"How is the absurd man to live?"
Grant Weishaar, pg. 6

"Mortal or Immortal
You all end up here."
Alissa Rehmert, pg. 43
Live Ideas: Undergraduate Primary Texts Journal

Editor:
Suan Sonna (philosophy; suan@ksu.edu)

Assistant Editors:
Trace Henderson (psychology; traceh117@ksu.edu)
Camryn Eberhardy (political science, criminology, pre-law; ceberhardy00@ksu.edu)

Primary Texts Program Director & Associate Faculty Editor:
Laurie Johnson (political science; lauriej@ksu.edu)

Student Reviewers:
Natalie Jabben (philosophy; najabben@ksu.edu)
Alissa Rehmert (english; alissarehmert@ksu.edu)
Mawi Sonna (english; msonna@ksu.edu)
Sydney Wolgast (anthropology; history; smwolgas@ksu.edu)
Cadence Ciesielski (philosophy, spanish; cadebai99@ksu.edu)
Lori Leiszler (secondary education, english/journalism; lorial@ksu.edu)
Chris Butler (sociology; edwinbutler@ksu.edu)
Mason East (mathematics, secondary education; whs00236000@ksu.edu)
Dene Dryden (english; deneddryden@ksu.edu)
Bob Brummett (gwss, secondary education, social studies; bobbrummett@ksu.edu)
Austin Kruse (political science, history, leadership studies; ajkrus@ksu.edu)

Faculty Reviewers:
Kathleen Antonioli (modern languages; kantonioli@k-state.edu)
Mark Crosby (political science; mcrosby@k-state.edu)
John Fliter (political science; jfliter@k-state.edu)
Carol Franko (english; franko@k-state.edu)
Sara Luly (modern languages; srluly@k-state.edu)
James Hohenbary III (nationally competitive scholarships; jihomh@k-state.edu)
Benjamin McClooskey (classical studies; mccluskey@k-state.edu)
Shannon Skelton (theatre; sshskelton@k-state.edu)
Christopher Sorensen (physics; cso@k-state.edu)
John Warner (political science; jmwarnen@k-state.edu)

Live Ideas: Undergraduate Primary Texts Journal is the open-access, peer-reviewed undergraduate journal of Kansas State University’s Primary Texts Certificate program. It is co-produced by students and faculty at K-State and is published online quarterly (Oct., Dec., Feb., Apr.). Live Ideas was co-founded by Jakob Hanschu and Dr. Laurie Johnson in 2018 with the mission of providing a platform from which undergraduates could express their original ideas or add to the conversations of existing ideas in creative, unbounded and meaningful ways. It is a student-led adventure into thought-provoking and creative expression. The founding editors would like to firstly acknowledge Dr. Glenn Swogger and the Redbud Foundation he founded to support the liberal arts and sciences, without whose financial support the creation of this journal would not have been possible. Second, we would like to thank the numerous reviewers, contributors, and friends that helped us get this journal "off the ground."

—Jakob Hanschu & Laurie Johnson

December 2020

Contents

Albert Camus and the Desirability of Suicide | essay
Grant Weishaar 3

Everything is Politics | capstone essay
Mathew Orzechowski 8

Starry-Eyed Arimtages (Snakes in the Grass) | poem
Andrew Holland 18

Mental Health of Adolescents: Have We Done Enough? | essay
Brian Garcia 23

Precedent in Unprecedented Times | food for thought
Cadence Ciesielski 34

Mathematical Gods | poem
Alissa Rehmert 42

Image Credits 44
**Letter from the Editor**

Dear Reader,

It is quite intimidating to serve as editor in chief after Jakob Hanschu and Olivia Rogers and especially amidst a global pandemic; but my assistant editors, Trace Henderson and Camryn Eberhardy, and Dr. Laurie Johnson have been of great help and encouragement. I officially began as editor in chief with our first Live Ideas Institute during the summer of 2020. The goal of this institute – and truly all of them – is to provide students with the opportunity to share and workshop their original pieces hopefully towards publication in the journal. There is also the added benefit of a $250 scholarship if the accepted applicant attends all four days of the institute. We usually begin on a Wednesday evening with a guest speaker followed by personal introductions. We then meet on Thursday and Friday evening for breakout sessions where students are able to interact with their peers and workshop their submissions. The weekend is then spent finalizing entire pieces or an excerpt to be read aloud on Monday, the last day of the institute. Of course, all of this is occurring online!

Students have resoundingly praised the institutes, as they offer a creative escape and opportunity to meet artists of diverse backgrounds and disciplines. The Primary Texts Certificate program has been greatly enriched by these institutes and so too has the journal. We have been able to extend across campus and achieve a greater awareness among students beyond the College of Arts & Sciences. Moreover, the $1,000 Swogger Scholarship continues to attract worthy applicants and encourages undergraduate projects that enliven the scholarly discourse.

It is therefore with great confidence that I and the Live Ideas team present this edition of the Live Ideas Journal. Thank you to our authors and loyal readers.

Sincerely,
Suan Sonna
Editor-in-chief

---

**Albert Camus and the Desirability of Suicide**

Grant Weishaar
sophomore | philosophy, economics

**Author’s Preface**

This work attempts to examine Albert Camus’ views on the rationality and desirability of suicide in the face of existentialism. I understand that the issue of suicide is a sensitive subject for many people, whether they are currently tempted by it or have lost someone in the past. Know that the purpose of this essay is not to make any claim about the emotional impact, or the devastation suicide causes. Instead, it is a critical analysis of Albert Camus’ thoughts on its rationality when isolated from feeling. If you feel you are in crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. It is a free, 24-hour hotline, at 1.800.273.TALK (8255). Your call will be connected to the crisis center nearest to you. If you are in an emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

**Summary**

Camus’ Absurdism as outlined in The Myth of Sisyphus, while sometimes bogged down by extravagant wording and anti-philosophical rhetoric, provides a beautiful alternative to the hoplessness associated with the existentialist movement of the 20th century. Through simultaneous acceptance of and rebellion against our current circumstances may we find happiness.

**Keywords:** Suicide, Philosophy, Existentialism, Absurdism
For over two thousand years, much of the western world had a divine purpose derived from each region’s respective religions. But during the turn of the 19th century, religious skepticism evolved from being a belief held by a small handful of individuals, to a thought process held by a large portion of the population. With rapid advances in science challenging orthodox beliefs, philosophers now had to wonder if they were alone in the universe, and, supposing they were, if the universe could continue to hold any meaning. Modern existentialism, or the idea that the universe holds no inherent purpose, was born under these circumstances. Albert Camus—a 20th-century existentialist—writes in his Myth of Sisyphus: “On the plane of history, such a constancy of two attitudes illustrates the essential passion of man torn between his urge toward unity and the clear vision he may have of the walls enclosing him. But never perhaps at any time has the attack on reason been more violent than in ours” (8).

