The **PURPOSE** of *Encompass Magazine* is to renew an ethical dialogue among all disciplines of the Duke community. We hope to show that ethics aren’t just for philosophers, priests, or goody-two-shoes.

**This is where we begin...**

Take a long, cool sip...

**of ethics.**
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As students, we spend four years figuring out our place in the Duke Community. From the day we step foot onto campus, we are told that we will spend the next four years of our lives “finding ourselves” and “forging communities.”

That’s all well and good, but what does it really mean? What types of moral constructs, values, and debates are present in communities—both those we claim as our own and the “others.” At Duke, whether we come to identify ourselves as Cameron Crazies, Pratt-stars, lax bros, or theater junkies, we all quickly learn that there are unspoken rules and cultural norms that everyone seems to abide by.

This issue of Encompass—“ethics in communities”—attempts to synthesize all those ideas. We aimed to address how people who live and socialize together form a common ethical identity, and how they cope when confronted with outsiders or challenges to their community. Communities are defined by any number of standards, some that we are familiar with and others not as much. From depraved Russian gulags, to small, southern towns in Alabama, to prestigious universities, communities and their moral values are as diverse as we are.

Just because one is not aware of the community ethics doesn’t mean that he or she can’t be subject to its ethical debates. Sometimes, we enter these community debates before we are even out of the womb…or test tube, as the case may be (p. 10). For those that mature and become aware of a community’s ethical norms and standards, inevitable violations and questioning occurs.

How are violators of a community’s ethical norms treated? Are they forced to subscribe to a certain moral belief in order to “reform” (p. 14)? Do we dehumanize those that have been punished under a set of community morals and write them off as outsiders (p. 16)? Or, in extreme cases, can communities react with an even swifter, deadlier form of vengeance against perceived outsiders (p. 6)?

Many face the task of traversing multiple communities. People can live on the cusp—between scientist and neighbor (p. 22), mother and worker (p. 18), or tourist and traveler (p. 24)—delicately balancing between two entirely different communities, each demanding something different from them. What obligation do we have to each community we are a part of? Do we have an obligation to serve communities we intrude upon, or can we simply act as a traveler in a foreign nation (p. 24)?

We certainly do not have the answer to all of these questions, and we aimed to present many perspectives to you in this issue of Encompass. Our contributors are undergraduates and professors, liberals and conservatives, scientists and writers—and each of them belong to their own set of communities, here at Duke and beyond. It remains up to you to take the ideas, questions, and debates presented here and start your own conversations about the ethics of everyday life that surround us. We hope you take up that challenge and begin these important conversations—here in our Duke community and whatever other communities you call your own.

Enjoy, engage, and encompass ethics!

Katy Wood and Bethany Horstmann
Movie Night!

The Invention of Lying: what would the world be like if no one had the ability to lie?!
Not the Atom Bomb?

Interviewing/Filming Gulag Survivors in a Culture of DANGEROUS MEMORY

Dr. Jehanne Gheith, Professor of Slavic and Eurasian Studies

“Why do you want to talk with us? After all, this [the Gulag] wasn’t like the atomic bomb.”

Mariia Budkevich, a child of “enemies of the people,” asked me this in 1998, on a crowded St. Petersburg street on our way from the metro to her apartment for our second interview. By the time we had reached her apartment, I was able to respond: “How many people died during the atomic bomb? And how many during the Gulag?”

This stopped her, and she said: “Hundreds of thousands in Nagasaki. And millions in the Gulag.”

Budkevich [1] was trying to understand why a scholar from the US would want to talk with Gulag survivors and the children of those incarcerated or killed—as her parents had been—in the Gulag. This comment, made not on tape but in casual conversation, has haunted me for years.

Many of those whose lives were deeply affected by the Gulag have [2] a sense similar to what Budkevich expresses here: that their experiences were unimportant, that they were not the subject of history. There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is that the public narrative around the Gulag denied their exper-
ence for many years. Equally important, in the former Soviet Union, as Russian historian Khubova and her colleagues state: “[R]emembering has been dangerous since at least the 1920s.” [3] While remembering has been less overtly dangerous in the glasnost and post-glasnost years, the deeply ingrained habits of not remembering and of not speaking remain.

In this essay, I will focus on my interviews with Maria Stanislavovna Budkevich over ten years and my eventual decision to film her (and my other interviewees). My discussion of these interviews is a way to explore the particular responsibilities created for an interviewer in a society in which I have come to think of as a culture of dangerous memory operates and continues to leave traces.

**Contextualizing my project**

I have conducted multiple life history interviews over ten years with fifteen survivors of the Gulag.[4] My group of interviewees includes three workers and twelve members of the intelligentsia; eleven were women and four were men. Interviewing the same people several times and in increasing depth has over time built trust between us and has allowed people to tell me more in each interview about their memories of their time in the Gulag and their lasting effects. How people remember and how they talk about their time in the Gulag is central in my work: this, I believe, is how the Gulag continues to affect or haunt Russian society today.[5]

I conducted one set of interviews in May and June of 1998. As a result of those initial interviews, I was compelled to continue and deepen the conversation which even after three hour interviews felt like it was just beginning. So I returned to Russia in late July and was able to conduct interviews in July and August of 1998. I later returned to conduct interviews in 2000, 2001, 2005, and finally (for the last time) in 2008.[6]

**Mariia Budkevich (Interviewee)**

Mariia Budkevich had just turned 14 in 1937 when her parents, both Polish Communists, were arrested. Her story is one of quest: when I interviewed her in 1998, 2001, and 2008, she had spent roughly 60 years trying to find out what had happened to her parents and why.

Budkevich was not herself put into a Gulag camp; instead, she, like millions of children, was put into a children’s home after her parents were arrested.[7] In our first interview, she gave me the bare bones of the story. In subsequent interviews, she fleshed out the stories, giving more detail and a sense of her own evolving knowledge and interpretation of her own history.

Until 1956 (three years after Stalin’s death), Budkevich still didn’t know if her parents were alive or dead. This is how she found out: “And so, in 1956 I got a document saying that [my parents]’ file had been reviewed, and there was no crime. Well, that was it. There was no crime. No apologies, nothing about whether they’d been rehabilitated—no—but everyone got this formula ‘The file has been reviewed, there was no crime.’ So the article—nothing was mentioned. So then, when I began...Yes, to write, so they would give me a document about my parents’ deaths.... ‘Posthumously,’ was written there. The file was reviewed posthumously. So. So that’s how it was. And then I worked on getting a document about their deaths. And they gave me a document saying my mother had died from heart disease...and my father from kidney failure.” [21 August 2001][8]

In 1956, she immediately began the quest to find out where they were buried. In 1989, 33 years after she got the news of their deaths, she finally found out that her parents had, in fact, been shot. Under Gorbachev in the late 1980s, it became possible to get information about what had happened to people in the purges; more than that, it became important to Budkevich and many other children of “enemies” to establish what had happened—important not only emotionally but also financially as some pensions were paid to Gulag survivors and their children. She went to Moscow every year and got help from Moscow Memorial (an organization that works with Gulag survivors) to find the place where they had been cremated. Workers at Memorial found new lists for the Moscow crematorium, and that is how Budkevich determined that her parents were there. However, she was not quite sure of the information: “But perhaps it’s in another place in another cemetery. No one knows. Perhaps they did not take them there but to some common grave....But that’s all in the past, you can’t change that—you can’t return it.” She was skeptical, I think, because her parents had not appeared on the first lists; also, she very much wanted them to be buried rather than cremated; and, perhaps, too, she was not quite ready for the quest to be over—the quest was what she still had of her parents. [August 17, 1998]

For nearly twenty years after their deaths, Budkevich searched for her parents. A search that could never find its object. But in the quest itself, she found mourning and hope, a connection to them and to her own past.

