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Case 1: Diagnosing Public Figures

In January 2020, a professor of psychiatry at Yale University, Dr. Bandy X. Lee, had a few things to say about Alan M. Dershowitz's claims about his sex life. After being questioned in 2019 about his connections to the accused sex trafficker, Jeffrey Epstein, Dershowitz told a reporter that he had a "perfect, perfect sex life" with his wife.

Dershowitz, professor emeritus of Harvard University, is a well-known free speech advocate and was one of the attorneys on the defense team for President Trump's first impeachment trial in 2020. Dr. Lee concluded that Dershowitz's comment was odd. "Alan Dershowitz's employing the odd use of 'perfect' might be dismissed as an ordinary influence in most contexts," she said. "However, given the severity and spread of 'shared psychosis' among just about all of Donald Trump's followers, a different scenario is more likely." She compared Dershowitz's use of the word "perfect" to the way Trump had described his "perfect" phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. That phone call was the leading cause of Trump's first impeachment trial. Previously, Dr. Lee had tweeted about Trump's "grandiosity and delusional-level impunity."

Within days of the January tweet, Mr. Dershowitz filed a complaint with Yale University, accusing Dr. Lee of publicly diagnosing him as psychotic based on nothing more than his publicly-stated legal and political views. He said that Dr. Lee's behavior violated the American Psychiatric Association's Goldwater Rule. Dr. Lee's annually-contracted teaching position at Yale was allowed to lapse in May of 2020 without the automatic reappointment she had come to expect.

Karen Peart, a spokesperson of Yale University, said, "Dr. Lee was a voluntary faculty member in the School of Medicine, and the denial of her reappointment followed Yale's policies and practices." Peart pointed out that voluntary faculty members do not have the protections of those in paid positions. "Voluntary faculty members are unpaid," she said, "But, in exchange for up to four hours of departmentally sanctioned teaching activity per week, they receive a Yale faculty affiliation."

From the time that Donald Trump was elected president in 2016, Lee had been leading a movement to shed light on what she described as Trump's dangerous mental condition. Lee's compiled essays by mental health professionals appeared in a book, *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*, published less than a year after the election. In December, 2019, Dr. Lee submitted a petition to US Congress signed by 350 mental health professionals claiming that the President had the "real potential to become ever more dangerous, a threat to the safety of our nation." In an email to the *New Haven Register*, Lee wrote, "As a violence scholar, I projected that Donald Trump was dangerous, not as much for specific acts of violence but for the groundwork he would lay for a culture of violence that would then give rise to epidemics of

suicides, homicides, and mass violence. Although his election in the first place served as a barometer for a poor state of collective mental health, once in office, he vastly exacerbated and legitimized violence.”

Some people, including Dershowitz, argue that it was a violation of The Goldwater Rule for Dr. Lee to diagnose Trump as having a mental illness without having a professional medical relationship with him.

The Goldwater Rule was named for US Senator Barry Goldwater, the 1964 Republican presidential nominee. During the campaign, *Fact* magazine published an article in which they reached out to 12,356 US psychiatrists about the psychological fitness of the presidential candidate. Half of the 2400 psychiatrists who responded either said that Goldwater was fit or that they didn't have enough information to make that call. The other half said that Goldwater was not fit to be president. The cover art read, “1,189 Psychiatrists Say Goldwater Is Psychologically Unfit To Be President!”

Goldwater successfully sued *Fact* magazine for defamation, putting the publication out of business.

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association began including a section in their Code of Ethics that warned psychiatrists against diagnosing any person, including public figures, whom they have not personally examined. Section 7.3 states, “On occasion, psychiatrists are asked for an opinion about an individual in the light of public attention or who has disclosed information about himself/herself through public media. In such circumstances, a psychiatrist may share his or her expertise about psychiatric issues in general with the public. However, it is unethical for a psychiatrist to offer a professional opinion unless he or she has conducted an examination and has been granted proper authorization for such a statement.” In other words, the public official must consent to the psychiatrist's disclosure of their professional opinion.

In March, 2017, the American Psychiatric Association reaffirmed its support for The Goldwater Rule, saying that what was recognized as unethical in 1964 remained unethical more than fifty years later.

Dr. Lee, who was not a member of the American Psychiatric Association at the time of her public statements, told the *Yale Daily News* that the APA's reaffirmation of The Goldwater Rule was an attempt to “silence psychiatrists” and described it as “alarming and unacceptable.”

From an idea suggested by graduate student Alessandra Casanova Silva

Case 2: No Bombs Bursting in Air?

We Americans love our fireworks. We shoot them off for New Year's Eve, Labor Day, Memorial Day, personal birthdays, and sometimes just for the heck of it. But the most fireworks-happy day of all is Independence Day. Consumption of fireworks has increased significantly over the last twenty years. Interestingly, though, during that period, the consumption of display fireworks (for public displays) dropped from 50.6 million pounds to 18.7 million pounds, while that of consumer fireworks (for home use) skyrocketed, so to speak, from 102 million pounds to 385.8 million pounds.

