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# A Collection of Op-Ed Essays from McDonnell Academy Scholars

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A core mission of the McDonnell International Scholars Academy is to develop future global leaders. We pursue this by recruiting outstanding graduates of partner institutions from around the world for PhD or professional degree programs at Washington University. But it is more than academic talent that we seek. We also seek McDonnell Academy Scholars who have an interest in broader social issues, and once they are here, we provide them with opportunities to develop their leadership skills. These opportunities include experiencing the cultural and political life of America, learning about other societies and meeting major figures from business, government, academia and the nonprofit sector.

In addition to fostering leaders at the individual level, the Academy seeks to create a leadership network. This requires bringing Academy Scholars together on a regular basis to participate in cultural and social events and to work in group settings. These activities lead to lifelong friendships, but they also produce deeper understanding of the perspectives of others, including those with whom one may disagree. Our hope is that Scholars’ friendships and understandings will serve them well as they pursue their individual careers and participate in the Academy network in the decades ahead.

In an effort to create this network, as well as to develop leadership and communication skills, all McDonnell Scholars participate in special activities. These include the “Global Leadership Visions” series in their second year in the Academy. This involves Scholars’ giving short public presentations on topics of their choosing. The topic might grow out of their own research, or it may have to do with an issue that concerns them more generally as global citizens. Each of their presentations is followed by questions from the audience made up of Scholars, Academy Ambassadors, members of the Advisory Committee and the Washington University and St. Louis communities. The Scholars then follow up by writing the op-ed pieces that appear in this booklet.

These oral and written presentations showcase the considerable talent of the Scholars and prove to be good settings for honing their communication skills. The presentations also provide a forum where some unexpected differences of opinion surface. As I listened to the presentations, I sometimes got the impression that members of the audience were surprised — if not shocked — by what the Scholars said, but that is precisely the point. It challenged us all to move, at least for a few minutes, beyond our accepted wisdom. I hope it proved to be as fascinating and as much of a learning experience for Scholars as it was for me and others.

We invite you to take a few minutes to read the following op-ed pieces that grew out of this process. You will find reflections on regional political issues, critiques of the United States, calls to action for dealing with environmental problems and a host of other fascinating thoughts. It will be interesting and inspiring for all of us to drop in again on these Scholars in a decade or two to see what they are saying and doing about the issues they raise here. Much of the world’s future will depend on how they and their generation deal with them.

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GM CHINA VS. FORD CHINA: A BUSINESS PARTNER CHOICE

As domestic and worldwide auto-manufacturing giants, General Motors and Ford are comparable on many levels. GM’s 2011 global revenue stood at $150.3 billion, while Ford’s was $136.3 billion. GM’s 2011 global unit sales, however, were 58 percent higher than Ford’s, and in China GM’s sales were almost five times higher than Ford’s. Several reasons might explain why GM is doing so much better than Ford in China. One unremarkable (at first sight) but important reason I found during my March 2012 MBA Global Management Study trip was the choice of a Chinese business partner. This is especially significant because it was pointed out to me by managers from both GM China and Ford China.

In 1997, GM entered China by forming a joint venture with Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation (SAIC). Four years later, Ford formed a joint venture with Chongqing Changan Automobile Group (CCAG). Both SAIC and CCAG belong to the top four automobile companies in China. However there are several noteworthy differences between the two. In 2011, automobile sales of SAIC were more than 4 million units while those of CCAG were 2 million. Most of the cars sold by CCAG were in the mini segment and only 0.22 million were in the sedan segment. In contrast, most of the cars sold by SAIC were in the sedan and SUV sectors. Reviewing the history of the two companies, the contrast becomes even more stark. First, SAIC is located in Shanghai, the most developed city in China with special political and economic influence. Due to its attractive location, SAIC gained the support of Shanghai and even the central government and became the number one automobile company in China in the early 1980s. CCAG, in contrast, is located in Chongqing, one of the main cities in western China. Although Chongqing became the fourth largest municipality in 1999 due to the West China Development Drive initiative, the gap between the two cities still exists and is growing.

Several reasons might explain why General Motors is doing so much better than Ford in China. One unremarkable (at first sight) but important reason was the choice of a Chinese business partner.

Because of its early advantages, SAIC invested heavily in sedan manufacturing lines as well as technology innovation and new brand development. This was happening while CCAG invested only in mini manufacturing with few self-owned brands. The gap between the two companies is also due in part to the fact that CCAG missed the boom period of the private car market in China. Consequently, CCAG lacks influence and brand awareness in mid-high level automobile market, which is one of Ford’s main target markets.

One more fact worth mentioning is that GM is not the first foreign company to partner with SAIC. In 1985, 12 years before the GM partnership, SAIC and the Volkswagen Group formed Shanghai Volkswagen, the first foreign joint venture in the Chinese automobile industry. The experience gained with the Volkswagen Group provided SAIC with better insights and understanding of such unique joint ventures, which made the cooperation with GM proceed much more smoothly. In contrast, Ford was the first foreign business partner for CCAG. From the beginning of this cooperative effort, conflict and management problems arose, resulting in frequent changes of the senior management team at Ford China.

As a minicar manufacturer with a privately owned background, CCAG is weak in government networking and in mid- to high-end car brand awareness. Since government purchases are a highly profitable segment of the automobile market in China, Ford is missing out on a great opportunity. Recently, Ford realized the weaknesses of its partner and tried to connect to other stronger local automobile companies, e.g. First Automobile Works (FAW), the oldest and second largest automobile company in China. FAW started as a state-owned corporation and had strong connections with the government. Ford provided FAW with technology support even after it chose CCAG as a strategic partner. The connection may provide Ford with government support in the long run.

In sum, there is a fairly straightforward structure of cooperation between foreign and Chinese automobile companies: foreign companies provide technology and investment while Chinese companies provide government networking and local brand support. For Ford, CCAG does not have the right brand image or strong government networking ties. For GM, SAIC provides both. Why would Ford choose such a weak partner? As early as 1995, Ford and SAIC held discussions about cooperating and establishing a Sino-foreign joint venture. Unfortunately, the negotiations failed and Ford refused to accept SAIC’s conditions. Instead, GM accepted and seized the opportunity with SAIC. Does Ford regret its decision after 15 years of business in China? I cannot say, but if I were them, I would.

Jiazi Guo was in the McDonnell International Scholars Academy at Washington University in St. Louis and was the Risun Coal Corporate Fellow – Shanghai, China. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in finance in 2007 from Peking University in Beijing, China. She received her MBA degree in 2012 from Washington University’s Olin Business School. She currently resides in New Haven, Conn.
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INNOVATION AS THE KEY TO CONTINUED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Since the economic crisis of 2008, the global economy has been associated with the word “gloomy.” The United States is soft. The European Union is soft. Japan is soft. Latin America is soft. China has appeared to be the only BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) country left unscathed. But even China turned in its lowest growth rate in 13 years, adding to the already “gloomy” global economy. People are losing jobs, cutting spending and seeing a declining standard of living.

The world must have economic growth to improve the standard of living for all, or at least to accommodate its ever-growing population, and the best minds around the globe have been working diligently to tackle this issue. Yet I would argue that in the long run, global economic growth must rely heavily on a cross-disciplinary, cross-border innovation mechanism rather than on simple growth alone.

Let’s take a step back and look at a useful model of production that depicts economic growth and the factors impacting it. This model, known as the Cobb-Douglas production function, exhibits the relationship between the input to the economy and the output. It shows us that growth in per capita output is coming from two sources: capital deepening and an improvement in technology, but it also tells us that capital deepening cannot be a source of sustained growth in the economy once the economy reaches a steady state. That is to say, sustained growth in per capita output is only possible with technological progress.

Most developing countries are still quite far away from an economic steady state where diminishing marginal productivity would counter the benefits of capital deepening. Therefore, it would seem that increasing investments in the economy should have a higher priority than making technological progress. However, overlooking the importance of technological progress can have a negative impact on economic growth. Without the requisite technological progress, a developing country might have to stick with its suboptimal economic structure and uncompetitive industries. It would then be likely to suffer from trade deficits, which would place downward pressure on its currency valuation. And as a result, people would experience a deteriorating standard of living in their highly import-dependent economy. Thus, even though making technological progress does not seem to be as urgent in developing countries as suggested by the Cobb-Douglas function, it should be taken just as seriously as in developed countries.

I believe in the long run, global economic growth must rely heavily on a cross-disciplinary, cross-border innovation mechanism rather than on simple growth alone.

Having established the importance of technological progress for sustained global economic growth, we can now turn to look at how best to develop that technology — that is, to innovation. The notion of innovation actually covers the complete “workflow” from inputs (capital and human capital) to outputs (tangible and intangible), and more importantly, a variety of “processes” that determine the overall efficiency of innovation. These determinants include the education system, the R&D environment, motivation and compensation mechanisms, as well as commercialization channels. Different countries present different contexts with regard to these determinants. Even for a given country, in order for these “processes” to work both individually and collectively, concerted efforts are required from multiple disciplines, including but not limited to science, education, politics, law and business. Therefore, taking all these considerations into account, sustainable global economic growth requires a cross-border, cross-disciplinary innovation mechanism.

Consider China as an example. The Chinese economy had a stellar performance during the past three decades, and now has become a potent engine for the global economy. This rapid economic growth was attributable not only to the vast capital being invested, but also to great technological progress. Achievements have been made in all areas. The education system successfully produced a large pool of talent. R&D systems have been fueled with spending that increased at a rate approximately twice that of overall economic growth. Greatly improved motivation and compensation mechanisms also helped attract plenty of talent, much of which has already made great contributions to the Chinese economy as scientists, business leaders and policy makers. However, China’s innovation system still has problems and vulnerabilities. Two of the most significant issues are associated with commercialization channels and intellectual-property (IP) protection. According to a recent government report, about 60 percent of R&D output was not commercialized or transformed to meaningful economic output. Meanwhile, about 70 percent of the R&D capacity belongs to universities and institutions as opposed to companies. The clear disconnection between R&D output and commercialization has served as something of an impediment to transformation. A so-called “Industry-Academia-Research” (IAR) platform that integrates both R&D and commercialization efforts is the remedy. Building up such a platform involves parties from different disciplines and calls for talent in science, business, law and policy-making. The disconnection among these that now exists reflects a short-sightedness and lack of entrepreneurial spirit in Chinese companies. Lacking patience for the demanding and sometimes time-consuming processes of innovation, companies flock to shortcuts such as reverse-engineering and copying, and this has raised great concern about IP protection.

Dealing with all the IP disputes and creating a healthy and sustainable growth engine for the economy requires a cross-disciplinary approach, but also a cross-border approach. China has to work internationally with other countries to make IP protection a core part of its innovation culture. (Continued on next page)
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One might think that the requirement for a cross-disciplinary, cross-border innovation mechanism would apply only to developing countries such as China, but I would argue that even a well-developed country like the United States needs this innovation mechanism. After working for a start-up biotech company in Illinois for three years, I learned a great deal about what makes for a successful approach. Although the company had a great product, with a high-potential proprietary technology, there was little clarity about the business development path, and as a result the company struggled to have a real economic impact. Sixteen years after being incorporated it was still more of a workshop of scientists and engineers than a successful business. Although large companies have known great success in commercializing science and technology outputs, for most small companies successful commercialization has proved elusive. And lacking cross-disciplinary collaborations or even a mindset of cross-disciplinary efforts often has been a large factor in their demise.

Like most international students in the United States, I encountered complications in getting permission to work while I was employed by this company. The company did not lose me because of those issues, but it was, in fact, forced to take on an extra financial burden. In the larger scheme of things, the U.S. economy suffers when its immigration policies effectively encourage the outflow of a high-skilled workforce trained with U.S. resources. When this company that I worked for dealt with international business and R&D collaborations, it stumbled on several occasions due to regulatory and legal issues or simply cultural differences. Big corporations are usually well-positioned on these issues, but most small companies find it extremely difficult to tackle them without the support of a cross-border, cross-disciplinary platform.

In sum, the U.S. economy as a whole (not just big corporations, but hundreds of thousands of small companies as well) needs a cross-disciplinary, cross-border innovation mechanism to propel its long-term, sustainable growth. The global economy is getting increasingly intertwined, and the solution is no longer simply a question of capital investment. It is technological progress through innovation that ultimately drives sustainable global economic growth in the long run. Real life situations and stories suggest that the global economy requires an innovation mechanism that integrates cross-border and cross-disciplinary efforts, be it in developing countries or in developed countries. While the details of such a mechanism still require a significant amount of research, it is never too late to equip our future global leaders with this crucial cross-border and cross-disciplinary mindset.

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BALANCING HOME AND WORK DEMANDS IN TODAY’S ECONOMY

Eric Sanderson works as an engineer at Monsanto. His duties include managing resources, negotiating with suppliers and following employees’ progress.