When I interviewed her in 2008, Budkevich had finally found definitive proof of where her parents were buried: she had a photograph of the mass grave and an archival document with their names on it. “Yes, I knew earlier,” she said. “Not from rumors but from people who knew what had happened. But now it’s all completely...”
clear: there’s a document that they were there. I’ll show you a photograph of the grave. [9] It’s a common grave. I counted 400 Poles. Just imagine how many ashes are there. And it’s not just people who were shot who are there.... It’s called Common Grave Number One, that’s what it was called then, unidentified remains. Unidentified! People off the street...." She finished, sadly: “I know my story, my family’s story [history], only through the archives” [October 13, 2008].

A major part of her lifelong quest to discover what had happened to her parents had thus been accomplished. And Budkevich expresses here a lingering sense of sadness—both a sense of her parents not being honored in death and a profound sense of being cut off from the her own lived history: her primary access to her parents and to her own past is through documents. She channeled that into a new quest: to organize an archive of her own about Gulag survivors. In 1998 she had told me that she saved every letter ever sent to her. [10] In 2008, she said: "I even brought photographs. I brought a whole bag. I hope that sometime I’ll start an archive and put all of this in order and it will all be there. I have a lot of material collected. Both about my life and about the lives of my friends who had the same fate." [October 13, 2008]

Budkevich moved from wondering why her experiences were important to agreeing to be filmed, and, in fact, she is now creating historical records for the future as she works on her archive collection. In this section, I have given my understanding of Budkevich’s movement, and now I turn to the other side of the story: my own slowly made decision to film interviewees.

**Decision to film (Interviewer)**

In the ten years over which I conducted interviews with Gulag survivors, scholars in the West would often ask me: “Why aren’t you filming your interviewees? It’s so important to record this.” My immediate thought each time I was asked: “It’s a good idea; why am I not filming?” The dilemma was pointed. On one hand, not only would the film become an important part of the historical record, but it would also be perhaps the most effective way of communicating knowledge about the Gulag, encouraging people to care about these events.

When I did seriously consider filming, audio taped the interviews or took their pictures. Because Western understandings of concentration camps are formed mostly in reference to the Holocaust [11], it is important to underline here the great differences in the two historical situations. After World War II was over, because the Nazi regime had been defeated, most Holocaust survivors did not face the possibility of a present, realistic risk of physical danger or incarceration for themselves or their loved ones.

Yet, in the end, I did decide to film my interviewees. It was only possible to make this decision after ten years of knowing them. Also pushing me to consider filming was the fact that Jody McAuliffe, a colleague from Duke, approached me about the possibility of doing the filming. [13] We set this up carefully, engaging in intensive discussions with interviewees about filming, hearing their concerns and getting their agreement in each case.

Filming led to positive results, some of which were unexpected. First, being able to show clips to students enhances their sense of the immediacy of the Gulag even when they don’t know Russian. Thus, as I had hoped, having the film does increase student interest in the Gulag. Second—and more surprising—the interviewees who agreed to be filmed have made multiple comments indicating that being filmed gave them an added sense of importance, almost of security: their stories are film worthy and the act of filming means it is protected for posterity. Filming, then, seemed to add a sense of reality to their experiences and, as much as it created a sense of danger, it could also create a sense of security.

Conducting oral history with Gulag...
survivors means negotiating contradictions and tensions in a heightened way. It means considering the psychological dangers as painful memories are brought to the forefront of interviewees’ minds. And it means taking seriously, a society in which there is a long history of prison camps and authoritarian violence and a political climate that is (to put it mildly) not encouraging. It means balancing all of that with Gulag survivors’ desire to tell their stories and a scholar’s commitment to knowledge and justice. And filming increases the stakes as it is a public forum that clearly identifies those who are filmed. Negotiating these tensions is a complex and ongoing process and it is important to engage in an evolving and serious dialogue around them.

[1] In 2005, Tatiana Kosinova interviewed Maria Stanislavovna Budkevich as part of the Figes project. These interviews can be found at: http://www.orlandofiges.com/interviewIndex.php
Kosinova’s interviews occurred after I had interviewed Budkevich three times and before she agreed to be filmed. Her story was so public by this point that I imagine that being filmed was almost a logical next step.

[2] With the increasing focus on the Gulag over the last 15 years, more of these survivors were incarcerated in the Gulag now have a sense of its importance.


[6] I would have liked to interview each year but both my own life circumstances and those of my interviewees did not permit this. Interviews with Budkevich were on June 12, 1998; August 17, 1998; February 21, 2001, June 12, 2005; and October 15, 2008.


[8] In this interview she expanded on what she had told me earlier where she gave me the bare bones of the story but not this level of detail.

[9] Her emphasis on the importance of the document as proof is something that many Gulag survivors share. See my AAASS 2006 paper.


[11] The expectation that Gulag survivors should be filmed is also based, in part, on Holocaust models, including Shoah, Spielberg’s Film and Video Archive at USHMM, Dori Laub’s videotaping for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale.

[12] By this I mean both a culture in which many elements of the regime that had been responsible for the Gulag remained in power at least until the late 1980s and one in which prison camps have been part of the horizon of digestion at least since the publication of Dostoevsky’s Zapiski is podpol’ia (Notes From the House of the Dead) in 1862.

[13] Jody McAuliffe’s interest in this was in part so that she could better stage a play she was considering “Gulag Follies.” She did not, in the end, use the film in this play.

Gulags

The Gulag system of corrective labor camps, exile, and a labor army began to be formed soon after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution; it was formally named the Gulag in 1930. It lasted into the 1980s, though the character of the camps changed significantly after Stalin’s death in 1953. Millions of people cycled through the camps, and millions died there. Credible estimates of how many people died range from 1.1 million to 7 million; some estimates have put it as high as 20 million deaths. This very range shows the massive indifference to human life created by the Gulag. The Gulag was a system of labor, punishment and, at least at first, an attempt to “reforge” people through labor. Gulag labor built cities and railroads, mined nickel, gold, and other metals, and did heavy labor of various kinds including timber, peat digging, and brick-making. There were over 475 Gulag sites scattered throughout the Soviet system. It was a mass system of terror and as such, it was arbitrary: in its earlier years, those sent there tended to be people who had status in the pre-Bolshevik society (e.g., former aristocrats, clergy, intelligentsia); in the 1930s, the focus tended to be Communist Party members perceived as a threat to Stalin, Kulaks (prosperous peasants), Red Army Commanders, and prominent officials; in the 1940s, whole nationalities were deported. The Gulag transformed Soviet life, including the relationship to self and others, and it continues to affect post-Soviet society today.
Debate

The Ethics of Sperm Banks

Who's Your Daddy

by Grace Zhou
Public Policy, ‘12
Baby-making is now a business. A booming industry, in fact. A recent exposé by the *Atlantic Monthly* revealed that sperm “donation” is now far from a charitable act. California Cryobank, the crème de la crème of sperm banks, is the leader of this new emerging industry.

For donors, Cryobank is harder to get into than Duke. Of 28,000 annual applicants, less than 1% of hopefuls are accepted. The compensation is more than worth the screening process; donors make up to $70/vial, enough to have reportedly put one donor through law school.

For women, Cryobank offers a catalogue of the sperm donors complete with an array of personal information, such as height, weight, hair color, and education, and a photo of a celebrity look-alike to facilitate the decision-making process. Cryobank also allows all clients to “resell” any left-over samples to other women.

I argue that the nature of sperm donation should be a charitable transaction, like blood or organ donation. While donors should be compensated for their time, the payment should not be so high as to drive the incentive to donate. We need to recognize that the emerging sperm market is dangerous. Men want to donate to agencies like Cryobank. Women want a donor from one of these companies. Thus, Cryobank and other elite agencies have cultivated their “brand identity” as the gold standard for creating one’s “dream baby.”