The first record of fireworks came from the Han Dynasty in China, 202 BCE – 220 CE, and consisted of bamboo stalks that popped when thrown in a fire. But, in the late Tang Dynasty (618 – 907) the Chinese discovered a formula for gunpowder, and during the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279) things really took off. Since that time, fireworks have been used around the world at public celebrations. There have been numerous advances over the centuries in the military use of gunpowder as well as their celebratory use. Because of the close connection between fireworks and weaponry, it is not surprising that one common use of fireworks has been to celebrate military victories. The lyrics of the US National Anthem declare, “And the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.” It seems to many that the celebration of the American War of Independence would almost require a patriotic display of rockets and bombs.

Everyone knows that fireworks are dangerous. Each year, many injuries take place due to fireworks-related accidents. For example, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, during the calendar year of 2020, there were an estimated 15,600 such injuries treated in US hospitals, 10,300 of which occurred during the one-month period between June 21 and July 21. Furthermore, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), in 2018, there were an estimated 19,500 fires started by fireworks. Although it doesn't make the news very often, many people know from personal experience that animals can become frightened or disoriented at the sound of fireworks. Pets wander off lost or cower under cover. What fewer people know or think about is that Fourth of July celebrations can be very stressful to victims of gun violence and to veterans of war suffering from post-traumatic stress. In the case of veterans, it is more often the unexpectedness of an explosion than the noise that triggers a response.

On social media recently, various claims have been made about “noiseless” fireworks as a solution to the problems that traditional fireworks cause for animals and sensitive humans. However, such claims are somewhat deceptive. There has been no major breakthrough in pyrotechnic science allowing huge bursts to light up the sky without making a sound. In fact, many existing fireworks, such as Roman candles or sparklers are relatively quiet, but are not really suitable as display fireworks.

Major public fireworks displays are quite expensive and last a short amount of time, but people often shoot off their own fireworks randomly for days before and after a holiday. Discussions on social media that start with a “please don’t go crazy with your fireworks this year,” often become a heated exchange about people needing to get some earplugs or keep their pets indoors, and resentment at being told to change anything about the way they celebrate just because it might bother someone else. Laws vary greatly from one state to another, but, according to the NFPA, the only state in the United States that banned all consumer fireworks as of June, 2019, was Massachusetts.

Case 3: Dungeons and Racists

US game companies producing role-playing games (RPGs) and video games have long fielded complaints about sexism and racism, and RPGs and video games in the United States have been dominated in production and consumption by white males. Even though the gamer demographic has broadened over the years, the gamer stereotype remains male and white.

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) was the first commercially available RPG, dating to 1974 and published by TSR. The RPG is currently published by Wizards of the Coast (WotC), a Hasbro subsidiary since 1999. For most of the game’s history, the white male gamer stereotype was on point, as female-identifying players and non-white players were few and far between. Although the gender demographics of D&D players has changed drastically over the years, with female-identifying players approaching 40 percent, according to WotC, D&D players are still predominantly white.

The consumer base for many products is skewed towards a particular demographic, but the criticism of fantasy games like D&D is that people of color and female-identifying players have been routinely excluded from the game. The main method of exclusion has been by perpetuating harmful and degrading stereotypes of race and gender. In particular, the “races” of D&D that most closely resemble non-white cultures and ethnicities are typically construed as “evil” or criminal, like Drow, Orcs, Goblins, Vistani, Yuan-ti, and others.

According to a January 2020 article in *Wired* magazine, in light of more widespread recognition of racial prejudice, injustice, and violence, WotC announced an effort to remove what some critics call “racial essentialism,” or having the moral qualities of game characters dictated by their supposed genetics. If you encounter a Drow character in the game, for example, that character will be evil, unless the dungeon master has bent the game rules a bit. Players choosing to be an Orc character would get a negative modifier to Intelligence and a bonus to Strength, because Orcs as a race are large, strong, and dumb. Therefore, in their effort to address the history of racism that many critics perceive D&D to instantiate, WotC has announced that future editions of the game will eliminate such race-based statistics.

One D&D race that has received particular attention is the Vistani, who are predominantly depicted in the Ravenloft world source material and who are rather clearly based upon the Romani peoples. Vistani are described as nomadic people of neutral alignment and as a subjugated race who are universally distrusted by all others, as demonstrated by the large negative reaction modifier for interactions with non-Vistanis. WotC recently announced it will remove or reduce references to the Vistani's affinity for alcohol, superstitions, and thievery. Such efforts are not without criticism, however, as some argue that such changes will barely scratch the surface of the racism built into the game. Others criticize these changes to game mechanics for making little sense: D&D is a *fantasy* world, and such prejudices don't necessarily carry over to the real world. After all, magic, mythical creatures, and talking nonhumans populate D&D, making it rather significantly divergent from the real world.