He has obligations as a father as well: taking his 8-year-old daughter to track and also singing lullabies to his 3-year-old son. Likewise, he has other responsibilities as a husband, especially the romantic nights out on Wednesdays with his wife, Katherine. Lately, he’s been shirking in the last of these; however, it’s not entirely his fault. Various unexpected complications — sick children, problems with suppliers at Monsanto, emergencies at the hospital where Katherine works as a nurse — have conspired to keep them apart on Wednesdays.

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Eric and Katherine can’t complain much about their financial situation. They have plenty of money in their bank account, a paid house, beach house, two cars and memberships in golf, chess, poker, soccer, basketball and swimming clubs (without the time to participate). They would like to spend more time together, more time with their kids, to be involved in their lives, to go to school meetings and to go camping. Unfortunately Eric has to work 60 hours a week at Monsanto plus overtime when something goes wrong — which happens quite often, and Katherine works 40 hours a week plus emergencies.

One day, while grocery shopping, they commented to each other that they wish they could buy time, no matter what the cost. This conversation was heard by Matthew Viviano. Matthew Viviano had been unemployed for almost five years after being fired from Chevrolet in the 2008 financial crisis. He and his wife, Angie, lived in his mother’s house in St. Louis. With little money, they could not afford to buy new school supplies for little Alex to go to school or new pants for Samantha. Matthew graduated from UCLA with a degree in mechanical engineering and had been struggling to find a job while Angie had been working part time at McDonald’s, where she gained 20 pounds since she started last year. Their life is hard. They can barely pay the bills, earning the odd dollar through temporary or freelance jobs on Craig’s List. The government should offer incentives, such as a reduction in taxes, for companies or create regulatory laws to address this issue.

These two problems — so different on the surface, but in fact very closely related — exemplify a few consequences of one of the laws of capitalism: maximizing efficiency and cutting expenses. Companies would rather hire only one person for a position that could be performed by two. The idea is to make the employee work more and be more connected with his job, instead of hiring more employees with increased costs of salaries, health insurance and retirement. Unemployment is at 7.5 percent of the workforce in the U.S.A. and 6 percent worldwide (June 2013). At the same time, companies still make it difficult for their employees to work fewer hours during the week or to take off more than 15 days in a year. The average American can expect to work 44 hours a week, and managers, directors and coordinators of businesses may be on the job for up to 70 hours a week. The New Economics Foundation has studied the 9-to-5 work model and come to the conclusion that is not sustainable. Instead they recommend a business model where employees would work for 21 hours per week. With people working fewer hours, they can spend more time with their families and have more time to spend the money that they earn. Increased circulation of money fuels the economy, and with higher employment rates, more people would be receiving a salary and be likely to spend money, thus leading to an increase in production and in the economically active population. Despite the logical benefits of this practice, it is still difficult for companies to take the initiative to enact it because companies only see the short-term benefit of hiring fewer employees.

What this suggests in my view is that the government should offer incentives, such as a reduction in taxes, for companies or create regulatory laws to address this issue.

After Eric and Matthew met and told each other of their dilemmas, they arrived at a useful solution. Eric would hire Matthew as his assistant, delegating some of his workplace obligations. Impressed by the resulting increase in productivity, Monsanto decided to hire Matthew as a full-time assistant. Now, both Eric and Matthew enjoy the financial stability of salaried positions and the spare time to embrace life with their loved ones.

Antonio Henrique Zanutto was in the McDonnell International Scholars Academy at Washington University in St. Louis. He received his Bachelor of Science in computer engineering in 2011 from State University of Campinas in Brazil. He received his Masters of Science in biomedical engineering in 2013 from the Department of Biomedical Engineering in Washington University’s School of Engineering & Applied Science.
HOW TO ATTRACT A MILLENNIAL SHOPPER

Have you ever shopped online? If yes, and your birth date was between the latter part of the 1970s and the early 2000s, congratulations! You are a Millennial Shopper and one of the target customers omni-channel retailers are keen on studying. Since you are probably familiar with both online shopping and store shopping but have different shopping behaviors under these two scenarios, you will pose some challenges for the omni-channel retailers searching to reach you through all of its available channels, from e-shops, to mobile apps, to social network sites and even traditional physical stores.

Not all the Millennial Shoppers behave the same when they do their online shopping: there are (1) the avid shoppers, (2) the browsers and (3) the purposeful shoppers. Avid shoppers browse shopping websites almost every day, and purchase frequently, behaving like a shopaholic. For these consumers, omni-channel retailers need to constantly reinvent themselves, creating new products and promotions to keep the avid shopper’s attention.

Browsers, on the other hand, visit e-stores from a few times per week to a few times per month, but do not purchase as frequently as avid shoppers. Thus a user-friendly website or app is more effective and useful in terms of keeping their attention. Purposeful shoppers only buy a specific item when they need it and so do not shop on impulse or treat shopping as a hobby. To this demographic, omni-channel retailers need to communicate specific information, such as, conveying for example the notion that whatever that shopper’s purpose may be, they are the store to go to, using slogans such as “We have what you need, when you need it.”

But these three types of Millennial Shoppers do share some common characteristics: their research usually starts online, so online resources must be up-to-date and provide a strong positive first impression; they are fickle, so if ordering is not convenient or the presentation is unhelpful, they will go elsewhere.

They are also considerably swayed by friends, family and the online community’s opinions about retailers, websites and brands. Omni-channel retailers have found that they also want the advertising to draw them in — the idea of “the chase” is what makes their shopping experience more fun. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they are not brand loyal, so an isolated poor presentation of a brand can be fatal. They are, however, more likely to be product or retailer loyal. For example, a customer may always purchase jeans in the GAP because he enjoys the GAP retail environment, and he is able to find a brand of jeans that he likes, but that does not necessarily generate a desire to purchase other GAP brands.

Millennial Shoppers are also fickle, so if your ordering interface is not convenient or its presentation is unhelpful, they will not hesitate to go elsewhere.

A diagram to illustrate the Millennial Shopper’s process may be helpful. Note the image on the left, which shows the process of a Millennial shopping for a pair of new shoes — in this scenario, the budget is relatively low and time is short. Following the chart, Millennials start their research online, then compare several websites to narrow their choices, send links to friends to collect feedback, decide which pair is more stylish and which color most attractive. After that, they may check the online customer reviews, or even visit the physical store to try them on. At the same time, they evaluate the deal opportunity to decide whether to buy it in the store or online. Overall, however, most of these steps will be completed online.

The storyboard on the left addresses the Millenial’s process of purchasing a luxury watch over a longer time period. In this context, in-store and online steps will likely be more equally divided. The research on the product and style will be done online and consulting with the online community, through venues such as Pinterest, will also likely be involved. Once the evaluation process starts, however, Millennials more often prefer to visit the physical stores to physically check the details of the product. In this context, the Millennial Shopper — particularly the purposeful shopper — will compare the deal opportunity and the quality of customer service to decide where to buy.

Omni-channel retailers are trying to adjust their strategies to influence these Millenial shopping processes. Kate Spade is a good example of a company that balances its efforts between traditional store channels and e-channels. While it has a lot of physical stores in the world, and almost all major department stores carry its products, it also occasionally sets up some pop-up stores to attract the less fashion-attuned to some of its fashion events. For e-channels, Kate Spade also has some good practices: its e-shop has products exclusively available online, e-giftcards for purchase and the buttons for social media shortcuts stand out on every webpage. Kate Spade also presents itself well on popular social media such as YouTube, Pinterest and Tumblr.

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Retailers are also putting more and more attention on the key part of customers’ online shopping experience— the product view. Most of the omni-channel retailers now use 360° pictures or even short videos to show the product more fully. These retailers are also increasingly making use of “Quick View,” which allows shoppers to check details such as available colors, sizes and alternate views of certain products without too many additional clicks, zooms or new pages. Facing the fickle Millennial Shoppers, web designers realize fewer clicks often equates to more commerce.

The storyboard above also shows that Millennial Shoppers pay considerable attention to customer reviews. Omni-channel retailers therefore cannot treat their design of this aspect lightly either and have accordingly created search filters that allow for sorted results as well as photo reviews that show, for example, shoes or clothes being put on, which can in turn help shoppers better understand how these items look and work in action.

Overall, for attracting their target customers—omni-channel retailers have understood that they must make the online shopping experience as clean and hassle-free as possible, and so they have worked to improve visibility and placement of social media buttons and added color swatches to unify the visuals across all of their retail channels. Though Millennial Shoppers may share some characteristics and a similar process, it still must be remembered that one size does not fit all. Omni-channel retailers must therefore be vigilant in customizing their pitches to each Millennial shopping demographic.

Liu Zhang was in the McDonnell International Scholars Academy at Washington University in St. Louis and was the Brown Shoe Corporate Fellow in St. Louis, Mo. She received her finance degree and Bachelor of Arts degree in economics in 2011 from Fudan University in Shanghai, China. She received her MBA degree in 2013 from Washington University’s Olin Business School. She is currently a research assistant at Washington University’s Olin Business School.
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Towards a No-Fault Compensation System for Medical Accidents in Japan

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Time to Reform the Outdated Petitioning System in China

The Old Men and the Sea: Making the Luzon Strait Peaceful

On the Legalization of Marijuana
Towards a No-Fault Compensation System for Medical Accidents in Japan  Naoko Akinoto

“Second Victimization” of Sexually Abused Children in Criminal Procedures  Sohyun Bang

Time to Reform the Outdated Petitioning System in China  Li Chen

The Old Men and the Sea: Making the Luzon Strait Peaceful  Chih-Chung “Jerry” Lin

On the Legalization of Marijuana  Lenny Ramsey
TOWARDS A NO-FAULT COMPENSATION SYSTEM FOR MEDICAL ACCIDENTS IN JAPAN

How the legal system handles the seemingly ever-increasing number of medical malpractice lawsuits is a growing concern in Japan as well as America. Though doctors have argued that Japan has reached a “crisis of medicine” on this front similar to the United States, reaction from the legal establishment in the two countries has been strikingly different.

First, it is important to understand the nature of the medical experience itself. Medical interventions such as surgical operations inherently involve risk to the human body, and some unfortunate outcomes are unavoidable or unforeseeable at the time of operation. However, these unfortunate results might be more avoidable if the causes of the accidents were investigated, analyzed and made known to the wider medical community, particularly the relevant doctors, rather than being legally hushed up in fear of further exposure to liability. Unfortunately, as the law currently stands, the pursuit of compensation through tort law takes a more reactive than preventative or preemptive approach.

Without a more public disclosure of the issues, doctors are condemned to repeat the same errors, and patients are condemned to be exposed to the same risk of unhappy outcomes.

In cases involving such patients, lawyers are rightly focused on their own clients, hoping that by financially punishing the doctors, the doctors will be motivated to improve their methods. However, the opposite has actually proven to be true. Lawsuits have had a chilling effect on surgery, and doctors’ liability insurance has predictably skyrocketed to cover the endless parade of lawsuits. This increases costs for everyone. But without a more public disclosure of the issues, doctors are condemned to repeat the same errors, and patients are condemned to be exposed to the same risk of unhappy outcomes. The motivation behind an approach that analyzes and seeks to improve medical procedures for future patients is particularly relevant for patients whose medical accidents were the product of no-fault claims. Under the current regime, these victims cannot even be compensated even though their injuries may be as serious as injuries caused under non-no-fault claims.

America attempted to address this problem with its Tort Reform Bill in the 1970s. Many states introduced limits for damages and limits for lawyers’ contingency fees, or they instituted mandatory panel screening before the filing of individual lawsuits. The problem of preventing future medical accidents was left to be solved by individual hospitals under various programs such as a peer review system.

Japan, however, has taken another approach to deal with the problem of skyrocketing medical costs. Recognizing that the threat of lawsuits against doctors may have caused a decrease in the number of doctors, especially obstetricians, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare launched a no-fault compensation system in 2009 for severe cerebral palsy caused during childbirth delivery accidents. This compensation system is mandatory for obstetric institutions and the budget comes from national medical insurance rather than the coffers of the hospital itself. Whether cerebral palsy of newborn babies results from the fault of the doctor or not, this system provides a maximum of $375,000 per child until that child reaches 20 years of age.

While it is a good beginning, this only addresses half the problem. As stated earlier, the problem is not simply skyrocketing costs, but also improving medical practice over time. Compensating only the damage of those children who have cerebral palsy due to delivery error doesn’t solve the larger general issue of incentivizing doctors to learn from their errors. On the contrary, this system almost incentivizes a doctor’s indifference, by minimizing their legal exposure for error.

I would argue that what is required is a new approach that analyzes the causes of medical accidents, gives feedback in analytical reports to medical institutions in which the children with cerebral palsy were born and accumulates and distributes data for prevention of similar accidents moving forward. However, doctors have been resistant. During the course of discussion regarding such an approach, there was strong opposition from doctors who argued that the feedback of analytical reports to patients without immunizing doctors from lawsuits would simply lead to even more lawsuits. They argued that parents could potentially use analytical reports to prove doctors’ fault and that they could also use money they received as compensation for attorneys’ fees, obtaining yet more money through an additional lawsuit.