Camus’ Absurdism provides an intriguing alternative to the hopelessness associated with the existential dread of the 20th century. Before understanding the central ideas of Camus’ essay, we must first understand what he means by ‘absurd.’ The common usage of the word ‘absurd’ might be described as a set of circumstances that are self-contradictory, impossible, or both. Camus elaborates: “If I see a man armed only with a sword attack a group of machine guns, I shall consider his act to be absurd…[and] the magnitude of the absurdity will be in direct ratio to the distance between the two terms of my comparison” (10). ‘Absurd’ is used to describe a scenario that is so great, so impossible, and so strange that it may only elicit amusement.

Camus’ use of ‘absurd’ follows closely its everyday meaning, though it demands more attention. Stated simply, “The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need [for purpose] and the unreasonable silence of the world” (1). There exists no more fantastic comparison than the search for inherent meaning in a universe that holds none. Because of the extreme distance between these two thoughts—those being the ideas of inherent meaning and a meaningless universe—the absurdity of the search for inherent meaning is absolute. Camus then states the necessary conditions for this supreme absurdity: “...a total absence of hope (which has nothing to do with despair), a continual rejection (which must not be confused with renunciation), and a conscious dissatisfaction (which must not be compared to immature unrest)” (11).

Camus uses colorful—although depressing—language to illustrate how one first becomes aware of the absurd: “It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, street-car, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, street-car, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the ‘why’ arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement” (5). Once man arises from his mundane existence to realize that, despite his longing for purpose, he lives in an inconsiderate and indifferent universe, absurdity takes hold of his soul. Now that we understand what Camus means by absurd, we may dive into the main issue of The Myth of Sisyphus: that of suicide.

Camus begins The Myth of Sisyphus with an ambitious claim: “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide” (1). Camus reasons that the matters of the highest importance must have the most serious consequences. The converse is also true: the ideas that do not have serious consequences do not deserve a high level of importance. Galileo, for example, abandoned his heliocentric theory when the church threatened to act upon his life. While Galileo certainly thought the theory important, he did not value its reception more than he valued his own life. Camus concludes that one’s own life holds the most importance, and that, “…the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions” (2). He also argues that, if life has no meaning, it cannot have any importance. If it does not have any importance, it is better to be dead, as dead men cannot suffer.

Camus wishes to tackle suicide logically, arguing that most cases of suicide are not born of reason, but of impulse. “Rarely is suicide committed (yet the hypothesis is not excluded) through reflection [alone]” (2). While people might have a reason to commit suicide—such as losing a loved one, being let go from work, or some other tragic event—seldom is the decision to take one’s life born of pure reason. Instead, confronted with a distaste for existence, their passions lead them to choose escape over struggle. Suicide is a confession: “But if it is hard to fix the precise instant, the
subtle step when the mind opted for death, it is easier to deduce from the act itself the consequences it implies. In a sense, and as in melodrama, killing yourself amounts to confessing” (2). But what if, Camus questions, we were to approach the issue of suicide rationally; when faced with the absurd, must one end their life?

Combining Camus’ absurdity and the issue of suicide results in a distressing thought: “...no one will live this fate, knowing it to be absurd, unless he does everything to keep before him that absurdity brought to light by consciousness” (18). If we recognize the absurd, suicide becomes not only logical, but also desirable to escape a lifetime of suffering. For Camus, there is but one answer to this dilemma: instead of accepting the absurd, we must revolt against it. Note that this does not mean merely ignoring the absurd, as we must be aware of something to be able to reject it. Camus claims that anything we do, as long as we do it with the intention of revolting against the absurd, can be thought of as our life’s meaning.

Through this revolt against the absurd, man gains a certain kind of freedom. By losing the obligation to conform to a traditional, preordained purpose, one is free to choose a meaning that is unique to their circumstances. As long as he is mindful of the absurd, “...the absurd man feels released from everything outside that passionate attention crystallizing in him. He enjoys a freedom with regard to common rules” (20). When using a god, science, or any other means to define his purpose, the absurd man may never become free: he is a slave to that which has predestined his existence. This freedom from obligation is what gives the absurd man a reason to live. “That revolt gives life its value...To a man devoid of blinders, there is no finer sight than that of the intelligence at grips with a reality that transcends it” (19). To see that life is absurd, and to revolt against it, allows one to see the world for what it is: “…it is clear that death and the absurd are here the principles of the only reasonable freedom: that which a human heart can experience and live” (20).

While now aware of Camus’ answer to whether or not living itself is desirable, how is the absurd man to live? Camus thinks that, if an ultimate good were to exist, it would lie in a life that is long and full of experiences. In short, to revolt against absurdity, one must live as intensely as possible. “Thus I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death—and I refuse suicide” (22).

Now understanding Camus’ thoughts, we will address the myth that The Myth of Sisyphus derives its inspiration: Sisyphus was a Greek character who was known for incurring the wrath of the gods through his craftiness. When people of today discuss Sisyphus, rarely are the tales of his life brought up; instead, it is the punishment for his deeds that interests us. Sisyphus was condemned by Zeus, who was often at the receiving end of Sisyphus’ tricks, to roll an enormous boulder up a hill for eternity. While this task is daunting in itself, there was a catch. While the punishment could have been merely physical, Zeus decided to torment Sisyphus with the strain of repetition. Instead of having Sisyphus roll up this boulder on an infinitely tall mountain—like rolling a ball on a treadmill—Zeus created a finite mountain. Every time Sisyphus would nearly reach the peak, the boulder would tumble back down. Sisyphus would then trudge down to the base of the mountain and start the process all over again. This feeling of reaching only to fail is the foundation of Camus’ Absurdism. Camus ends his essay by discussing, with what we now understand about the absurd, the nature of Sisyphus’ situation. As I do not feel I can do it literary justice, I provide it in its entirety here:

“All Sisyphus’ silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing. Likewise, the absurd man, when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols. In the universe suddenly restored to its silence, the myriad wondering little voices of the earth rise up. Unconscious, secret calls, invitations from all the faces, they are the necessary reverse and price of victory. There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night. The absurd man says yes and his efforts will henceforth be unceasing. If there is a personal fate, there is no higher destiny, or at least there is, but one which he concludes is inevitable and despicable. For the rest, he knows himself to be the master of his days. At that subtle moment when man glances backward over his life, Sisyphus returning toward his rock, in that slight pivoting he contemplates that series of unrelated actions which become his fate, created by him, combined under his memory’s eye and soon sealed by his death. Thus, convinced of the wholly human origin of all that is human, a blind man eager to see who knows that the night has no end, he is still on the go. The rock is still rolling. I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one’s burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (24).

Works Cited

Author’s Preface

It was through my experience with reading primary texts that I added a second major and, ultimately, the Primary Texts certificate, and it has been through these that I have engaged with the thinking and writing of others, which has expanded my horizons and made me realize a new passion.

Introduction

The story of how I ended up with two majors is tied into my experience reading and thinking critically about primary texts. Although my dual majors of industrial engineering and political science seem entirely separate, I’ve learned that they really aren’t so distinct at all. The place I am in now – having graduated with two degrees, neither of which is in mechanical engineering – is not something I imagined for myself as an incoming freshman at K-State. Yet, everything I have learned along the way reminds me why I became interested in politics and political thought in the first place, and why I will never regret jumping into this, headfirst.