Co-authored by Sophia McWilliams, Dungeon Master and Communications major at Berea College

Case 4: Trans-Rat Race

Rodents such as rats and mice have been used in medical research for over 150 years. One could even argue that rodents are a linchpin to the medical marvels and advances we have today. Naturally, many countries have adopted laws or guidelines for the proper use and treatment of laboratory animals. Some widely accepted animal-rights regulations include requirements that the use of laboratory animals should be necessary, the animal should not experience undue or unnecessary pain or suffering, and science and humanity will benefit from the research.

China is the world's largest producer of scientific research. Recently a team of Chinese scientists broke ground on a transformational question: Can a male gestate a fetus? To answer this question scientists used forty-six pairs of rats. Each rat pair consisted of a castrated male and a healthy female. The rats were surgically conjoined to share the same bloodstream and hormones. Eight weeks later the uteri of the female rats were transplanted into the conjoined male counterpart. After another eight weeks, embryos were implanted into the transplanted uteri. A total of 842 embryos were used across the forty-six pairs of rats resulting in a grand total of only ten rat cubs which survived until adulthood. At the end of the study, all of the rats were euthanized. Results suggest that it is possible for a male to carry a fetus full term, but the likelihood of a live healthy birth is less than 4 percent.

Reaction, both pro and con, to the research has been strong. In fact, the authors of the study at first requested to retract the manuscript but then rescinded the retraction request. When asked about their work, the research team responded in part by saying, "to be honest, we did nothing wrong, just performed animal experiments." They added, "we are just ordinary scientific

researchers who do experiments. We also plead to the outside world not to bring issues other than scientific problems into scientific research.”

The research team viewed the science as a step forward in better understanding reproductive biology, claiming that the data suggests a fetus can only develop when pregnancy hormones are in the blood. Some groups think this could be a step forward for transgender rights by eventually providing an option for males and transgender women to receive a donor uterus and carry a child to full term.

Case 5: One Hundred Seconds

For the last seventy-five years, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has published a statement about the current threats to the existence of the human race. They chose the metaphor of a clock to express the urgency of these threats: Midnight represents the cataclysmic end of civilization brought on by human activities, and the number of minutes until midnight represents how imminent that cataclysm has become. The first so-called Doomsday Clock was set, in 1947, at seven minutes till midnight, based on concern over the emergence of nuclear weaponry.

Unlike time itself, existential threats do not advance irreversibly. By 1953, both the United States and the Soviet Union had tested their first thermonuclear devices, and the hands of the Doomsday Clock were reset to two minutes before midnight. Over the next several decades, the settings have fluctuated to reflect the ebb and flow of international tensions. When the Soviet Union and the United States signed the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963, the clock backed off to twelve minutes before midnight. But by the end of the 1960s, with the entry of the United States into the Vietnam War, the Indo-Pakistan War, the Six-Day War, and the acquisition of nuclear weapons by China and France, the clock moved forward to seven minutes before midnight. In the early 1980s, cold-war tensions increased so much that the clock advanced to three minutes before midnight. But the dissolution of the Soviet Union suddenly backed the clock up to seventeen minutes before midnight.

In recent years, the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* has recognized more threats to our existence than simple nuclear holocaust. Threats considered now in the assessment include climate change and disruptive technologies. Among the latter are developments in biological weapons, cyberwarfare, and the spread of misinformation.

The Doomsday Clock has had a place in the popular imagination. “Seven minutes to midnight” (Wah! Heat), “2 minutes to midnight” (Iron Maiden), and “Minutes to midnight” (Midnight Oil) are song titles that reference then-current changes to the clock’s settings. The *Watchmen* graphic novel series and its movie and television spin-offs use it as a recurrent visual theme.

The Doomsday Clock is a metaphor, of course, not a precise measurement of anything. It is an assessment of the state of the world, designed to spur more people to take the dangers of our current world seriously and take active steps to mitigate those dangers. Numerous people have criticized the *Bulletin's* use of the clock as subjective, fear-mongering, and political. It has been accused of focusing too much on the negative side of technologies while ignoring the positive side. In his book, *Enlightenment Now*, Steven Pinker calls the Doomsday Clock a “gimmick” and a “political stunt.” In response, Rachel Bronson, the *Bulletin's* president and CEO, wrote “Come join us, Steven Pinker. We welcome you to the discussion. There is a seat at our table.”

On January 27, 2021, the Doomsday Clock was reset to one hundred seconds before midnight.

Case 6: Lawns, the Untold Story

Who doesn't enjoy a well-tended lawn, that soft carpet of grass that practically begs to be caressed and rolled in? It's a pretty picture that belies a \$40-billion annual price tag and long list of environmental assaults.

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, we use three trillion gallons of water every year, much of it coming from steadily depleting aquifers. That's in addition to seven hundred million pounds of fertilizer to keep grass green and the two hundred million gallons of gasoline we need to run mowers over our yards for an average of seventy-three hours a year.