However, one of the primary hopes of parents of these children is to know what caused their children’s disability and to make sure that if it was due to an accident, it will not happen to others in the future. If they don’t get this feedback, this goal will never be realized. Ultimately, the parties to these negotiations agreed that parents of affected children should receive analytical reports without immunizing the physicians from lawsuits and that the independent committee making these reports would never be at fault in legal terms.

Since this system was launched in 2009, it seems that this compensation system has been working relatively well, although the number of children who have been compensated is still small. However, there are still issues at stake in the future, such as dealing with serious fault cases in which the larger operating reference, by minimizing their legal exposure for error. (Continued on next page)
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First, it is important to understand the nature of the medical experience itself. Medical interventions such as surgical operations inherently involve risk to the human body, and some unfortunate outcomes are unavoidable or unforeseeable at the time of operation. However, these unfortunate results might be more avoidable if the causes of the accidents were investigated, analyzed and made known to the wider medical community, particularly the relevant doctors, rather than being legally hushed up in fear of further exposure to liability. Unfortunately, as the law currently stands, the pursuit of compensation through tort law takes a more reactive than preventative or preemptive approach.

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In cases involving such patients, lawyers are rightly focused on their own clients, hoping that by financially punishing the doctors, the doctors will be motivated to improve their methods. However, the opposite has actually proven to be true. Lawsuits have had a chilling effect on surgery, and doctors' liability insurance has predictably skyrocketed to cover the endless parade of lawsuits. This increases costs for everyone. But without a more public disclosure of the issues, doctors are condemned to repeat the same errors, and patients are condemned to be exposed to the same risk of unhappy outcomes. The motivation behind an approach that analyzes and seeks to improve medical procedures for future patients is particularly relevant for patients whose medical accidents were the product of no-fault claims. Under the current regime, these victims cannot even be compensated even though their injuries may be as serious as injuries caused under non-no-fault claims.

America attempted to address this problem with its Tort Reform Bill in the 1970s. Many states introduced limits for damages and limits for lawyers' contingency fees, or they instituted mandatory panel screening before the filing of individual lawsuits. The problem of preventing future medical accidents was left to be solved by individual hospitals under various programs such as a peer review system.

Japan, however, has taken another approach to deal with the problem of skyrocketing medical costs. Recognizing that the threat of lawsuits against doctors may have caused a decrease in the number of doctors, especially obstetricians, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare launched a no-fault compensation system in 2009 for severe cerebral palsy caused during childbirth delivery accidents. This compensation system is mandatory for obstetric institutions and the budget comes from national medical insurance rather than the coffers of the hospital itself. Whether cerebral palsy of newborn babies results from the fault of the doctor or not, this system provides a maximum of $375,000 per child until that child reaches 20 years of age.

While it is a good beginning, this only addresses half the problem. As stated earlier, the problem is not simply skyrocketing costs, but also improving medical practice over time. Compensating only the damage of those children who have cerebral palsy due to delivery error doesn't solve the larger general issue of incentivizing doctors to learn from their errors. On the contrary, this system almost incentivizes a doctor's indifference, by minimizing their legal exposure for error.

I would argue that what is required is a new approach that analyzes the causes of medical accidents, gives feedback in analytical reports to medical institutions in which the children with cerebral palsy were born and accumulates and distributes data for prevention of similar accidents moving forward. However, doctors have been resistant. During the course of discussion regarding such an approach, there was strong opposition from doctors who argued that the feedback of analytical reports to patients without immunizing the physicians from lawsuits. They argued that parents could potentially use analytical reports to prove doctors' fault and that they could also use money they received as compensation for attorneys' fees, obtaining yet more money through an additional lawsuit.

However, one of the primary hopes of parents of these children is to know what caused their children's disability and to make sure that if it was due to an accident, it will not happen to others in the future. If they don't get this feedback, this goal will never be realized. Ultimately, the parties to these negotiations agreed that parents of affected children should receive analytical reports without immunizing the physicians from lawsuits and that the independent committee making these reports would never be at fault in legal terms.

Since this system was launched in 2009, it seems that this compensation system has been working relatively well, although the number of children who have been compensated is still small. However, there are still issues at stake in the future, such as dealing with serious fault cases in which the larger operating institution must seek further reimbursement from the guilty medical institutions or doctors. This system currently applies only to children with severe cerebral palsy from childbirth delivery, and the Japanese government is now having discussions about establishing a broader no-fault compensation system for medical accidents in all areas of medicine. It will not be easy to establish such a system, especially when (Continued on next page)
(Continued from previous page)

one considers the financial burden, as well as the manpower for running the independent committees to provide analysis, as well as the vast array of possible medical accidents. Time will tell whether such an approach can bring down the rates of such medical errors and effectively control malpractice costs. However, it is at least an effort at address the problem, and if proven effective, countries with similar concerns, such as the United States, would do well to consider it more closely.

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“SECOND VICTIMIZATION” OF SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN IN KOREAN CRIMINAL PROCEDURES

“A crumpled paper never goes back to the original condition,” remarked a father in an interview following the brutal rape of his 7-year-old daughter. The rape resulted in a loss of 80 percent of the child victim’s reproductive organs, large intestines and anus. All of Korea was left in a state of shock following the aftermath of this incident. This was not the end of the story however. Several years later, I found another article in a newspaper noting that the girl and her parents had won a damage suit against the government based on “secondary victimization.”

“Secondary victimization” means further victimization occurring after the original victimization through subsequent actions by individuals and institutions. The girl was forced to repeat her testimony four times for two hours due to the prosecutor’s inexperience. In this particular case, the girl was not able to sit down without pain because the testimony had taken place immediately after her major surgery. Having to repeat her testimony in these dire circumstances clearly qualified as secondary victimization.

As in the case above, experts say that sexual crime victims suffer serious long-term psychological injuries throughout the subsequent adjudicative process. These traumatic injuries are coupled with the devastating effect of the abuse itself. This issue is particularly troubling in cases concerning young children ill-equipped mentally for a methodically ponderous adjudicative process requiring them to revisit their sufferings. There are five major factors that are well documented in causing “secondary victimization” in criminal procedures: (1) facing the criminal again in the court; (2) delay of testifying; (3) repeated questions; (4) lack of legal knowledge; and (5) a coercive court environment. We might not prevent all child sexual crimes, but I strongly believe we can at least substantially mitigate the “secondary victimization” of victims during criminal trials by reforming how we process the testimony of victims.

Furthermore, a child victim may be asked to repeat the same things to a variety of people: parents, police officers, prosecutors and so on. Surveys have shown the average to be around 12 times.

It is said that child sexual crime is particularly difficult to prosecute, and pressure on the victims is extremely high because without the child's testimony, it is not easy to find other compelling evidence. It is obvious that child victims would suffer terrible pain by having to face the criminal again in the court and that this pain may often be an obstacle to finding out exactly what took place. In many countries such as Japan, the United States (certain states) and even Korea, video tapes recording the child’s advance testimony is admissible as evidence at trial. Although video recording helps to decrease the mental distress of a child victim, it also has a negative side — a criminal loses his constitutional right to face witnesses in court and cross-examine them. In this sense, we need to balance a child victim’s right to face witnesses in court and cross-examine them, which explains legal terminology and process in field experts such as lawyers, judges and even providing a segregated safe waiting room equipped with toys and games.

Lack of legal knowledge and coercive court environments are other factors that make the process more difficult for child victims. Some efforts have been made to remedy this issue as well. In Scotland, for example, a “going to court” handout is issued, which explains legal terminology and process in an easily comprehensible manner, sometimes even using cartoons. In Alabama, the “Court Prep Group” has meetings with children to prepare for trials and decrease the child victim’s anxiety and fear. Other accommodations also have been made, such as establishing procedures that allow a judge to sit next to a child without a robe, allowing trustful people like parents to accompany child victims during trials or even providing a segregated safe waiting room equipped with toys and games.

In Korea, after the incident of the 7-year-old girl, public interest regarding protection for sexually abused children has increased. Support centers for sexual crime witnesses are in the works nationally throughout Korea. These centers are known to offer psychiatric counseling, security officers and also teach those legal procedures presently employed in developed countries. Although every nation faces different situations, I truly hope that all nations will continue to make concerted efforts to protect child victims in the manner in which Korea has chosen. Some people have called “second victimization” nothing less than “second rape.” Given the trauma such cases can cause to the young, it becomes all the more necessary to commit ourselves to preventing it from occurring.

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Another issue that causes additional trauma is that it often takes months if not years to go to trial after the crime occurs. This time frame causes children deep anxiety, disrupting treatment of the victim and often compromising the memory of the child. Furthermore, a child victim may be asked to repeat the same things to a variety of people: parents, police officers, prosecutors and so on. Surveys suggest that the average is somewhere around 12 times. Despite the necessity for consistency, repeated questions can decrease the accuracy of the statements by the victim and increase the risk of possible distortions. Research has shown that children tend to change words when they are asked the same question repeatedly. To remedy this issue, it would be wise to establish a court to deal exclusively with child sexual crimes, with a premium placed on expediting the legal process and mitigating suffering to the child. Such a court would delegate tasks to specialized investigators and prosecutors with sufficient experience and knowledge on child sexual crime and thereby minimize the need for multiple testimonies. In addition, cooperation with related field experts such as child psychiatrists should be commonly adopted.

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TIME TO REFORM
THE OUTDATED PETITIONING SYSTEM IN CHINA

In China rather than having an independent system of courts that follow due process, we employ an outdated petitioning system for dealing with certain grievances. The Chinese petitioning system is the central administrative system with head offices based in Beijing for hearing complaints and grievances from individuals against government officials and agencies. This infamous system has been denounced by human rights organizations and legal scholars as inefficient, ineffective and even cruel.

Most of the cases brought under this system are not resolved satisfactorily. Often, they are referred back to the local government offices where the grievances originated and then are stalled indefinitely. Petitioners continually flood Beijing in hope of reviving their cases.

I observed this system firsthand when assisting in an overseas Chinese petition for the return of property wrongly confiscated by the municipal government. It was during this experience that I observed the ineptitude of the bureaucracy in handling grievances and recognized the deadening impact of an utter lack of coordination between different agencies.

Rights activists and some prominent Chinese legal scholars have argued for dismantling this [petitioning] system, believing that the correct solution is to promote the rule of law, loosen control of the press and advance large scale political reform. While I support these ideas, such changes are not likely to happen quickly, leaving thousands of people without a practical way for redress. The strategy I advocate is to:

1. Restructure the petition-handling system so that a department has the needed authority and discretion to enforce disciplinary action, and
2. Carefully foster the creation of grassroots public interest organizations to help people resolve their grievances in more effective ways.

Petition-handling departments should work closely with two powerful Chinese government bodies — the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party of China and the Organization Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee. The former is charged with rooting out corruption and malfeasance among Communist Party of China (CPC) cadres and officials. The latter is responsible for making key staffing decisions within the CCP and has an enormous amount of control over personnel.

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The second step is to foster civic-minded people who are trained in law, public policy, journalism, politics and related disciplines to form grassroots organizations to help petitioners mount more strategic petitions to get fair and reasonable results. Bringing a petition to fruition demands a number of crucial skills, which ordinary Chinese citizens lack. By fostering and promoting public-interest organizations that provide free services to petitioners, they will have access to the thinking and skills needed to craft the best strategies, including garnering publicity and encouraging social outcry for egregious cases.

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THE OLD MEN AND THE SEA: MAKING THE LUZON STRAIT PEACEFUL

On May 9, 2013, a small Taiwanese fishing boat in the Luzon Strait was attacked by a Philippine Coast Guard vessel, resulting in the death of a 65-year-old Taiwanese fisherman, Mr. Hung Shih-Cheng. The shooting occurred about 180 nautical miles southeast of Taiwan and 50 nautical miles east of an inhabited Philippine island. Both countries asserted that the incident occurred within their 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zones (EEZ). The Philippine government proclaimed that the coastguard was on duty to prevent “illegal fishing” in Philippine waters; they opened fire because the fishing vessel attempted to ram their ship. The survivors from the fishing boat, however, denied any intention of attacking the Philippine vessel. The government of Taiwan challenged that on an unarmed fishing boat, arguing that it violated the International Maritime Law.

However, by invoking the “One-China Policy,” the Philippine government has denied Taiwanese sovereignty and considers signing a treaty on fishery issues with Taipei as inappropriate and unnecessary. At the same time, however, the Philippines has not opened discussions with Beijing on the disputed fishery issues. Although Taiwan has eagerly sought to negotiate fishery issues, the Philippines has refused to cooperate.