If nothing else, my experience with primary texts has ignited a new passion for me wanting to read and understand every idea – what I have learned is how to do this.

Keywords: Reflection, Capstone, Ethics
My Two Majors

Throughout high school, I was heavily involved with a FIRST robotics team – I loved the process of starting with a challenge and, in a limited timeframe, find some way for our team to solve it; I loved working with my hands and learning how to machine various parts; and I especially loved the rush of competing against both the clock and others who solved the same problem differently. All of these things are why I chose to begin my K-State career in mechanical engineering. However, that was extremely short lived. I’d switched to industrial engineering by the end of my freshmen year and had added a second major in political science at the beginning of my sophomore year.

The turning point, then, in my early academic career, and why I ended up where I am now, was when I took Introduction to Political Thought (with Dr. Warner). This was a whole new experience for me since, up until this point, I had never engaged with philosophy or the types of questions it asks and now I was being asked to read Plato and to understand it through the author’s eyes. My worldview at that point was largely unreflective – I understood society, politics, and religion through what I heard from others, without really considering why I held the views that I did. I might not have always adopted what people told me into my own belief system, but I always accepted it at face value, without considering what it meant or why they believed it. Although this was slowly changing as I matured and moved out, this class marks the point where this fully changed for me, and it was because I read primary texts that challenged me academically and challenged my worldview and assumptions. Just like I’d been part of a robotics team and pursued engineering in order to do more of the same, once I’d gone through this class, I had to learn more and do more of the same exploration and critical thinking I’d done in this course. I signed up for a minor in political science, took a few more classes, and decided to make it a major instead. It’s as though a switch went off in my head and I realized how much I didn’t know and had never thought to even ask prior to this point.

During my academic career, there were many times I questioned why I was even getting an engineering degree at all, to the point where I almost switched to mathematics (from my math-heavy engineering curriculum) during my junior year – the reality of my classes made me feel like I was doing work for the sake of work, and the reality of the field meant I would likely never experience the design process like I had as a student on my robotics team. Looking back now, I see that there was tension between my understanding of what engineering is, as a concept, and the reality of paying jobs in the field. At the same time, I never questioned my political science major; I never had a reason to.

One of the most common questions I’ve gotten upon sharing my two majors has always been “what will you do with both of those?” – it’s hard for people to see how they relate, and it was hard for me, too. Yet, there are many examples throughout what I’ve learned that can show a clear connection. First, we would ask the question, what problems are being solved? The answer might be that these are determined through the institutions of our society, on the understanding that it is a social contract we have undertaken (à la Rousseau, Locke, or Hobbes). This is the answer I would lean to and suggests our political systems, through laws and norms, shape the things we allow and encourage in society, including the
firms who hire engineers to solve specific problems. This same understanding would fit within the traditional telling of history as the progress of science, whereby engineering is the realization of those progressive steps. Then, this is the second question: why are we solving these problems? This is something that (with, I'll admit, my limited experience) I find lacking in the field of engineering – why does it matter what caused the problem when you could solve it regardless? Yet we can see why this is an important question in cases, like those involving infrastructure, where we're often solving problems of our own creation.

Electric cars are increasingly demanding attention since they solve the problem of reliance on fossil fuels and ballooning pollution levels; but an agrarian such as Wendell Berry or an anarcho-primitivist like John Zerzan might ask whether we might better solve the problem by just reducing our use levels, instead of engineering a new solution. In another case, our roads themselves are cutting animal habitats into pieces such that wildlife cannot safely travel as needed. The solution? More infrastructure, this time, for the animals to travel over or under ours. Here Jacques Ellul would identify this as technique since it's a problem that we created and are then reliant on new advancements in our understanding to solve.

The last question we might ask about engineering in society is this: how are we solving these problems? This, I think, is where we can get most into the weeds of politics as itself a career path since any method we'd want is necessarily dependent on the decisions made by our politicians and our political institutions. The easiest answer to this question is money – the entire career of lobbying exists to ask for that money and attention. A city government might pay civil engineers to design its streets, or the federal government might request bids to create a website for its new healthcare exchange. In both of these cases, our roads themselves are cutting animal habitats into pieces such that wildlife cannot safely travel as needed. The solution? More infrastructure, this time, for the animals to travel over or under ours. Here Jacques Ellul would identify this as technique since it's a problem that we created and are then reliant on new advancements in our understanding to solve.

These three questions are just a few specific examples of how the real-world problem solving of engineering is dependent on or influenced by politics. This, to me, seems to be somewhat of the point, though, since these problems lose their significance (or, even, don’t exist at all) outside of society and its institutions; and, since politics is one of the biggest ways in which we engage our society and our institutions, it will always have influence on engineering as a field and as a career.

Ethics in Engineering and Politics

The importance of ethics to both engineering and politics come from their plac-
Challenges in Engineering

One of the most important challenges I see in the field of engineering comes with how we are educating engineers: we are not teaching them how to be ethical (or, at the very least, are not teaching them enough). There is robust disdain within undergraduate engineering circles for humanities classes – which are often seen as “unproductive” toward the technical work they are hoping to do post-graduation – and this is where I think the problem and solution can both be found. Ethics, for engineering, means maintaining public trust in the methods and solutions to the various problems being identified and solved. The easiest example of this is, again, infrastructure – people need to trust that the bridge they’re driving over will stay standing until they reach the other side, or that their toilet will flush on command. Taking a social contract framework, we can say this is a contract between “the public” and “the engineers” whereby the former agrees to let the latter perform their job of designing and using resources if the latter agrees to do so to the best of their ability and with a focus on public safety. This is the basis for the professional licensure in the field of engineering – engineers are tested to ensure they understand how and why to make things safe, and then put their personal reputation and legal-self behind anything they design or approve.

If this social contract is brokered through licensure, then issues arise where none exists or where license standards are not maintained. As society continues to put more and more stock in computers and algorithms, the people who design these have to hold more and more of the public trust – they need to be ethical and we need to be able to ensure that they are. However, software engineers are not licensed like civil engineers are; when a team leader signs off on an algorithm they have created, they are often not putting their personal reputation on the line and typically cannot be sued for damages that would arise. So, unlike a bridge collapse, where a negligent engineer would be found at fault, the negligent designer of an algorithm with a racial bias is off the hook. This is, I think, a major challenge facing the field and facing society.

Then, the problem is also found in how we are educating engineers and maintaining these ethical standards – good education and maintaining high expectations of designers should be able to overcome the problems caused by lacking licensure. This is where the bigger problem lies, since there is almost no ethical education for engineering students. In my curriculum, for example, we specifically covered ethics for only two weeks of one semester, with a few additional report and test questions sprinkled into some of our advanced courses. This, when taken with the general disdain among engineering students for the few humanities courses they are still required to take, means many graduates are left with an ethical blind spot. I think that the current education standards for engineering ethics are inadequate, and, if nothing is done to improve them, will lead to the erosion of the public trust that we should hope to maintain.