“It is depressing isn't it to drive through these miles and miles of suburban subdivisions and just see this monoculture. A monoculture by its very definition is not healthy,” said Benjamin Vogt, a landscape designer in an interview on the podcast, “Mothering Earth.” Vogt is author of the book, *A New Garden Ethic*. “And then we go and we slather fertilizers and herbicides and pesticides all over it, which makes it even worse. Especially when rainfall runs off of it into our storm drains and our ponds and our lakes and our rivers.”

The *Guardian* newspaper has reported that lawns, not agriculture, are the biggest irrigated crop in the United States. Runoff from residential areas and farms in thirty-two states are carried away by the Mississippi River and deposited in the Gulf of Mexico where hypoxia, low oxygen levels caused by fertilizer-contaminated water, has created a dead zone covering up to seven thousand square miles.

One solution, if not *the* solution, according to Vogt, would be to replace traditional turf grasses, which are non-native species for the most part, with native ground cover, herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees. These will nourish and support endangered pollinating insects, birds, and other wildlife, whereas grasses that need regular mowing do not.

Before that could happen, many municipal ordinances regarding residential and commercial landscaping, as well as homeowner association restrictions, would have to change. Most current rules require maintaining traditional lawns and impose fines for violations. One way to succeed at overturning those regulations is to follow the example of advocates for natural landscapes in Montgomery County, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C. They were able to convince their county council to overturn its nuisance rules, arguing that replacing lawns with native plants helped improve air quality.

Of course, to a lesser extent, lawns can also help trap CO₂. That is the first of five benefits of lawns touted by Scott's, the maker of lawn care products. It also credits lawns with reducing stormwater runoff, reducing noise pollution, helping to lower air temperatures, and improving soil structure by enabling it to hold more water. They also provide spaces for children and adults to relax and enjoy nature and outdoor activities, which more than likely do not include mowing the lawn.

Case 7: Unspoken Hate Speech

In the recent past, important concepts such as race, identity, and equity have become ever richer topics of discussion. Events such as the George Floyd murder, the Black Lives Matter movement, anti-semitism, and attacks on Asian-Americans highlight the unpleasant fact that not all groups of people get along, and yes, some social groups even engage openly in hateful speech and actions.

Kevin K. Karbach, a student of good conduct and in good academic standing at his university, openly self-identified a year ago as a member of a hate group aligned with ill will and violent, discriminatory behavior. Coincidentally, some unknown person has been distributing propaganda promoting the group and its messages at various points throughout the campus including, dorms, hallways, restrooms, and common areas. When one wall-posting is immediately removed from one location, another reappears overnight at another location. Kevin seems amused at the school's efforts to stamp out this messaging, but has not admitted to being the culprit. Furthermore, he has never directly threatened or harmed anyone, either verbally or physically, in the campus community. Nevertheless, in the wake of recent national events, several campus community members are reporting stress, fear, and anxiety about Kevin being on campus at all. His very presence is distressing not just to students, but also to faculty and staff who feel targeted by the group. Kevin's presence creates for these people an ominous undertone, which, some claim, has negatively affected the learning environment.

The counseling service on campus has documented a significant increase in students reporting higher-than-normal levels of anxiety and fear, usually tied back to Kevin. Since he has to date done nothing to warrant corrective action, however, the administration's hands are tied.

One approach to addressing the tension, suggested by the Vice President of Student Affairs, would be to create a "Free-Speech Zone," in which people would be encouraged to express controversial views, facilitated by a trained person who could direct the conversations into constructive lines and prevent escalations. While this sounds appealing, critics argue that its effect would probably not be to promote free speech at all, but rather to suppress it across the rest of campus.

Case 8: The Oldest Story Ever Stolen

When Steve Green, CEO of Hobby Lobby, the crafts store chain, won a \$1.67 million dollar auction in 2014 for a four-thousand-year-old Mesopotamian clay tablet, he had wanted it to go on display at the Bible Museum in Washington, D.C. Instead, it and thousands of other artifacts have been sent back to the countries from which they were stolen.

The tablet turned out to contain a small piece of the five-part, epic poem, *Gilgamesh*, the oldest known literature in the world, written sometime in the second millennium BCE. The tablet, only six inches by five inches, contains part of the story of a dream Gilgamesh confides to his mother. The reason it was of interest to Green and the curators of the Bible Museum is because it conveys many of the same story elements contained in the Bible's book of Genesis, specifically the story about Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden.

But after receiving that clay tablet and thousands of other artifacts that had disappeared from Egypt and Iraq, the staff at the Bible Museum discovered a problem. The relics' journeys from the Middle East to D.C. had come by way of a century-old, illegal antiquities market in which millions of dollars worth of stolen artifacts are sold every year. Many of those items had been looted from the National Museum of Iraq after the American invasion in 2003. Eventually, the United States Department of Justice confirmed their illegal origins and ruled that they should be returned by Hobby Lobby and the Museum of the Bible.

