance to pay for her sex. How have things gotten so bad in our country that a woman can’t even speak for her rights without being demeaned? Honestly, it’s despicable.

As if all of this weren’t enough, early last week a new bill was proposed in Wisconsin by State Senator Glenn Grothman. This new bill would deem single mothers to be “a contributing factor to child abuse and neglect.” The bill would not directly penalize single mothers, but its implications are clear: a woman can not successfully raise a child without a man by her side.

It’s all really scary to me. I thought we had come so far, but now it seems as though I couldn’t be more wrong. The perfect family now equals one guy, one girl, 2.5 kids (conceived after marriage, of course), a white picket fence and some very conservative morals. And that’s just sad. **C**

staff editorial: after steubenville rape case, we must discuss rape culture

Teenagers often hear lectures on the potential repercussions of giving too much away on social media. In the last edition of "The Communicator," we gave one of our own, urging students to emulate offline behavior on social media and act humbly and privately.

Being careful on social media and understanding potential consequences is crucial. That, however, should not be the primary lesson learned from the rape case in Steubenville, Ohio that made national headlines.

The Steubenville case unfolded on the night of August 11, when a 16-year-old girl, unresponsive for most of the night due to alcohol, was raped by two members of the Steubenville High School football team. Over the course of the night, she was transported from party to party, and photographed naked. Much of the incriminating evidence in the case came from social media and technology: an Instagram photo of the girl being dragged by her hands and feet, text messages comparing the girl to a dead body, Twitter posts that joked about rape and insulted the girl, a video showing Steubenville High football players laughing about the sexual assault.

The content of the posts is disturbing and shocking. But, in a twisted way, social media had a positive impact in that it helped lead to punishment for the rapists. On March 17, Trent Mays, 17, and Malik Richmond, 16, were sentenced to a year in a juvenile detention facility for rape. Mays also received an additional year the facility for distributing a nude picture of the girl. Both will have to register as sex offenders.

After delivering the verdict, Judge

Thomas Lipps also reportedly added his own advice for teenagers, telling them "to have discussions about how you talk to your friends, how you record things on the social media so prevalent today and how you conduct yourself when drinking is put upon you by your friends."

While Judge Lipps' advice is sound in general, the most important discussion to have after this case should not be about proper conduct on social media. In simplest terms, the boys' crime was committing rape, and, because of social media, they got caught.

"Thanks to social media, this wasn't another case of 'he said, she said.' It was a case of 'they all said,'" wrote Amanda Hess of *Slate.com* in a piece that condemned Lipps' words.

Yes, the rapes only earned Mays and Richmond one year sentences (disregarding the child pornography charge for Mays) because they were tried as juveniles. But the fact that these idolized high school football players were prosecuted and convicted of rape says something when, according to statistics compiled by RAINN.net from studies by U.S. government departments, only 3 percent of rapists spend a day in jail.

Lipps probably didn't intend to undermine the severity of the rape—when announcing the verdict, he called the charges "serious charges" that, in an adult court, would result in a lot of prison time for the defendants. But it's unfortunate he didn't choose to explicitly call for a discussion of the culture around rape in America. Though the social media posts certainly were disturbing, the moral of the story should not be "If you're more careful on social

media, you won't get caught." The moral should be "Don't commit rape."

Yes, the case should inspire discussion. But the most important question this time isn't, "How can we keep from incriminating ourselves on social media?" First, we should ask why the boys thought it was okay to have sexual contact with a barely-conscious girl and why no witnesses stepped in to stop it. We should ask why Steubenville high schoolers thought it was okay to treat rape as a joke (one former Steubenville High School student allegedly tweeted "Song of the night is definitely 'Rape Me' by Nirvana"), and why, as a result of the incident, the girl was shunned by peers at her school. And finally, should wonder why coverage of rape is still often mishandled (CNN was especially criticized for focusing extensively on how the verdict ruined the boys' "promising futures") and why the victim is still so often blamed. **C**

communicator policy

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opinion

staff editorial: students should get informed about new michigan laws

ruthless graft
communicator web staff photo courtesy

At the end of this year, many of the Michigan legislators will be at the end of their terms. This lame-duck session has proposed a bevy of controversial bills, which cover a range of issues including right to work, gun control, and women's rights. On Dec. 11, Governor Rick Snyder signed a bill weakening Michigan's unions. This bill will not take effect until April, but it is bound to affect those of us at Community High School. It will affect our teachers, our parents, and the people around us. However due to the chaos surrounding the right to work legislation, the bills concerning women's rights have been largely overshadowed.

The state House of Representatives passed a bill Dec. 12 that mandates licensing and insurance requirements for facilities that perform abortions. This means that facilities that perform abortions must stand up to the same standards and regulations as a surgical clinic. Many clinics now do not. As reported by the Detroit Free Press, Lori Lammert the head of Planned Parenthood in Michigan, said that because of this overreaching law several clinics would be forced to close their doors.

An additional component is that these facilities must make sure that patients have not been coerced into having an abortion. Although supporters of the bill say that they are protecting women's rights with these laws, this bill simply makes it harder for women to have access to the health care that they have a constitutional right to.

On Dec. 14, Michigan residents woke up to even more newly passed bills—the lame-duck had lasted until 4:30 a.m. that morning. One bill lifted restrictions on carrying concealed weapons. If signed by Snyder, this legislation would allow highly trained gun owners to bring their weapons into

schools, churches, stadiums, and other locations where guns had previously been forbidden. The morning after the legislature pushed this bill through, the debate on gun control once again moved to the forefront of the nation's consciousness after a shocking, tragic massacre at a Connecticut elementary school on Dec. 14 left 27 dead, including 20 kids.