This is the beginning of the solution that I’d propose: teach engineers ethics in a dedicated course. From Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway’s book, Merchants of Doubt, we can conclude there is no neutrality in science – this understanding, I would argue, also applies here. In such a course, the most important thing to do is to break their pre-conceived notions that science and engineering are “neutral” and that their personal biases, experiences, and assumptions do not matter. There is no reason every engineer needs to know who Kant or Mill are, but they certainly need to have an understanding that the solutions to the real-world problems can be influenced by their own perspective and that the affects they have on people’s lives carry weight. The best example of this (and why it’s important) is another software engineering challenge: driverless cars deciding to/not to hit a pedestrian to save the life of their own occupants. It’s more important to teach them why this question matters and some frameworks to interpret it by than to teach them a solution – Mill and Kant might answer this question radically differently, and that is the point and what an engineering ethics course should emphasize.

Conclusion

I think one thing that kept me from ever doubting my decision to get a political science degree was the realization that, as Socrates said it, “I know nothing.” The more I read, the more I wanted to (and had to) read more – every writer and thinker is a product of their time, so I had to read more history; each was influenced by other thinkers who came before them, so I wanted to read them to understand their interpretation of them; each has been translated from another language, so I want to learn their language so I can read as they wrote; each had a unique upbringing and religious framework… the list is limitless! My decision to take the Introduction to Political Thought course is certainly a turning point in my life – my high school US government course may have been the first push I had in this direction, but the decision to take that course is a defining point of my K-State career since it fueled my initial desire to read and truly understand different ideas for morality, society, and government.

Oddly enough, I think the element most in common between engineering and politics might just be creativity. Or, at least, this is what’s in common between my understanding of the two. When an engineer is solving real-world problems, it’s critical to have creativity – they have to know how to adapt and synthesize their previous knowledge and understanding with a new problem to come up with a creative solution. In the same vein, I think one of my biggest takeaways from reading so many different takes on politics, history, and society is that these are examples of creativity, too – each is synthesizing their understanding of previous knowledge and society to come up with some creative and new answer to questions of justice, political society, or the human condition.

To take this one step further, like in engineering where a real-world problem includes
real-world constraints, political problems also have constraints; and so, we accept in both cases that any solution is inherently limited and imperfect. This is, I feel, the “ah-ha moment” for my previous self’s “Schoolhouse Rock” understanding of politics – these institutions are imperfect, but the takeaway is to understand that they can change. Both in engineering and in politics, we might accept imperfect solutions; however, if we understand this is the case, then we are in a better place to improve upon them. For both engineering and politics, there is a theoretical element and a practical one, and the benefit to society is in finding some synthesis between the two. If engineering is built on science and is the realization of its teachings for society, then politics is built on political theory and is the realization of its teachings for society. In the same way that bridge design is advanced by incremental improvements in the materials science of concrete aggregate mixtures, we can advance our political institutions by continuously reflecting on them, their history, and their future potential.
Starry-Eyed Armitages
(Snakes in the Grass)
Andrew Holland
senior | anthropology

Artist’s Reflection

This poem was primarily inspired by my experience with watching the movie Get Out with my family. Using elements of fantasy and magical realism, I had incorporated some of the lessons I learned in my Cultural Anthropology and American Ethnic Studies courses at K-State to create a world where privilege and class differences manifest themselves as power-ups in an obstacle course that children compete in to get a piece of treasure. As I built this world where children face obstacles at every corner, I drew from some of my favorite shows and movies, such as Legends of the Hidden Temple, Nickelodeon GUTS, and Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle, to create a storyline to keep readers engaged.

The characters I created for this poem, Alastair the Anaconda and his accomplice, Ranger Armitage, represent how privilege and inequality negatively affect people who have fewer resources, such as people in marginalized communities. Ranger Armitage (whose name is derived from those of Dean and Missy Armitage, the main antagonists of Get Out) symbolizes the more subtle methods in which marginalization occurs, and Alastair’s presence as the Architect of the Jungle is a larger metaphor for the sociopolitical system built upon slavery, prejudice and discrimination.

Keywords: Social Issues, Racism, Privilege, Fantasy, Magical Realism

“It’s a jungle out there.”

People use that saying - cliché as it may seem
To describe the dangerous uncertainty of life, the outside world, and its dark corners
As if that phrase contains any hints of a map
Leading to golden treasures, wealth, or success

That phrase makes no mention of the fact that many explorers will fail because
They haven’t received proper training
They weren’t given as many tools as other explorers
Or that they’ll come across many roadblocks, and have to duck, dodge, and jump to avoid traps and pitfalls invisible to the naked eye
And as more and more fall victim to the carefully concealed traps scattered throughout the trees and brush,
Ranger Armitage, perma-grin plastered on his face, stands in front of young, impressionable adventurers
Knowingly handing out backpacks filled halfway with tools to some kids
And backpacks practically overstuffed with essentials to other kids
The Ranger tells the children, “This is it. Your first steps into a new, exciting world
But be careful, because very few explorers have escaped with their lives
And even fewer have survived and managed to leave with some of the treasure
So good luck, do your best, and watch your step
Because we can’t all be like Indiana Jones or Lara Croft.”

What Ranger Armitage fails to warn the adventurers about
Is that, after all the secret traps, falling rocks, and cliff walks
Lies the most unforgiving challenge of them all:
The explorers have to scale the Gladiator Gorge to reach the silver and gold
All while avoiding the jungle beasts who want nothing more than total control over the treasure, and any explorer bold enough to try and snatch it
Most explorers very nearly reach the top of the radical rock
Only to be chased off by bloodthirsty jaguars
Possibly into a poisonous pool of piranhas
But the most feared jungle predators are the snakes
Humongous, hulking pythons and anacondas
With eyes glimmering like diamonds and emeralds
Who want nothing more than to squeeze the life energy out of every explorer that falls into their clutches
So that they can absorb the adventurers’ youthful energy and hunger for victory.
And continue their reign over the gorge, and all that surrounds it

By far, the meanest predator in the jungle
Is the one they call Alastair, the Anaconda King
The “Final Boss” and the last step between the explorers and sweet freedom
A frightening menace almost a hundred feet long
Able to crack skulls and bones like walnut shells with his vise-like strength
Any explorer who has the gall to face him will certainly meet a gruesome fate

Yet, Alastair isn’t as menacing as he seems to be...at least not at first
He’ll act friendly with the explorers, and even cheer them on sometimes
As they inch their way across mountain ledges
And cross streams to avoid getting swept away by the rapids
But what the explorers don’t know is that Alastair’s “guidance” is all a part of his sinister scheme to stay in power
The Anaconda King uses his charm to lull the explorers into a false sense of security
By whispering “helpful hints” to them, his voice dripping with gleeful malice
For example, if an adventurer is tasked with avoiding booby traps, the sneaky serpent will point out the exact location of the traps to some children
Yet he’ll whisper to other kids, “That’sss it...baby sssstepssss...nice and sssslow...”,
Knowing that they’ll fall into viper pits, or be hit with poison darts at any moment
Because Alastair isn’t just the Anaconda King...he’s also the Architect of the Jungle