"My goal was always to protect, preserve, study, and share cultural property with the world," Green has been quoted in published reports. "That goal has not changed, but after some early missteps, I made the decision many years ago that, moving forward, I would only acquire items with reliable, documented provenance. Furthermore, if I learn of other items in the collection for which another person or entity has a better claim, I will continue to do the right thing with those items."

In January of 2021, Green announced the Bible Museum had returned eight thousand artifacts to the National Museum of Iraq and would subsequently send others including the *Gilgamesh* tablet. Hobby Lobby, at the same time, is suing Christie's of London and an individual antiques dealer for selling artifacts illegally.

Case 9: Faces in the Crowd

Police in several cities, including New York and Miami, used facial-recognition software to identify people who allegedly engaged in criminal activity during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. For example, Miami police used Clearview AI software to identify a woman in a Miami protest who allegedly threw a rock at a police officer in May, injuring him. In the arrest report, according to the woman's attorney, there is no mention of the software, only that the suspect was identified "through investigative means."

Facial-recognition software is widely used in other places around the world, including China and the U.K., but the United States is just beginning to explore the use of the software, the accuracy, and whether any legal limitations of privacy apply. Clearview AI claims a database of more than three billion images culled from the Internet, including social media sites. The attorney for the Miami woman who was arrested said that they have not been told where the police or Clearview AI obtained her image or even if the comparative image is of her. Without knowing the origin of the identifying images, those who are identified cannot know if the photograph was taken in private or if the picture was posted without her permission. A few January 6 protesters have made similar arguments.

Facial-recognition software is often inaccurate. Joy Buolamwini, a professor at MIT, found that the software had a gender and skin-color bias. She found that the primary database is based on visual aspects of white males, making the results less certain for people of color and females. The National Institute of Standards and Technology found that facial-recognition systems it tested had the highest accuracy when identifying white men but were ten to a hundred times more likely to make mistakes with Black, Asian, or Native American faces.

Despite the inaccuracies, many law enforcement agencies continue to use the software, sometimes leading to wrongful arrests. Civil rights organizations have already sided against facial-recognition software and are asking for state and federal regulation to restrict the use of these systems. Some states, including California, Washington, Idaho, Texas, and Illinois are already regulating or banning their use altogether.

From an idea suggested by graduate student Elizabeth Fauber

Case 10: AI@war.mil

China is reportedly making progress in the development of artificial intelligence (AI) for its growing military, perhaps surpassing the United States. That development has the US Department of Defense's full attention as it uses AI in a number of different ways, such as a control system for swarms of drones and robots in combat.

The Global Information Dominance Experiments (GIDE) even uses AI predictively, combining satellite imagery, intelligence reports, and remote sensors to give military commanders and politicians a heads-up before circumstances develop into dangerous events. According to US Air Force General Glen Vanherck, this could alert US leaders to volatile situations days in advance. GIDE benefits from AI, but ultimate decisions remain in the hands of real humans. If the information is faulty or has been compromised, then whatever decisions are predicated on them could be poor.

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is working on a number of other AI applications, including one for live combat situations that are too complex and fast moving for humans to make good decisions. One test of the system, reported in *Wired* magazine, involved dozens of drones and tank-like robots in a hunt for "terrorists" hiding among several buildings. The machines were tasked to "find and eliminate" the suspected bad guys. Although the results were not announced, the goal would presumably be to target real terrorists while ignoring innocent civilians. But AI is not perfect, and DARPA research has shown it can develop biases and behave in unexpected ways such as mistaking civilian clothes for military uniforms. Testing by DARPA's Joint Artificial Intelligence Center has shown that AI can be susceptible to tampering, which underlines the high stakes in the race for AI supremacy between the United States and China.

In their book, *2034: A Novel of the Next World War*, Elliott Ackerman and Admiral James Stavridis speculate that China may win a battle while everyone loses the war if it infiltrates and compromises American command and control networks and satellite GPS systems. Such a breach could leave the United States with a moral dilemma: Either accept defeat or resort to nuclear weapons. In the latter case, every nation would be a loser and no amount of AI would make a difference.

Case 11: Billionaires in Space

Once upon a time, three very rich men wanted to go into space: Bezos, Branson, and Musk. At the turn of the millennium, Jeff Bezos was the first to enter the rocket-launching business by founding Blue Origin. Then, two years later, Elon Musk founded SpaceX, and two years after that Sir Richard Branson started Virgin Galactic.

Musk's SpaceX has won contracts with NASA and commercial companies, launching satellites and sending supplies and astronauts to the International Space Station. Bezos and Branson both proved last year that space tourism is possible by taking rocket rides beyond the Earth's atmosphere. Altogether, the three men have sunk a sizable portion of their combined \$400 billion net worth into their space companies.

Of the three, Sir Richard Branson, a British entrepreneur, seems to be satisfied, for the moment at least, with providing rides to the edge of space and a few minutes of weightlessness for a mere \$250,000 per person. As he told the hosts of the television talk show, *The View*, “Imagine a world where people of all ages, all backgrounds, from anywhere, or any gender or any ethnicity, have equal access to space. And they will, in turn, inspire us back here on Earth.”