Historically, fishing agreements have not always involved sovereign states as parties. The Faroe Islands is a Danish self-governing administration that is north of Great Britain and about halfway between Iceland and Norway. Situated in the area between the Norwegian Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, the Faroese depend heavily on fishing. Despite not being a fully fledged independent country, the Faroese government has conducted fishing-rights negotiations with neighboring countries. The Cook Islands in the East Pacific Ocean, whose defense and foreign affairs are controlled by New Zealand, serve as another example. Although not a sovereign nation, the Cook Islands signed fishery agreements with South Korea and Norway. Additionally, its government also signed a maritime boundary treaty with the United States to resolve the territorial disputes with American Samoa. These facts show that reaching fishing agreements is not a privilege exclusively enjoyed by sovereign states.

Returning to the case at hand, Japan recently signed a fishing agreement with Taiwan. Japan controls several islands in the East China Sea and the West Pacific Ocean, one of which is only 70 miles from Taiwan. Not surprisingly, the overlapping EEZ led to the stringent competition of fishing grounds between both sides. In the past it was often claimed that Taiwanese fishing boats were detained by the Japanese coast guard due to “illegal fishing” in Japanese waters. The subsequent Taiwan-Japan Fisheries Accord allows the fishing vessels from both countries to operate within a certain zone. By strict adherence to this agreement, fishing conflicts between Taiwan and Japan will be minimized.

Furthermore, Taiwan participates in several Regional Fisheries Management Organizations as a “fishing entity.” For instance, Taiwan is a formal member of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRMO). The legal basis for Taiwan to participate in these inter-governmental organizations is firmly grounded on the Fish Stocks Agreement of the United Nations, which “applies mutatis mutandis to other fishing entities whose vessels fish on the high seas.”

Being part of the international fishing community, Taiwan has the same rights to manage and conserve marine resources as other nations. Therefore, it is improper and unreasonable for a country not to negotiate with Taiwan on fishery issues.

In retrospect, the tragedy that happened in May could have been prevented if both Taiwan and the Philippines had been willing to start negotiations and define a maritime border. The “One-China Policy” is an invalid excuse to hinder such negotiations; several examples show that it is not only sovereign states that are capable of signing treaties on fishery agreements. Taiwan is an official and equal member of several inter-governmental organizations on fishery management, and the Philippines should acknowledge Taiwan as a fishing entity that enjoys the rights and obligations protected by the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement.

In sum, it seems perfectly reasonable, indeed necessary, that the Philippines start negotiations on fishery issues and maritime boundary with Taiwan, mirroring the recent negotiations between Taiwan and Japan. In this way, both countries will be able to minimize fishing conflicts and share the marine resources in the Luzon Strait and its neighboring waters in a peaceful manner.

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Hung was not the first Taiwanese fisherman to be killed by the Philippine coastguard. In 2004, Philippine police attacked a Taiwanese fishing vessel in disputed waters, resulting in the death of a crew member. Similarly in 2006, a captain was shot and killed by the Philippine coastguard within the overlapping EEZ. In addition, an estimated 108 Taiwanese fishing vessels have been detained by the Philippines in the past two decades. There is little doubt that the undefined maritime boundary between Taiwan and the Philippines is an urgent problem that needs solving.

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ON THE LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA

Mentioning the Netherlands, and especially Amsterdam, often evokes responses related to cannabis. While Prop 19 in California has heated up the debate on the legalization of cannabis and the discussions about medical marijuana have not subsided, the rules in the Netherlands are becoming more and more strict. Should marijuana be legalized in the United States? Is there another way to deal with the current drug problem?

The Dutch drug policy is aimed at controlling use and reducing harm instead of banning recreational drug use completely. Many people don’t know that cannabis is not fully legalized in the Netherlands. Large-scale dealing, import and export of soft drugs are illegal, but because of a tolerance policy, these rules in many cases are not enforced. This tolerance policy sets written guidelines as to when offenders should not be prosecuted. Further, since 1983, coffee shops are licensed to sell small amounts of marijuana under certain restrictions. Contrary to opponents’ expectations, tolerance policies did not lead to extremely high use of cannabis when they were instated in 1976, and this continues to the present day. Average use across the Netherlands is lower than in many countries, including the United States, and so is the drug-related mortality rate.

Compared to alcohol, a much more widely used and less debated substance, the dependence and intoxication risks from cannabis are lower, and it leads to fewer violent crimes. While studies on the effects of THC (the active substance in marijuana) in adults have shown that cannabis temporarily affects memory, after one week of abstinence, no changes in performance or brain structure can be detected. It is even well established that cannabis can be helpful as a treatment for symptoms of many medical conditions, most commonly for decreasing pain, nausea and insomnia.

Decriminalizing marijuana in the United States could have potentially positive effects by decreasing the criminal network involved in circulating the drugs, which could in turn decrease the number of people in already over-full prisons and decrease the money spent on the “war on drugs.” Current incarceration rates for drug-related crimes in the United States are estimated to be between 7 and 10 times that of the Netherlands.

Contrary to opponents’ expectations, tolerance policies did not lead to extremely high use of cannabis when they were instated in 1976, and this continues to the present day.

Going a step further, by fully legalizing a drug like cannabis, the control and supervision of the amounts used and the quality of the drug are increased. Over the past years, the THC content of cannabis has increased significantly, raising its potency and addictiveness. Legalization would increase governmental control and thus create the opportunity to set rules about THC content. It would also make the sale taxable, leading to extra governmental income, and would make research on the potential medical uses of cannabis easier.

But does this mean that decriminalization or legalization solves all problems? One of the main worries of legalizing cannabis is that it may increase use and increase the number of people struggling with addiction. While we can’t predict the effects of legalization, the evidence we do have from trials with decriminalization seem to suggest that usage wouldn’t significantly increase as a result. Cannabis would be accessible to the general (adult) population, but does this mean that people will indeed start using the drug on a massive scale? And even if more people decide to try it, does this mean more people will end up with an addiction? In general, people who frequently smoke marijuana now will probably still smoke once it is legalized. The groups of interest are the people who do not or have not yet used cannabis. An alluring possibility is that the people who use cannabis for the thrill of it being illegal, especially teenagers, would no longer be attracted to it. The people that now stay away from it are likely not the group of people at risk for addiction, and they still are not likely to become frequent users.

Something that should not be overlooked however, when trying to legalize or decriminalize a drug, is its potential effects on bordering countries or states. One of the reasons for the current stricter regulations in the Netherlands is to try to restrict trafficking across borders with neighboring countries that do not share the same tolerance policies.

As cannabis seems relatively harmless to the adult brain, one of the main dangers of its use could be in teenagers who are still developing mentally and emotionally. Animal studies have shown that extremely high dosages of cannabis during development have emotional and cognitive effects in later life. Even though the long-term consequences are not yet clear in humans, cannabis has been shown to affect and possibly delay the development of psychosocial adjustment, decision making and problem solving in youth. So, whichever path is chosen for the future of cannabis regulations, protection and education of teenagers should remain a central concern.

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ON THE LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA

Mentioning the Netherlands, and especially Amsterdam, often evokes responses related to cannabis. While Prop 19 in California has heated up the debate on the legalization of cannabis and the discussions about medical marijuana have not subsided, the rules in the Netherlands are becoming more and more strict. Should marijuana be legalized in the United States? Is there another way to deal with the current drug problem?

The Dutch drug policy is aimed at controlling use and reducing harm instead of banning recreational drug use completely. Many people don’t know that cannabis is not fully legalized in the Netherlands. Large-scale dealing, import and export of soft drugs are illegal, but because of a tolerance policy, these rules in many cases are not enforced. This tolerance policy sets written guidelines as to when offenders should not be prosecuted. Further, since 1983, coffee shops are licensed to sell small amounts of marijuana under certain restrictions. Contrary to opponents’ expectations, tolerance policies did not lead to extremely high use of cannabis when they were instated in 1976, and this continues to the present day. Average use across the Netherlands is lower than in many countries, including the United States, and so is the drug-related mortality rate.

Compared to alcohol, a much more widely used and less debated substance, the dependence and intoxication risks from cannabis are lower, and it leads to fewer violent crimes. While studies on the effects of THC (the active substance in marijuana) in adults have shown that cannabis temporarily affects memory, after one week of abstinence, no changes in performance or brain structure can be detected. It is even well established that cannabis can be helpful as a treatment for symptoms of many medical conditions, most commonly for decreasing pain, nausea and insomnia.

Decriminalizing marijuana in the United States could have potentially positive effects by decreasing the criminal network involved in circulating the drugs, which could in turn decrease the number of people in already over-full prisons and decrease the money spent on the “war on drugs.” Current incarceration rates for drug-related crimes in the United States are estimated to be between 7 and 10 times that of the Netherlands.

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Going a step further, by fully legalizing a drug like cannabis, the control and supervision of the amounts used and the quality of the drug are increased. Over the past years, the THC content of cannabis has increased significantly, raising its potency and addictiveness. Legalization would increase governmental control and thus create the opportunity to set rules about THC content. It would also make the sale taxable, leading to extra governmental income and would make research on the potential medical uses of cannabis easier.

But does this mean that decriminalization or legalization solves all problems? One of the main worries of legalizing cannabis is that it may increase use and increase the number of people struggling with addiction. While we can’t predict the effects of legalization, the evidence we do have from trials with decriminalization seem to suggest that usage wouldn’t significantly increase as a result. Cannabis would be accessible to the general (adult) population, but does this mean that people will indeed start using the drug on a massive scale? And even if more people decide to try it, does this mean more people will end up with an addiction? In general, people who frequently smoke marijuana now will probably still smoke once it is legalized. The groups of interest are the people who do not or have not yet used cannabis. An alluring possibility is that the people who use cannabis for the thrill of it being illegal, especially teenagers, would no longer be attracted to it. The people that now stay away from it are likely not the group of people at risk for addiction, and they still are not likely to become frequent users.

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

In 1970, Sister Mary Jucunda, a Catholic nun aiding children in Zambia, wrote Dr. Ernst Stuhlinger, then associate director for science at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. She questioned how he could, in good conscience, suggest spending billions of dollars on a manned mission to Mars when there is so much misery and squalor here on Earth. Dr. Stuhlinger, deeply touched by her sincere concern, responded with an eloquent essay that has since become an emblem in the pursuit of science.

One of Dr. Stuhlinger’s arguments was based on a compelling parable: In a small town in Renaissance Germany, a count shared a large portion of his income with the often plague-ravaged poor. One day, he met a man who worked in his laboratory in his scant free time during the evenings, grinding lenses and building optical gadgets. The count, fascinated by this man’s work, invited him into his homestead where he would be able to devote all his time to the development and perfection of his contraptions — much to the dissatisfaction of the townspeople, who felt that the count’s wealth deserved better use than this man’s useless hobby. Later, of course, his hobby, along with work done by others, would eventually herald an exceedingly useful device: the microscope. The great irony, Dr. Stuhlinger argued, was that even if the count had donated his every Thaler to the blight-stricken poor, he would not have helped save as many people from disease as he did by contributing a small portion to something of no immediate apparent benefit.

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Fast forward 400 years. At the European Organization for Nuclear Research, or CERN, situated on the Franco-Swiss border, the largest machine ever constructed was built in a 27-kilometer-long underground tunnel. The titanic forces produced by the Large Hadron Collider’s superconducting magnets help scientists understand how unimaginably tiny particles interact through the most incredibly delicate forces. Disconnected from everyday reality as it may seem, the same technology that allows physicists to peer into the labyrinthine clockwork of the cosmos can empower next generation medical scanners to improve early cancer detection. Twenty petabytes of data generated each year in experiments demand extremely high performance computing frameworks that researchers in other fields may now take advantage of, from weather forecasting to protein folding. And the unprecedented level of international cooperation involved in the €7.5 billion project is the perfect counterpoint to typical diplomatic egotism and mistrust.

Nevertheless, in the United States science as a whole is being jeopardized by indiscriminate budget cuts as a response to a soaring government budget deficit. As policy makers pull the national economy’s proverbial parking brake in an effort to alyy government fiscal irresponsibility, expenses viewed as “discretionary” are not spared the harsher slashes of the scythe. Irrespective of other adverse effects in the United States economy, (perversely, sequestration will likely increase debt) the damage to science will be profound. When funding through government grants becomes less than 2 percent of the federal budget, comparable to the Department of Homeland Security alone. Even though science’s payouts typically overstep the schedule of quarterly reports (or, for that matter, political representation), how many traditional investment options can claim the same?

Leandro Medina deOlivera is in the McDonnell International Scholars Academy at Washington University in St. Louis. He received his computer engineering degree in 2011 from State University of Campinas in Campinas, Brazil. He is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Computer Science & Engineering in Washington University’s School of Engineering & Applied Science.
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Each year, as $20 trillion of revenue are generated worldwide in a digital economy whose infrastructure is partly founded on a constellation of more than 8,000 satellites, few doubts should remain about the worth of the now nearly six-decades-old space program. Far from being an accident, it still holds true that even the most arcane branches of science yield prompt applications in a wide variety of fields and reap rewards orders of magnitude above the initial expenditure. Today, these amounts to less than 2 percent of the federal budget, comparable to the Department of Homeland Security alone. Even though science’s payouts typically overstep the schedule of quarterly reports (or, for that matter, political representation), how many traditional investment options can claim the same?