Yes, Alastair, he is the one who sets all the traps in the hellish obstacle course
He delivers false information to purposely throw some explorers off-guard
He deliberately exploits the adventurers who have less gadgets in their backpacks, and intentionally leads them to their demise
Because he made the rules to this sick, twisted course
Using his manipulative tactics to make Ranger Armitage fill some packs more than others
To lead some adventurers to betray alliances and friendships made along their journey
And to weed out the adventurers that Alastair deems unworthy
All under the guise of “friendly competition” and “survival of the fittest”

It most certainly is a jungle out here, but it’s no game
And if it was, it’d be a race where certain explorers get an all-important head start
A few extra seconds to run like mad, escape with their lives, maybe get a little bit of gold

On a twisted course where, to the unprepared, every step feels like the Final Boss level
And one wrong move means a permanent Game Over screen
With the player’s blood dribbling, staining the lush green canvas of the jungle

And for the explorers who still see the course as healthy, friendly competition
Who somehow make it to the base of Gladiator Gorge
They’ll find Alastair lying in wait, with an evil glint in his emerald eyes
Ready to unveil the final stage of his plot: Operation “Alliance or Anguish”
As the final explorers scale the mountain
Alastair strikes when they least expect it
Squeezing the scouts until they turn redder than tomatoes
And like Kaa did to Mowgli in The Jungle Book,
He hypnotizes the children, his emerald eyes shimmering in the skylight
Hoping to gain their trust one last time:
"The rulesss to the final level are sssssimple…
Do assss I command, and you might jussstt leave with the treasure, and your livesssss…
Or don’t obey my ordersssss...and your last moments on Earth will be sssspent gasssssping for your final breathssss
Gazing into my iridescent irises
As I ssssqueeze the energy, the happinessss, the life out of your helpless little bodiessss.”

He lets out a deep, diabolical laugh that makes the jungle floor rumble
And makes the jungle cats cackle
“Now then, the choice is yoursssss. Which will it be?”
Little do the scouts know, whichever choice they make, they still lose their souls, their essence, their moral compass
However, if they refuse to follow Alastair’s commands, they’ll lose their souls and their lives
And their life energy is squeezed out of them like the last drop of toothpaste out of the tube
Absorbed by the snakes, sometimes shared with the panthers and jaguars
While the explorers’ bodies are tossed away into the shadows of the jungle

How do I know all this?
I know, because I was once one of those same kids who tried their hand at the obstacle course
I wanted a shot at the gold - and I wasn’t going to let anyone stop me
Alastair guided me through the whole course, let me know where the traps were set
The Mental Health of Adolescents: Have We Done enough?

Brian Garcia

Introduction

Conversations about mental health have been growing exponentially especially over depression and anxiety. These mental disorders have multiple types of treatments, such as medication and therapy. Although, cognitive behavior therapy has been recommended more often than medication. However, the procedure of therapy is arranged differently from teenagers to adults. This brings up the question, “How effective is cognitive therapy in reducing depression and anxiety in adolescents?”. By examining the impact depression and anxiety has on adolescents and the effects cognitive behavioral therapy as a treatment for either reducing or worsening both mental disorders.

To examine this question, one must understand the definition of depression and anxiety. However, the frequent association of “depression” and “anxiety” in our society has been applied more towards describing an emotion than to the symptoms of a disorder. This description could convince people to either become unaware of the potential development towards a mental disorder or students could convince themselves that they developed a severe mental disorder when it could merely be common stress. This essay will examine studies related to major depressive disorder and social phobia disorder, which are specific disorders that are mostly diagnosed with adolescents (10 to 19 years old). In addition, investigation on cognitive behavior therapy is essential as it has been a highly suggested therapy practice for treating these specific mental disorders, with consideration of medication that is recognized as the golden standard of treatment.

This research question is worth investigation because the common interpretation of depression and anxiety is often either incorrect or vague. The significance...
of understanding the amount of impact these mental disorders can have on people becomes important when a friend or a loved one decides to open up about their mental problems or when you try to recognize if you are currently dealing with a mental disorder by self-reflecting. Overtime, the adolescence stage has been presented to be at an age where they experience emotional highs and lows, are seen as impulsive, and are considered as "moody". This perception of adolescence can reduce people’s recognition of the symptoms related to mental disorders than to the typical life of a teen. This could increase the risk of adolescents living with an undiagnosed mental disorder throughout their adulthood and increasing the difficulty of recovery. Nevertheless, while cognitive behavioral therapy has been highly recommended, it is beneficial to acknowledge that every solution has flaws and realizing if those flaws would cause more harm than good.

**Depression**

The term depression is often misunderstood and falsely believed to occur only in a state of sadness and in times of low motivation. Often the word depression is used loosely and varies because there isn’t a fixed definition. The medical definition is derived from its complex symptoms that they use to evaluate what type of depressive disorder an individual presents. The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) acknowledges eight different categories of depressive disorders including mood dysregulation disorder, major depressive disorder, persistent depressive disorder, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, substance/medication-induced depressive disorder, depressive disorder due to another medical condition, other specified depressive disorder, and unspecified depressive disorder. Each are separated by their symptoms, duration, timing, and/or presumed etiology. The word depression is an overgeneralization from the many different kinds of depressive disorders. Therefore, the mention of depression would instead be focused on major depressive disorder (MDD). The DSM-5 states that MDD must have five (or more) of the following symptoms present for most of the day, nearly every day, for at least 2 weeks: include loss of interest or pleasure in activities, appetite disturbance, sleep disturbance, psychomotor agitation or retardation, fatigue or loss of energy, poor concentration or difficulty making decisions, feeling of worthlessness or excessive guilt, and recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, or suicide attempt (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Ultimately, there is a clear distinction that can be seen between occasional sadness and laziness than to a depressive episode.

The development of MDD can be caused by genetic, temperamental, environ-

mental, course modifiers, and/or psychological factors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 166). Some examples consist of experiencing major life changes, trauma, or stress, to personal or family history of depression, or certain physical illnesses and medications (“NIMH » Depression,” 2019). These variations that cause MDD contributes to the difficulty in trying to prevent the development of MDD for each individual, especially for adolescence. Adolescents diagnosed with MDD have a higher level of maladaptive self-schemata in the form of a neurotic attitude, and a poor ability to regulate after a stressor (Shapero, 2015). Depressive symptoms are shown to be mild enough that it becomes unnoticed to individuals who interact with them (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 167). This exhibits a disadvantage in trying to use coping mechanisms and a means towards treatment since external support is key towards a more successful recovery.

Living with MDD can put pressure on a person’s self-esteem, worsening their mental state to find perseverance in having satisfaction towards life which can lead to self-harm. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for 15-29-year-olds and nearly 800,000 people die due to suicide every year (World, 2018). While, according to the Children’s Mental Health Report, “90% of young people who commit suicide have a psychiatric illness” (Child Mind Institute, 2015). Most people experience a healthy amount of sadness in their life, but depression is a clear indicator that one should not talk lightly but instead with consideration of the impact it has on people. The discussion over suicidal victims should not be stigmatized nor shun upon as people would tend to ignore and not associate themselves with the person crying for help. Therefore, the problem worsens with people hiding their scars and issues from their friends and family to prevent them from feeling rejected.