The unregulated market and “sperm brand identity” are problematic for three reasons.

First, treating sperm as a commodity that one can “buy” and “sell” cheapens the parenthood experience because it implies that the process is one we can manipulate with money. The gravity of sperm donation is even more severe than organ and blood donation because it is not only giving a body part but consenting to create new life. Sperm and monetary compensation are incommensurable. Not only do sperm have intrinsic value (like organs), but they also carry the possibility of new life and parenthood. Propponents of Cryobank may argue that sperm can be alienated and commodified as a bodily fluid, but to assert that the value of life and parenthood can be made commensurate to money is denigrating the human experience.

Moreover, elite agencies like Cryobank further inequities based on wealth. Whereas some women can afford Cryobank and a superior set of genes, most women are precluded from such options because of cost. The “branding” of sperm mirrors our consumer fetish, but instead of Louis Vuitton, Chanel, or Jimmy Choo, certain genes now receive top dollar.

While I am not advocating that women should be assigned a random donor (reproduction is not random in real life), the degree of control afforded by sperm banks is uncanny and dangerous. Although we all look for certain characteristics in a life partner, rarely can we control for an entire checklist of characteristics such as age, hair color, eye color, level of education, IQ, genetic propensities, and genetic diseases.

To what degree is this pseudo-eugenics ethically justified? While it may be reasonable to screen out genetic diseases and other medical conditions, other characteristics constitute a slippery slope. Should race selection be allowed? Should eye color? Hair color? IQ? Musical talents? Allowing parents to select for superficial characteristics opens up Pandora’s Box of moral hazards.

Finally, there are serious social implications for this emerging industry. The lack of regulation and support throughout the process is astounding. Due to new marketing strategies by sperm banks such as California Cryobank, donors who see dozens of their children over the internet often suffer a rude and traumatic shock. In addition, given that most women who visit the same sperm bank live within the same geographic locale, the concentration of half-siblings in areas due to sperm donation is likely to grow. These children may network with dozens of half-siblings, or they may remain in the dark and potentially date and marry their half-sibling.

As the demand for sperm donors rises, new regulations need to be put into place. We need to recognize that although the intention of helping women conceive is good, letting the free market run amuck is dangerous. In addition to limiting donor compensation, we should also reduce the client’s selection power and the agencies’ marketing practices. Clients should only be allowed to select against medical conditions to ensure the health of their babies. Anything more will open Pandora’s Box. If it is okay to pay to ensure that one’s baby has blonde hair, blue eyes, and a propensity for intelligence and athleticism, what’s to stop clients from asking for genetic enhancements that their donors don’t provide? To be fair, selecting a donor and directly altering the genetics of one’s child is different, but the end goal is the same: to create a genetically desirable child. Moreover, we should ensure that agencies responsibly distribute sperm and create networks of support for those who seek it. For example, there should be a maximum cap on how many women each donor can impregnate.

These are merely suggestions, but the bottom line is that sperm should not be a means to make a baby that one can purchase. Sperm should not be a commodity.
Allowing prospective mothers to select sperm from specific anonymous donors does not trivialize the birth of a newborn anymore than the use of contraception to rein in the “course of nature” blemishes the creation of life. Such selection could result in people converging on particular donors. If this phenomenon is crudely branded as “branding”, accompanied by hackneyed stock arguments against “commodification,” we have scorned the monumental and meaningful choices made by mothers.

Branding is nothing more than the use of a name to place a probabilistic stamp of quality on the life that will be brought into this earth when one of the donor’s sperm, which is not identical with its multitudinous counterparts, fuses with the mother’s embryo, which is unique to the mother’s genetic makeup. This is drastically different from caricaturing sperm recipients as merry members of a baby-shopping expedition. Chance still enters the picture; the throbbing anticipation of a mother awaiting the delivery of her child still persists.

On another level, even if chance were to be somehow effaced with “branded” sperm, this does not sully the meaningful domain of parenthood. When parents nourish their infant with food supplementing her neurodevelopment, milk fortifying her bone growth, and Mozart melodies nurturing her musical faculties, they are not leaving their child to the mercies of nature (whatever “nature” might be!) Food supplements and music tracks are exchanged in markets, and they become integral constituents of a child; they in part define who she’ll be. This does not denigrate any reasonable definition of parental love.

Likewise, a specific sperm contains certain components that a mother might find desirable for her infant’s development in this world. The mother might have to toil harder to obtain the funds necessary to seek out that donor. This might be the testament of her sacrifice for her potential child’s wellbeing. This is a powerful demonstration of parental love we should not chastise.
But we do recognize that there are many manifestations of parental love. By subjecting oneself to the wider gates of randomness, by not selecting for genetic characteristics, a mother is also embracing an ingredient of unconditional parental love. Any high-handed attempt to regulate sperm distribution will ironically corrode the resonance of such an embrace because nobody can make, nor has made, a choice.

The discourse on good parenting—between the loving anxiety to mold a nascent life or a generous embrace of Que Sera Sera—is a rich and ongoing discussion. Regulation would mute it.

Regulation also aggravates inequity on two fronts. First, removing the anonymously origins of the sperm subjects lesbian couples to a thicker veil of opacity than straight women, who select their spouses because of certain clear and distinct hereditary traits.

On another front, any mandate to skew a sperm bank’s variable payment to sperm donors and impose a blanket compensation scheme will disadvantage mothers with less economic clout. The fixed compensation rate will turn away many of the banks’ regular donors. Even if we were to naively assume that the fixed rate is still sufficient to attract some donors, sperm banks would have to invest more in replenishing their erstwhile reserve of sperm.

Given that this investment is probably significant and that the revenue of sperm banks will be crimped by regulatory regimes, the scarcity of sperms will be more acute.

Whether the rationing mechanism of higher prices or snaking queues kicks in, greater scarcity will disadvantage the poor.

A final point against mothers-to-be making requests for specific sperm donors concerns half-siblings procreating with each other. Concealed in this consequentialist prognosis is the fear of genetically-inferior progeny. This dramatized dystopia can be tackled by existing medical assessments prior to any couple’s decision to procreate.

More importantly, this justification implies that genetic inferiority is a robust rationale for the state’s draconian interference. This justification contradicts the attempt to uphold unconditional love as a cherished virtue, regardless of what the genetic-induced outcomes might be.

Further, this justification allows the aversion towards undesirably intermingling genes, an aversion that belongs to individuals in positions of power, to trumps the fragile and loving attempts of lesbians, infertile couples, and aspiring single mothers to fashion their lives and their families in their uniquely vibrant ways.

Sperm donation isn’t the only taboo market that has caused fervent debates on both sides of the issue. Kieran Healy, a Visiting Associate Professor in Sociology and the Kenan Institute for Ethics, studies the “moral order of the market society.” Healy describes himself as an economic sociologist and examines taboo markets—stigmatized, morally controversial markets such as sperm donation, sex work, gambling, and drugs. The market for human blood and organ donation is central to Healy’s work and is the focus of his book Last Best Gifts: Altruism and the Market for Human Blood and Organs.

Traditionally, organ donation is viewed only as a choice made on an individual level. Debates surrounding organ donation typically construct a contrast between generosity and altruism on the one hand and self-interest on the other. Healy rejects this characterization of organ donation. The choice of whether or not to donate an organ doesn’t take place in a vacuum and we have to look at the issue through an organizational lens, not just an individual one. The real question, according to Healy, isn’t whether or not people are altruistic, but rather whether or not they are asked to give. Healy constructs a cultural account of organ donations that explains the various levels of donor rates in different countries.

Healy’s work, though not about sperm donation, applies to most morally controversial markets and is certainly relevant to the sperm donation debate.