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THE JOURNEY TO CURE GENETIC DISEASES

Many human diseases are based on abnormalities in the genome. For example, sickle-cell anemia is a blood disorder characterized by abnormal sickle-shaped blood cells and is caused by a single base mutation in the beta-globin chain of hemoglobin. Various cancers are also genetic diseases. What led Angelina Jolie to decide to have a preventive double mastectomy? It was a single gene, BRCA1, one of the tumor-suppressing genes. Angelina Jolie has a harmful mutation in the gene, which dramatically increases the risk of breast or ovarian cancer.

My question is: How can we conquer these genetic diseases? What would be the most effective therapeutic means humans can devise to cure them? There are many ways to deal with this. One relatively simple way would be adding the normal version of the abnormally functioning cells. Let’s revisit the sickle-cell example above. Normal red blood cells could be added to manage sickle-cell diseases through blood transfusions. In the context of type I diabetes, this can be achieved through the administration of insulin. However, this type of cure has a critical disadvantage: Patients are required to take this type of medicine for their entire lives.

Ideally, the most fundamental way to attack this problem would be to fix the genome from the beginning. In this way, the original cause of the disease can be removed, and the disease can be cured without need for further medical attention. This had been thought to be an impossibility, but it now seems much more within our reach thanks to two recently emerging biotechnologies: genome editing with engineered nucleases and induced pluripotent stem cells.

The first breakthrough was the development of the genome-editing technology with engineered nucleases. The most famous examples of the gene-editing nucleases are zinc finger nucleases (ZFNs) and tal effector nucleases (TALENs). They are hybrid enzymes, the fusion of the DNA binding protein and the DNA cutting enzyme. The DNA binding part of the enzymes can be easily designed and engineered to be able to bind to only one specific site in the human genome. The nuclease part of the enzyme works like a pair of scissors to cut the DNA into smaller segments. This special hybrid enzyme can be used to cut only a specific site in the genome. When this cut is introduced on the genome by the engineered nucleases, cells detect the damage on the genome and try to fix the damage by various mechanisms, and these cellular repair processes can be used to put the wanted DNA sequences exactly in a desired site. In this way, any mutations on the genome can be corrected using gene-editing nucleases — at least in principle.

However, just correcting mutated sequences in the human genome does not lead to the cure of diseases. There are roughly 100 trillion cells in the human body and each cell has its own genome with exactly the same DNA sequences. Certainly we do not have to correct all the cells’ genomes, but we still have to correct all genomes of a certain type of cell — for instance, red blood cells to cure sickle-cell disease. How can we cope with this issue? The solution for this would be using induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells. The iPS cell is an artificial pluripotent stem cell derived from an adult somatic cell. For example, adult skin cells can be reprogrammed to go back to the pluripotent state by introducing a specific gene expression. Shinya Yamanaka, who first generated mouse and human iPS cells from skin cells, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for this discovery in 2012.

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One important advantage of iPS cells over the human embryonic stem cells is that patient-specific iPS cells can be derived directly from the patient's own skin cells. Therefore, when iPS cells are used for cell therapy, potential immune rejection can be avoided. Another important advantage is that ethical issues posed by human embryonic stem cell research can be obviated. Human embryonic stem cells are derived from human embryos, which have the potential to develop into a new life, which has been the source of heated ethical debate. However, with iPS cells no such ethical concerns present themselves.

So how do you combine two of the most recent biotechnologies to cure genetic diseases? Let’s get back to the first example, sickle-cell disease. First, skin cells are easily obtained from a sickle-cell disease patient and are reprogrammed to generate iPS cells. By using gene-editing nucleases, the genetic defect of sickle-cell disease can be repaired in iPS cells. Then, this corrected version of iPS cells will be differentiated into hematopoietic stem cells and will be transplanted back into the patient. The transplanted hematopoietic stem cells will be further differentiated into different types of blood cells and eventually normal red blood cells will replace the sickle-shaped red blood cells. This novel approach of using a combination of gene editing and iPS cell therapy can be applied to any genetic disease in principle as long as the cause of the mutation of the disease is known.

However, not a single clinical trial using this approach has yet been implemented. There are still many obstacles to overcome before this can be applied to the real world in clinical trials. It should be ascertained that gene-editing nucleases fix only the target mutation and do not change any other DNA sequences on the genome. Whether iPS cells are suitable for safe use on patients also should be further researched. The optimal transplant method should also be developed for certain types of cells required to cure each genetic disease. More concerted efforts should be dedicated to combining these two emerging technologies and to overcome current obstacles. Advances in combining those technologies would without question help us cure genetic diseases.

Hyung Joo Lee is in the McDonnell International Scholars Academy at Washington University in St. Louis. He received his Master of Science degree in Chemistry in 2009 from Seoul National University in Seoul, South Korea. He is currently a PhD candidate in the Division of Biology & Biomedical Sciences at Washington University's Graduate School of Arts & Sciences.
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Water is unarguably one of the most important substances required to sustain life. Being the most widely occurring substance on planet Earth, most people consider it a resource with infinite supply. The result of this misperception is that since 1950 the population has doubled while water usage has tripled. Of all the water present on Earth, less than 1 percent is readily available for use by human beings. Pollution caused due to anthropogenic activities has led to poor quality of available water and has put an additional burden on an already limited resource. Around 2 million tons of waste is put into water sources daily, and one third of the world’s population live in water-stressed countries and lack access to improved water supply. This has been primarily responsible for more than 2.2 million deaths each year due to water-associated diseases, a number equal to the entire population of children under age 5 in New York City. With more frequent desperation, making conflicts unavoidable in the near future. Professor Uri Shamir, a member of the Israeli negotiating team to the Middle East peace process, once noted: “If there is a political will for peace, water will not be a hindrance. If you want reasons to fight, water will give you ample opportunities.” Recent history is full of violent conflicts associated with water resources — Israel’s water sanctions against Gaza, the Taliban’s threat over water supplies, conflicts in the Somali region, Sri Lankan rebels cutting water supplies to a village, the dispute between India and China over the Ganges and the tension between USA and Mexico over the Colorado river basin are just a few examples.

Albert Einstein rightly once said: “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity,” which is the case with our current water crisis.

Thus the question remains to be asked: Is war the only possible fate of this crisis, or do we stand any chance of having this resolved via a peaceful process? Albert Einstein rightly once said: “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity,” which is the case with our current water crisis. Surprisingly though, very few people think so despite the fact that water is one of the most commonly shared trans-boundary entities. Facing common needs and problems, we need a common solution for them and the water crisis can act as a perfect bridge to achieve this. Even today, examples exist that prove the tremendous potential that water can offer as a weapon for peace rather than an excuse for war. Several examples come to mind: the Nile Basin Initiative, through which Egypt, Ethiopia and other countries are exchanging the benefits of cooperation on the Nile; the cooperation in West Africa between Senegal, Mali and Mauritania to share the Senegal River; and innumerable treaties between European countries to share watersheds. They all suggest that a water crisis can indeed be used as a medium to enrich conversations towards peaceful resolutions.

So how can the world move toward a future of cooperation rather than conflict? I believe that the next steps that need to be taken to address water conflicts can be divided into four parts. First, it is imperative to raise the awareness of the proper use of water amongst the majority of people while maintaining sound economic policies. Second, technological development and know-how should be used as a bridge between the nations and continents to facilitate peace talks. Third, involvement of both political leaders and technical experts should be imposed to better ensure a pragmatic solution. And finally, a dedicated and independent legal organizational body is needed to adjudicate water matters on a global scale.

Although this might sound too demanding, the help of the European Union can play a crucial role due to its experience building institutions for managing the great European rivers such as the Danube and the Rhine. Being optimistic, I strongly believe that this is not impossible and that with the right spirit and with honest efforts, we can definitely make the water crisis a weapon for peace rather than an excuse for war.

Finally, I would like to end with a quote on war from Omar Bradley, ex-general of the U.S. army, which I think applies well to the context of this current water crisis: “Wars can be prevented just as surely as they can be provoked … and we who fail to prevent them must share the guilt for the dead.”

Vrajesh Mehta is in the McDonnell international Scholars Academy at Washington University in St. Louis and is the Ameren Corporate Fellow in Environment in 2008 from Indian Institute of Technology Bombay in Mumbai, India. He is currently pursuing his PhD in the Department of Energy, Environmental & Chemical Engineering in Washington University’s School of Engineering & Applied Science.
THE GLOBAL WATER CRISIS: AN EXCUSE FOR WAR OR A WEAPON FOR PEACE?

Water is unarguably one of the most important substances required to sustain life. Being the most widely occurring substance on planet Earth, most people consider it a resource with infinite supply. The result of this misperception is that since 1950 the population has doubled while water usage has tripled. Of all the water present on Earth, less than 1 percent is readily available for use by human beings. Pollution caused due to anthropogenic activities has led to poor quality of available water and has put an additional burden on an already limited resource. Around 2 million tons of waste is put into water sources daily, wastes which include industrial waste, chemicals, human waste and agricultural waste.

The distribution of available fresh water on planet Earth is not uniform nor is the population. Presently, one third of the world’s population live in water-stressed countries and lack access to improved water supply. This has been primarily responsible for more than 2.2 million deaths each year due to water-associated diseases, a number equal to the entire population of children under age 5 in New York City and London. Asia and Africa together account for 90 percent of this population, which clearly illustrates the continental disparities of water availability at regional levels. This has become a key concern and has led to a water crisis, which is a major challenge for many countries around the world. With more frequent extreme weather events, recent estimates suggest that climate change will account for a 20 percent increase in global water scarcity, the effect of which could be very severe at local/regional levels. The critical challenges thus lie ahead for addressing the water crisis.

Recognizing this pressure, many experts and leaders have widely acknowledged that water scarcity will play an important role in creating discontent and desperation, making conflicts unavoidable in the near future. Professor Uri Shamir, a member of the Israeli negotiating team to the Middle East peace process, once noted: “If there is a political will for peace, water will not be a hindrance. If you want reasons to fight, water will give you ample opportunities.” Recent history is full of violent conflicts associated with water resources — Israel’s water sanctions against Gaza, the Taliban’s threat over water supplies, conflicts in the Somali region, Sri Lankan rebels cutting water supplies to a village, the dispute between India and China over the Ganges and the tension between USA and Mexico over the Colorado river basin are just a few examples.

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Thus the question remains to be asked: Is war the only possible fate of this crisis, or do we stand any chance of having this resolved via a peaceful process? Albert Einstein rightly once said: “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity,” which is the case with our current water crisis. Surprisingly though, very few people think so despite the fact that water is one of the most commonly shared trans-boundary entities. Facing common needs and problems, we need a common solution for them and the water crisis can act as a perfect bridge to achieve this. Even today, examples exist that prove the tremendous potential that water can offer as a weapon for peace rather than an excuse for war. Several examples come to mind: the Nile Basin Initiative, through which Egypt, Ethiopia and other countries are exchanging the benefits of cooperation on the Nile; the cooperation in West Africa between Senegal, Mali and Mauritania to share the Senegal River; and innumerable treaties between European countries to share watersheds. They all suggest that a water crisis can indeed be used as a medium to enrich conversations towards peaceful resolutions.

So how can the world move toward a future of cooperation rather than conflict? I believe that the next steps that need to be taken to address water conflicts can be divided into four parts. First, it is imperative to raise the awareness of the proper use of water amongst the majority of people while maintaining sound economic policies. Second, technological development and know-how should be used as a bridge between the nations and continents to facilitate peace talks. Third, involvement of both political leaders and technical experts should be imposed to better ensure a pragmatic solution. And finally, a dedicated and independent legal organizational body is needed to adjudicate water matters on a global scale.

Although this might sound too demanding, the help of the European Union can play a crucial role due to its experience building institutions for managing the great European rivers such as the Danube and the Rhine. Being optimistic, I strongly believe that this is not impossible and that with the right spirit and with honest efforts, we can definitely make the water crisis a weapon for peace rather than an excuse for war.

Finally, I would like to end with a quote on war from Omar Bradley, ex-general of the U.S. army, which I think applies well to the context of this current water crisis: “Wars can be prevented just as surely as they can be provoked … and we who fail to prevent them must share the guilt for the dead.”

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3.4

STORIES FROM THE DEEP

How many poles are there on Earth? Most people would answer two: the North Pole and the South Pole. Mountaineers may say three, including Mount Everest as a third. Geophysicists and oceanographers, however, would answer four, adding the Mariana Trench—the deepest place on the earth.

There are more than 10 trenches around the Pacific Ocean, and some of them, such as the Mariana Trench and the Tonga Trench, lie more than 30,000 feet under the sea. In other words, if we put Mount Everest (with an elevation of 29,029 feet) into these trenches, the mountain would not even reach sea level. On March 26, 2012, James Cameron reached the bottom of the Mariana Trench in the Deepsea Challenger, submersible, inspiring others to explore. However, because of the extreme high pressure, trenches still remain unreachable in most cases, and thus remain the most mysterious places on Earth.