Both Musk and Bezos, however, are serious about leading the way to exploring deep space. Musk is said to have his sights set on Mars and even making the trip himself when it’s practical and safe. “I’ve said I want to die on Mars,” he is quoted as saying. “Just not on impact.”

SpaceX has proven its ability to deliver for the United States space program. It has successfully landed and reused rocket boosters and crew modules. It has successfully competed for government projects against other NASA contractors such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Pratt & Whitney, and Aerojet Rocketdyne.

Not everyone is on board with these efforts. Critics point out that there would be no need to escape Earth if climate change could be slowed. True, Elon Musk, multitasker that he is, has created a company that makes electric cars and owns a manufacturer of residential and commercial solar energy systems. However, according to media reports, he and Bezos have been enjoying federal tax rates of from one to three percent in recent years.

As Adam Schiff tweeted, on July 20, 2021: “Listen, I’m all for space exploration and it must have been an amazing view. But maybe—and I’m just spitballing here—if Amazon and other companies paid their fair share in taxes, we could lift all kids—if not into space—at least out of poverty. Sincerely, Earthlings.”

Case 12: Reporting Creepiness

Law enforcement agencies of all sorts promulgate the “See something, say something” mantra, in an attempt to get the average citizen to become hypervigilant in watching for illegal activities. In a similar vein, many colleges and universities focus on training incoming students to report “problematic” behaviors in order to anticipate harassment and related conduct issues. In an effort to support and provide resources to students who may be harmed by the words and actions of others, many campuses have developed bystander programming that encourages students to report any and all instances of potentially harmful behavior, especially behavior that could fall under Title IX legislation.

While the ideal would be for all students to feel safe and respected on campus, awareness campaigns that encourage the reporting of *all unusual* behaviors sometimes harm an already marginalized group of students. On some campuses, for instance, student affairs administrators

have been surprised that the awareness campaigns have resulted in many reports in which students with disabilities were the main subject. Perhaps this result shouldn't be surprising. As one student conduct administrator explained, students who identify as having certain types of disabilities are not as adept at reading social, verbal, or physical cues as students who do not so identify. Students with communication or social challenges, for instance, have sometimes found their behavior reported by their peers as "stalkerish" or "creepy." Students sometimes reported classmates with disabilities for making them feel uncomfortable by excessively staring, following them after class to try to talk, or persisting in contact even though the reporting student thought they had made their discomfort clear. When asked whether they told the other student to leave them alone or to stop staring at them, the aggrieved student often reported having been uncomfortable about saying anything or having been scared of the other student. In such cases, the student affairs administrators receiving these reports had to determine how to handle the seemingly competing interests of the scared and uncomfortable students as well as those who faced social and communication challenges.

Although many disabilities are visible or identifiable, many others are mostly invisible. Persons whose disabilities are mostly invisible may have some control over who knows about their disability, whereas those with identifiable disabilities, like those requiring a wheelchair, for example, do not have the same level of privacy.

Persons with both identifiable and invisible disabilities frequently meet with negative affective responses from others. According to research on the aesthetics of disability, many people who do not identify as having disabilities will express "discomfort" when confronted by someone with a disability. It could be argued that this "discomfort" may seem similar to the feelings expressed by survivors of sexual misconduct when in the presence of someone who acts in a way they find triggering, like staring or following or just seeming to be "creepy."

Case 13: Sales from the Crypt

CryptoPunks are a set of ten thousand primitive digital images that only exist as non-fungible tokens (NFTs) or pieces of code in the blockchain environment of Ethereum. The complete set was released as an experiment by Larva Labs in June, 2017. Anyone who wanted one could claim it for free, and they were snatched up fairly quickly. Because CryptoPunks are NFTs, they are unique, their ownership is clear, and they can be transferred from one owner to another. While copies may be made of any CryptoPunk, they are just that, copies. The original work of art itself is distinct, with a clear lineage of ownership.

Each CryptoPunk is a highly pixelated cartoon image of a head, a mere 24 x 24 pixels in size. There are five basic types, male, female, zombie, ape, and alien, with males being the most common (6,039) and aliens being the rarest (9). There are over eighty possible attributes, such as

a headband, a smile, welding goggles, and so forth. Each Punk can have up to seven attributes, although most have only two or three. These tiny digital works of art cannot be displayed on a wall. In fact, you can hardly do anything with them but buy, sell, or trade them. But they are scarce, since the technology, once set in motion, prevents any more from being created. It is their scarcity that prompted the experiment in the first place and also what has driven sales since their first release.

Yes, there is an active market for CryptoPunks. As of the writing of this case, the most expensive purchases were made on March 11, 2021 for two of the nine alien Punks. CryptoPunk #3100 was bought by address 0x7b8961 and #7804 was bought by address 0xf4b4a5, for the price of 42K ETH (approximately \$7.58 million) each. The cheapest CryptoPunk currently for sale has a price tag of \$213,719. Since CryptoPunks were first released, they have generated a total of \$1.82 billion in sales.