**Anxiety**

To the public eye, the word “stress” and “anxiety” are believed to have the same meaning which then causes them to be used interchangeably. When in reality, anxiety is an anticipation of future threats with excessive fear that is associated with cautious or avoidant behavior along with muscle tension that can all persist around six months or in less duration when diagnosing children, according to the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 189). Panic attacks are known to be common, but not limited to, an anxiety disorder as it can abrupt a surge of intense fear or discomfort that can occur from an anxious state or even from a calm state of mind (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, pg. 214). Stress, however, is seen as an external cause that can be relieved once the situation has been resolved, although, it can also be considered as a trigger for anxiety (Ross, 2018). Not knowing the difference between the two can lower one’s interpretation of the amount of impact anxiety can have towards an individual’s daily life.
The complexity of anxiety has led to various classification types each associated with different symptoms. Out of the different anxiety disorders, social anxiety disorder (SAD), recognized as social phobia, is seen as the third most common psychiatric disorder with approximately 13% of the general population, pertained mostly to adolescence (Rao et al., 2007). SAD is seen in an individual that is fearful or avoidant of social interactions and situations with the possibility of being scrutinized such as being embarrassed, humiliated, rejected, or offending others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 190). Similar to MDD, SAD can be influenced by environmental, temperamental, genetic, and physiological factors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 205). Adolescents with SAD are often confused with shyness which differs since SAD can impact the impairment of an individual's emotional, academic and social life when compared to those with no disorder due to their symptoms (Rao et al., 2007). Symptoms for SAD in children can consist of phobic/avoidant behaviors to a social setting, in which a child is interacting, feels noticed, or is performing for others must occur in a peer setting and not just during interactions with adults that would be expressed in distress, freezing, crying, or other similar forms of fear or discomfort, an avoidant fear of showing anxiety symptoms for fear of judgement, displays fear or anxiety that is out of proportion from the actual threat of the social situation or to the sociocultural context, is not caused or attributed from a substance, another medical condition, or another mental disorder, and if another medical condition is present, the fear, anxiety, or avoidance are either unrelated, or is excessive (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 203). Overall, an individual diagnosed with SAD can experience an intense anxiousness that can prohibit the ability to work with others and make meaningful interactions that can restrict them from finding adequate treatment for their disorder.

**Comorbidity**

Coincidently, when diagnosed with MDD it is common for being diagnosed with SAD, and vice versa. As nearly 60% of patients with MDD also meet criteria for at least one anxiety disorder and SAD is often comorbid with other anxiety disorders and major depressive disorder due to the chronic social isolation (Snyder, 2013; American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 208). Studies found that children and adolescents with social phobia, or other types of anxiety disorders have an increased risk of developing a subsequent depressive disorder, and the onset of depression is more likely in individuals with a higher number of anxiety disorders, a more severe impairment of anxiety disorders, and when panic attacks co-occur. (Beesdo, Knappe, & Pine, 2009). A reason for this being that both mental disorders reported that patients would have a higher neuroticism state of mind when confronting an obstacle. This occurrence of comorbidity between MDD and SAD in adolescents could result from the overlap in both the symptoms and items used to diagnose the disorders, common etiological factors of the development of each condition, and the negative presences of anxiety that increases the risk for the development of depression (Hari, 2018, p. 12; Garber & Weersing, 2010). Acknowledging that MDD and SAD are comorbid and can increase the intensity of the symptoms can present a factor on whether or not a treatment is shown to be effective. The treatments that have been recommended for both mental disorders were CBT for therapy and SSRI’s for medication.

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

Individual Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) would be the main focus instead of the other types of therapies. This is because CBT is offered, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration survey, 88 percent of all facilities, from 87 percent of facilities in the Northeast to 90 percent of facilities in the Midwest and the West (Substance 2017). This makes it almost impossible for patients to not come across CBT when they’re finding treatment. CBT has two main aspects: cognitive and behavioral. The cognitive section works to develop helpful beliefs about the patient's life, while the behavioral side helps them learn to make healthier choices (“Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Effective Child Therapy,” 2017). The framework of CBT works on the thought process to control certain emotions that can influence negative behavior. CBT has been an intervention for both anxiety and depression CBT, with positive effects for CBT reported across the anxiety disorders and for mild to moderate levels of depressive disorder (Garber & Weersing, 2010). However, Garber & Weersing also mention how interventions targeting one disorder will not necessarily successfully treat the other comorbid condition (2010). Many CBT elements in treating anxiety and depression include problem solving, assertiveness training, cognitive restructuring, family communication skills training, relaxation, exposure, pleasant activity scheduling, and behavioral activation CBT focus on (a) the interplay between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and (b) within this framework, teaching adaptive responses to stress and coping with negative emotionality. (Garber & Weersing, 2010). In a way, this would help patients become their own therapist and gain control when they sense the effects of their symptoms. By reframing their thought process into a more neutral or positive manner they can plan to act accordingly with less discomfort.

Deciding to attend a CBT therapy session would be different for every individual, but typically, if sessions are once a week, it would last between six to twenty sessions
Considerable evidence has been accumulated on the benefits for adolescents cognition to control behavioral actions. Ultimately improve CBT sessions since the therapy works specifically in improving social behavior and damage to the hippocampal can disrupted their spatial navigation, (Boldrini et al., 2013) The hippocampal, helps form cognition and so-reversed the effects MDD would have on neuronal progenitor cells that are part of the common form of social anxiety disorder respond after taking venlafaxine or an SSRI (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). 50% to 80% of patients with the same cogitative and linguistic skills as a child and vice versa. More leniency should be considered when in fact most kids with anxiety disorders don't receive treatment, even when (CBT) has been shown to be highly effective in combination with medication. (Child Mind Institute, 2018).

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors

With the constant mentions in studies about combination regarding CBT and SSRIs, it suspects whether SSRIs are shown to have more significance towards the patient's recovery than CBT. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI) are a type of medication treatment used for both MDD and SAD that are prescribed and can simple be taken orally. Some examples of SSRI's are Fluoxetine (Prozac), Sertraline (Zoloft), Paroxetine (Paxil), Escitalopram (Lexapro), Fluvoxamine (Luvox), Citalopram (Celexa), Vilazodone (Viibryd), and Vortioxetine (Brintellix). The use of antidepressant in the past month increased overall, from 7.7% in 1999–2002 to 12.7% in 2011–2014 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). 50% to 80% of patients with the general form of social anxiety disorder respond after taking venlafaxine or an SSRI for 8 to 12 weeks (Harvard Health Publishing, 2010). This study focuses on a sample of individuals who have untreated MDD and results states that SSRI that may have reversed the effects MDD would have on neuronal progenitor cells that are part of the hippocampal. (Boldrini et al., 2013) The hippocampal, helps form cognition and social behavior and damage to the hippocampal can disrupted their spatial navigation, minimize social interaction, and trouble in memory (Boldrini et al., 2013). This would ultimately improve CBT sessions since the therapy works specifically in improving cognition to control behavioral actions.