Should we ask more men to donate sperm rather than attempting to incentivize (or commodify depending on your view) potential sperm donors? Or is a free market solution to the sperm market issue the right one?
Bay Minette, a city in south Alabama, recently launched “Operation Restore Our Community (ROC).” Essentially, Bay Minette offers first time non-violent offenders the choice between “Jesus time” and “jail time.” The ones who choose church over jail will have to check in with a local church of their choosing every Sunday for a year. ROC aims to provide a more long-term solution to many offenses ranging from stealing to traffic violations, arguing that religion can serve as a deterrent to crimes. ROC is projected to save approximately $75 a day per inmate, and only churches are participating because there are no synagogues/mosques/temples in the region. Enraged by this option, the ACLU is suing Operation ROC on the claims that the city government is forcing religious participation.

As an Alabamian, I’m skeptical that this law comprises fair policy. It is probably safe to say that most people would rather go to church once a week than stay in jail everyday despite their religious beliefs. The option does not seem well thought out. By offering this choice that heavily incentivizes attendance of church services, Bay Minette compromises religious freedom and to a larger extent, the separation of the church and state. If we can’t force a child to go to a religiously affiliated school, why should Bay Minette be allowed to mandate church attendance for inmates?

The attempt at a sustainable solution that keeps people out of jails, however, is exciting. We hear successful stories about how drug rehabilitation centers keep ex-addicts from relapsing and “back-to-school” programs that keep the desperate robbers from re-entering jail. We also hear about Breathalyzer-activated cars for drunk drivers and chemical castration for child molesters. These approaches can be effective, refreshing, and at the same time, expensive, time-consuming, and controversial.

Bay Minette argues that by coercing first time offenders to attend religious services, the offenders, due to his/her new found religious belief, community, and supporting network, are less likely to become repeat offenders. This not only has the potential to help deter a variety of offenses, but is also incredibly cost effective, as the private churches take on the bulk of the responsibility.

Yes, the ROC project is not exactly great. It favors Christians and forces people to go to church because, to be honest, who wouldn’t choose church? The whole operation is most likely against the Constitution and to top it all off, its primary rationale lies somewhere along the lines of this quote from a chief police officer at Bay Minette: “You show me somebody who falls in love with Jesus, and I’ll show you a person who won’t be a problem to society.

But the motive—the idea of trying something “different” that just might solve the problem—is something worth applauding. America has the highest incarceration rate in the world, and that is not something we should be proud of. We simply need to find more effective ways to prevent crimes. In the Bay Minette case, what if there were equivalent services offered for people with different beliefs? What if it doesn’t operate on the assumption that “falling in love with Jesus saves you?” Most importantly, what if it works? A better choice can be offered to these non-violent offenders, and I believe that although the Bay Minette case is not a model that should be encouraged, it certainly has the right idea – simply putting people in jail does not solve problems.”

“...I believe that although the Bay Minette case is not a model that should be encouraged, it certainly has the right idea – simply putting people in jail does not solve problems.”

By Chad Liu, Biomedical Engineering ’13
Thinking Outside the Box: Alternative Solutions to Social Problems

- In ancolumn in New Yorker, Malcolm Gladwell proposed that the chronic homeless should receive free food and free housing with virtually no strings attached. According to Gladwell’s analysis, the policy would save society time and money as a long-term solution to homelessness.¹

- Students at the Maryland Institute College of Art launched a portable picnic table campaign to create a space for social inclusion and community bonding that will travel around blighted urban neighborhoods in East Baltimore.²

- MoGro, the Mobile Grocery, is combating America’s food desert problem by bringing the supermarket to the shoppers for communities that would otherwise lack access to healthy and affordable food options. The supermarket-on-wheels business model uses temperature-controlled trucks to transport their stores to under-served areas.³

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In an online survey of Duke students...

88.9% would choose to attend a Christian Church

11.1% would choose Jail

Would you agree with a policy that would give non-violent offenders the choice between going to jail or registering with a Christian Church?

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What if the policy allowed registration with ANY religious organization (assume equivalent organizations for Atheists and Agnostics)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>17.8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35.6% believed the policy could reduce recidivism

64.4% did not believe that the policy would reduce recidivism

“Two false assumptions are made when assuming church services will reduce repeat offenses: a) Christian ideals reduce criminal tendencies, b) Church attendance leads to Christian ideals in an individual.”

“Sitting for an hour isn’t much punishment in comparison to sitting in jail for a year.”

“I’m sure the policy could serve beneficial consequences just as it could possibly be harmful. 1) Is the policy sending all offenders to the same faith-based church system? 2) Have these churches proven themselves to be stable facilities for rehabilitation? 3) What are the measures to ensure that every participant receives the same level of treatment?”

“The basis that ‘religious denominations’ are morally superior is problematic.”

“If an offender already attends church, he basically receives no punishment!”

Any type of positive rehabilitation environment is more likely than a jail cell to be effective at reducing repeat offenses. Integrating offenders back into the normal population likely has a positive effect.”

“It would depend on the person and potential for ‘reform.’ In this case, I’m going to assume the person is redeemable and in that case, I think a year in jail could easily succeed in making someone angrier versus going to church once a week and reflecting and then living a normal life would probably introduce the person to a set of morals s/he could put into practice right away.”

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². http://www.good.is/post/good-maker-finalist-maryland-art-students-put-social-design-on-wheels/
³. http://www.mogro.net/
I wrote a letter over winter break and told nobody about it. I snuck an envelope and stamp out of my mom’s office, carefully wrote down the address that took me nearly a year to track down, and dropped it in the post office box, unsure if it would even reach its destination. In early February, I discovered a reply in my Duke mailbox, written in handwriting that I hadn’t seen in over a year.

Some backstory seems appropriate at this point. At the start of 8th grade, I met a girl who had failed her “Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills” (TAKS) test in previous years and needed math tutoring. She initially lacked confidence in her ability to succeed, but, as I quickly found out, she also had more dedication to improving herself than most of the “Pre-AP” kids in the school. She had just never been given the option to succeed. By the end of the year, she passed her TAKS test and I was given a calculator for my dedication—both of which were trivial compared to what she taught me about the line (or rather the lack thereof) between “good kids” and “bad kids.” Most of all, I had made a friend. This, I figured out on Valentine’s Day when she brought me a couple of “roses,” roses that I have never found the heart to break open for the chocolate stored inside. I’ve thought about her every Valentine’s Day since.

Fast forward some years into high school. I talk with her in the hallways, she visits me at lunch, we exchange numbers multiple times (hers frequently changes). I often see her joking with her teachers and friends. She’s one of those people that it’s impossible not to like and it’s apparent just how much she values her friends. Outside of school she spends most of her time working at the dry cleaners. We try to hang out outside of school, but between my parents and her job, it never works out and it’s one of my biggest regrets.

I’m writing this story on the day after Valentine’s Day, which is oddly fitting because it’s been exactly one year since I found out that she had robbed a bank.

Everyone knew that our school had made the news again, everyone knew how she did it, and most people knew that she had a ski mask uselessly lying on the top of her head instead of covering her face when she walked into the bank. Most people even knew the exact location of the bank in question. Yet only a few people bothered to remember her name, even less people followed the story long enough to hear that she was the one who turned herself in, only a select few actually thought to wonder what happened to her afterwards, and nobody knew her motivations.

Once I had worked past the initial shock of the news, I found myself experiencing a second, unexpected emotion: anger. Anger with those that judged her without knowing her, anger at those who considered themselves so above her that they could actually laugh, and anger with the assumptions so easily made on her intelligence and her worth as a human being. They didn’t know that she filled notebooks with beautiful poetry written in Spanish. They had never been given a folded paper ninja star from her, carefully crafted from folded paper.

They didn’t know how hard she had to work to gain even a foothold in life or how much she just needed to feel wanted. They didn’t care where she volunteered or how many people’s lives she touched... but all of this I did know, and that knowledge changed everything.