These political discussions are happening right here in our state. As the rally in Lansing on Dec. 11 showed, these are extremely volatile issues that can cause tense protests. And as the Connecticut shooting showed, we never know when a tragedy will leave us asking what both lawmakers and constituents could have done differently.

As a school of many students below the voting age, it can be difficult for us to analyze the effects these laws will have in our everyday lives. It's important for us to look around at the reactions from the adults around us. Not to take their ideals as our own, but to realize the impact of these new laws on our futures.

This is a time of turmoil in the state of Michigan. It is vital that we stand up for what we believe in. Regardless of our exact views, our voices are that of the next generation of legislators, workers, and governors and they need to be heard.



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finding the right kind of patriotism

marl cohen

On Nov. 10, the Michigan Senate approved a bill that immediately sparked heated debate in the comments sections of numerous online newspaper articles. If the House votes to pass it, this bill would require that every Michigan public school student start each day by reciting the pledge of allegiance (except for students that express an objection and choose to opt out) and that an American flag be displayed in every classroom.

It is important that we question the objective of this bill. Evidently, the 31 Michigan Senators who voted for the bill are invested in students' patriotism. But it is difficult to see how exactly the ritual of reciting the same phrase every morning benefits our country. The bill requires students to pledge allegiance without asking them to consider what they are doing and why they are doing it. This teaches students to be thoughtlessly and automatically patriotic, as opposed to basing patriotism on critical thinking and educated opinion.

In my experience, thoughtless patriotism is cultivated in elementary and middle school. Patriotism is reinforced, but the question of why and for what purpose one should be patriotic is rarely tackled. The American History curriculum is simplified and occasionally misleading, and tends to represent America positively. With the exception of abbreviated information about slavery and the treatment of Native Americans, details that show America

in a negative light often fall by the wayside.

Luckily, in the American History class that I took my sophomore year, I learned a more detailed and inclusive version of American history. Though I discovered a love for the subject and was fascinated with what I learned, I was also often disgusted. At every turn, it seemed that Americans were responsible for atrocities. I winced as I learned more details about slavery and the forcing of Native Americans onto reservations, and I shuddered as I learned the specifics of the damage our country committed in the Vietnam War. Descriptions of racism or corruption could be found on almost every page of my textbook.

One of the most unpleasant surprises came as I learned about the period of American imperialism at the beginning of the twentieth century. At that time, the U.S. set out to exercise its power by dominating and annexing numerous countries, most famously the Philippines. Americans believed that they were superior and needed to "civilize" the residents of the new territories. Following this ideal, the Americans often committed brutal acts against people in the territories and suppressed their independence, just as America's own independence had been put down by Britain more than a century before. The flag that I had been taught to admire and say the pledge for could be, when carried into other countries, a symbol

for racism, inhumane treatment and arrogance.

After viewing a fuller picture of America's past, it became difficult for me to muster up patriotism for my country. In addition to my disillusionment with the past, I felt increasingly frustrated with the partisan squabbles that dominate our country's current politics. I did not feel there was much to be proud of.

Now, I am in the process of re-forming my patriotism. I recognize that although it was not right for me to be blindly patriotic without truly knowing my country, it also was not right for me to forget the things about my country that I do take pride in.

I remind myself that all countries have political issues; the U.S. is not the only country fragmented along party lines. I try to remember that unpleasant, shocking events are facts of history, and are not unique to the American past. I try to think about how far we have come and about all the individuals that made positive changes in our history. Above all, I remind myself that I am grateful to have the rights that I have and live in a democracy, even if it is a partisan one. I am grateful that I can write this piece and express my opinion without being persecuted by the government. I am grateful that I can choose my religion, and that when I turn 18 I will be able to vote for who I think can best lead the country.

Although my pride in my country is not what it once was and my patriotism is not as simple as the Senators who voted on the pledge of allegiance bill may expect it to be, I feel that my new patriotism is an improvement. Now that I have truly realized how often my country can have the wrong answer, I am more inclined to criticize and analyze political events and to form my own opinion and ideas. Now, instead of assuming that the U.S. is the best country, I try to think about how we can make the U.S. a better country.

I discovered that it is good to be patriotic, but it is wrong to be blindly patriotic. Patriotism should be multi-layered and well-considered. Our legislators should not put so much emphasis on students mindlessly pledging allegiance to a flag. Instead of requiring students to drone on with the same words each morning and to take these words at face value, we need to encourage students to think for themselves and analyze the current and past deeds of the country. Democracy is created through thought and opinion, and a true way to establish the American ideal is to foster independent thought from a young age. Patriotism is useful only when it is with the purpose of improving, questioning, and participating in government. Thoughtless patriotism, formed through mindless rituals, is an obstruction, not a vehicle, to peace and democracy. **C**

AS OF 2008, 36 STATES HAVE LAWS MANDATING THAT SCHOOLS REQUIRE STUDENTS TO RECITE THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE. AS OF OCTOBER 2009, 26 OF THESE STATES ALLOW STUDENTS TO OPT OUT.

questions?

- Tracy Anderson:
andersont@aaps.k12.mi.us
- Madeline Halpert
madeline.halpert@gmail.com