According to the theory of plate tectonics, ocean trenches are produced by a process called subduction. The lithosphere, the rigid outer most rocky shell of the Earth, is divided into several plates, such as the North American plate and the Pacific plate. These plates move relative to one another, determining three types of plate boundary: convergent, divergent and transformative. The divergent boundaries normally appear as mid-ocean ridges, and rocks are generated by the magma of the mantle.

In contrast, at a convergent boundary, one plate moves under another plate and sinks into the Earth’s mantle, these rocks return to the mantle. The convergent rate varies from tens to hundreds of millimeters per year. The area where two plates move towards one another and one slides underneath the other is called a subduction zone. The trench is the most observable sign of a subduction zone on the Earth’s surface. The Pacific Ocean is surrounded by a series of subduction zones, including the ones at the coasts of Japan, Alaska, Washington State, Mexico, Chile and Tonga.

Scientists have noticed that more than 90 percent of earthquakes and 75 percent of all volcanoes are in a narrow band surrounding the Pacific Ocean, and so they have named this band the Pacific Ring of Fire.

There are many unknown but interesting problems in the subduction zones, such as the dynamic process of the motion, the water flow between the mantle and the surface, and so on. But the most important issues affecting our daily lives are earthquakes and volcanoes. Scientists have noticed that more than 90 percent of earthquakes and 75 percent of all volcanoes are in a narrow band surrounding the Pacific Ocean, and so they have named this band the Pacific Ring of Fire. Modern geophysical studies reveal that this “ring” is a production of the subduction zones around the Pacific Ocean.

As can be imagined, when one plate slides beneath another, the large friction on the interface between two plates prevents this relative motion. Even though the high temperature in the mantle and the water brought with the subducting plate can facilitate the sliding process, the stress on the interface still accumulates over a long period. This stress can be released frequently as small and harmless earthquakes. However, if the stress has been accumulated for a long time without any release, a catastrophic earthquake may occur. Unfortunately, so far no one can predict when the stress will be released or what the trigger of an earthquake is. Since the subduction zone usually extends thousands of miles along the surface, once the stress is released on one end of the subduction zone, the residual stress may focus on the other end, thus causing another earthquake.

The great Christchurch earthquake in February 22, 2011, is just such a case. New Zealand is on the same subduction zone with the Tonga Trench. In September 29, 2010, three earthquakes with a magnitude of more than 7.8 occurred near Tonga, Samoa and American Samoa, all located on the north end of the Tonga subduction zone. These earthquakes and the subsequent tsunami killed 192 people. After about five months, an earthquake with magnitude of 6.3 then occurred near Christchurch, the second largest city in New Zealand, killing 185 people and destroying the entire downtown area. Seismologists believe that these earthquakes were all caused by the movement of the Pacific plate westward beneath the Australian plate.

Another product of the subducting process is the volcanic activity surrounding the Pacific Ocean. When the oceanic plate subducts, it brings a large amount of water, which has been dissolved in the minerals. As the plate sinks deeper, the increasing pressure extracts the water from the subducting plate into the mantle. This supplementary water dramatically decreases the melting point of rock and thus produces plenty of magma. This magma with lower density then rises and finally erupts, reaching the surface and forming volcanoes. If the overlying plate is another oceanic plate, the volcanoes appear as an island chain or as submarine volcanoes, such as the Japan islands and the Tonga islands. In contrast, if the overlying plate is a continent, the volcanoes form a huge volcanic mountain range, such as the Andes.

Although more earthquakes have been reported to the public recently, the total number of all earthquakes and that of big earthquakes has not increased. In other words, our Earth is behaving normally, as it always has. The seismology group from Washington University in St. Louis has been operating several research projects in the Tonga-Fiji region and the Mariana-Guam region. We use various seismological techniques to study the natures of these subduction zones, in order to better understand the earthquakes and geological evolutions of the Pacific Ring of Fire.

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The Familiar Face of the Bully Sherria Ayuandini
Social Networks in China Weijie Li
“In Between” Food and People Yunzi “Melody” Li
The Brain Drain of China Yan Liu
Human Trafficking: Looking Beneath the Surface Sasithorn Payakanate
Farmer Suicide in India BharatKumar Suthar
On the Unnecessarily Shortened Lifespans of Some Contemporary Chinese Architecture Mengfei Wu
Rebuilding Our Faith: An Urgent Challenge for China Chuanmei Zhu
THE FAMILIAR FACE OF THE BULLY

Bullying is a serious issue all around the world, but especially in the United States where it is the leading cause of suicide among young people below the age of 14. People have begun to recognize the gravity of the situation. Public figures, many of them celebrities, have started nationwide campaigns to speak out against bullying and to provide support to those who are bullied. A lot of these campaigns take the form of a Public Service Announcement (PSA), where the person on camera recounts his or her experience. Almost all of the stories retold address how that individual was bullied while growing up.

These PSAs are important. What they do is show that things do get better and that a bullied kid can grow up to be a successful and respected person. It provides hope for those who may live their lives day to day feeling helpless, and it lends support to go on living. However, we need to be cautious of the possible unintended consequences of these efforts.

Apart from sending a message of support and solidarity with the bullied, PSAs also make it clear that bullying and the bully are undesirable, if not to be despised entirely. As a consequence, “bully” and “bullying” are terms with which no one would want to associate his or her self. Furthermore, aligning with the bullied becomes alluring. Who would not root for the underdog? After all, each of us must have experienced peer pressure for not belonging enough or for not being perfect enough. Those experiences could justly be viewed as an experience of being bullied.

Yet, there is a danger to this way of thinking. Suddenly the bully becomes that other person; someone who does not have anything to do with us as a person, is not us and could not possibly be us. After all, we were the ones who were bullied! We were the good ones! Yet, studies have shown that the bullies were often once bullied themselves. Not only that, bullies sometimes do not think that what they were doing was wrong. They bully to defend themselves, because they genuinely feel the other deserves it, and sometimes, they even bully to correct what they think is in need of correction. This gets complicated as the act of bullying can take many different forms. Bullying does not solely consist of mean-spirited acts that result in the bullied person contemplating suicide. Bullying is something of a slippery slope. It starts as a mild joke, a witty comment, and without any intention of repetition, it does get repeated, then it escalates.

What this means is that bullying is closer to each and every one of us than we would like to think. The face of a bully is not always that distorted, cruel or angry face that we do not recognize. It is the face of you, it is the face of me, it is us. We are the faces of bullies and yes, we could easily be a bully at any point in time. What is even more alarming is that it is easier to “slip” and become the bully when we are convinced that we are on the side of the good. When you believe that you are the good one, you justify and rationalize your action as acceptable, even when it starts to be questionable. “I made her cry, but she deserves it. She is a mean person.” “So he was humiliated today, what about it? He scolded me in front of others just a week ago.” Before you know it, because you keep believing that you are good, you become the bully.

Public figures, many of them celebrities, have started nationwide campaigns to speak out against bullying and to provide support to those who are bullied.

Now, we can only hope that those sitting in a position of leadership will not ever see themselves as one of the good ones. With that much power to wield, we can only imagine what goodness might compel them to do. We might have a better chance on betting on a leader who realizes that they could be bad rather than on those who believe they are purely good. If only each of them and each of us realize that we are the face of imposition, of suppression, of atrocities, maybe we could then stop distancing ourselves from the label bad and start to be more aware of what we are actually doing. Being bad is unfortunately not the opposite of being good. History after all has shown that the worst of us were often those who were wishing really hard to do good.

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SOCIAL NETWORKS IN CHINA

Social networks are a phenomenon that has recently dramatically transformed the landscape of interpersonal communications on both a local and global scale. Previously, communication tended to be person to person or point to point, but in the new realm of social networks, communication has become net to net. The world suddenly has become so small that through social networks, the distance between different people has been reduced dramatically.

As in other parts of the world, China has witnessed a stunning development of its social networks. More than 30 percent of the country’s people have linked themselves to these networks. Given China’s population base, this is a very large number. And the Chinese love to use these social networks.

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In particular, a social platform known as “Weibo,” roughly the equivalent of Twitter, has become the most popular social network platform in China. Its users employ it at a high frequency, and there is a trend among users to use it even to replace other conventional means of communication such as email or phone.

While Chinese users of Weibo in many ways employ this platform as an American would use Twitter, there are also some behaviors that distinguish the two. Traditionally, for example, Chinese people tend to hide their direct feelings and true opinions and avoid expressing their opinions in face-to-face encounters. This may in part stem from the fact that China offers less freedom for public speech. Perhaps people find it a bit risky to express their opinions, preferring to restrict sharing them to more private circles. Hence, the Chinese seldom express their true thoughts in public, especially those about the country and the government.

The emergence of more public-oriented social networks, however, has brought revolutionary changes. On the one hand, people can make their voices heard online without facing real people face to face. On the other hand, voices on social networks are less subject to scrutiny and investigation. What is more important, every individual, even those at the bottom of the social hierarchy, now can express an opinion to a potentially huge audience throughout the country, as compared to the past when the right of public speech was controlled by a few people and the mainstream media.

Consequently, social networks in China have actually allowed the general public to be more vocal, which has had several consequences. First, China’s social networks are closely related to the public’s passion for discussing political and social issues. Chinese people already question the media’s role in uncovering social issues, especially the scandals of political figures and the government, and they understand the mainstream media often purposely hide the truth about issues deemed too sensitive for open discussion. Social media has quickly become a popular area for sharing information on these issues due to its convenience, efficiency, lack of agenda and broad reach. It may be surprising for some to learn that social networks have, in effect, assumed the role of the public media in China.

Another feature of Chinese life is the extraordinarily high pressure of everyday life. In China, the average person lives under tremendous pressure with limited channels for relief. Over time, that pressure can accumulate to an unbearable level. Social networks provide an ideal platform for people to release these pressures and vent their emotions. As a result, complaints are the most commonly seen contents of social networks in China. People seem to feel better just by having the chance to tell others how miserable their lives are and how much pity they deserve.

In contrast, young offspring of the wealthy and of high government officials often show off on social networks. Because of their superior status and desire to let others know about it, these people often will post articles and photos to show just how spectacularly well off they are, glorifying in the envy of others.

Another issue that preoccupies many is simply one’s friend/follower count. Some consider this number alone to be an indicator of social status: the larger the number, the higher the social value of this person. Thus these people purposely add as many friends/followers as possible or even purchase friends/followers with real money. It may sound strange, but truth can be stranger than fiction. This strong desire to show off has become a commonly held psychological pattern among the Chinese of today, and it is therefore no surprise that social networks have developed into the major outlet for personal chest beating.

Social networks perform unique functions in China, largely driven by their unique social, political and cultural environment. China is an emerging economy but an ancient country. It has many values and behaviors that differ markedly from the rest of the world. Through social networks, Chinese people have finally found an ideal channel to speak freely, to release emotions directly and to gain attention conveniently. In China, social networks are not only a pure communication tool, they serve other functions as well, some of which naturally complement the current societal system. To be sure, some major social functions have not been fully implemented or realized by the current system, due to either political reasons or cultural factors. That is why social networks in China have evolved to serve such a unique set of needs, creating not only a new landscape for communication but also for the entire society.

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“IN BETWEEN”

FOOD AND PEOPLE

My interest in understanding the relationship between foods, countries and their citizens can be traced to my first experience eating Chinese food in America. While there are some wonderful Chinese restaurants in St. Louis, they are not what I would have ever termed “Chinese.” To address this lack of authenticity, I took it upon myself to launch a “small” Chinese restaurant — my home — and then to invite friends to experience what I considered to be the authentic Chinese food experience.

Noticing that I was cooking and eating more Chinese food here than ever back home in China, I began to ask myself: Where does this particular longing for my home country’s food come from? Considering not only myself but the larger Chinese-American community, the natural corollary question was, assuming I was not alone in this experience, how is food experienced and what is its function in the Chinese-American community?

French sociologist Claude Fischler says, “If we do not know what we eat, how can we know what we are?” Put in another way, food can serve as a shared reminder of my cultural heritage and cultural experience in America, the Chinese community here could create a sense of home for me. It was for this reason I was excited when a friend offered to take me to a Chinese restaurant soon after I arrived in St. Louis.

French sociologist Claude Fischler says, “If we do not know what we eat, how can we know what we are?” Put in another way, food can serve as something of a code expressing one’s cultural identity.