Then I discovered all the “stupid criminal” articles online, mocking her, twisting the situation. And the comments that came with them, those were the worst; so many people who apparently had nothing better to do than scour the internet and pass derisive judgement on others whom they could even justify any semblance of knowing. Judgement on her intellect, judgement on her motivations, judgement on her family, and, always, judgement on her as a person. Did really it make them feel better about their own lives?

Yet the thoughtless jokes, the derisive comments, I see reflections of them all around me every day, even, or especially, here at Duke—in daily gossip, in the accompanying conspiratorial snickers, and in the multitude of judgements people so naturally seem to pass. The rumors and looks that go flying all around campus, they mirror the comments online, in substance and purpose. It’s a gross inconsistency that once exposed is hard to ignore. Who cares to actually understand anything? That’s not the point.
After the gossip died down and the school forgot about her, it never quite left me. I thought about her often—where she was, what she was going through and, of course, why she did it. She never once, in my mind, stopped being my friend. And I suspected that at a time where she would most need support, she had no support at all, and this is when I began my search for her.

I quickly realized the following: the prison system is just as easy to work with as every other governmental agency (read: not very) and emailing the police is scary. At first, she was nowhere to be found. Months later she showed up in a federal database with her case status listed as “Transferred to INS” (Immigration and Naturalization Services). Even later, someone contacted me through Facebook also trying to figure out what happened, with no luck. Then a couple weeks into my new Duke experience, I received the name of a location that she had been held at, but by the time I had gotten back to Austin and had time to breathe, she was gone. Dead ends everywhere, frustrating hours of searching; all I needed were where, when, and how to reach her. It wasn’t until winter break that I found another database entry—this one, finally, with a location.

The word “criminal” pops up and people lose the ability to empathize, to look beyond the barest of surfaces. Without such a barrier to my understanding, it was easy to see from the news reports and crime details that she was scared witless and desperate, and that she was harder on herself for what she did than anyone else. Yet not one bearer of news even seemed to consider the idea that she might have felt immediate regret. They never once tried to work through explanations as to why it happened.

How would you describe a letter written from one friend to another, one lonely soul to another? A report on life, expressions of frustration, scattered with a few hopeful thoughts? A different image forms when you hear “letter from an inmate” and “letter from a young girl who has never had the opportunity to find direction in life,” and yet I can personally attest to the fact that they are one and the same.

“The food is horrible,” “people are mean here,” “I miss chocolate,” “I have no money and everything is so expensive,” “this place is so depressing,” these are all familiar sentiments, I’ve heard them all a multitude of times while here at Duke. It read just like a normal letter, the same sentiments of humanity ran through it: “I’m lonely,” “I tried.” The only difference might be that somehow, “they might as well just give me the death penalty” has a whole different meaning when coming from her than when coming from students with an Orgo test on Valentine’s day, or three days after Spring Break.

Empathy. We take it for granted sometimes, so much so that we don’t notice as it fades, as it’s forgotten. And then, one day we find that we have lost that basic aspect of humanity that we took for granted, the art of understanding. The feeling that we’re all in for this “human experience” thing together. The same idea that powers our own “Me Too Monologues” and the famed Walk Two Moons quote. “Don’t judge a man until you’ve walked two moons in his moccasins.” The assumption that we can’t assume anything.

This is a story that needed to be told, not because it’s spectacular, but because it’s normal. This is the story of us, about how we live our lives, about how we see our world. Because sometimes we all need a reminder that the lines we draw to judge the world don’t actually exist.

### 5 Tips for Finding Someone

1. **Ask lawyers**—I’ve been told they have access to resources that others don’t have.

2. **Databases** can be incredibly useful. Start with local databases and work your way up.

3. **You don’t need to publicize your search** but don’t be afraid to talk to people either. You’ll find connections and assistance in unexpected places.

4. **Don’t hesitate to attempt contact**; people change situations and move quickly.

5. **Don’t forget that there are others doing the same thing** as you. Just reading their questions and concerns may help greatly.
Both of my children started at day care when they were a few months old and have been very happy there. However, shortly after starting kindergarten, my older child came home from school one day and asked me, “Why does Tommy’s mother stay at home? Why don’t you? Then I could always be with you.” Was I a bad parent? I sure felt like I was.

This got me thinking more about my role as a parent. What is a good parent? And, what’s more, does the notion of a “good parent” differ by gender? Was the social criteria for being a “good mother” different than that for being a “good father?”

Since one of the reasons my children had started day care was because I worked outside of the home for pay teaching here at Duke, this also got me thinking about what makes a “good worker.” For example, is it okay to miss an important meeting at work because your child is sick? Is it acceptable to miss the meeting because you went on a field trip with your child’s class? Are these types of issues different for men and women? In the past few decades, women’s and men’s time-use patterns have changed drastically. Women have increased their time in the labor force, and men have increased their time in co-parenting. Yet, many of the stereotypes and expectations for mothers and fathers have remained the same, and what’s more, they remain highly gendered and polarized. Mothers are often held to different standards and expectations than are fathers.

Many of us are familiar with the image of the “good mother” as self-sacrificing, doing anything for the sake of her children, being nurturing and comforting, soothing and nourishing whether it be through food or hugs, and always available to her children. In contrast, the “good father” is frequently viewed as one who can provide for his children financially and is often not expected to be as emotionally available as the mother is.

Although alternative images of mothers and fathers—as well as other caregivers—exist, and such images vary around the world and over time, these images seem to maintain great importance in Western societies. They persist even when empirical findings demonstrate they may not reflect the ways in which mothers and fathers actually live their lives.

How does the notion of the “good mother” play out when mothers are less available and less self-sacrificing than society expects? This question is especially relevant for mothers (and fathers!) who are not stay-at-home parents and who work for pay in the labor force.

Several situations in my own life have brought these questions and issues to the forefront for me. For example, I’ve noticed that when people find out that I have young children, they often ask me whether I am a stay-at-home parent. Yet, no one has ever asked my male partner this question—people usually assume that he works outside of the house. Although when people ask about my work situation, this may reflect more extensive choices that are open for mother’s roles relative to father’s possible roles, there is also a huge moral and ethical component involved in this question. I often hold my breath to see what a person’s response will be, as people often have very strong feelings about what mothers do.

Genna R. Miller, Ph.D.
Visiting Instructor,
Economics Department
people look down on stay-at-home mothers, assuming that they are not doing anything worthwhile or anything that requires skills. Others critique mothers who work in the labor force, viewing them as selfish in their choice to not be at home with their children. It seems to be a “Catch-22” for mothers.

Similarly, at a neighborhood block party this past fall, one of the stay-at-home parents in my community asked me how many hours my younger child spends in day care each day. I felt pressured not to answer truthfully. He usually goes from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. because my partner and I both have paid work to do during those hours. I thought for sure that my neighbor would think I was a terrible mother for sending my child to day care for so much of the day. However, to be a good worker, I have to have someone else watching him. It would be impossible for me to do my paid job with a four-year-old running around. Likewise, my older child is at school until 3:30 p.m., further constraining the time available to me for paid work hours. I often find myself catching up on work at nights or on the weekend. In fact, as I write this article, I am at my home sitting in the hallway outside the bathroom while my older child takes a bath. Does this make me a bad mother?

Last semester, my younger son’s day care had monthly Friday story time events during which parents could come to the class to read to the children. As I was teaching a class every Friday, I never made it to any of the events. Although I explained to my son that I wished I could be there, I felt awful, like a terrible mother.

While I’ve discussed pervasive images of what denotes a “good mother,” the concept of a “good worker” is defined by similarly pervasive imagery. The “good worker” is available at all times of the day and the week to do paid activities. Within the university, this expectation requires availability at all times to attend meetings, answer emails from coworkers and students, participate in professional development, attend academic events, and more.