Considerable evidence has been accumulated on the benefits for adolescents with SAD and MDD. Although, some studies speculate that SSRIs could be doing more harm than good. A study concern with psychopharmacological interventions in children was in regards to the unknown long-term effects of such treatment on neurological development. (Beesdo, Knappe, & Pine, 2009). The common side effects of SSRIs can include: feeling shaky or anxious, diarrhea or constipation, loss of appetite and weight loss, dizziness, sleeping problems (insomnia) or drowsiness, headaches, low sex drive, erectile dysfunction (in men), while side effects can improve over time, some sexual problems can persist (NHS Choices, 2018). While the side effects present a second consideration when trying to recommend SSRIs to adolescents, the main worry stems from the fact that SSRIs can increase thoughts of suicide. The claim that antidepressant serotonin reuptake inhibitors cause patients to commit suicide and become addicted to their medication may have disconcerted the public and members of the medical profession (Ebmeier et al.). Some people, especially under 25, are at risk of having suicidal thoughts and a desire to self-harm when they first take SSRIs (NHS Choices, 2018). On the other hand, a study found that approximately two people out of every 100 treated with an SSRI have a “suicide-related” thought (Jane Garland, Kutcher, Virani, & Elbe, 2016). So, while it may be true that adolescents would have a higher risk of suicidal related thoughts, the description is overemphasis when put into context of the chances it would affect adolescents taking SSRIs. Furthermore, a study linked completed suicide with prescription rates of SSRIs in different counties from 1996 to 1998 and found suicide rates were lower where prescription rates were higher (Child Mind Institute, 2015).

Discussion

Sadness and the lack of motivation do not accurately portray the indications of depression, and stress can often be a trigger for anxiety, but they are not identical. Major depressive disorder (MDD) and social anxiety disorder (SAD) has been diagnosed frequently in adolescence and are shown to be comorbid. They are both complicated mental illnesses worth understanding and acknowledging as they can increase the intensity of symptoms and the duration of treatment. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has been one of the most recommended treatments for both disorders, along with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI). Both have demonstrated to be effective in stabilizing or reducing the intensity of the symptoms but with certain conditions.

While SSRIs have shown to be mostly ineffective and at times dangerous to
patients who may have a severe disorder, research seems to demonstrate that with the combination of CBT would be the most beneficial. Federally funded clinical trial of treatments for kids with anxiety disorders showed that after 12 weeks, 60% of respond rates for CBT and 55% for medication alone, while in combination the respond rates showed up to 81% (Child Mind Institute, 2015). But if one were to be chosen, creating a session plan to meet with a therapist at a regular bases would be most recommended treatment based on the data and the risks associated with each one.

Restating the question, how effective is cognitive behavioral therapy in reducing depression and anxiety in adolescents? Based on the studies gathered, the effectiveness of CBT is dependent on the condition of the patient. There have been more successful outcomes with shorter sessions for patients with anxiety than those who have depression. The motivation of patients could be a reason for the lack of success for depression since MDD demonstrates symptoms of loss of interest, fatigue, and poor concentration that can increase the duration and difficulty to stabilize or reduce their disorder. While with SAD, they are forced to face their anxiety as they have to interact and open-up to a stranger by either their own will or from the encouragement of their parents which can make CBT beneficial to them. If an adolescent were to be diagnosed with both mental disorders as comorbid, then it could lead towards longer sessions since both symptoms tend to overlap in symptoms causing the severity to increase. Not only will the intensity of the symptoms increase, but the method the therapist would shift as they have to recognize an approach for MDD that won’t cause a negative effect on SAD and vice versa. The severity of the mental disorder can also contribute on the effectiveness of CBT considering that if the patient had a mild severity of SAD or MDD, the amount and intensity of their symptoms would be reduced compared to a moderate or severe.

Their symptoms could be the only barrier that could prevent them from finding a way to function in our society. However, there are people less unfortunate than others that contain multiple barriers such as cost of insurance, time and travel, external support, etc., that become much more difficult for adolescents as they rely on their parent or guardian for this amount of support. With CBT, the presence of a therapist as a support system with the combined of coping skills like breathing techniques, exercise, organization, etc., can be more beneficial in the long term so adolescents won’t have to rely solely on a therapist and retain skills to function properly in our society towards adulthood.


Abstract
An overview of ten US Supreme Court decisions produced during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic. This paper will address the issue, the opinion, and the impact of each case in the order that it was decided by the Supreme Court. At the end, I will discuss the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the judicial impact resulting in it, and the nomination and confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

Summary
This paper will explain Supreme Court precedent, address ten of the Supreme Court decisions released during the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020, and discuss the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as well as the confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett.
Under normal circumstances, the Supreme Court hears cases that they have selected between the months of October and April. At any time after they hear a case the Court can release their decisions to the public and create precedent as long as they rule before the end of the session. This means that a lot of decisions are typically handed down during June and July. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, operations halted. Eventually, the Supreme Court heard arguments via conference call starting in early May. Once they were able to resume operations, they also began releasing some decisions (US Courts 2020). This paper will explain Supreme Court precedent, address ten of the Supreme Court decisions released during the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020, and discuss the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as well as the confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

Supreme Court precedent is a collection of Supreme Court decisions that dictate how our laws are interpreted. These decisions are passed down through our national Supreme Court and state Supreme Courts. This concept shapes our common law system. Our laws are constantly changing and evolving. One constant in our judicial system is the doctrine of Stare Decisis. This translates to “let the decision stand.” Given that most justices follow this principle and adhere to previous decisions, this keeps our laws consistent, stable, and predictable.

With this understanding of Supreme Court precedent, now consider the legal issues, court opinions, and common law impacts of ten Supreme Court decisions that set precedent in unprecedented times:

In Kahler v. Kansas, decided on March 23, 2020, Kahler appealed his conviction and sentence as he argues that it is unconstitutional for a state to abolish the insanity defense according to the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments. In this case, Kahler was convicted of capital murder but initially wanted to make an insanity defense. In the state of Kansas, there are limits as to what a jury can consider about an insanity defense. With these restrictions, Kahler was found guilty and sentenced to the death penalty. In his appeal to the Supreme Court, Kahler argues that a limited capacity for an insanity defense violates the rights of due process as established by the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution. In this case, the Supreme Court held that “Due process does not require Kansas to adopt an insanity test that turns on a defendant’s ability to recognize that his crime was morally wrong” (Kagan 2020a). Thus, the Supreme Court affirmed Kahler’s conviction and sentence, upholding the Kansas Supreme Court’s decision. While the Court’s decision denies Kahler’s appeal, it does acknowledge that the insanity defense and the science of mental health with regards to culpability is ever-changing. This language could signal that the Court is open to new interpretations of an insanity defense under due process should the science support it.