The CryptoPunk experiment went a long way toward establishing the possibility of a purely electronic art market in which NFTs are bought with cryptocurrency. This December, the super rich emerged from their pandemic-induced isolation wealthier than before and eager to socialize and buy really expensive stuff, and to attend one of the year's most prestigious art fairs, Art Basel Miami Beach. There, the art world collided with the cryptocurrency world, turning a handful of starving digital artists into instant millionaires.

In the past, only the rich could afford original art, and museums were the general public's only access. The allure of electronic publishing had always been that it would make images, music, literature, and other creative works so inexpensive it would democratize high culture. But the irony of crypto art is that something that costs nothing to produce or reproduce can now be locked away securely from all but the ultra-wealthy. And, seemingly, that kind of scarcity is all it takes to fuel enough envy to drive a square of 576 pixels from \$0 to over \$7 million.

Case 14: Arch Enemies?

Most people only know of Arches National Park in Utah through the image of its iconic sandstone formation, Delicate Arch, on their screensaver. But, after months of the pandemic, the park has become something of a mecca for the cabin feverish. It has become so popular in fact, that Arches often reaches full capacity by 8:00 a.m., at which point the park entrance must be closed. These closures can last up to five hours leaving visitors, many of whom come from far away, temporarily shut out of the park. Such closures were intended for only the busiest holiday weekends, of course, but they happened in 2021 nearly every day from March through the summer.

Since its inception, the National Park Service has had a dual mission. On the one hand, it promotes the use and enjoyment of the country's iconic cultural, historic, and natural places. On the other hand, it seeks to preserve those places unimpaired for future generations. But many of these new visitors, refugees from the crowded cities, are unfamiliar with national parks, with the dry conditions in Utah, and with the dangers of nature. As Mary McGann, chair of the Grand County Commission, told NPR, "We're having a lot of problems with fire rings, with human waste. We've even gotten pictures of campers dumping their sewage right there."

The city of Moab, outside the gates of Arches, has been overrun with tourists. The city had long been a mining town until it began marketing itself to tourists. Kerry Kelly, an assistant professor at the University of Utah and a part-time Moabite tells NPR, "Basically any flat spot on a busy weekend people are camped there, even if [it's] right next to the no camping sign." Residents of Moab successfully lobbied state lawmakers to allow them to use their hotel tax money to advertise to tourists. Now, state law requires most hotel tax money to be spent in that way, and Moabites are asking state lawmakers for more flexibility in how they can spend these funds—on maintenance, for instance.

National awareness of Arches may be due in part to Edward Abbey, who, in the 1950s, spent two years as a park ranger at what was then called Arches National Monument. A decade later, he turned his copious notes into an influential work of environmental literature, *Desert Solitaire*. In one passage, he describes an ominous encounter with a survey crew, sent to lay out a paved road into the park.

Don't worry, they said, this road will be built. I'm worried, I said. Look, the party chief explained, you need this road. He was a pleasant-mannered, soft-spoken civil engineer with an unquestioning dedication to his work. A very dangerous man. Who needs it? I said; we get very few tourists in this park. That's why you need it, the engineer explained patiently; look, he said, when this road is built you'll get ten, twenty, thirty times as many tourists in here as you get now. His men nodded in solemn agreement, and he stared at me intently, waiting to see what possible answer I could have to that.

"Have some more water," I said. I had an answer all right but I was saving it for later. I knew that I was dealing with a madman.

Co-authored by Matthew Mangum, Clinical Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University – San Antonio

Case 15: Birds Aren't Real

The Birds Aren't Real movement exists to spread awareness that the U.S. Government genocided over 12 Billion birds from 1959-2001, and replaced these birds with surveillance drone replicas, which still watch us every day. Once a preventative cause, our initial goal was to stop the forced extinction of real birds. Unfortunately this was unsuccessful, and the government has since replaced every living bird with robotic replicas. Now our movement's prerogative is to make everyone aware of this fact.

So reads the message on the homepage of the website, birdsarentreal.com. But is Birds Aren't Real real?

In his book, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, Yuval Noah Harari claims that cultural myths are what make humans, more than any other animal on earth, able to exist and interact in societies composed of millions of individuals. Our ability to share beliefs in myths, legends, and other imaginary constructs has enabled us to band together with those outside our immediate families, neighborhoods, and local environments.

How old were you when you discovered that Santa Claus wasn't a real person? The Tooth Fairy? Easter Bunny? Did it make you question your parents' veracity or wonder why they had been lying to you? And why were so many people outside your family promulgating the same stories? For most, these unmaskings are only the first few of life's psychological speed bumps. These minor myths are accepted and then, once exposed, tucked away in the vault of childhood memories. Later in life, we encounter other stories that initiate us into the cultures that define the outlines of our lives: Religion, tribalism, nationality, history, science, and so forth. Some may be true, some not.