Last semester I taught a course that also had weekly dinner meetings as part of the required class time. Although I fully enjoyed these dinner sessions and the connection it created with my students, the commitment meant that I would not be available at those times to my own family. I recall many instances when my partner would return home from his job and I would be dashing out the door to my dinner meeting while my younger son was crying, “Don’t go, Mommy!” However, if I didn’t go to my meeting, I would not be a “good worker,” and this could potentially have a negative impact on my job status. In other situations I have been asked to attend meetings and events on the weekend, which is extremely difficult with young children at home. Yet, to be a good worker I sometimes attend weekend events. I often confront a moral dilemma over a desire to attend an interesting talk or presentation on campus, only to find out that the event is scheduled for 4 p.m., a time when I usually need to be at home to meet my children. Should I attend the event and have someone else watch the kids or should I go spend time with my kids and forego the event? Can I be both a “good worker” and a “good mother?”

How does the notion of the “good mother” play out when mothers are less available and less self-sacrificing than society expects?

Can my time be available to both my job and my children? And what about myself in all of this? There are so many conflicting identities and social expectations involved. As an economist by trade, I might try to weigh the marginal costs and benefits from extra time at work and extra time with my children. Yet, I find that my training as an economist offers little to help me. These issues are not as clear cut as a cost-benefit analysis. There seems to be so much guilt and moral judgment involved that makes the situation and expectations overwhelming. Can a person be both a good worker and a good mother? I once heard an expression that, “There is no such thing as a perfect parent, you can only be a good enough parent.” Is that the key? Can you, perhaps, also only be a “good enough worker,” not a perfect worker?

Incidentally, I just arrived home from picking my children up from school and day care. They are sitting in the living room watching television while I finish writing this article. Am I a good enough mother and a good enough worker?
The Kenan Institute for Ethics offers undergraduates the opportunity to pursue a certificate in the study of ethics through the Ethics Certificate Program (ECP). The interdisciplinary scope of the certificate attracts students from all areas of study and results in a unique collection of majors, departments, and interests that all intersect in ethics. The diversity of academic and professional interests encapsulated in the program exemplifies the transcendent quality of ethical thought. In light of our mission to demonstrate that ethics is everywhere, everyone, and in everything, Encompass surveyed ECP students about their academic interests and professional goals.

**A sampling of ECP majors...**

- Art
- History
- Religion
- Environmental Policy
- German
- Biology
- Political Science
- Cultural Anthropology
- Philosophy
- Pharmacology
- Public Policy
- History

**How did you become interested in the certificate?**

- An EI-listed class...33.3%
- Professor...50%
- Friend...16.7%

**50%** of survey respondents expect to incorporate ethics into their future plans or professional goals. The other half of respondents did not yet know.

**66.7%** of ECP students surveyed were interested in ethics BEFORE entering Duke.

**Bookbag Your Ethics!**

ECP Students recommend the following EI courses:

- PHIL 210S Adversarial Ethics with Wayne Norman
- LIT 143S Migration and Exile with Ariel Dorfman
- ETHICS 100D Challenges to Living an Ethical Life with Ruth Grant
- HIST 190C History of Abortion in America with Peter English
- PUBPOL 116D Value Conflict with Evan Charney
- The Arts and Human Rights with Catherine Admay and Louise Meintjes
- WST Feminist Ethics with Kathy Rudy
- RUSSIAN 176 Dostoevsky with Jehanne Gheith

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“"I am especially interested in the study of contemporary American religions, and there are a lot of ethical questions involved. I use the skills that I've learned in ethics classes to strengthen my arguments when I disagree with a professor or my classmates, as well as looking at problems through different frameworks."

Sarah Bartleson
Religion Major, German Minor, ECP '13

“"The Ethics Certificate Program has taught me that ethics is not only something to contemplate and discuss, but something to practice and live out as well. My primary concern in finding a job after college is that I find something that I believe in. Meaningful, ethical opportunities are not always easy to find and often aren’t the highest paying positions, but I do believe they can be found in all sectors, both for-profit and non-profit. (If you hear of something, let me know!)"

Michael McCreary
Philosophy, ECP '12

“"I study political theory and I am very interested in human rights and foreign policy. I would like to be an international human rights lawyer, and I think it is important to examine what obligations the international community has towards human rights problems around the world. How should human rights affect foreign policy decisions? Which institutions are most responsible for human rights decisions? How does our current understanding of sovereignty affect human rights policies? These are all questions I am studying that I believe will be relevant to a future career in policy and law."

Leah Yaffe
Political Science, ECP '13

“"I am probably going to be working in the defense sector and/or security studies. War is filled with ethical questions, and if our country is going to engage in wars (which we obviously are), we need to thoroughly understand the philosophical and ethical underpinnings of war."

Nancy McKinstry
Public Policy Major, Political Science Minor, ECP '12

“"My major interest in the study of philosophy is ethics—so [ethics] is pretty central to my academic interests outside of the program. I’m thinking about doing this academic work professionally after I graduate...but if that doesn’t come to fruition, I am not sure."

Benjamin Elkind
Philosophy and Cultural Studies at UNC, ECP '12
For the past 15 years consumers have been skeptical of Genetically Modified Foods (GMO) and their potential safety risks and side effects. Even amongst major research groups and think tanks, safety risks are still debated. Organizations such as AgBioWorld, the Royal Academy of Medicine, and the US National Academies of Science claim there have been no adverse health effects documented from GMO products to date. Other groups, such as the Organic Consumers Association and Greenpeace, warn consumers against supporting GMOs due to their unknown health and the environmental risks.

However, the purpose of this article is not to make an argument for or against GMO consumption. Rather, it will highlight an inconsistency in American consumerism, which has very little to do with public support or opposition for genetically altered products. The majority of consumers (knowingly, or not) support GMO products, despite public trends disfavoring modified produce. If the potential risk of GMO products is enough to deter shoppers, why do consumers still pick and choose what GMO products are acceptable? The controversy over GMO protects points more towards our willingness to overlook the ethical implications of our shopping habits, or more alarmingly, our ambivalence towards being properly informed.

First, some GMO history for the well-informed grocery shopper: In 1996 Monsanto developed the New Leaf Potato, incorporating genes from the bacteria Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) that lives naturally in the soil. The GMO potato produces a compound that acts as a natural pesticide against the Colorado Potato Beetle, a primary pest to potato crops. It was reported by Monsanto, that as result of the “new species,” pesticide application by farmers was reduced an average of 40%. Enhancements to the New Leaf in 1998-1999 led to an 80% average decrease in pesticide use—a huge triumph, from an environmental perspective [1]. Moreover, according to the University of Minnesota Vegetable IPM Resource for the Midwest, many pesticides used against the Colorado Potato Beetle are now restricted due to their known toxicity to humans [3]. Marketing the New Leaf Potato suggested few drawbacks for agribusiness and industrial farming as the crop cut pesticide costs and environmental degradation.

We consumers constantly show our naïveté to marketing schemes and our willingness to follow consumer trends without, at least, having some idea as to what we are supporting.

Currently, the US produces 35% of the world’s soybeans, 93% of which are genetically modified, as of 2010 [5]. Whereas other crops are typically genetically modified (without the majority of consumers protesting or boycotting such products), 70% of all processed foods contain soy and so should be especially considered [8]. This means that nearly ¾ of everything we eat contains a GMO product! Additionally, 31% of US consumers actually “seek out” soy products, and 84% “perceive soy products as healthy” [7].

The controversy over the New Leaf Potato, in contrast to soybean consumption, brings to question the very ethicality of our product endorsements as consumers. We consumers constantly show our naïveté to marketing schemes and our willingness to follow consumer trends without, at least, having some idea as to what we are supporting. Why do we care about GMO potatoes but not GMO soybeans? Moreover, why did McDonald’s and Frito-Lay’s failure to inform consumers, anger so many, if today it continues with soy products? There are no excuses for these questions because the honest answer for the majority of consumers, including myself is: “I simply never knew enough about what I was buying to care.” That is the heart of the GMO issue. By first informing ourselves of the GMO debate before we judge a particular product, we will become more conscientious consumers. It is not a matter of who is right or wrong in the GMO debate, rather our decision as consumers to show consistency in our shopping ethic.
Scientist or Neighbor?