In Kansas v. Glover, decided on April 6, 2020, the Court evaluates whether it is reasonable to assume that the owner of the vehicle is the one driving it, withholding contrary evidence. In this case, an officer made an investigative traffic stop of Glover because the officer realized that the owner of the vehicle’s license had been revoked. The Kansas Supreme Court ruled that the stop was unconstitutional claiming that the officer had no reasonable suspicion of criminal activity, and thus, violated the Fourth Amendment. The State of Kansas then appeals arguing that the officer had a reasonable suspicion that the registered owner was the person operating the vehicle. After hearing arguments, the US Supreme Court agreed with the State: “When the officer lacks information negating an inference that the owner is driving the vehicle, an investigative traffic stop made after running a vehicle’s license plate and learning that the registered owner’s driver’s license has been revoked is reasonable under the Fourth Amendment” (Thomas 2020). This case sets a precedent the Court can release their decisions that set precedent in unprecedented times:

In Ramos v. Louisiana, decided on April 20, 2020, the court rules on non-unanimous jury verdicts under the Sixth Amendment. In the traditional jurisprudence, or history of law on this issue, the Sixth Amendment requires a unanimous ruling to convict someone, meaning that all jurors must agree that the defendant is guilty. In Louisiana, Ramos was charged with second-degree murder and found guilty by ten out of twelve jurors. With its non-unanimous jury verdict in place, Ramos was found guilty and sentenced by the court. Ramos then appeals the claiming that the non-unanimous jury verdict law, on the books in Louisiana and Oregon, violates the Sixth Amendment right to a fair trial. The Supreme Court rules with Ramos in this case claiming that the Sixth Amendment requires “that a jury must reach a unanimous verdict in order to convict” (Gorsuch 2020a). The Court also considers two other precedents on this issue, but ultimately rule in an 8-1 opinion that the non-unanimous jury verdict is unconstitutional. This precedent will require that Louisiana and Oregon strike the law and only convict defendants when there is a unanimous jury verdict.

In an opinion decided on June 15, 2020, the Supreme Court historically ruled on Altitude Express, Inc. v. Zarda, Bostock v. Clayton County, and R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes Inc. v. Equal
Employment Opportunity Commission. Each of these cases concerns the employment discrimination of people based on sexual orientation and whether this discrimination is prohibited by Title XII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In Altitude Express, Inc. v. Zarda, Zarda claims that he was terminated because of his sexual orientation. In Bostock v. Clayton County, Bostock similarly claims that Clayton County terminated him for “conduct unbecoming of its employees” which stemmed from his sexual orientation. Finally, in R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes Inc. v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Aimee Stephens alleges that the funeral home terminated her shortly after she announced that she would be transitioning from male to female. In each of these cases, the Supreme Court rules that “an employer who fires an individual merely for being gay or transgender violates Title VII” (Gorsuch 2020a). After the oral arguments, the Court decides that the Regents were correct and the overturn the rescission of DACA. However, in this opinion, Roberts conveys that DHS can still rescind DACA; but in order for a lawful termination, they must follow a different procedure. The future of DACA will most likely be determined by the next presidential administration.

In Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue, decided on June 30, 2020, the Supreme Court evaluates a “no-aid” provision in Montana that prohibits the allocation of tuition assistance for students to a religious school. This case arose when the Montana Department of Revenue created a provision in a tax-credit scholarship program that prohibited scholarship recipients from using that scholarship at a religious school; in this case, it was the Stillwater Christian School. Espinoza and other parents filed a lawsuit challenging the provision as a violation of the Religion Clauses or the Equal Protection Clause of the US Constitution. When this reached the Supreme Court, five of the justices agreed. The Court ruled that “the application of the no-aid provision discriminated against religious schools and the families whose children attend or hope to attend them in violation of the Free Exercise Clause of the Federal Constitution” (Roberts 2020b). This precedent will allow the use of those scholarships at religious institutions in Montana and other states with similar programs.

In Chiafalo v. Washington, decided on July 6, 2020, the Court rules on faithless electors, also known as presidential electors that choose not to support their party’s nominee or for whom they have pledged to vote. In the state of Washington, there is a law that requires electors to pledge to vote for their party nominee. If they do not vote for that party nominee, they face a $1,000 fine. In 2016, Chiafalo and other electors pledged to vote for the Clinton/Kaine campaign, but instead voted for the Colin Powell. They were subsequently fined $1,000. The electors challenge the law claiming that it is a suppression of their First Amendment right. In their analysis of the issue, the Court unanimously found that “a State may enforce an elector’s pledge to support his party’s nominee—and the state voters’ choice—for President” (Kagan 2020b). This precedent will allow states to penalize faithless electors.

In McGirt v. Oklahoma, decided on July 9, 2020, the Court rules on the State’s jurisdiction on crimes committed on grounds belonging to Indigenous Peoples. McGirt, a member of the Muscogee Creek Nation, was convicted of a crime that took place within the Nation’s boundaries. McGirt argued that he should not have been prosecuted by the State because the Indian Major Crimes Act dictates that crimes committed in Native American territory are subject to federal jurisdiction, meaning that he should have been prosecuted by the US government. The dispute here was whether the Creek Nation territory was “Indian country” per the Major Crimes Act. The Court found that “For MCA purposes, land reserved for the Creek Nation since the 19th century remains “Indian country”” (Gorsuch 2020c). Under this precedent, members of the Muscogee Creek Nation in the Oklahoma Creek Nation territory will be subject to federal jurisdiction.

Each of these ten cases set a unique precedent that will shape the federal and state laws in the US. Even during unprecedented times, like the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is important for the US Supreme Court to hear cases, interpret the law, and make decisions about legal issues in our country.
judicial term, the US saw the unfortunate passing of longstanding Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Ginsburg, as the second woman to serve on the US Supreme Court, was a strong advocate for women’s rights, combating gender discrimination, and upholding voting rights. Shortly after Ginsburg’s passing, Justice Amy Coney Barrett was nominated and confirmed to the US Supreme Court as the fifth woman to sit on the bench. Barrett’s nomination was highly contested by Senate Democrats as they advocated for a delay in the nomination until a new president had been elected. Despite this pressure, Justice Amy Coney Barrett was confirmed to the Supreme Court on October 26, 2020, eight days before the 2020 Presidential Election.

“Justice Amy Coney Barrett was confirmed to the Supreme Court on October 26, 2020.”

References
Mathematical Gods

Alissa Rehmert
Senior | English

Abstract
I originally wrote this piece for my husband, who is a mathematician. I am interested in combining our loves -- writing and math. This is supposed to be an encouragement, not only to him, but to every scholar who finds themselves struggling to understand their field. Even the 'greats' had their hiccups.

Summary
This short poem acts as an encouragement to mathematicians, or any other academic, struggling for footing in their field. It is easy to look at the 'greats' and feel small. With this poem, I hope to shed light on the fact that even the 'mathematical gods' like Euler all had to learn the basics at some point.

Keywords: Mathematics, Poetry, Encouragement, Learning
What We Publish:
We accept a wide range of works, including research, creative writing, art, poetry, and multimedia essays. The journal seeks works that are especially engaging, as is reflected in our author guidelines.

Submissions should be alive in the full sense of the word.

How We Review Submissions:
Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis. Once a piece is submitted, it undergoes the review process, which typically takes several weeks. A submission is first reviewed by the editors to ensure that it is appropriate for the journal. Following this, the piece is forwarded to three peer-reviewers—one university faculty member and two undergraduate students.

After all of the reviewers' comments and suggestions have been returned to the editors, the piece will be sent back to the author/creator with a decision.

Visit https://liveideasjournal.org/ for more information!