Entering the restaurant, I heard an American say, “I love this Chinese restaurant, it’s very Chinese!” Some of his friends enthusiastically agreed. I was, however, less convinced and almost said, “No, a real Chinese restaurant is not like this!” The exaggerated décor of the restaurant, for example, provided a picture only of some sort of fantasized Chinese garden restaurant. Looking at the menu, I was further surprised to see many food items I had never seen before, such as “General Tso’s Chicken,” “Twice-Cooked Pork,” “Sweet & Sour Beef” and “Kung Pao Shrimp.” From an American perspective, the popularity of these dishes was logical: “General Tso’s Chicken,” for example, is a sweet, slightly spicy, deep-fried chicken, elements that all fit well with American dietary preferences. Indeed, to me the big pieces of sweetened chicken just looked like Chinese KFC chicken, re-flavored with a perceived sweet Chineseess that suited American palates. Ultimately, these dishes are not Chinese food or American food — they are new trans-Pacific creations, hybrid Chinese-American food. Therefore, finding a sense of belonging or community in a Chinese restaurant eluded me. Having been to this restaurant, I realized this was an unrealistic expectation, something dreamt of rather than realizable. However, the experience went still further for me, not only preventing a new space for belonging but also upsetting my memory and my appreciation for how China is understood by the rest of the world. This romanticized Chinese restaurant was formed from a disturbing blend of China and what Westerners imagine China to be. Instead of curing my homesickness, I actually found myself confused and out of place, a stranger in a space that was supposed to give me a taste of home.

Chinese-American literature often addresses this issue of “betweenness” in both food culture, and it can bring a deeper, fuller understanding of this phenomenon. For instance, Mei Ng’s Eating Chinese Food Naked tells a story of an Americanized Chinese girl named Ruby who goes through a journey of finding her cultural identity through food. Ruby’s mother is the quintessential traditional Chinese woman. In the beginning they both resist the food that is alien to them, Chinese food for Ruby and American food for Ruby’s mother. However, by the end of the story the mother and daughter find a harmonious meeting point, a place culturally and culinarily in between. While Ruby learns to appreciate and enjoy Chinese food, her mother also learns to integrate American food into her daily life. The generation gap is bridged through the shift of “Chineseness” and “Americaness” in their diets. In short, they establish a hybrid Chinese-American food, or what I would term “in-between” food.

Similarly, my longing for authentic Chinese food has been gradually replaced by my adaptation to Americanized Chinese food after having lived in America for these last three years. Ultimately, I have come to realize and even appreciate that the romanticized Chinese image we see is a product of an evolved idea of “Chineseness” developed for years in Chinese immigrant communities, and I no longer find fault with that. So, these days, when I hear Chinese-American friends refer to “Chop Suey” or “General Tso’s Chicken” as Chinese food, I no longer feel an urge to “correct” them as I once did. Instead, I understand that this is simply an acceptable, hybrid understanding of Chinese food. Broadly speaking, this all shows that food serves as an important means for us to understand and appreciate different cultures. Given that we all live in such a global world, I invite you to enjoy American food, to enjoy Chinese food but perhaps most particularly to enjoy — and celebrate — “in-between” food.

Yunzi “Melody” Li is in the McDonnell International Scholars Academy at Washington University in St. Louis. She received her Master of Philosophy in Translation in 2011 from the University of Hong Kong in Hong Kong. She is currently pursuing her PhD in comparative literature in the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis.
“IN BETWEEN”
FOOD AND PEOPLE

My interest in understanding the relationship between foods, countries and their citizens can be traced to my first experience eating Chinese food in America. While there are some wonderful Chinese restaurants in St. Louis, they are not what I would have ever termed “Chinese.” To address this lack of authenticity, I took it upon myself to launch a “small” Chinese restaurant — my home — and then to invite friends to experience what I considered to be the authentic Chinese food experience.

Noticing that I was cooking and eating more Chinese food here than ever back home in China, I began to ask myself: Where does this particular longing for my home — and then to invite friends to experience something dreamt of rather than realizable. However, the experience went still further for me, not only preventing a new space for belonging but also upsetting my memory and my appreciation for how China is understood by the rest of the world. This romanticized Chinese restaurant was formed from a disturbing blend of China and what Westerners imagine China to be. Instead of curing my homesickness, I actually found myself confused and out of place, a stranger in a space that was supposed to give me a taste of home.

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The prestigious journal *Science* published an interesting result from a survey done by the National Science Foundation (NSF). It shows that the most likely undergraduate alma mater for those who earned a PhD in 2006 from a U.S. university was Tsinghua University. Peking University, its neighbor in Beijing, ranked second. University of California, Berkeley was third. South Korea's Seoul National University occupied fourth place, followed by Cornell University and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Isn't this a surprising result? Someone may argue that China has a large population and maybe the two Chinese universities have far more undergrad students. However, this is not the case and, actually, the top two Chinese universities have fewer students than the other four universities mentioned above.

As an undergraduate from Tsinghua University who came to the United States for PhD training, I have witnessed a trend that an increasing number of Chinese students hope to come to the United States for higher degrees after college. Though many of them choose to complete only a master's, a great number of them are interested in doing a PhD in the field of science and engineering (S&E). What are the reasons behind this? Firstly, the United States is a developed country with the most top universities and research institutions. The United States has produced the most Nobel Prize winners and has created many innovative companies whose inventions have changed people's lives. Students like me in China believe that if they want to do research or find a job in the field of S&E, the United States is the best choice for them.

Secondly, U.S. education is different from Chinese education and has its own advantages. China's education system focuses on testing. Opportunity for students is based on test scores, which is a relatively fair and easy way to deal with lots of people. As there are so many students, the competition is very fierce. This peer pressure cultivates the virtue of a hard-work ethic. For example, students will try to do as many problems as possible to prepare for an exam to earn a better a score, and they know if they don't work hard, they will fall behind others and may be replaced.

As more and more Chinese students are going abroad to study, China has suffered one of the worst brain drains ever recorded. According to statistics by the Chinese government, for every four students who have left in the past decade, only one has returned to develop his career in China... However, China is fighting the brain drain and starting to lure top talent home.

However, Chinese education doesn't emphasize creative thinking enough. This is again due to the difficulty of processing so many people through an education system. This characteristic also is due to a culture of deep respect for elders that often overrides critical thinking. In China, there is a saying: "The protruding nail gets hammered down." In America, people tend to give awards for protruding nails. Years of study in China have prepared good foundations for students interested in S&E, and they hope to come to the United States to be better trained in an environment that encourages them to think critically, to challenge authority and to be innovative in research across disciplines.

Thirdly, for a regular Chinese student like me whose family is not rich enough to pay the tuition of an undergraduate or master's degree in the United States, doing a PhD is the only way to come here because of the scholarships provided. In the meantime, as the economy keeps steadily growing, more families in China are able to send their children abroad for bachelor's or master's degrees.

Why aren't most Americans interested in pursuing a higher degree in S&E? According to the data from the National Science Foundation, in the United States, about 4 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded in 2008 were in engineering. This compares with about 19 percent throughout Asia and 31 percent in China specifically (China has 4.3 times as many people as America). In China, S&E is highly regarded because people know that in a knowledge economy, mastering technologies will provide them with better jobs. In contrast, America has a cultural problem with science and math. These subjects are difficult pursuits requiring hard work and years of practice, yet socially they are vilified and are not paid well, especially for people working in academia. In China, people who are smart and excel are encouraged to be scientists, engineers or entrepreneurs. While in the United States, the best people are encouraged to be lawyers, businessmen and doctors, careers that offer better compensation.

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However, China is fighting the brain drain and starting to lure top talent home. Programs such as the Yangtze River Scholar Scheme and the one-thousand-talents program promise top salaries and attractive funding to elite researchers who are working overseas and willing to return to the country. The schemes have lured more than 5,000 researchers. Yigong Shi, the youngest full professor in the Department of Molecular Biology at Princeton University, won the prestigious Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator award with a $10 million grant and then rejected it, resigning his position at Princeton University to pursue his career at Tsinghua University. He then became dean of Tsinghua's School of Life Sciences and has recruited 20 more faculty since his return. The return of Dr. Shi and some other high-profile scientists is a sign that China is succeeding quickly at narrowing the gap that separates it from technologically advanced developed countries.

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING:
LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE

Does human trafficking in Missouri exist? Do we have to be concerned about this issue? Perhaps because people tend to associate human trafficking with crossing international borders, states like Missouri, located in the middle of the country, might seem immune. The reality is otherwise.

Statistics from the United States Department of Justice have shown that the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the Western District of Missouri has prosecuted more trafficking cases than any other district in the United States. Human trafficking can happen anywhere and to anyone. It is time to look beneath the surface of this hidden crime and understand how best to help law enforcement and related organizations in their fight against this travesty. For after all, human trafficking is nothing more than modern day slavery. It is one of the worst forms of oppression in the world and can come in the form of either sex trafficking, labor trafficking or both.

You might have heard or read about trafficking occurring in other countries with little awareness of its existence locally. However, there is increasing evidence of the presence of this crime right in our own backyard. The common characteristic of trafficking cases is the use of force, fraud or coercion to exploit a person for profit. According to the U.S. State Department, each year an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders. These individuals are forced into prostitution, to work in sweatshops or farms, or to labor as domestic workers, just to name a few of their destinations. An estimated 14,500 to 17,500 of these individuals are brought or lured into the United States annually by promises of legitimate jobs and better life, only to find themselves trapped in sexual slavery or other forms of involuntary servitude. It should be noted that these numbers are only approximations, as this activity is for the most part a jealously guarded secret.

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According to the Mid-Western Regional Anti-trafficking Task Force report in 2011, there were about 90 cases of human trafficking in the Midwestern region during that year. These trafficking activities caused hardship to victims’ physical, psychological and financial condition. While the budget used against trafficking is estimated at around $361 million a year worldwide, fewer than 17 percent of victims have access to any of this money.

Since the enactment of Trafficking Victim Protection Act in 2000, there have been many initiatives created to combat human trafficking in the United States and abroad. One of the most successful initiatives is the Rescue and Restore Campaign. It was launched in several cities in 2004 and 2005 to form coalitions to address the issue locally. The campaign helps raise awareness of human trafficking around the country. St. Louis is one of the cities that has one of the stronger Rescue and Restore coalitions. I was fortunate to be part of the coalition and had the opportunity not only to promote awareness but also to actively participate in the rescue of hidden victims from their captivity.

Even though there are several campaigns and projects dealing with issues of human trafficking, raising awareness is still an important strategy to combat this problem. Efforts to train law-enforcement, social service and health-care professionals in Missouri and surrounding states have been established with the goals of increasing victim identification, providing better services to survivors and punishing perpetrators. Creative ways such as art exhibitions and movie nights are also useful to increase awareness of how severe the problem of human trafficking is.

 Trafficking exists here in this country, and until we are willing to increase our vigilance and call people and businesses out for their unethical actions, it will persist or even get worse. Taking down this sordid global business and helping in the fight for people’s basic human rights is not only worth the effort but a moral imperative. It is time to learn more about human trafficking and spread the word of this terrible crime so that we, as a community, can help prevent individuals from falling into this vicious skein of oppression.

Sasithorn Payakanate was in the McDonnell International Scholars Academy at Washington University in St. Louis. She received her bachelor’s degree in political science in 2010 from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. She received her Master of Social Work degree in 2012 from the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. She is currently executive director at Bamboo Group Co. Ltd. and founder and CEO of SasP Co. Ltd in Bangkok, Thailand.
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An alarming trend has been observed over the past 20 years: Indian farmers are taking their own lives, a trend that many source in part to their inability to pay down crushing debts incurred from the purchase of genetically modified seeds. Some have blamed this on the greed of big pharmaceuticals, whose seeds promise much but whose full price tag is not immediately obvious. Others source this to reduced parcels of land, and others to reduced or eliminated subsidies, incurred through pressures of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. It is undoubtedly true that all of these factors have played a role, but the ultimate concern is that Indian farmers are committing suicide and the trend is only increasing.

The extent of this tragedy is perhaps further clouded by the official definition of who qualifies as a farmer. The National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB) defines a farmer as someone with “title to land,” which means that those who farm and kill themselves but do not have title to land do not figure in these statistics. For example, as one older farmer related: “My son ran the farm… I am 80 years old. However, the land is still in my name.” As it happened the son did not have title to the land, so when he took his own life, his death did not qualify as a farmer suicide.

Nonetheless, even making use of this wildly restrictive definition of what constitutes a farmer, the numbers are still staggering; according to the data reported by the NCRB, 270,940 “Farmers” have committed suicide since 1995, which accounts for one suicide every half hour. These averages are also not entirely reflective of the degree of the crisis. While the averages suggest a farmer suicide rate that is “only” 47 percent higher (16.3 per 100,000) than the rest of India (11.1), that average in the five predominantly agricultural regions of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is up to 300 percent higher than other regions. Furthermore, over time the suicide rate has alarmingly climbed, going from 9.3 in 1995 (lower than the national average) to 18.2 in 2006, while for male non-farmers, it has remained relatively even, going from 13.3 in 1995 to 13.9 in 2006. So what went wrong?

One belief is that over the past two decades the farming labor force has increased and cultivable land has decreased resulting in more people holding less land. These shrinking parcels of land have been well-documented: from 1960 to 2003, for example, the number of farming land holdings doubled from 51 million to 101 million while the land operated on declined from 133 million to 108 million hectares.