Dilemmas of a researcher caught in the midst of the fracking controversy

by Adrian Down
Doctoral Student, Nicholas School
We hurried to fill our sample bottles before the sun sank behind the hills. The other graduate student and I had been driving around rural northeastern Pennsylvania since sunrise, sampling water wells. This was the last sample we planned to collect before returning to the hotel that we were using as a base camp for our field work. As we labeled our sample bottles, preparing to leave, the owner of the well we had just sampled said, “You know, my mother lives just down the road. You could sample her well, too, if you want.” He was being polite, not directly posing the request that the hopeful tone in his voice belied. He was asking for a favor. He had let us sample his well, given us an hour of his time, and he was hoping that we could do a small task for his family in return.

Our lab provides free well water testing, a service that usually costs homeowners hundreds of dollars. The data we collect from these samples is useful to us and to homeowners. We get scientific data, homeowners get a free service. On the surface, it seems that everybody benefits. However, our interactions with homeowners are rarely simple.

Many people in northeastern Pennsylvania are wary of anyone interested in their water. In recent years, natural gas drilling in this region has expanded faster than the social fabric there can accommodate. This natural gas is extracted from shales in a process called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. In this process, millions of gallons of fluid are injected into underground wells at extremely high pressure, thereby creating fractures in the shale that increase the flow of natural gas from the rock. If gas wells are not properly constructed, these fracturing fluids, which can contain numerous toxic chemicals, as well as methane can travel through the rock surrounding the gas well and potentially end up in groundwater tapped by water wells. In the past decade, technological improvements to extraction methods have made natural gas wells profitable in areas that were previously uneconomical to drill. The Marcellus shale formation that extends under Pennsylvania, New York, and West Virginia is one area that has received substantial media attention, and it is where I am carrying out a portion of the field work for my Ph.D.

Fracking has brought jobs and commerce to a region that has struggled with poverty for generations. However, not everyone has shared in the profits, and some residents are concerned that fracking may be causing more environmental harm than the profits from natural gas extracted from the property owner’s land. Some landowners have made huge profits from gas leases. Others have opted not to sign leases with gas companies, hoping to avoid the trucks, noise, and potential hazard of nearby gas drilling, only to have neighbors sign gas leases and gas wells appear just across property lines. Many families in Pennsylvania where our research takes place have kept the same land in their families for generations and value it deeply. For some, a lease with a gas company and the income it could generate is the only way to avoid selling the family farm.

The rapid growth of fracking has raised a number of social and economic issues, many of which have been better covered elsewhere. As a scientific researcher, I strive to be as unbiased and objective as possible in all aspects of my work. However, these social issues affect my research insomuch as they shape the environment in which I work. When I ask to sample a homeowner’s water well, they want to know what side of the debate I come from. If the homeowner supports shale gas drilling, he or she may be hesitant to support a project that could potentially have negative consequences for the gas industry. Evidence of well water contamination by methane or other chemicals as a result of fracking could be bad for shale gas. At the same time, if our research finds no evidence of contamination, that could be good news for the gas industry. This kind of unbiased approach, concentrating on the data and letting it tell the story, can be hard to convey to people who live in a world where everyone has a polarized opinion of fracking. We don’t have a bumper sticker stating our allegiance, and sometimes people just don’t know what to make of us.

Given this environment, it is understandable why many homeowners are hesitant to participate in our study. When someone does agree to let us sample their well, we treat that opportunity with respect. Many of these homeowners have had their water sampled multiple times, by gas companies, local government agencies, and sometimes by other academic researchers. These people see many vans come and go from their driveway, many bottles filled with water by experts, and still nothing changes. All that we as researchers can offer these people is a little bit of knowledge, in the form of water testing results, and the opportunity to contribute to research that could help address a few of the many unanswered questions about fracking. People on both sides of the debate, for and against fracking, firmly believe that their point of view will prevail once more is known about the effects of the fracking process. The conflict arises because of what we have yet to measure.

When I collect a sample from someone’s water well, I am doing more than just obtaining another data point to put on a map. I am developing a relationship with that person. I want to be able to return to these people in the future and sample their water again if necessary. I want to represent Duke University well in a place where distrust of all types of institutions is the new normal. I want to do what I can to help that person, whatever his or her situation may be, and what I offer is a small bit of clarity in a haze of confusion and change.

So when a homeowner asks me for a favor, should I be a good scientist or a good neighbor? Will we drive up the road and sample the well at his mother’s house? Probably. We might not need the additional data, since the sample we just collected is so near by. We might not have budgeted the funds to run additional samples, as the analyses that we provide free to homeowners cost us to produce. We might not have enough light left in the day, but that problem is easily solved: we carry so much gear in the back of our van, that there must be a flashlight in there somewhere. When we leave that night, I hope the family feels like we respected them and valued their participation. Just as I hope that they respect the work we do, focusing on the data, whatever those results may be.
PITY WORLD

DukeEngage Goes to Africa

By Michael McCreary
Philosophy ‘12
Ethics Certificate Program
Americans are bored with Disney World and Hollywood, going out to fancy dinners and staying in ritzy hotels. The sexy new leisure activity for Western elites: a voluntour in Africa!

Voluntouring, or volunteer tourism, is a kind of secularized mission trip that is fast becoming the preferred method of cultural consumerism today and is especially prevalent on the African continent. Here I want to challenge some of the intentions and justifications behind voluntour organizations such as DukeEngage. The principal question is whether voluntour experiences cultivate a genuine appreciation for international cultures, or if they are locked into a paternalistic attitude that evokes only pity in place of understanding.

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The genesis for this article came when a friend emailed me a link to a blog entitled “Gurl Goes to Africa.” The site greets you with the following introduction:

So.

You go to one of those fabulously elitist schools where everyone talks about privilege, classism, racism, sexism, etc. as if they don’t practice it in real life. But in order to really see the world, they decide to go somewhere where they can understand what their privilege looks like. So they choose AFRICA! Yay! A whole continent dedicated to helping white people understand what it means to be poor and undeveloped.

This is for all you fabulous biddies who decided that Africa was the right place for you. There’s nothing like good ole exotification to fill up your time while basking in the hot Saharan sun, wearing your “traditional” African clothes, eating “weird” foods and taking as many photos of black children as possible. You go, Gurl with lots of privilege! This is dedicated to you.

The blog itself is then filled primarily with photos of white, college-aged women holding, hugging, playing with, posing next to, taking pictures of, and/or being surrounded by black children in sub-Saharan Africa.

For me, the photographs on the blog are both disturbing and personal. First, I have my own photos worthy of posting on the blog from my visit to Kenya in the winter of 2010 (picture right), which makes me want to get to the bottom of why I find “Gurl Goes to Africa” so powerful and so haunting. Second, these kinds of images are all around us at Duke, ranging from the pictures of our “civic-minded” friends posing with African children on Facebook, to the stereotypical portrayals of starving African children in advertisements by WorldVision and other aid organizations, the naked African children in the Third World Success meme, and the smiling African children (who are only clean and happy because they have just been served by American college students on summer holiday) in DukeEngage’s Twitter profile picture.