However, when ignorance, fear, and gossip come together to amplify conspiracy theories across social media, they can create divisions within groups and families and splinter the online population into various tribal segments marinating in a sauce of misinformation. Think of *QAnon*, for instance. Born on the Internet in 2017, it purported to expose a plot by pedophile Democrats to take over the government, and it cast Donald Trump in the role of America's lone, heroic savior whose garbled speeches were actually coded messages to his followers. Or, think of *Birds Aren't Real* which also started in 2017. It claims that the very same government has been secretly killing billions of birds and replacing them with surveillance drones to keep watchful eyes on every US citizen.

Is there any truth to be found in either story? Well, while no one has come forward to claim authorship of QAnon, the creator of Birds Aren't Real will gladly tell you, as he did the *New York Times*, that his followers are in on a conspiracy all right—a conspiracy to ridicule all the other conspiracies that have riled up so many people.

“It basically became an experiment in misinformation,” Peter McIndoe told the *New York Times*. “We were able to construct an entirely fictional world that was reported on as fact by local media and questioned by members of the public.”

“I have a lot of excitement for what the future of this could be as an actual force for good,” he said. “Yes, we have been intentionally spreading misinformation for the past four years, but it’s with a purpose. It’s about holding up a mirror to America in the Internet age.”

Case 16: A New Genesis?

Science—that amazing endeavor that has brought about much good and much harm both to humanity and to nature! The year 2021 had its fair share of astonishing science: space missions, discovery of genes linked to obesity, brain-computer interfaces, a possible cure for type 1 diabetes, the first human arm and shoulder transplant, and the list goes on. Yet one scientific accomplishment may have slipped under the popular media radar while eliciting concern and hesitation from many scientists world-wide. In April of 2021, US and Chinese scientists authored a publication claiming to have collaborated in developing the world’s first human-monkey embryos. Scientists inserted human stem cells via CRISPR technology into macaque monkey embryos, gestating the cells for a maximum of twenty days prior to the embryos becoming unviable (as was planned).

Some proponents of the research extol the great potential for enriched human health care, such as kidney, liver, or heart transplants. Kidneys, for example, seem to be in great demand. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration website, 39,000 organ transplants were performed in 2020, and 106,884 persons are on an organ transplant waitlist, but seventeen persons die each day while awaiting an organ transplant. As of September of last year, 83 percent of those on the organ waiting list needed kidneys, ten percent were waiting for a liver, and the remaining people needed hearts, lungs, or other tissues. Considering these statistics, which are almost certainly underreported worldwide, one could be optimistic about the prospect of harvesting much needed tissues and organs from human-monkey embryos. A further cause for optimism lies in the fact that two very different scientific communities could so successfully collaborate in such a complex and groundbreaking achievement.

Yet others question whether scientists are even entertaining the thought that there may be a limit to how far science should go or how fast it should go there. Gene editing is still new, and there are unexpected and perhaps unpredictable consequences that arise from its practice. In the rush to be the first explorers in new areas of science, are scientists properly assessing the moral risks before plunging ahead?

Case 17: No, Really, I Can Do This

Felicia Sonmez, a reporter on the breaking political news team for the *Washington Post*, filed suit against her employer in July, 2021, in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. After she publicly identified herself as a survivor of sexual assault, she claimed she was unfairly barred from covering any story that involved sexual misconduct allegations. In 2018, Sonmez had accused Jonathan Kaiman, a former colleague at the *Los Angeles Times*, of sexually assaulting her in 2017 in Beijing. According to Ms. Sonmez, on the day she issued her statement about Mr. Kaiman, the *Post* “canceled her appearance on a nationally televised news program and banned her from covering one of the most prominent stories of 2018—Christine Blasey Ford’s accusations against Brett Kavanaugh.” The ban was later expanded, she said, to include all #MeToo-related coverage. The *Post*, in short, “unlawfully and blatantly discriminated against Ms. Sonmez because she was a woman and victim of a sexual assault.” In the lawsuit, Sonmez further claims that *Post* management chastised her “for trying to be the ‘star’ of her own sexual assault.”

Sonmez was also subjected to a brief suspension in 2020 for tweeting an article about sexual assault allegations against Kobe Bryant shortly after his untimely death. The *Post*, however, lifted the suspension after it received pushback from other employees.

In defense of the ban against Sonmez, management at the *Washington Post* contended that barring Sonmez from stories involving allegations of sexual misconduct was necessary because her identification as a survivor prevented her from offering non-biased, objective reporting as a journalist. The *Post* further contended that they wanted to protect Sonmez from being triggered or retraumatized, especially from online attacks by Internet trolls and others who spew hateful and harmful speech at female journalists in particular. Sonmez claims, however, that while she was discouraged from speaking publicly about her sexual assault allegations, she nevertheless found herself having to repeatedly explain to others why she was barred from covering certain news stories.