The main drawbacks of having a smaller farm are higher fixed costs as well as reduced bargaining ability, which in turn leads to greater difficulties in gaining access to credit and insurance. What’s more, despite the significant size of the farmer population, their interests tend to be underrepresented in economic reforms due to their lacking a unified political organization to represent their interests.

But perhaps the greatest of ironies is that due to their increasingly desperate situation, farmers in India have become increasingly malnourished. In 2004-05 about 357 million farmers of the agrarian community were undernourished, 83.1 percent of these being small-marginal farmers. In some cases, the indebted farmer, lured by the success stories and inflated claims of high-yield (but high-risk) crops, have switched to these crops, but in less suitable conditions: poorly irrigated areas, pest outbreak, poor knowledge and monsoon failure, just to name a few. When the crops fail, these farmers find themselves with no income and crushing debt. These problems are exacerbated by strong international competition from Sudan, Egypt and Israel.

Ultimately, with increasing indebtedness, poor policy implementations and exposure to global market volatilities, the Indian farmer has been pushed into something worse than a Faustian bargain — for it is ultimately no bargain at all.

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1 See for example http://www.globalresearch.ca/killer-seeds-the-devastating-impacts-of-monsanto-s-genetically-modified-seeds-in-india/28629
2 Taken from “Whose Suicide is it Anyway?” (http://www.indiatogether.org/2005/jun/psa-whosesuicide.htm).
3 Agrarian Crisis and Farmer Suicides, edited by R S Deshpande, Saroj Arora, p. 44.
FARMER SUICIDE IN INDIA

An alarming trend has been observed over the past 20 years: Indian farmers are taking their own lives, a trend that many source in part to their inability to pay down crushing debts incurred from the purchase of genetically modified seeds. Some have blamed this on the greed of big pharmaceuticals, whose seeds promise much but whose full price tag is not immediately obvious. Others source this to reduced parcels of land, and others to reduced or eliminated subsidies, incurred through pressures of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. It is undoubtedly true that all of these factors have played a role, but the ultimate concern is that Indian farmers are committing suicide and the trend is only increasing.

The extent of this tragedy is perhaps further clouded by the official definition of who qualifies as a farmer. The National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB) defines a farmer as someone with “title to land,” which means that those who farm and kill themselves but do not have title to land do not figure in these statistics. For example, as one older farmer related: “My son ran the farm...I am 80 years old. However, the land is still in my name.” As it happened the son did not have title to the land, so when he took his own life, his death did not qualify as a farmer suicide. 3

Nonetheless, even making use of this wildly restrictive definition of what constitutes a farmer, the numbers are still staggering; according to the data reported by the NCRB, 270,940 “Farmers” have committed suicide since 1995, which accounts for one suicide every half an hour. These averages are also not entirely reflective of the degree of the crisis. While the averages suggest a farmer suicide rate that is “only” 47 percent higher (16.3 per 100,000) than the rest of India (11.1), that average in the five predominantly agricultural regions of Maharashtra, Andhara Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is up to 300 percent higher than other regions. Furthermore, over time the suicide rate has alarmingly climbed, going from 9.3 in 1995 (lower than the national average) to 18.2 in 2006, while for male non-farmers, it has remained relatively even, going from 13.3 in 1995 to 13.9 in 2006. So what went wrong?

One belief is that over the past two decades the farming labor force has increased and cultivable land has decreased resulting in more people holding less land. These shrinking parcels of land have been well-documented: from 1960 to 2003, for example, the number of farming land Holdings doubled from 51 million to 101 million while the land operated on declined from 133 million to 108 million hectares. 4

The main drawbacks of having a smaller farm are higher fixed costs as well as reduced bargaining ability, which in turns leads to greater difficulties in gaining access to credit and insurance. What’s more, despite the significant size of the farmer population, their interests tend to be underrepresented in economic reforms due to their lacking a unified political organization to represent their interests.

But perhaps the greatest of ironies is that due to their increasingly desperate situation, farmers in India have become increasingly malnourished. In 2004-05 about 357 million farmers of the agrarian community were undernourished, 83.1 percent of these being small-marginal farmers. In some cases, the indebted farmer, lured by the success stories and inflated claims of high-yield (but high-risk) crops, have switched to these crops, but in less suitable conditions; poorly irrigated areas, pest outbreak, poor knowledge and monsoon failure, just to name a few. When the crops fail, these farmers find themselves with no income and crushing debt. These problems are exacerbated by strong international competition from Sudan, Egypt and Israel.

Ultimately, with increasing indebtedness, political neglect, poor policy implementations and exposure to global market volatilities, the Indian farmer has been pushed into something worse than a Faustian bargain — for it is ultimately no bargain at all.

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1 See for example http://www.globalresearch.ca/killer-seeds-the-devastating-impacts-of-monsanto-s-genetically-modified-seeds-in-india/28629
2 Taken from “Whose Suicide is it Anyway?” (http://www.indiatogether.org/2005/jun/psa-whosesui.htm).
3 Agrarian Crisis and Farmer Suicides, edited by R S Deshpande, Saroj Arora, p. 44.
ON THE UNNECESSARILY SHORTENED LIFESPANS OF SOME CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

On January 06, 2007, the Main Teaching Building at Zhejiang University was imploded only 13 years after its construction. Hundreds of students and faculty went to the site to say goodbye to the building in which they once spent countless hours studying and working. There was no compelling reason for the destruction; the official statement was simply that the university needed a more “up-to-date” building for newly purchased equipment.

This sort of premature destruction is not an isolated phenomenon in China. As a matter of fact, in the past decade, more than 90 percent of the buildings torn down in China were less than 30 years old, which is stunning when considered in light of China’s Architecture Design Code mandating a design lifespan of at least 70 years. To give some comparative reference, Britain, under its Architecture Design Code, which requires a full 100 years, enjoys an actual average building lifespan of 124 years.

This situation in China is problematic for many reasons. First, the very brief cycles of designing, bidding and construction constitute a staggering waste of manpower and material resources. Second, as building materials such as concrete and steel are non-recyclable, the process of building and rebuilding has an unnecessary and devastating effect on an environment already heavily burdened.

More seriously, the greatly shortened lifespan of buildings reflects implicit problems rooted in China’s architecture, urban design, construction and real estate industries. One of the most obvious is the low quality of raw materials, pre-cast structures that lead inevitably to a low quality, short-term structure. The Shanghai Lianhuaxue residential complex is one of the more telling examples. Designed purportedly to last 50 years, the housing complex did not last even a day before its collapse as the structure of its basement foundation failed to properly function because it was improperly constructed. Knowing that an event in the sequence of steps in construction would cause problems, the company responsible for the project carried forth nonetheless. Yet the contractor was not solely to blame. In this case, the workers, knowing the new sequence would be fatal to the structure, nonetheless continued in order to meet an unreasonable deadline set by the owner.

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From a broader perspective, the construction market in China is problematic in its restrictions in its supply chain. An owner or even a designer will often restrict a contractor’s choices, making it difficult for him to use safer materials that may come at a slightly higher price. Lacking effective inspection on the bidding process, on material and construction quality, or even management qualifications, the owner and design parties tend to insist the contractor make use of the cheapest option available. To reduce costs, contractors often try to shorten the construction period, compromising quality and building integrity. While there is no other country that can compete with China in the “efficiency” of its construction, in most cases, too many cost reductions are required to survive the bidding process. These may include exploiting the labor force or substituting good materials with substandard ones, resulting in a dangerous compromise of building integrity.

Looking at the larger picture, this phenomenon suggests problems for Chinese cities as a whole. Entering the 21st century, China is becoming a significantly more urbanized country. The urban expansion came so fast that it would seem almost out of control in some cities. Shenyang, for example, has expanded its urban area by more than 40 percent in the last 20 years, and the once-suburban residential area has become the city’s business center in the last decade. With the shift in the urban zoning code, buildings had to change accordingly. Especially after the Beijing Olympics of 2008 and the Shanghai Expo 2010, larger cities as well as smaller cities were busy rearranging their structures to accommodate their rapidly growing populations. Bearing in mind that a goal for each city is also to look attractive to both its inhabitants as well as outsiders, city planners rarely miss an opportunity to try to improve their cities’ look and feel.

It is understandable in a country developing as quickly as China, that the metabolism rates of its cities are correspondingly high. However, such a process can quickly become fraught unless it is planned and closely regulated. However, since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.), the design of a city has not been left in the hands of urban planners — it is the government, rather, that dictates such policy. In stark contrast to professional planners, local governors have interests, such as optimizing Gross Domestic Product through extra construction, a goal that may be at odds with optimizing the urban landscape.

The Chongqing Yongzhou Convention Center, for instance, was replaced by a five-star hotel only five years after its construction. It was abandoned by the Yongzhou Government because it did not bring as much profit as had been predicted.

A more balanced relationship between designer, governments, contractor, construction manager, as well as other relevant parties is clearly in order in China. On a more reassuring note, I am confident that as this problem has been noticed by many and widely discussed among the public, it will not be long before these problems are addressed. With this in mind, as a future architect excited at the prospect of working in China, I am ultimately confident that these problems will be addressed and that China’s construction industry has a bright future.

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Every day I receive news from China that shocks and saddens me, such as people selling fake "lamb" that is actually made from mouse meat, a school principal raping young students and a college student poisoning his roommate to death. I can't help but wonder: What's wrong with China?

Let's look at the social reality in China's decades of economic development. In the early 1980s, China started "Reform and Opening-Up" program and set economic development at the center. While China has experienced very rapid economic growth during this period, the Chinese people have become correspondingly more materialistic and "money-worshipping." According to an online study by Reuters in 2012, 70 percent of the Chinese people equate money with success and 80 percent of people from all over the world see China as the number one money worshipping country. Almost all the Chinese are trying to pursue as much money as he or she can, trying every possible means. In this context, many challenging and urgent social and moral problems have emerged, such as food safety, corruption, a breakdown of corporate ethics, the collapse of marital ethics, unbearable work pressure, increasing income gaps between rich and poor, and urban and rural disparity.

How do the Chinese feel living in such a country? I will give you just two examples. First, families routinely fortify their houses with thick iron bars on windows and big iron doors to prevent robbery, which to me makes houses look like prisons. Second, consider the little Yue-Yue incident in China in October 2011. This two-year-old girl was hit by a big truck on the street. While 18 people passed by, no one gave her any help. Finally an elderly woman trash collector offered aid. The injury was so severe that little Yue-Yue died after a week in the hospital.

This is not an unusual thing in today's China, and you can see how it makes me think the Chinese feel indifferent, confused, empty and insecure. China lacks love, trust, higher moral standards and forgiveness. Many scholars claim that these problems are results of an imperfect legal system, education and political institutions. I agree that these external factors matter, but I believe the key reason for this crisis lies internally. That is, we Chinese people don't have a mature spiritual faith that can guide our mind and behavior.

In my view Wu Fa Wu Tian (吴法霆), which means having no fear of law or God, is the reason why people tend to commit immoral acts and why so many social problems occur. Indeed, China has been living in a faith vacuum for the last several decades. Chairman Mao, who founded the New China, described religion as a "poison," and the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 70s almost eradicated all religious belief in China. After the Cultural Revolution, the Communist Party promoted one central belief system in China, namely, atheism based on Marxism and Communism.

However, this political belief loses its charm especially in today's society when corruption and autocracy of the Community Party pervade Chinese society. The religions of Confucianism and Buddhism have existed in China for hundreds of years but people rarely take time to seriously consider them because they are so busy earning money. Hence, even recent Premier Wen Jia-Bao used the phrase “faith crisis” in China.

Although China has experienced very rapid economic growth during this period, the Chinese people are becoming more and more materialistic and “money-worshipping.”

Chinese people nowadays have started to look for a faith. There are more people who believe in Confucianism or Buddhism. In addition, other religious beliefs have spread into China and grown rapidly in recent years, one of which is Christianity. Christianity, which was once thought to be a Western faith, is gaining popularity in China. It is especially appealing to the Chinese because of its message about love, righteousness and forgiveness, which are all longed for.

Despite the obvious need for some sort of faith to guide people's lives, the Chinese government has taken strict control and sometimes even oppressed the development of religion. Stories of police preventing believers from worshipping in church are reported. Also, there are still many Chinese people who resist having any faith in an environment of atheism and materialism. I believe human beings not only have material needs but also spiritual needs. Rebuilding faith is an urgent challenge that China faces today, and it is a key solution to the many social and moral problems in China. The Chinese government and people need to work together to build faiths that are good for the nation and people. Appreciating and welcoming faith is the first step!
REBUILDING OUR FAITH:
AN URGENT CHALLENGE
CHINA FACES

Every day I receive news from China that shocks and saddens me, such as people selling fake “lamb” that is actually made from mouse meat, a school principal raping young students and a college student poisoning his roommate to death. I can’t help but wonder: What’s wrong with China?

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Diploma

Πανηγυρίς
εστὶ τῆς
ψυχῆς τῇ
παιδείᾳ
DIPLÔMA

Πανηγυρις
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