Of course, it is relatively easy to satirize stereotypical images of Africa by offering simple caricatures like “Gurl Goes to Africa,” Mia Lehrer’s brilliant Monday, Monday column in the Duke Chronicle as a “Concerned Global Citizen,” or Binyavanga Wainaina’s hilarious Grania essay on “How to Write About Africa.” But it is much more difficult to spell out why exactly we are driven to imagine a person spending their whole life in Africa, however convenient it might be for vacation, but no human being could spend her whole life that way.2

Here Concerned Global Citizen’s inability to imagine a person spending their whole life in Africa is entertaining satire because she bluntly ignores the very population she is supposed to be “concerned” about: Africans. But the deeper truth behind the joke that gets to the heart of my dissatisfaction with the photos from “Gurl Goes to Africa” specifically and with international service efforts generally is her idea that the inhabitants of the “Third World” are not, after all, human beings—that they do not lead recognizably human lives. Admittedly, the days of racist science arguing that blacks were a different species or not, after all, human beings—that they do not permit people to have legitimate desires (even though the men would marry like as many wives as they wanted and it was so icky but that’s their culture so I’m not judging or anything), I honestly never wanted to come home. But I had to, because living like that is fine for vacation, but no human being could spend her whole life that way.

Africa changed my life. After going to sleep at dusk and waking up at dawn, with no lights, no water and no internet, living close to the land with people who cared about their families (even though the men would marry like many wives as they wanted and it was so icky but that’s their culture so I’m not judging or anything), I honestly never wanted to come home. But I had to, because living like that is fine for vacation, but no human being could spend her whole life that way.

Yet,

Monday, Monday

Here Concerned Global Citizen’s inability to imagine a person spending their whole life in Africa is entertaining satire because she bluntly ignores the very population she is supposed to be “concerned” about: Africans. But the deeper truth behind the joke that gets to the heart of my dissatisfaction with the photos from “Gurl Goes to Africa” specifically and with international service efforts generally is her idea that the inhabitants of the “Third World” are not, after all, human beings—that they do not lead recognizably human lives. Admittedly, the days of racist science arguing that blacks were a different species or a lower race than whites are in the past, but Concerned Global Citizen’s comment makes me wonder how far we have come in treating all people equally as human beings, despite our tacit acknowledgement of universal humanity.

Just as racist science has diminished
and that student volunteerism is not entirely altruistic in that programs like DukeEngage exist out of a concern for the development of the students volunteers as well as the communities they are intended to serve. The assumption of this contemporary view is that the problem of paternalism in service (which troubled Illich) is solved if we just acknowledge that the student volunteers are intended to benefit as much from their engagement as those who they are supposed to be helping. As a result of this new framework of volunteerism, more egalitarian words like “engagement” and “partnership” are taking over a discourse that used to be flooded with paternalistic ones such as “service” and “charity.”

However, the photos on “Gurl Goes to Africa” as well as the Twitter profile picture for DukeEngage make me question the sincerity and integrity of the new volunteer rhetoric about partnership and shared humanity. In particular, I am concerned about what the student volunteers are said to be gaining. Mlyn and McBride write that students should develop in many areas, but mention “international awareness, intercultural relations, and international career intentions” specifically. But, for example, what kind of international awareness is DukeEngage providing by sending students to Africa during summer break? The “Gurl Goes to Africa” blog jests that Africa is “a whole continent dedicated to helping white people understand what it means to be poor and undeveloped.” My fear is that DukeEngage often fosters precisely this kind of attitude towards Africa.

The Gurl Goes to Africa blog jests that Africa is “a whole continent dedicated to helping white people understand what it means to be poor and undeveloped.” My fear is that DukeEngage often fosters precisely this kind of attitude towards Africa. The gaze of Duke volunteers in developing countries rarely escapes the perspective of superiority, and the primary benefit the student volunteers seek to gain is “an appreciation of what it is like to be poor,” besides a resume boost that is.

Until Duke students are disallowed from bringing laptops and cameras, until they have to live in the same huts and not only eat but cook and perhaps even help to grow or harvest the same food as the locals, until they are allowed to ride the same motorbike for transportation, until they first question they ask at the cultural awareness info session is not related to the kinds of alcohol available in the local bars, until they make a genuine effort to pick up the local language, until they are compelled to spend their free time with locals rather than fellow Duke students, until they make an effort to read the local news and pick up on the local politics, until they don’t pack up from their service site and go for a weekend safari to a game reserve 50 kilometers away that most local residents have never had the chance to see, until a higher percentage of Duke students demonstrate their interest in the region by committing to semester or year-long engagement, and until they are genuinely encouraged to see the values and advantages rather than the sheer poverty in the local way of living, I see no reason to believe that the development of “international awareness and intercultural relations” are being pursued in earnest.

Mlyn and McBride wrote that good intentions are not enough. My question in response is whether or not DukeEngage has so much as good intentions. The two most salient justifications for DukeEngage, not even mentioned here are, of course, that the program has served as a useful tool for recruiting students (recently surpassing men’s basketball as the most cited reason for matriculating at Duke) and that it serves as a great public relations campaign for Duke to spread its name as a Concerned Global University. But setting those aside, I am not convinced that international volunteer programs such as DukeEngage have yet found a way to foster earnest partnerships with local communities and to fos-
ter an ethos of universal humanity as they claim to be doing. The kind of relationship they are promoting is not one of appreciation, understanding, or respect, but rather one of pity.

From the late 19th century and into the early 20th century, ethnographic exhibits—also known as “Negro villages” or “human zoos”—portraying live Africans “in their native environments” were widespread throughout Europe and to some extent in the United States (although usually with Native Americans). With the advent of modern transportation, the need to put villagers in zoos has elapsed, and Americans can now travel to observe “primitive” living in its natural setting.

As I look at the images on the blog, I realize that my disgust comes from the extent to which the black people in them seem to be positioned as animals, or objects, or something less than human, something quite exotic, and viewing them (taking their picture) is some kind of new luxury good. The DukeEngage Twitter profile picture similarly positions two African children as mere objects. When we stare into their faces, we don’t know their names, we don’t know where they’re from, we don’t know they’re story, and most Americans probably cannot even tell their gender. All we know is that they are black and they are poor. We know they are black because DukeEngage has noticeably enhanced the contrast on the image to make their skin tone even darker than natural, in case anyone was confused. But unlike their blackness, we do not know they are poor from anything we see—there are no torn clothes, no dilapidated house—we know they are poor because they are African and because they are on the DukeEngage profile picture. If they weren’t poor then they wouldn’t need our help, and they certainly wouldn’t provide any Duke girl (or boy) with the kind of cultural immersion in poverty and destitution that she or he went looking for in Africa.

1 http://gurlgoestafrica.tumblr.com/
2 http://www.dukechronicle.com/article/syllabus-living-global-101s
4 http://www.dukechronicle.com/article/dukeengorge
Across:
1 - last head of state of the USSR
3 - a feeling of deference towards someone
6 - belief that a particular event is likely to happen
9 - agribusiness firm founded in Missouri
10 - technique used to extract natural gas from underground
12 - abbr. for fed. agency that deals with immigration matters
13 - a small quantity of something
14 - a standard on which a decision can be based
20 - a long and difficult journey
21 - restoring a criminal to a life useful to society
25 - environmental organization based in Amsterdam
27 - to remove a group of people considered undesirable from society/government
28 - USSR’s system of forced labor camps
29 - having the tendency to reflect before taking any action
30 - title for Joseph Heller’s novel

Down:
2 - a continent dedicated to helping privileged people understand their privilege
4 - an oversimplified opinion of someone
5 - to detain a person in prison
7 - to firmly fix something in someone's mind
8 - to mock someone
11 - abbr. for Alabama’s program that offers first time non-violent offenders a choice between ‘Jesus time’ and ‘jail time’
13 - sedimentary rock that has a high quantity of clay
15 - negotiation between opposing sides
16 - commercial child services available to working parents
17 - author of ‘how to write about africa’
18 - The Devil’s ____ blog
19 - the promotion of the consumer’s interests
22 - her parents were killed in the Gulag
23 - future generations
24 - openness policy instituted in Russia in the 1980s
26 - to continually worry someone